

THE JUSTIFICATION OF GOD?

THE STORY OF GOD'S WORK ACCORDING TO JÜRGEN MOLTMANN: PART 1

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Abstract

This essay reconstructs the way in which Jürgen Moltmann tells the story of God's work. This is done on the basis of a review essay by Douglas Farrow who identifies a neo-Platonic structure in Moltmann's systematic contributions to theology. The argument of this essay is that Moltmann fails to distinguish adequately between creation and fall. This has significant implications for his understanding of salvation, church and eschatological consummation. In this way theology becomes preoccupied with the doctrine of providence and thus with the theodicy problem.

Key Words: Economic trinity, Jürgen Moltmann, Sin, Suffering, Theodicy

Introduction

How is Jürgen Moltmann telling the story of God's work (on earth)? This necessarily complex question is in Moltmann's case difficult to answer for at least three reasons:

- Firstly, there is the size of his oeuvre. It is obviously not easy to condense all his writings into a single essay. Moreover, there is a gigantic corpus of secondary literature that has to be taken into account – in terms of articles, postgraduate theses and *Festschriften*.¹ The richness and scope of his writings would at least allow one to reconstruct such a narrative since he has written extensively about basically all the 'chapters' of this story – creation, evolution, human emergence, sin, providence, redemption, church, ministry and mission and eschatological consummation. Although there are some discontinuities in Moltmann's thinking, there is no obvious need here to distinguish between an 'earlier' Moltmann and a 'later' Moltmann.²
- Secondly, although Moltmann is clearly attracted to narratives and at times adopts the

¹ See the *Festschriften* edited by Deuser et al 1986, Volf, Krieg & Kucharz 1996, Moltmann & Rivuzumwami 2002, Volf & Welker 2006. Although the contributions in these *Festschriften* often (but not always) engage with Moltmann's writings, there is seldom a thorough analysis or critique of his work. In terms of authors with an interest in Moltmann's ecological theology, the contributions by Bauckham 1987, 1999, Bouma-Prediger 1995, Deane-Drummond 1997 and Schuurman 1991 may be mentioned.

² This is also evident from Moltmann's extensive autobiographical comments (see 1997, 2000). I wish to highlight two significant changes that Moltmann himself recognises in his oeuvre. Firstly, there is a shift from the historical categories of promise and hope in his earlier theology towards the inclusion of the spatial category of indwelling in his later work (see 1999:111 and the *Festschrift* edited by Moltmann & Rivuzumwami 2002). One may argue that this spatial turn is precisely prompted by his preoccupation with the theodicy problem: *Where is God amidst planetary suffering?* See Mertens 2002. Moltmann's response draws on the spatial categories of presence, solidarity, Shekinah, oikos and perichoresis. Secondly, in his series of six 'systematic contributions to theology' Moltmann came to recognise that solidarity with liberation, black, feminist and Minjung theologies would only be possible on the basis of engaging with his own German context and through conversations with others from within this context.

notion of theology as biography,³ he cannot really be described as a 'narrative theologian'. His 'exploration' of themes in Christian doctrine is deliberately not an attempt to construct a theological system or a systematic theology, but a series of 'systematic contributions to theology', that is, contributions from within the sub-discipline of systematic theology to the wider task of theological reflection and from within the German context to wider ecumenical conversations.⁴ He does not seek to integrate his explorations logically, chronologically or in any other order, also not a narrative order. He eschews any attempt at comprehensiveness, any dogmatic 'coercion' as hubris. Perhaps his style of writing could best be described in terms of a *theologia viatorum*, through an ongoing dialogue with a wide range of ecumenical conversation partners. It may also be described as one of 'experimentation'⁵ and 'exploration' – not merely the exploration of a series of Christian doctrines, but of a rich cluster of theological symbols vibrating with each other. It is fairly easy to list some of these symbols reverberating in Moltmann's oeuvre: *adventus*, *doxa / kavod*, joy, liberation, *Messiah*, *nova creatio*, *oikos*, *pathos*, *perichoresis*, *promissio*, *ruah*, *Sabbath*, *Shekinah*, *theologia viatorum* and *zimsum*.

- Thirdly, and perhaps precisely as a result of such an exploratory approach, Moltmann has often been criticised for a certain conceptual looseness. Critics have pointed out contradictions, a lack of clarity, imprecise formulations, unresolved questions and in some cases an all too speculative tendency in his work, engaging selectively with the Christian tradition and departing from the biblical narratives perhaps too easily. Moltmann's admirers typically suggest that this is more than made up for by the richness and boldness of his explorations.⁶

In this contribution I will take as a point of departure a review essay by the British/Canadian theologian Douglas Farrow published in 1998. In this essay, entitled "In the end is the beginning", Farrow offers a review of the first five of Moltmann's series of theological explorations. Although Farrow is highly appreciative of Moltmann's contributions,⁷ he is also severe in his criticism. What is helpful about his review is that he suggests what may here be called a story-line for how Moltmann is telling the story of God's work.

Farrow's argument is that the underlying thought pattern of Moltmann's version of the story, notwithstanding Moltmann's own critique of the influence of Hellenistic categories on Christian theology,⁸ remains neo-Platonic in structure.⁹ The story as reconstructed by

³ See Moltmann 2000:xviii-xix. Moltmann often offers moving autobiographical comments to illustrate the contextual nature of his work. See especially his *Experiences in theology* (2000) as well as his recent autobiography *A broad place* (2008). Given the available literature on his life, I opted not to add a biographical section here.

⁴ See the preface (dated 1990) to the paperback edition of *The Trinity and the kingdom of God* (1981:vii) as well as the preface to *Experiences in theology* (2000:xvi). The category of 'contributions' is here understood by Moltmann as supplementing the work of liberation theologians, feminist theologians and black theologians from within his own 'First world' context.

⁵ This is how Moltmann described his approach in *Theology of hope*. See also his *The experiment hope* (1975).

⁶ As Douglas Farrow (1998:427) observes, "While it is commonly held that Moltmann's conceptual looseness and spotty engagement with the tradition exacerbate his readers' difficulties..., it is also widely agreed that the seminality of his thought goes a long way to compensate for that."

⁷ Farrow (1998:426) says, for example, "If theology today shows signs not only of flexibility but of serious disarray, this one project is sufficient evidence that the discipline is far from moribund."

⁸ See Moltmann's discussion (1967:259-260) on Greek versus Hebrew concepts of history (the concept of history is a creation of Hebrew prophecy). He criticises a notion of revelation in terms of the Greek notion of *logos*, namely as the epiphany of the eternal present of being (1967:40). A discussion of the Hellenistic influence on Christian theology abounds in rest of his oeuvre.

Farrow entails, in short, the following episodes:

- 1) Creation as emanation from the eternal triune God following the kenotic self-withdrawal of God (*zimsum*) to create / vacate space within Godself for the world to come into being;
- 2) An increasing alienation between God and a creation suffering from the threat of a primordial *nihil*, from being godforsaken, from mortality and from sin – which also renders God vulnerable and induces God’s own suffering;
- 3) The history of redemption through which God overcomes such alienation by reoccupying the world through the indwelling of the Spirit and the incarnation of Christ, culminating in the events of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- 4) The movement of the Spirit to affirm all forms of life through the indwelling Spirit and through the ministries and mission of the church based on the promises of God; and
- 5) The consummation of all things which is understood in terms of the mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*) of God in the world and the world in God, perhaps best portrayed in the symbol of the Sabbath feast.

I will investigate this narrative in more detail below. Here it should also be noted that Farrow detects such a neo-Platonic thought pattern not only with reference to the work of God but also with reference to the person of God. Farrow suggests that the underlying scheme in Moltmann’s work is indeed circular. There is a move from theology (the immanent trinity) to pneumatology (the history of creation) to Christology (the turning point) to pneumatology (the history of redemption) to an eschatological trinitarian theology.¹⁰

Of course, the brevity of this account cannot do justice to Moltmann’s rich oeuvre. One may also argue that his thought patterns are not so much neo-Platonic as it is Hegelian.¹¹ I have heard that Moltmann has confessed that such a Hegelian inclination “is merely what is to be expected from a German professor”. This does not imply that Moltmann seeks to build an entire Hegelian system (which he repeatedly criticises); it refers to his habit of seeking to overcome the dialectical tension between a thesis and an antithesis.¹²

⁹ Farrow (1998:431-432) says: “He [Moltmann] flies not *from* Platonism but into it by embracing emanationism.”

¹⁰ I will not explore Moltmann’s contributions to the person of God here at any length. See also Tang’s doctoral thesis on *God’s history in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (1996) which addresses Moltmann’s understanding of both the immanent and the economic trinity. See also the *Festschrift* for Moltmann edited by Volf & Welker (2006) which explores his trinitarian theology at some length. Obviously this begs questions about his understanding of the relationship between the economic trinity and the immanent trinity. Following Rahner, Moltmann seeks to overcome this distinction on the basis of a theology of the cross and on the basis of an understanding of reciprocity (*perichoresis*). What transpires at the cross is also an event within the trinity. Elsewhere Moltmann (1981:152) describes the relationship between language on the economic and the immanent trinity in terms of narrating the history of salvation and thanksgiving, praise and joy (doxology) for such experiences of salvation.

¹¹ See, however, also Moltmann’s critical engagement with Hegel in a discussion of God’s self-glorification (not self-realisation) in the final section of *The coming of God* (1996:326ff). Perhaps the core of Moltmann’s criticism of Hegel may be found in his thoroughly trinitarian theology. For Hegel there is only a single divine subject who passes through the phases of externalisation and dialectical *Aufhebung*. Moltmann (1996:330) describes Hegel’s triadic analysis of the Absolute as ‘modalism in the extreme form’

¹² For example, never shy of resolving long-standing theological quarrels, Moltmann seeks to overcome the schism between Christianity and Judaism and between the East and the West over the *filioque*. He challenges the unfruitful grounding of theology both in the ontology of substance and the metaphysics of transcendental subjectivity and proposes instead a metaphysics of relationality and community. He challenges a one-sided emphasis on either God’s transcendence or God’s immanence; the radical distinction between God and the world is overcome by their mutual *perichoresis* in God’s Spirit. His Messianic Christology challenges both a

The suggestion that a certain neo-Platonism underlies Moltmann's entire oeuvre would also run against much of what he is saying. Here one may mention his early emphasis on the history-creating promises of God,¹³ the hope for the emergence of that which is new instead of a contemplative search for that which is abiding,¹⁴ his persistent critique of various forms of dualism, his appreciation of that which material, bodily and earthly,¹⁵ his understanding of God as passionate, vulnerable and in solidarity with creation, and so forth. It is therefore not quite clear that Moltmann is indeed vulnerable to the criticism of a persistent neo-Platonism.

For this contribution, I initially intended to defend Moltmann against Farrow's critique. However, I have been persuaded that such a circular structure may indeed be found in Moltmann's story-line. In this contribution I wish to investigate, instead, one aspect of the story-line that seems to have repercussions for all the others, namely his tendency to conflate two sources of (human) suffering, namely suffering as a result of what is usually described as 'natural suffering' and as a result of the legacy of human sin. I will seek to demonstrate that this has repercussions for several other aspects of his theology.

Theology as Theodicy

Moltmann's entire oeuvre may be construed as a theological response to the immense human and planetary suffering which defined the twentieth century. In every major book Moltmann has addressed this problem – with reference to Auschwitz, Hiroshima, racism, the cold war, ecological degradation, poverty, the oppression of women in patriarchal societies, the suffering of innocent children, and so forth. His political theology is an anti-bourgeois theology standing in solidarity with the victims of modernity,¹⁶ not a progressive theology of the established middle classes.¹⁷ Here theodicy indeed becomes the primary theological task.

Moltmann argues that theodicy does not require an explanation for suffering – since that would somehow justify it and render it acceptable. He insists that his theology of the cross should not be understood as an answer to the theodicy problem. Instead, it is "the power to live with the open wound of the unanswerable but unrelinquishable question to God: 'My

metaphysical Christology 'from above' and an anthropological Christology 'from below' by proposing a non-triumphalist Christology of the Way en route to the renewal of all things (Christ is the one who is coming to us in our journey on the way from ahead). He seeks to undermine the tension between revealed theology and natural theology and between revelation ('a theology for pastors and priests') and experience ('a pre-eminently lay theology') by calling for an appreciation of the richness of an experience of the Spirit's presence in creation (see 1992:5f, 17f). He integrates the doctrines of justification and sanctification on the basis of a universalist affirmation of life. He rejects as false the contrast between an eschatology transposed into time and an eschatology transposed into eternity and retrieves a notion of eschatology as the coming of Christ (*adventus*) as the fulfilment of the history-creating promises of God (see especially the chapter on 'Promise and history' in *Theology of hope*, 1967:95-138, also 1967:165). Finally, he seeks to overcome the distinction between the economic trinity and the immanent trinity on the basis of the notion of reciprocity within a loving relationship: the work of God *ad extra* influences the relationships within the trinity and vice versa (1981:98, 151). Farrow (1998:436) observes: "As Moltmann sees it, the primordial Trinity (God open to the world) is perfected via the economy (God suffering with the world) into an eternal or doxological trinity (God glorified in the world)".

¹³ See especially *Theology of Hope*, the volumes edited by Muckenhirn (1968), Capps (1970) and Herzog (1970), and the early study by Christopher Morse (1979) on *The logic of promise in Moltmann's theology*.

¹⁴ See, for example, Moltmann 1967:289.

¹⁵ See, for example, the discussion on the bodily resurrection of Christ and the hope for the resurrection of the body in *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Moltmann 1990:252ff).

¹⁶ See Moltmann's comments on the notion of 'sub-modernity' (1999:11ff).

¹⁷ See Moltmann 1999:57.

God, why have you forsaken me?”¹⁸ What is therefore required is a protest against suffering – God’s own protest.¹⁹ Only in this way can God be justified (theodicy). In short, Moltmann’s answer is that the world as such, with all its suffering, is involved in God’s very self-constitution as a God of love, that is, a God who becomes vulnerable by being in a reciprocal relationship with the object of God’s love. This vulnerability is evident from the perichoretic relationships within the (immanent) trinity and is replicated in the history of the triune God’s engagement with the world that God created. For Moltmann, only a thoroughly trinitarian theology can account for God’s suffering and can counter a monarchical understanding of God.²⁰ Following Bonhoeffer, Moltmann insists again and again that only a suffering God can be credible to humankind today.

Despite Moltmann’s critique against attempts to explain suffering, it is important to investigate his account of what I have elsewhere described as the ‘sources of suffering’. My suggestion is that one may differentiate between a number of such sources of suffering, including 1) natural suffering that is embedded in God’s good creation irrespective of human sin (there was sickness and death on earth long before there were humans or human sin); 2) suffering which result from what may be called ‘historical contingency’ – where no one can be held accountable directly; 3) the (long-term) impact of one’s careless and malicious actions and destructive habits on oneself (often in response to the actions of others); 4) suffering induced directly by another person (being ‘sinned-against’) and 5) suffering which results from structural violence, that is, the long term impact of human sin on the way in which societies are structured – where everyone is accountable, albeit to various degrees, and everyone experiences suffering, again to various degrees.²¹

In terms of this analysis one may argue that Moltmann, throughout his career, has protested against structural violence and has pleaded for the victims of society, those who have been sinned against.²² There can be little doubt that his youthful experiences during the Nazi regime have prompted a life-time commitment to a political theology that could address such suffering. Political theology was indeed born after the war from the horror over the failure of the German church and theology to address the crimes against humanity associated with Auschwitz.²³

Given his acute sense of the difference between the suffering of the victims and the very different forms of suffering experienced by oppressors, Moltmann has consistently refrained from universalising discourse on sin. The Christian message of redemption can only be made cheap (Bonhoeffer) where a generalised message of God’s forgiveness is proclaimed without bringing the distinction between oppressors and their victims into play.

Moltmann’s position still requires a response to the question where the sins of the oppressors come from in the first place. Moltmann is quite aware of the apostle Paul’s

¹⁸ Moltmann 2008:281.

¹⁹ See already Moltmann (1967:21): “Hope finds in Christ not only a consolation in suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise against suffering ... hope causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience.” See also Moltmann 1974:200ff.

²⁰ Farrow (1998:426) notes that, for Moltmann, “only a robust trinitarianism which has eradicated all monarchian tendencies can supply a decisive critique of the culture of domination and ‘possessive individualism’ against which suffering peoples and a suffering planet are crying out.”

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of these sources of suffering, see Conradie 2005, 2006.

²² See also the discussion on ‘Deliver us from evil’ in Moltmann 2004:53-78.

²³ See Moltmann 2000:115. In *The crucified God* Moltmann (1974:xi) wrote: “I experienced a very ‘dark night’ in my soul, for the pictures of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and horror over the crimes of Auschwitz, had weighed on me and many other people of my generation since 1945. Much time passed before we could emerge from the silence that stops the mouths of people over whom the cloud of the victims hangs heavy.”

comment that we have *all* sinned (Romans 3:23) and that we humans are therefore collectively accountable for sin. However, his intuition is that it would be obscene to universalise human guilt in the cases of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the Gulag, the victims of racism and genocide, the poverty of those marginalised by a neo-liberal economy, the plight of women in patriarchal societies and also the non-human victims of environmental degradation.²⁴

Although Moltmann therefore refuses to universalise human guilt, his response to the problem of the origin of sin is to view human sin as a manifestation of the suffering that is embedded in God's creation. Although he resists the temptation to generalise human *accountability*, he has little hesitation in literally universalising *suffering*. On this basis I suggest that Moltmann tends to conflate two sources of suffering, namely natural suffering and suffering resulting from human sin. Human sin is seen as an almost necessary and inevitable result of the suffering embedded in God's good creation. Indeed suffering is already implied in God's resolve to create. For Moltmann suffering is a function of the vulnerability that is implied in a reciprocal relationship of love where the response of the beloved cannot be taken for granted. This vulnerability is evident from the history of God's love for creation and therefore also characterises the relationships of love within the triune God – epitomised by the paradox of God's own godforsakenness as expressed in the cross of Jesus Christ.

This fusion of natural suffering and human sin as sources of suffering (and therefore of creation and sin) has implications for every aspect of Moltmann's account of God story. It requires, for example a radicalisation of the message of redemption. If the victims are not responsible for their suffering, then no human beings can ultimately be responsible. The only way out is to hold God responsible. Theology thus becomes theodicy.²⁵ The only way in which God can be declared just in the face of human and other forms of suffering is to proclaim universal salvation.

Let us now explore each step of Moltmann's theodicy with reference to the various 'chapters' of God's work. I will again draw on Farrow's reconstruction but also on Moltmann's own texts.

God's Primordial Self-withdrawal and Vulnerability

Like many other twentieth century theologians Moltmann is keen to move away from a portrayal of the triune God as apathetic and distant from the world. He thus avoids speculation about a protological trinity and subsequently temporalises the immanent trinity. God is the one who exists within time and cannot be understood as separate from us. This implies that God is open to time, influenced by historical changes and therefore affected by suffering. Especially in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* Moltmann stresses the pathos of God above God as logician, a supreme substance or an Absolute subject.²⁶ Accordingly, he speaks of God as love and on this basis as the God who freely limits Godself by that which

²⁴ In *Theology of hope* (1967:23) Moltmann describes sin primarily in terms of the sin of despair: "It is not the evil he does, but the good he does not do, not his misdeed but his omissions, that accuse him."

²⁵ One may argue that where theology becomes a response to the theodicy problem, all the other 'chapters' of God story tend to be subsumed under the doctrine of providence. However, this is hardly the case in Moltmann's work since he discusses the themes of creation, redemption and consummation extensively. It is nevertheless noteworthy that he has not produced a monograph on the theme of God's providence, probably because this infuses all his work.

²⁶ Moltmann 1981:1-20.

is not God, by creation, the object of God's love.²⁷ A relationship between God and the world based on reciprocity necessarily implies God's vulnerability, solidarity, compassion,²⁸ self-surrender and therefore the 'infinite sorrow of God'.²⁹ This also compels Moltmann to talk about God in Christological terms. Thus, from beginning to end, his theology is geared towards a response to the theodicy problem.

In his panentheistic ktiology Moltmann maintains that suffering not only belongs to God but that some form of suffering is inevitable for creation itself. Although creation is good, the object of God's joy and geared towards the celebration of the Sabbath,³⁰ it remains finite and imperfect. God's pain in giving birth to the world³¹ anticipates the pain of incarnation and cross as well as the groaning of the Spirit for a new creation.³²

The key to Moltmann's position here is his controversial use of the kabbalistic notion of God's primordial self-restriction or self-withdrawal (*zimzum*).³³ This suggests that God allowed room within Godself for the emergence of something that is different from Godself (*extra Deum*), a world that exist in front of, with and in Godself.³⁴ Moltmann describes the doctrine of *zimzum* as "the only serious attempt ever made to think through the idea of 'creation out of nothing' in a truly theological way."³⁵ What should be noted here is that this very act makes God vulnerable to the otherness of the other – creation. The act of creating itself may therefore be understood as *kenosis*.³⁶

The self-withdrawal of God also implies that creation is devoid of divine characteristics and is therefore finite. God created the world in Godself, giving it time in God's eternity, finitude within God's infinity, space within God's omnipresence, freedom within God's love.³⁷ Indeed, "time is an interval in eternity, finitude is a space in infinity."³⁸ This

²⁷ See Moltmann 1985:76f on the notion of *creatio ex amore Dei*.

²⁸ On the compassion of God, see Moltmann 1990:178ff.

²⁹ Moltmann 1981:36-42.

³⁰ On the significance of the Sabbath for an ecological theology, see Moltmann 1985 & 1989:61-66, 80-87.

³¹ Moltmann (1985:88, 146 1996:299) acknowledges that God as the living space of the world is a motherly metaphor, but does not develop the obvious suggestion of creation taking place within a divine womb. Johnson (1992:234) criticises Moltmann's exclusive use of male metaphors as a 'blatant anomaly'. In *The coming of God* (1996:300-301). Moltmann does mention the experience of space by a fetus in the uterus. This is an ecological experience of *Geborgenheit*. The fetus (that is not the mother) grows for nine months 'in' the mother. When the mother gives birth to the child she allows the child a certain independence. Moltmann concludes that human beings are both inhabitants and inhabited. This provides an analogy for the Christian affirmation that Christ is 'in' us but that we are also 'in' Christ. See Elizabeth Johnson (1992:233f) for one example of such a quintessentially female perspective on the notion of *zimsum*.

³² Farrow 1998:428.

³³ Moltmann's discussion of the notion of *zimsum* is derived from the kabbalistic tradition, retrieved by Isaac Luria, who argues that God's indwelling in the temple (*Shekinah*) is only possible if the infinite God contracts the divine presence. See already Moltmann (1981:108f) and in more detail (1985:86-93). He again builds on this notion in *The coming of God* (1996:281, 296f).

³⁴ This does not mean that creation takes place 'out of God' (which would suggest a monistic form of emanation for which Moltmann criticises Tillich). The world was created neither out of pre-existent matter, nor out of the divine Being itself. It was called out of being by the free resolve of God, and, more specifically, out of the ecstatic love of God. See Moltmann 1985:75f, also 1996:306.

³⁵ Moltmann 1981:110.

³⁶ A kenotic understanding of God in terms of self-restricting, self-emptying love is the motive behind Moltmann's emphasis on the notion of *zimsum* (see Moltmann 1985:88, also Torrance 1997:90). In *Science and wisdom* Moltmann (1993:63) adds: "A love which gives the beloved space, allows them time, and asks and expects of them freedom is the power of lovers who can withdraw in order to allow the beloved to grow and to come. Consequently it is not just self-giving which belongs to creative love; it is self-limitation too; not only affection, but respect for the unique nature of the other as well."

³⁷ Moltmann 1981:109.

finitude, I suggest, includes a limited duration (and mortality for living organism) but also transience and limitations to (human) power and knowledge.³⁹

However, there is more at stake here. This self-withdrawal of God leads to empty space that is to be filled by the emergence of creatures. Moltmann describes this in terms of the emergence of a *nihil*, which is a partial negation of divine being, but not the negation of creaturely being.⁴⁰ This does not imply that nothingness forms part of God's being from all eternity, but that the emergence of nothingness forms the reverse side of God's withdrawing. It is this void, being threatened by a primordial *nihil*, which accounts for much of the suffering in the world. It was out of chaos, darkness and flood that God created the world.⁴¹ The only response available to God is to re-occupy this vacated space – namely through the Spirit and the incarnation of Christ. This prompts Moltmann's panentheistic pneumatology and eschatology as we will see below.

Several of Moltmann's critics have concluded on this basis that, despite his intentions to the contrary, he cannot affirm the goodness of creation consistently. Creation is faulted because of the finitude and suffering that is inescapably embedded in creation. His verdict on creation is that it is 'very good' but not perfect. Only the Sabbath, the promise of future consummation built into the initial creation, is sanctified.⁴² I will return to this aspect below.

The Suffering Embedded in Evolutionary History

The history of creation is portrayed by Moltmann as a history of suffering. He makes it quite clear that the sources of suffering cannot be restricted to the predicament of evil and sin.⁴³ Suffering and death also forms an integral part of God's good creation. Moltmann says: "We cannot say 'if there were no sin, there would be no suffering.' Experience of suffering goes far beyond the experience of guilt and the experience of grace. It has roots in the limitations of created reality itself."⁴⁴ It is not merely guilt but ultimately death that

³⁸ Moltmann 1981:111.

³⁹ See my analysis of these dimensions of finitude (Conradie 2005:144-149).

⁴⁰ Moltmann (1985:87) describes this *nihil* as God-forsaken space, even as hell and absolute death. This creates the possibility (but not the actuality) of the demonic. This seems to assume that evil is a more or less necessary product of creation and that the Creator is therefore the author of evil – which would render the notion of a primordial *nihil* rather problematic.

Moltmann's use of the notion of *zimsum* has subsequently been severely criticized, especially by Bouma-Prediger (1995:254f; 1997), Farrow (1998), Torrance (1997) and Walsh (1987). Farrow (1998:437) concludes that, "Nothing could be more curious, it must be said, than the ease with which Moltmann takes up this dubious kabbalistic notion, defends and elaborates it with bizarre literalism, and gives it such enormous theological weight." Torrance (1997:90) observes that the notion of *zimsum* (which is a response to God's omnipresence) assumes spatial categories. It suggests that 'a kind of primal mystical space' (1981:110) is created, or, more precisely, *vacated* temporally prior to the creation event. This tends to encourage a container or receptacle model of space and a linear notion of time (where *creatio ex nihilo* is prior to the *creatio originalis* and *creatio continua*). Bouma-Prediger (1997) comments that, for Moltmann, the self-limitation of God assumes a primordial *nihil* as a necessary condition of the world to exist. The eschaton constitutes a refilling of this *nihil*. In that case, a distinction between God and creation becomes difficult to maintain in the eschaton. The eschaton requires a redeeming *annihilatio nihili* in which God gathers the nothingness into God's own being (Moltmann 1985:90-3).

It should be noted that these criticisms are based on Moltmann's work prior to *The coming of God* where he still uses the notion of *zimsum*, but balances this with the notion of 'aeonic' or relative eternity (see the discussion below).

⁴¹ See already Moltmann 1968:26.

⁴² Moltmann 1996:264.

⁴³ Moltmann (1981:52) says: "Suffering as punishment for sin is an explanation that has a very limited value."

⁴⁴ Moltmann 1981:50-51. Schuurman (1987:61) regards the denial that there ever was a pristine state of creation

makes the past irretrievably past.⁴⁵ If suffering is understood to have its roots in creaturely reality (and not merely in terms of the legacy of human sin), then sin itself may be understood as the more or less inevitable result of human fear of death – and not only the fear of God. Moltmann says: “The frailty of the temporal creation of human beings is like a detonator for the sin of wanting to be equal to God and to overcome this frailty.”⁴⁶ Death in its natural form, Moltmann maintains, is implied in the command to be fruitful and multiply. Sin and death are therefore dialectically related to one another. Sin enters human existence through fear of death and death (especially as the consequence of violence) follows on sin.

Although he acknowledges that to explain suffering is to excuse it, Moltmann does, after all, offer an explanation for suffering. He explains the inexplicable in terms of the most common explanation available, namely that suffering is entirely natural.⁴⁷ Likewise, Moltmann offers an explanation for the emergence of human sin. He describes sin as the ‘self-closing of open systems’.⁴⁸ The effect of both sin and nature’s ‘bondage to transience’ is therefore a (premature) closure. Sin is born from human finitude, from fear of death. In this way sin also becomes entirely natural, perhaps even inevitable.

This implies that redemption has to include redemption from the suffering embedded in creation.⁴⁹ It cannot be understood merely in terms of overcoming human alienation from God as a result of sin. Divine righteousness embraces forgiveness of guilt and the annihilation of death together (the negation of the negative).⁵⁰

The History of Salvation

The history of creation is for Moltmann not only a history of suffering but also of God’s passionate and compassionate love. It is a history through which God seeks to overcome the alienation between Creator and creation without abolishing the distinction between the two. This is possible through God’s re-entering the godforsaken world.⁵¹ Here Moltmann’s pantheism (or theo-en-pan-ism) is crucial: God is not absent but present in creation – through the Messiah, but especially through the *Shekinah* of God’s Spirit.⁵² The ontological gap between Creator and creation is overcome through God’s reoccupation of creation, but

as “...a collapsing of the traditional distinction between creation and fall” leading to “a very negative assessment of the limitations of that creation which, as Augustine so often said, God called very good.”

⁴⁵ Moltmann 1967:267.

⁴⁶ Moltmann 1996:91.

⁴⁷ See Farrow 1998:437.

⁴⁸ Moltmann 1979:122.

⁴⁹ Farrow (1998:437) describes the price that is paid for establishing the solidarity of God with a suffering world in the following way: “suffering belongs to God qua God, not only in redemption, but in creation. It belongs to creatures, then, just as they come from the hand (or should we say the womb) of God. Sin too becomes more or less inevitable since according to Moltmann it proceeds from the fear of death rather than from a failure to fear God. Salvation history, like the fall, is so absorbed into the process of making the world that the distinction between creation and redemption threatens to collapse.”

⁵⁰ See already Moltmann 1967:206.

⁵¹ Walsh (1987:75) comments: “Redemption, then is not primarily a restoration of a covenantal relationship with God broken in history, but a ‘re-filling’ of that space, an overcoming of God’s self-limitation by means of an *annihilatio nihili*. But if this *nihil* was for some reason necessary for the *creatio originalis* then how can the God / creation distinction still be maintained when this *nihil* is vanquished and God is all in all? Is the distinction between pantheism and panentheism only semantic?”

⁵² If I am not mistaken there remains a tension between Moltmann’s early emphasis on *adventus* (picked up again in the title of *The coming of God*) and his somewhat later emphasis on immanent presence. How could Christ be coming towards us from ahead and be present at the same time?

then in a perichoretic way so that creation is not overwhelmed by God's presence.⁵³ The history of salvation is the history of God's reoccupation of the vacated space in order to transfigure the whole of creation towards participation in the life of God. This destiny is anticipated in the Sabbath and in the Christian Eucharist.

For Moltmann the cross of Jesus Christ constitutes the turning point in the dialectic narrative of God's work. The cross is seen in terms of the solidarity of God with a suffering creation, God's vicarious love for the godforsaken world threatened by annihilation, and the protest of divine love against the suffering of creation.⁵⁴ The cross of Christ is the sign of God's solidarity for all those who live here in the shadow of the cross.⁵⁵ God enters the nothingness (which resulted from God self-withdrawal) by drawing it into God's own being.⁵⁶ Here God is not dead; death is taken up within God.⁵⁷ The alienating otherness of creation is overcome when such otherness is taken up in God's own being. Moreover, being abandoned by God becomes something that took place within Godself.⁵⁸ The cross in this way becomes a symbol for theodicy and not so much for soteriology. What is at stake here is a response to the theodicy problem: The justification of God, not of sinners. Farrow comments: "It is primarily the justification of God the creator by God the redeemer."⁵⁹ Here the crucified God is the only response available to the reproach that God created suffering, death and evil together with the world and humanity.⁶⁰ Perhaps Moltmann's deepest intuition is expressed precisely here.

It should nevertheless be noted here that Moltmann throughout his oeuvre seeks to overcome the separation of a theology of creation and redemption. In his work on creation he stresses the redemptive thrust of God's acts of creation in the beginning, continuing creation and new creation. Likewise, in his discussion of redemption, he stresses the creative thrust of God's acts of redemption.⁶¹

Moltmann's understanding of the sources of suffering prompts a theology of redemption

⁵³ As Farrow (1998:431) observes, "the thrust of an immanentist pneumatology is not to link the world in need of redemption to its redeemer ... but to link it directly to God."

⁵⁴ Moltmann's position here constitutes a radical departure from Anselm's understanding of salvation in terms of penal substitution – where Christ died on behalf of humanity who has become estranged from God as a result of sin. In an interesting analysis in *The crucified God* Moltmann (1974:64f) distinguishes between four dimensions of the cross of Christ who died for the godless: a) the need to follow Christ in a world full of idols and demons; b) the cross of the Christian martyrs; c) solidarity with abandoned and despised human beings; and d) the groaning of the enslaved creation, the sorrow of the godless world. In each case Moltmann emphasises the victims of suffering, resists relating such suffering to human sin and certainly avoids a universalising of sin. See also the discussion below.

⁵⁵ Moltmann 1975:57.

⁵⁶ In *Theology of hope* Moltmann (1967:198) describes the resurrection in terms of "a new totality which annihilates the total nihil".

⁵⁷ Moltmann 1975:83.

⁵⁸ See Moltmann 1974:151. He stresses that it is this godforsakenness alone which distinguishes the cross of Jesus Christ from the many crosses of forgotten and nameless people in history (1974:152).

⁵⁹ Farrow 1998:446, note 63. See Moltmann (1967:207) though: "justification means that God justifies man [sic] by grace and that man acknowledges God's justice in confessing his sins."

⁶⁰ See Moltmann 1981:40, drawing from insights of Miguel de Unamuno.

⁶¹ This dual emphasis is evident from all Moltmann's later writings where he has recognised the need to address ecological concerns. See, for example, Moltmann 1990:274-312. More than most other contemporary authors Moltmann sees the twofold dangers of separating creation from redemption. As I will argue below, questions remain over his own ability to maintain an affirmation of the goodness of creation consistently. To stress the redemptive thrust of creation may help to recognise the forces of chaos and death embedded in creation (as *creatura*). However, if creation itself is in need of redemption, from the beginning as it were, then redemption (as *nova creatio*) would tend to replace a creation that was faulted from the beginning. Then it would no longer be this earth, this body, this life that is redeemed.

that moves away from an Anselmian notion of expiatory suffering for human sins towards what Gustaf Aulén described as the *Christus victor* tradition: Victory over the forces of death, liberation from oppression and an end to suffering.⁶² This aspect of his position requires further investigation here:⁶³

In *The crucified God* Moltmann argues that the notion of expiatory suffering typically does not and cannot do justice to the resurrection of Christ and therefore does not interpret the cross in terms of the resurrection.⁶⁴ Instead, for Moltmann, the question raised by the resurrection is the theodicy question: Why was only this man raised? The answer to the question lies in the cross. The message is that through his representative suffering the risen Christ brings righteousness and life to the unrighteous and the dying.⁶⁵ Jesus was therefore merely the *first* to be raised and hence all people can live from the expectation of the resurrection of the dead. While Moltmann thus recognises the sins of the unrighteous, he links that in one breath to the suffering and dying of the whole of creation. In this way the ‘for us and our salvation’ of Nicene Christianity provides a response to the theodicy problem.

In *The church in the power of the Spirit* Moltmann offers an exposition of the doctrine of justification in an attempt to overcome the tension between a theological understanding of the church and the empirical reality of the church. He does this on the basis of the Lutheran notion of *simul iustus et peccator*. His interpretation follows the tension between reality (*peccator in re*) and hope (*iustus in spe*). He again emphasises the revolutionary power unleashed by this hope and its impact on the sanctification of Christian life and on society.⁶⁶ He also stresses that the justification of the unrighteous is not merely an aim in itself, but that it points beyond itself to the lordship of Christ. Moreover, it points towards the work of the Spirit, namely towards the believer’s freedom from sin, liberation from godless powers, the redemption of the body and the new creation.⁶⁷ He thus describes salvation in three consecutive sections in terms of ‘liberation from the compulsion of sin’, ‘liberation from the idols of power’ and ‘liberation from godforsakenness’.⁶⁸

This notion of abandonment probably reflects Moltmann’s deepest intuition. It seems that godforsakenness is here not so much a response from God to human corruption; it reflects the more or less necessary self-withdrawal of God, in order to allow creation to be itself, but leading to suffering and death in creation. Accordingly, justification is not understood primarily in terms of forgiveness offered to sinners (perpetrators, those who are guilty) out of God’s grace. Instead, he seeks to understand justification from the point of view of the victims, the oppressed, the suffering. Even where he uses the term ‘justification for sinners’ Moltmann stresses the liberating impact of such forgiveness.⁶⁹ This creates a tendency to move from a word of pardon in response to wrongdoing towards God’s word of affirmation.

⁶² For Moltmann, salvation in history may be understood as the divine opening of closed systems (1979:122). Accordingly, he characterises sin as closing off possibilities and grace as opening them up.

⁶³ For a discussion of Moltmann’s position on justification within the context of ecological theology, see the chapter on Moltmann in the doctoral dissertation by Ariane Arpels-Josiah (2005).

⁶⁴ Moltmann 1974:183.

⁶⁵ Moltmann 1974:185.

⁶⁶ Moltmann 1977:21-24.

⁶⁷ Moltmann 1977:31-35. Moltmann (1977:36) adds: “Man’s history in its relation to the history of Christ begins with the forgiveness of sins and his being freed for a new life. There can be no other beginning for the unrighteous, the unfree and the hopeless. But the beginning does not lead immediately to the end. Liberation leads to liberated life. Justification leads to the new creation.”

⁶⁸ Moltmann 1977:87-98.

⁶⁹ See for example Moltmann 1977:292.

In *The way of Jesus Christ* Moltmann again offers a brief discussion of justification. Here he acknowledges the liberating power of forgiveness of sin (understood as closing oneself off from the source of life). However, he suggests that justification cannot be narrowly confined to forgiveness; it also includes the notion of new life in righteousness. His point here is again that an emphasis on forgiveness on the basis of expiation cannot do justice to Christ's resurrection.⁷⁰ This would reduce Christ's resurrection to the divine endorsement of the salvific significance of his death. Instead, Moltmann emphasises that the purpose of justification is that there may be a just world for all created beings.⁷¹

This is most evident in Moltmann's discussion of the doctrine of justification in *The Spirit of life*. Here he notes the way in which sin (and salvation) is universalised in the Pauline literature and through Protestant theology. However, he also notes that the category of 'sinners' is not universalised in the same way in the synoptic gospels. Here the category of 'sinners' refers to the outcasts, the poor and the homeless. Although Moltmann acknowledges that people can be both victims and perpetrators, that victims can become perpetrators, and that there are some not so innocent onlookers too, he suggests that a distinction between victims and perpetrators is justifiable.⁷² He argues that a universal concept of sin makes people blind to specific manifestations of injustice and guilt. The universality of sin thus tends to mystify sin and to make sin so abstract that it becomes innocuous to confess one's sins.

For Moltmann, justification as the affirmation of life entails more than forgiveness of sin; it also responds to the 'cry for justice' of the victims of injustice.⁷³ Accordingly, Moltmann offers a reinterpretation of the doctrine of justification through the eyes of liberation theology, namely the liberation of people deprived of justice (justice for victims) and the liberation of the unjust themselves (justice for perpetrators). He does that on the basis of the category of an affirmation of life. Those who are being affirmed by God are primarily the social outcasts, those who are not accepted in society, the marginalised, the victims of injustice. Affirmation here implies solidarity with the victims and the affirmation of human dignity – also the dignity of those who are trampled upon – and an affirmation of the value of every life and every form of life. It is noteworthy that his chapter on 'The justification of life' follows *after* a chapter of 'The liberation for life'.⁷⁴

Finally, in a chapter on 'Deliver us from evil' in his book *In the end – the beginning*, Moltmann again treats the doctrine of justification.⁷⁵ Here he distinguishes even more explicitly between the victims and the perpetrators of evil. He argues that the righteousness of God should be understood first of all in terms of God's compassion for and solidarity with the suffering victims, those who are described as 'sinners' by the powerful elite. It is therefore a righteousness which brings about justice for the outcasts, the poor, the widows and the orphans – as illustrated in the ministry of Jesus the Christ. This justice implies that God through Jesus Christ judges between perpetrators and their victims. God judges

⁷⁰ Moltmann (1990:186) says: "The Lutheran theology of the Reformation period based justifying faith solely on the suffering and death of Christ 'for us'. But this was one-sided. They perceived the *pro nobis* in Christ's cross, but not in his resurrection. They therefore understood the justification of the sinner too narrowly as 'the forgiveness of sins,' but not as new life in righteousness."

⁷¹ Moltmann 1990:183-189.

⁷² Moltmann 1992:125, also 2000:107.

⁷³ See also Moltmann 2004:56f.

⁷⁴ Moltmann 1992:99-122 and 123-143.

⁷⁵ Moltmann 2004:53-78.

perpetrators in the face of their victims.⁷⁶ Moltmann acknowledges that the apostle Paul takes as his premise a universal concept of sin and does not distinguish between the perpetrators and the victims of evil. However, he interprets Paul's message as one aimed primarily at perpetrators. He notes that the deeds of perpetrators can never be undone. The perpetrators are therefore dependant on their victims if they are to be liberated from their evil. They have to be forgiven by their victims. How is this possible? Moltmann suggests that this is only possible by God's own actions, namely through the suffering, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He rejects the notion that Jesus died as the vicarious victim for our sins, paying off the debts of the perpetrators in some heavenly bank as it were.⁷⁷ Instead he suggests (somewhat vaguely) that the demonstration of God's solidarity with the victims, God's pain and God's own godforsakenness may free both the victims (because it releases them from the torment of remembrance) and the perpetrators (who are enslaved by their own repressed guilt). On this basis they may be liberated towards a new life. This is for Moltmann the significance of the resurrection through which both victims and perpetrators are brought into a just community with God and one another.⁷⁸ Only through this community, where God's liberating justice is recognised and experienced by both victims and perpetrators, does the justification of God become possible.⁷⁹ Moltmann therefore insists that the doctrine of justification cannot be reduced to the forgiveness of perpetrators.

Moltmann carries such a theology of redemption as the affirmation of life (and of creation) through towards the hope for the restoration of all things. In *The coming of God*, he offers an extended discussion of the hope for universal salvation (*apokatastasis panton*).⁸⁰ Here he is careful not to trivialise divine judgement and damnation since his prophetic political theology requires from him to maintain the distinction between those who are sinners and those who are sinned against.⁸¹ The victims of structural violence require a just verdict. Indeed, for the victims of history, God's judgement is a source of joy in God's righteousness and justice, not a threatening and intimidating message.⁸²

Moreover, Moltmann maintains that in the final judgement God redeems Godself in the eyes of the whole of the suffering creation. God's judgement over sin does not have the final word, in the same way that God's primal blessing given to creation precedes sin, Christians may hope that what would come last is the final blessing of the new creation in which justice and righteousness dwells.⁸³ This universalist hope, Moltmann argues, is a source of joy for the victims of history. They may be consoled to know not just that murderers will fail to triumph over their victims, but also that they cannot even remain the murderers of their victims for all eternity.⁸⁴ Moltmann therefore speaks of the *doctrine*, not the heresy, of universal salvation.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Moltmann 2004:71.

⁷⁷ Moltmann 2004:73.

⁷⁸ Moltmann 2004:74-76.

⁷⁹ Moltmann 2004:78.

⁸⁰ Moltmann 1996:235-255.

⁸¹ On the theme of divine judgement, see also Moltmann 1969:47f, 1990:334f.

⁸² Moltmann 1996:235.

⁸³ Moltmann 1996:237.

⁸⁴ Moltmann 1996:255.

⁸⁵ Moltmann 1996:250ff) grounds this hope in the cross of Jesus Christ and in his damnation through the descent into hell. If Christ has been damned, then nobody would need to suffer eternal damnation.

The Mission of God and of the Church

On this basis, the history of redemption may be understood as the ongoing solidarity of God with a suffering creation through the liberative presence of the Spirit. In his earlier work Moltmann emphasised that God's promise for the renewal of all things necessitates the mission of the church to all nations.⁸⁶ There is a necessary correlation between *promissio* and *missio*. God's promise turns our eyes not towards some primeval original event, but towards the eschatological fulfilment of God's promise.⁸⁷ Moltmann therefore calls for a theology born *out of* hope and not merely one *about* hope.⁸⁸ The mission and ministries of 'the church in the power of the Spirit' is characterised by a militant hope that confronts the many manifestations of suffering. Moltmann stresses that it is not so much that the church 'has' a mission; instead the mission of Christ creates the church. Mission does not emerge from the church; the church emerges from God's mission (*missio Dei*). Likewise, the church does not possess the gospel; the gospel creates the exodus church.⁸⁹ The purpose of mission is not to spread the church, but to spread the kingdom.⁹⁰ Moltmann says: "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way."⁹¹

Through its missionary practice the church does not search for eternal orders in the existing reality of the world, but for possibilities that exist in the world in the direction of the promised future.⁹² The forward-moving, history-making mission in this way provides the link between coming history and past history.⁹³ Mission here is understood especially in terms of the ministries of the laity which include work in the areas of socialisation, democracy, education and politics.⁹⁴ This hope is based on the resurrection of Christ and the apostolic witnesses that something new is emerging. The Easter experiences evoke a calling.⁹⁵ Mission constitutes the church as an exodus church, the pilgrim people of God, a people liberated from the land of captivity expecting liberation for the whole enslaved and suffering creation.⁹⁶ In a world fluctuating between the glory of self-realisation and the misery of self-estrangement, a world of lost horizons, of hopelessness, the task of the Christian church is to disclose to the world the horizon of the future of the crucified Christ.⁹⁷

While there is a strong emphasis in his early work on the mission of the church as the corollary of God's *promissio*, there seems to be, if I am not mistaken, a tendency in his later work to trivialise the mission and ministry of the church.⁹⁸ This may be understandable

⁸⁶ Moltmann 1967:225, also 2000:102.

⁸⁷ Moltmann 1967:298.

⁸⁸ Moltmann 1975:45, 2000:92-93.

⁸⁹ Moltmann 1977:84. The influence of Van Ruler's theology of the apostolate is evident here.

⁹⁰ Moltmann 1977:10-11.

⁹¹ Moltmann 1977:64.

⁹² Moltmann 1967:288.

⁹³ Moltmann 1967:284.

⁹⁴ Moltmann 1975:11. On ecclesiology written from the perspective of the laity, see also Moltmann 1978.

⁹⁵ Moltmann 1970:35.

⁹⁶ Moltmann 1977:83.

⁹⁷ Moltmann 1967:338. These phrases are derived from the very last lines of *Theology of hope*.

⁹⁸ Moltmann (2008:202) acknowledged that church adherence is for him not a matter of course since he did not grow up in a church. Perhaps Moltmann's position here is best understood as a persistent critique of the German *Volkskirche*. He comments that 'people' in the New Testament may be understood as Israel (*laos*), as the Gentile peoples (*ethne*) and as those living without the law (*ochlos*) – the poor and homeless with whom

given Moltmann's earlier publications in this regard and since he stresses that he does not seek to be comprehensive. He seems to put more and more emphasis on the universal scope of the Spirit's life-affirmation wherever suffering is manifested (also outside the church).

Already in *The church in the power of the Spirit* he could maintain that wherever people take up their cross in self-giving and wherever the sighing of the Spirit is heard in the cry for freedom, there the church is constituted.⁹⁹ Here he describes the church as "the fellowship of the godless who have found fellowship with God through Jesus' abandonment by God."¹⁰⁰ There are no chapters in either *The Way of Jesus Christ* or in *The Spirit of Life* on the church as a messianic community (the 'body of Christ') or as communion in the Spirit.¹⁰¹

In *The Spirit of Life* there is a chapter on charismatic powers, but here too the emphasis is not on the church but on the ways in which the charismata may empower life.¹⁰² In a chapter on the 'fellowship of the Spirit' the emphasis is on the vocation of the laity. There is only a brief mentioning of the gathering of Christians in the church and even there the emphasis is not on those who are 'churchgoing' but on the presence of the church in worldly contexts – where people live and work and in the context of civil society.¹⁰³ There are sections on the community of generations the community between women and men, action groups and self-help groups, but nothing on groups formed within the institutional church (cell groups, Bible study groups, youth groups, women's groups, etc). There is very little indeed about the church as worshipping community or as local congregation.¹⁰⁴ One may conclude that Moltmann's theology does not present a church dogmatics' it is indeed an exercise in imagination for the reign of God.¹⁰⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See the bibliography in Part 2 of this essay.

Jesus associated (see 2008:206). This suggests a concept of church where the focus is on solidarity with suffering.

⁹⁹ Moltmann 1977:65.

¹⁰⁰ Moltmann 1977:96.

¹⁰¹ For similar observations, see Smit 2006:75f. Perhaps Moltmann own theological journey plays a role here as well. He often observes that, having grown up in a secular home, he discovered the church only after his release from the concentration camp in Norton Camp. On Moltmann's ecclesiology, see also Rasmusson 1994.

¹⁰² See Moltmann 1992:180f.

¹⁰³ See Moltmann 1992:234.

¹⁰⁴ See the brief discussion in Moltmann 1992:245-6 on social forms of the church where four such groups are mentioned: voluntary groups, the local congregation, regional and national churches and the age of world-wide humanity.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann 1996:xiv.