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Rehabilitating Kenotic Christology

A Critically Constructive Examination and Strategic Systematization of Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of Christ

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Rehabilitating Kenotic Christology

***A Critically Constructive Examination and Strategic
Systematization of Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of Christ***

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Abstract

This thesis presents a constructive examination and strategic systematization of Jürgen Moltmann's christology, arguing that his outlook on the kenosis of Christ can be conscripted in a critical rehabilitative capacity for kenotic christological thinking more broadly. The envisioned contribution of this study is therefore twofold: advancing understanding of Moltmann's doctrine of Christ as well as applying its distinctive insights to key issues within kenotic christological discourse.

The study begins by examining the resurgence of kenotic forms of christology over the past thirty years, detailing this movement's self-stated focus on Christ's humanity and on conveying that humanity's significance for the living church. I then argue that contemporary kenotic christology often undermines its contributions on these subjects through a deficiency in what I refer to as "christological attentiveness." This deficiency often causes kenotic christology to focus overmuch on speculative and abstract modes of christological discourse while overlooking empirical, embodied, and praxiological dimensions. Utilizing key insights from the recent venture known as Transformation Theology, I formulate three heuristic questions which serve to focus christological attentiveness toward subjects which kenotic christology often neglects: Christ's historical *achievement*; Christ's ongoing, exalted *presence*; and the concrete significance of these for Christian *praxis* today.

The thesis then goes on to show that these three pivotal christological topics—achievement, presence, and praxis—are uniquely handled in Moltmann's christology, wherein they are related to the kenosis of Christ in such a manner that avoids, to a significant extent, the oversights of many iterations of kenotic christology. This is demonstrated through a

progressive strategic program that interfaces between Moltmann's theological method, his christology's manifold themes and expressions, and the biblical rootedness of his view on Christ's self-emptying. The thesis culminates in a unique, synthesized articulation of Moltmann's kenotic christological doctrine and its significance for the living church.

Abbreviations

Standard English translations of Moltmann's major works, having been completed in the original author's lifetime and typically finalized with his approval, are readily referenced and quoted throughout this thesis. Bibliographic information and corresponding abbreviations for the relevant English editions is provided here. The German originals have also been utilized throughout the study and at certain points the German text is brought into the English quotations in order to help clarify or further specify Moltmann's intended meaning or unique deployment of theological terminology. When such citations are made, they are from the corresponding German editions below.

- ABP* *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- = *Weiter Raum: Eine Lebensgeschichte*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006.
-
- CG* *The Crucified God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Der gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1972.
-
- CoG* *The Coming of God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
- = *Das Kommen Gottes: Christliche Eschatologie*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1996.
-
- CPS* *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes*, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1975.

- EG* *Experiences of God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- = *Gotteserfahrungen: Hoffnung, Angst, Mystik*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1979.
-
- ET* *Experiences in Theology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
- = *Erfahrungen theologischen Denkens*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Verlag / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000.
-
- EthH* *Ethics of Hope*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- = *Ethik Der Hoffnung*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010.
-
- FC* *Future of Creation: Collected Essays*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- = *Zukunft der Schöpfung: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, München, Chr. Kaiser, 1977.
-
- GC* *God in Creation*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Gott in der Schöpfung: Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1985.
-
- GSS* *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- = *Gott im Projekt der modernen Welt: Beiträge zur öffentlichen Relevanz der Theologie*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1997.
-
- HG* *Humanity in God*, New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983.

- HTG* *History and the Triune God*, trans. by John Bowden, London: SCM Press, 1991.
- = *In der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes: Beiträge zur trinitarischen Theologie*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1991.
-
- IEB* *In the End, the Beginning: The Life of Hope*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
- = *Im Ende—der Anfang*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004.
-
- JCTW* *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- = *Wer ist Christus für uns heute?*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1994.
-
- PL* *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle*, trans. by Douglas Meeks, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007 ed.
- = *Neuer Lebensstil. Schritte zur Gemeinde*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1977.
-
- SoL* *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- = *Die Quelle des Lebens: Der Heilige Geist und die Theologie des Lebens*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Götersloher Verlagshaus, 1997.
-
- SpL* *The Spirit of Life*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.
- = *Der Geist des Lebens: Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1991).
-
- SRA* *Sun of Righteousness, Arise! God's Future for Humanity and the Earth*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- = *Sein Name ist Gerechtigkeit: Neue Beiträge zur christlichen Gotteslehre*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009.

- SW *Science and Wisdom*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- = *Wissenschaft und Weisheit: Zum Gespräch zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Theologie*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser / Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002.
- TH *Theology of Hope*, trans. by James W. Leitch, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Theologie der Hoffnung*. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1965.
- TK *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Trinität und Reich Gottes: Zur Gotteslehre*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1980.
- WJC *The Way of Jesus Christ*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993.
- = *Der Weg Jesu Christi: Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1989.

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INTRODUCTION

MOLTMANN,

KENOSIS,

AND TRANSFORMATION

Here we introduce the “plotline” of this thesis. I will outline the intended contributions of the study, briefly circumscribe the major progressions of the argumentation, as well as discuss the fundamental goals that the thesis seeks critically and constructively to pursue. In Section 1 of this introduction, the thesis is described in summary. Section 2 presents the study’s goals as well as the underlying rationale for the employment of major interlocutors. The argumentative progressions of the thesis are outlined in more detail in Section 3, and Section 4 concludes the introduction with relevant points relating to method, sources, and the tonal focus of the study.

§1 The Thesis in Brief

This thesis centers on a strategic marshaling of Jürgen Moltmann’s doctrine of Christ as a rehabilitative resource for kenotic forms of christology. Specifically, I argue that Moltmann’s major works present a uniquely rendered form of *kenotic christology* (KC). Christology, compared to other areas of Moltmann’s theological oeuvre, has been largely neglected in secondary scholarship on his thought, and in the rare instances where his christology is

considered in some depth,¹ its unique perspective on Christ's kenosis has been overlooked.² This alone highlights the significance of this thesis' original contribution to research on Moltmann.

Before moving to its detailed elucidation of Moltmann's christology, the thesis examines recent forms of kenotic christology (KC) and detects in them a certain range of deficiencies which, it is eventually argued, the particular form of KC promoted by Moltmann is able to avoid. Thus, Moltmann's KC emerges as a rehabilitative or corrective resource in ongoing christological work, especially when such work is focused on the motif of kenosis. A key interlocutor for framing these critical christological issues is Transformation Theology, a recent "reorientation" in theological questioning and method that has been most developed in the work of Oliver Davies and Paul Janz.³ The rationale and internal logic for bringing these interlocutors to bear on the goals of this study is explained more fully below.

§2 Goals of the Study and Rationale for Interlocutors

The fundamental goal of this study is to produce a strategic systematization of the kenotic christology of Moltmann, as well as a constructive exploration of its rehabilitative application

¹ The most detailed English studies on Moltmann's mature christology are currently: Richard Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), Chap. 10 (originally: "Moltmann's Messianic Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 319-331); Scott Cowdell, *Is Jesus Unique? A Study of Recent Christology* (Paulist Press, 1996), Chap. 1. Hubert Watson, *Towards a Relevant Christology in India Today: An Appraisal of the Christologies of John Hick, Jürgen Moltmann and Jon Sobrino* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2002), Chap. 4; Ryan Neal, *Theology as Hope*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 99 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), Chap. 6; Stephen Williams, "Moltmann on Jesus Christ," in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement*, eds. S.W. Chung (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), Chap. 5.

² Stephen Williams is fairly isolated in his brief discussion of the kenotic focus of the christology ("Moltmann on Jesus Christ," 109-111). Otherwise, aside from threadbare mentions in scattered studies, it is Jane Linahan's dissertation—*The Kenosis of God and Reverence for the Particular: A Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann*, Ph.D. Diss. (Marquette University, 1999)—that has given some attention to kenosis in Moltmann's christology (though only in a single chapter, and not in systematic detail).

³ Janz, Davies, and Clemens Sedmak (an ethicist and fellow proponent of TT) initiated the venture with the publication of *Transformation Theology: Church in the World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008). This work has been followed most significantly by: Janz, *The Command of Grace: A New Theological Apologetics* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Davies, *Theology of Transformation: Faith, Freedom, and the Christian Act* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of kenotic christological discourse more broadly. This compound goal arises from the following considerations.

First, and most simply, Moltmann is a major theological voice who is consistently brought to bear on a vast number of contemporary issues; his theological contribution over the past half-century has been hugely significant. Over thirty years ago, in 1985, Miroslav Volf noted that more than 130 dissertations had been written on Moltmann's theology, standing as a resonant testimony to both the "fecundity" and "attractiveness" of his thought.⁴ The extent of Moltmann's influence beyond his native Germany⁵ only serves to illustrate the expanse of his theological endeavors, an expanse that has dealt with both age-old doctrinal axioms and emergent challenges to Christian faith. His contributions concerning eschatology and trinitarian theology have received the fullest attention in secondary scholarship,⁶ but these areas have, especially in the past fifteen years, been complemented by robust interaction with Moltmann's ethics (spurred in no small part by his recent and long awaited *Ethics of Hope*⁷), as well as his ecological, cosmological, and anthropological theses.⁸

⁴ Volf, "A Queen and a Beggar: Challenges and Prospects of Theology," in *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. M. Volf (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1996), ix. In the more recent festschrift for Moltmann, Volf and M. Welker put the number of dissertations on Moltmann's thought at "over two hundred" and claim that Moltmann has "shaped the international theological conversation in the twentieth century more than any other Protestant theologian since Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Paul Tillich" ("Preface," in *God's Life in Trinity*, eds. Volf and Welker [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006], xiii).

⁵ Well noted by Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 12, 15; see also Moltmann's own discussion in *A Broad Place: An Autobiography* (Fortress Press, 2008), esp. Chs. 10, 13-15, 18, and 23.

⁶ Moltmann's prodigious influence is admitted even in the midst of strong criticism of his theology, e.g. Stanley Grenz & Roger Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press / Carisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1992), 172. Concerning his trinitarian contributions, Joy Ann McDougall states quite rightly that "no theologian has played a more pivotal role in revitalizing trinitarian doctrine and its implications for Christian praxis than... Jürgen Moltmann" (*Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on Trinity and the Christian Life* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 6). See also Stanley Grenz on the importance of Moltmann's trinitarian thinking in *Rediscovering the Triune God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 73-87.

⁷ As *EH*, appearing in English in 2012. Such a book was "on Moltmann's agenda" immediately after the publication of his initial "trilogy" (*Theology of Hope, The Crucified God, and The Church in the Power of the Spirit*), but various issues inhibited its composition (see *A Broad Place*, 292; see also *EH*, xi).

⁸ Some of the most significant of these recent books and monographs include: *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Ton van Prooijen, *Limping but Blessed: Jürgen Moltmann's Search for a Liberating Anthropology* (Netherlands: Rodopi, 2004); *Sino-theologie Und Das Denken Jürgen Moltmanns*, ed. Thomas Tseng (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004); Joy Ann McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*; Timothy Chester, *Mission and the Coming of God: Eschatology, the*

However, if one examines the topical range of major secondary works on Moltmann's thought, one thing emerges quite strikingly: no work in English is dedicated centrally to expounding or interacting with his christology. True, many studies touch on his christology in some fashion, but none offer more than a few scattered sections, or perhaps one committed chapter, to the aspect of Moltmann's christology deemed most pertinent to whatever other locus is under investigation. Any full-scale, detailed analysis that attempts to sum the varied contours and themes of Moltmann's christological system is conspicuously absent in contemporary engagement with his thought.⁹ The prominence of this lacuna is exacerbated not only by the fact that the longest writings in both his original trilogy and his six-volume "Contributions to Systematic Theology" are, in fact, devoted to christology,¹⁰ but also by the fact that Moltmann, throughout his career, has unflinchingly asserted that his theology is christological in foundation and implication, a fact that is not always recognized by those who comment on his thought.¹¹

Moreover, the uniquely *kenotic* trajectory of Moltmann's christology has received, at best, scant attention from a small handful of commentators. This neglect has typically

Trinity and Mission in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and Contemporary Evangelicalism (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007); Nigel Goring Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007); Ryan A. Neal, *Theology as Hope: On the Ground and Implications of Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of Hope* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishers, 2008); J. Matthew Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other: The Trinitarian Ethics of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009); Poul F. Guttesen, *Leaning into the Future: The Kingdom of God in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009); Timothy Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); Bryan Jeongguk Lee, *Celebrating God's Cosmic Perichoresis: The Eschatological Panentheism of Jürgen Moltmann as a Resource for an Ecological Christian Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2012); Nicholas Ansell, *The Annihilation of Hell: Universal Salvation and the Redemption of Time in the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013); Brock Bingaman, *All Things New: The Trinitarian Nature of the Human Calling in Maximus the Confessor and Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: James Clarke and Co., 2015).

⁹ Note also that the interactions with his christology that do exist, while informative and rigorous, are only chapter-length and moreover are spread over two decades of scholarship. This highlights the lacuna effectively, especially when compared with the large number of books and monographs (not to mention chapters and articles) that have focused acutely on other expanses of Moltmann's theological program.

¹⁰ CG and WJC.

¹¹ Bauckham rightly recognizes it: "Jürgen Moltmann," 157; he's followed in this recognition by Bingaman, *All Things New*, 45.

assumed one of two forms: either a single aspect of Moltmann's christology is focused on in isolation, with little exploration of kenosis or other dimensions of his christology, or kenosis is discussed as an overarching cosmological or trinitarian theme in Moltmann's theology, but without much discussion of the specifically kenotic import for his christology. The need for this lacuna in Moltmann scholarship to be thoroughly addressed forms a principal motivation and goal of this study.

This needful exploration of Moltmann's christology is not intended to be merely a contribution to Moltmann studies as such. While it certainly is this, our exposition and systematization of Moltmann's KC also serves as a rehabilitative contribution to KC discussions more broadly. In short, we intend to demonstrate that the unique elements of Moltmann's KC will be shown to avoid certain pitfalls to which contemporary expressions of KC often succumb. It is this intended goal which animates the rationale for including other forms of kenotic christology as well as Transformation Theology as key critical interlocutors, especially in Chapters 1, 2, and 7 of this study.

Stated simply, the forms of contemporary KC that are analyzed in Chapter 1 serve as an important contrastive foil for Moltmann's own KC. It will be seen that these forms of KC claim to be committed to the pursuit of an unobfuscated view of the humanity of Christ and on the implications of that perspective for the current life of the church. However, it will also be made apparent through critical analysis that such expressions of KC often fail to make good on these commitments. These deficiencies, it will be argued, are ultimately rooted in particular characteristics of what we will refer to as *christological attentiveness*. These issues are presented in this study in order to highlight more effectively the often exceptional nature of Moltmann's own christological attentiveness, its ramifications for his unique rendering of KC, and his KC's potential as a rehabilitative resource.

The subject of "christological attentiveness" is made clear by our employment of

Transformation Theology in this study. As a recent theological venture that is overtly focused on revitalizing empirical concern in theological method,¹² and that has moreover oriented many of its proposals around chiefly christological thematics,¹³ Transformation Theology (TT) serves to define and sharpen the question of attentiveness along numerous critical lines. Thus it is able to bring something needful to our examination and application of Moltmann's KC: an acute focus on how christological questions can be most effectively explored in the unfolding of their ecclesial relevance for the world today. The rationale for including TT is thus, in short, that it serves the important role of "framing" our distinctive systematization of Moltmann's christology and its significance for the church today.

§3 The Structure of the Study

Here follows a specific outline of the progression of the thesis, charting its path via three major facets of the discussion and briefly describing the contents of each chapter and the specific manner in which they facilitate the goals and progression of the study.

1.3.1 – Christological Attentiveness

Chapter 1 begins by contextually and doctrinally situating contemporary expressions of KC (which, for reasons to be made clear in that chapter, I call "third-wave KC"). Once appropriate background information has been circumscribed, we then focus directly on one of the most pronounced manifestations of third-wave KC, specifically its roughly parallel exhibition in the work of C. Stephen Evans, Stephen Davis, Ron Feenstra, and David Brown,¹⁴ among others. This chapter will be centrally focused on the commitments, as well

¹² See Janz, "What is Transformation Theology?" *American Theological Inquiry*, Vol. 2.2 (2009), 9-28.

¹³ See e.g. Oliver Davies' references to what he calls "fundamental Christology," in *Theology of Transformation*, 38, 141.

¹⁴ The "strand" of KC represented by Evans, Davis, and Feenstra is among the most significant on the contemporary theological scene. Its flagship expression can be found in the anthology of essays entitled *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). David Brown's formulations represent

as the goals, of this particular manifestation of third-wave KC. Though the thinkers are all committed, in some fashion or another, to an explication of Christ's *full humanity* and delineation of its *ecclesial significance* for today, these commitments will be shown to be effectively trammled by the overt focus on theologically speculative and analytically abstract discourse which characterizes third-wave KC. Though this mode of KC, on the basis of its own commitments, seemingly demands attention to empirical realities (e.g. the lived history of Jesus of Nazareth and his current presence and activity in the world), its attention is instead often conscripted by abstract discussions about Christ's two natures and their variegated attributes. In short, we argue that the issue is one of misplaced or elided christological attentiveness, and it is this which prevents KC from fulfilling its own stated commitments.

This sets the stage for Chapter 2, where we summarize TT and marshal its usefulness for the framing of christological attentiveness. The ultimate goal of the TT discussion in this chapter is to formulate what we refer to as "transformational heuristic questions for christology." These questions, which pertain respectively to (1) Christ's lived historical achievements, (2) Christ's current presence, and (3) Christ's significance for ecclesial praxis, will not only reinforce aspects of our foregoing analysis of third-wave KC, but will also serve as needful framing or scaffolding for Moltmann's thought, enabling us to see (especially in Chapter 7) how his christological attentiveness operates and how it avoids certain deficiencies.

1.3.2 – Moltmann's Christology.

The thesis initiates its detailed and strategic exploration of Moltmann's christology in

another significant strand of contemporary KC that overlaps in some important respects with Evans et al., but is also useful for its critical and incisive commentary on the tradition of KC overall. See esp. Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

Chapter 3. Before engaging in an exposition of his christological content as such, Moltmann's theological methodology (which is unique in and of itself) is thoroughly analyzed in order to effectuate our exploration of his christology's myriad themes and developments. This chapter concludes by engaging Moltmann's christology at one of its most basal (and controversial) levels: his standing with respect to the Chalcedonian Definition and his view on "two natures" christology. Since contemporary discussions of kenotic christology often revolve around these issues, an initial discussion of them in Moltmann's thought is necessary in order to establish the foundations and presuppositions of Moltmann's christology, its methodological approach, and its standings before creedal affirmations.

We next turn our attention to the task of systematizing Moltmann's christological thematics. This task is important because Moltmann's christology is spread across several major and minor works emerging in the course of decades of theological development; it thus takes on different contextual and thematic hues depending on the context in which Moltmann is writing. Therefore, in order to have a sense of the christology's full orbit (which will be necessary for us to argue for its essentially kenotic character), a synchronic analysis of all his varied expressions, as well as a synthesis of them, will be key. This is undertaken in this chapter through a multi-dimensioned survey, categorization, and description of the various facets of Moltmann's textured christology.

Chapters 5 and 6 proceed to delineate Moltmann's doctrine of Christ further by elucidating what will be shown to be its orienting center: *the kenosis of Christ*. Stated briefly: it will be demonstrated that kenosis in Moltmann's thought is a deeply relational reality which defines Christ's existence and activity across four major, defining relationships: relation to the Father; relation to the Spirit; relations with social realities; and relation with Jesus' flesh itself. This portion of the thesis culminates in an integrated, systematized articulation of Moltmann's christology that is multi-faceted, biblical, and correlational, but

also deeply and pervasively kenotic.

1.3.3 – Kenotic-Transformation.

The final chapter of the thesis applies our transformational heuristic questions (emerging from Chs. 1-2) directly to Moltmann's KC (emerging from Chs. 3-6). Thus, the final chapter proceeds by way of three major sections that each explore the implications of Moltmann's KC by way of our three successive, transformational questions. Along the way, it will be shown that the thought of Moltmann does produce a christology that largely avoids the deficiencies detected in third-wave KC. Those deficiencies are circumvented insofar as Moltmann is attentive to (1) the lived social, historical, and material accomplishments of the life of Jesus; (2) a robust account of the continuing kenotic life of the exalted Christ through the Spirit and in his church; and (3) the generation of a framework in which Christian praxis is rendered as both fundamentally kenotic and fundamentally transformational simultaneously.

§4 Sources and Methods of the Study

Anyone familiar with the work of Moltmann recognizes that it is an oeuvre characterized by thematic arrangement and present-day challenges rather than systematic exposition. This has frustrated some commentators, but it is fully consistent with Moltmann's theological and methodological suppositions.¹⁵ My approach has been to concentrate my primary research on Moltmann's major published books and on the essays which appear in book-form collections, as these are the sources which represent his most consistent explication of his ideas. Moreover, my argumentation does not consist in describing Moltmann's "christological development" in a diachronic fashion, but rather in allowing his various mature statements to

¹⁵ This will be demonstrated and discussed at some length in Chapter 3.

throw mutual light upon each other in synchronic reciprocity. This approach is justified since, even though there are certainly “phases” to Moltmann’s career, as far as his christology goes there has been very little recanting of earlier positions on his part; rather, there has been a continuous expansion and clarification of his christological suppositions along thematic lines.¹⁶

Furthermore, concerning my treatment of Moltmann, I have taken up the task of systematizing and integrating various—and sometimes latent—themes or ideas that are disseminated throughout his major works. This entails that my exposition of his thought will occasionally make connections, or present systematizations, that he himself does not espouse explicitly (though they will be shown to be fundamentally rooted in his work and implied in his positions). This has been standard practice in constructive interactions with Moltmann’s thought, and he himself has not objected to it.¹⁷ Finally, secondary literature on Moltmann, as mentioned above, is presently quite vast in scope, and so I have judiciously focused on the range of interlocutors who have concertedly focused on areas of his theology that are most pertinent to an exposition of his christology.

When it comes to my appropriation of Transformation Theology, I have focused my attention solely on its few major books and relevant essays written to date by its principal proponents. TT is a recent venture, and as such there is not yet a wide swath of literature related to it. This poses no detriment to my study, since, with its methodologically and hermeneutically concerned focus, TT has arrayed its critical questions very readily and clearly in its initial publications. In my methodological approach to TT, I have focused on distilling and condensing critical questions from it that would lend themselves well to

¹⁶ See Moltmann’s comments in *WJC*, 1-5, 151-153.

¹⁷ E.g. Moltmann professes to have “not seen” some of the major themes that McDougall draws from his work, but he agrees that the themes and ideas do *follow* from what he has written. See his “Forward,” to *Pilgrimage of Love*, xi-xiii; as well as his “Foreward” to Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (UK: Marshall Pickering, 1987), vii.

highlighting specifically christological issues. Thus, I make no claim to exhaustively encapsulate TT or to adequately represent all of its diverse, critical emphases, nor necessarily to agree with all the nuances of its varied arguments, especially in works that have been published during the latter stages of the composition of this thesis.

In regards to KC, I have focused the bulk of my critical attention on its most recent historical manifestation, from the early 1980s onward, which I dub “third-wave KC” in Chapter 1. But this concentrated focus should not be taken as a myopic or deficient sample of KC. Though this most recent wave of KC has certainly exhibited certain features more clearly than foregoing “waves” (for reasons to be shown), my critical outlook could well be applied to a majority of KC proponents from Thomasius onward. Regarding sources, I engage the most prominent and relevant contemporary KC thinkers in their original work, and have delved into secondary literature in order to array more effectively both my ascriptions of value and detection of problems.

It should also be noted at the outset that I am organizing my historical reconstruction of the progression of KC in a manner that, to some extent, follows the recent organization offered by David Brown’s work *Divinity and Humanity* (2010). As I will treat it in this thesis, kenotic christology refers to a very specific school of thought, regardless of the fact that the “kenotic” designation is applied in a variety of different ways in diverse christological programs. KC, in this thesis, precisely refers to forms of christology that are committed to a creedal sense of the incarnation but which also “specifically accept the need for an account of what is abandoned [limited, divested, etc.] by the divine Son in the act of incarnation.”¹⁸ This very particular sort of christology has gone through three distinct historical iterations, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 1. Briefly, on my account (again, partially inspired by

¹⁸ Sykes, “The Strange Persistence of Kenotic Christology,” in *Being and Truth: Essays in Honor of John Macquarrie*, ed. by Alistair Kee and Eugene T. Long (London: SCM Press, 1986), 356.

Brown), “first wave” KC refers to the bold German advocacy initiated by Gottfried Thomasius; “second wave” KC refers to the subsequent British and Scottish developments, which were more chastened, but still obviously kenotic in the sense intended here (e.g. Charles Gore, P.T. Forsyth, etc.); and the “third wave” refers to the presently ongoing trend toward KC among several North American and UK-based theologians.

Readers should also note how this historical description of KC will differ from some other historical reconstructions and definitions of KC that have been offered in the literature. For instance, S.W. Sykes identifies three “flowerings” of KC; the first in Cyril and Leo’s use of kenosis in their christologies; the second referring to both the German and British waves; and the third referring to John Macquarrie’s and J.A.T. Robinson’s “new style kenoticism.”¹⁹ Such a broad understanding of KC has its own value, to be sure, but both the first and third flowerings which Sykes pinpoints would not be considered “properly” kenotic in the much more limited sense being followed by this thesis; the first flowering because of its strong traditional belief in divine immutability (thus no *real* divestment or limitation is allowed for the divine Son) and the third flowering on account of its somewhat ambiguous relationship to creedal christological formulations.²⁰

Finally, then, a closing note on the “tone” of this study, especially as regards the work of Moltmann. Despite the general admiration for Moltmann among many theologians, he has also, interestingly, been subject to a fair degree of sharp suspicion and theological censure in the course of his career, with the implicit accusations ranging from Marxist crypto-atheist, unbridled Hegelian, obvious tri-theist, sponsor of abusive theology, and participant in

¹⁹ Ibid., 350-358. Compare also the historical survey of Coakley, “*Kenosis and Subversion*” in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 8-25.

²⁰ David Law well notes that properly kenotic christology holds that the *Logos asarkos* implements a self-limitation in order to effectuate an incarnate life; see *Kierkegaard’s Kenotic Christology* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 38-39, 41-42.

slipshod theology that lacks proper analytical discipline.²¹ This has led, on occasion, to certain distortionary analyses and unfounded associations in secondary treatments of his work. Where these have been encountered in the course of research, and where possible in the progress of argumentation, they have been highlighted and challenged. However, criticisms of Moltmann are far from being universally delinquent, and many of them raise legitimate issues. Thus, where it is both topically relevant and logistically possible, I have sought to acknowledge certain deficiencies in either his method or in his doctrinal elucidations. That said, it should be remembered that the underlying disposition of this thesis is critically constructive. It affirms the positive, creative, and doctrinal value of third-wave KC, TT, and Moltmann, and seeks to offer an articulation and integration of their mutual strengths in its exploration of a rehabilitated expression of kenotic christology. With this in mind, I have adopted what could be called a “generously critical” approach to the principal interlocutors in this study.

²¹ For the charge of crypto-atheism, see Randall E. Otto *The God of Hope: The Trinitarian Vision of Jürgen Moltmann* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), esp. 1-11, 199-233. On Moltmann’s Hegelianism, see Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994), 72-76. For indications of the tri-theism charge, see George Hunsinger, “The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence,” *Heythrop Journal* 14 (1973), 278; G. O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 158. On allegedly abusive theology, see Millicent Feske, “Christ and Suffering in Moltmann’s Thought,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55.1 (Spring 2000), 92-101. On lack of rigor in Moltmann’s method, see Bauckham’s summary statement in *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 25.

CONTEMPORARY KENOTIC CHRISTOLOGY AND ITS CHRISTOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Kenotic christology (KC) in its late nineteenth and early twentieth century manifestations gave way under myriad pressures. As an innovative yet creedally committed movement in Christian dogmatics it received criticism from both conservative and liberal wings, making any long tenure on the highroads of theology unlikely.¹ Beneath the assailment of Barth,² any of its lingering intellectual purchase effectively crumbled (and those not inclined toward Barth could find a different range of critique in Pannenberg³). Finally, history itself shifted the sands which helped to bury KC, and once the dust of the World Wars had settled, it would be several decades before a proper resurgence could gather steam. True, there were occasional flickers of life,⁴ indicating that doctrinal dormancy, rather than permanent death, had set in, but by and large the first (German) and second (British) “waves” of KC had spent their force.⁵ The fact that KC has re-emerged with vigor in the past 30 years is one of the

¹ See Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 239-240; Roger Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 254-255. Even the less-bold British kenotic models received little love from conservatives; see e.g. the first statement by an American on kenosis: Francis J. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory* (New York/London & Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898).

² Barth maintained that the kenoticists (esp. Thomasius and Gess) had “good intentions,” saying that “they wanted to clear away the difficulties of the traditional teaching and make possible a ‘historical’ consideration of the life of Jesus.” But he firmly concluded that they “abandoned” the key fact that “the Godhead of the man Jesus remains intact and unaltered” and thus they had “reduced [orthodox Christology] to absurdity” (*Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4.1, trans. G.W. Bromiley [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010 ed.], 176, see further 175-177).

³ *Jesus--God and Man*, trans. by L.L. Wilkins and D.A. Priebe (London, SCM Press, 1968), 311-312.

⁴ E.g. Donald Dawe’s highly useful survey, *The Form of a Servant: An Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif* (Westminster Press, 1963), which makes significant constructive statements of its own (e.g. 188-204). Anglican theology allowed kenosis, albeit in a qualified form, e.g. Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1958), 260-276.

⁵ Sykes describes the various death knells that were sounded of kenoticism: “Strange Persistence,” 350, 356-357. Louis Berkhof, in the 1930s, said summarily that kenosis had “died out” and that it “finds very little support at the present time” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938], 329).

more remarkable developments in the contemporary state of christological study.

In this chapter we will first (briefly) situate the current KC discussion in its broader theological context. Following on this, the core “christological commitments” (that is, the goals and focuses which direct the christological work) of contemporary KC will be enumerated in detail and then critically examined. That examination will indicate that many strands of KC today are inhibited from fulfilling their christological commitments, and that such inhibitions trammel KC’s christological and ecclesiological significance overall.

§1 Third-Wave Kenotic Christology – The Resurgence

Perhaps not surprisingly, theological developments that challenged orthodox commitments are what stoked the coals of KC back into flame. In this regard there is a fundamental similarity in the emergence of first and second wave KC and what we can presently consider the ongoing third wave. 1977 saw the publication of a work that resonated through the halls of christological reflection for decades to come: *The Myth of God Incarnate*.⁶ This was an academic tour de force in which numerous English and American scholars sought to update, redefine, and/or relativize traditional understandings of the incarnation through incisive essays on various aspects and applications of the doctrine. The essay which sparked the most enduring controversy was that of the volume’s editor, the late John Hick. The twin specters of backwards dogma and failed logic loomed large in Hick’s assessment of traditional christological formulations:

[The Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation] remains a form of words without assignable meaning. For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square.⁷

Traditional christology has for too long, according to Hick, tried to render as literal what

⁶ *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ed. John Hick (Westminster Press, 1977).

⁷ Hick, “Christology and the World Religions,” in *Myth of God Incarnate*, 178.

should have remained metaphorical—Jesus’ status as the “son of God.” Christ was a man remarkably open to God, bringing an ethical kingdom, and a figure from whom people of all religious traditions could draw inspiration if only the “Ptolemaic” theological tendencies of conservative Christianity would desist (and thereby declare the notion of two-natures, enshrined at Nicaea and Chalcedon, to be defunct and parochial).⁸ Hick claimed throughout his career that a metaphorical understanding of Jesus “incarnating” the will and love of God was both closer to the biblical evidence and more religiously viable than any literal or metaphysical rendering of the doctrine.⁹ Other essays in *The Myth* offered further points along these lines, though none was perhaps more bold than Don Cupitt’s description of the church’s historic practice of worshiping Jesus as a “cult” and “paganization.”¹⁰

“Furor” is a term that has been employed to describe what *The Myth of God Incarnate* brought about,¹¹ and in the midst of that furor several christological thinkers deemed the kenotic model a useful tool to revive and put to use in defense of the traditional faith.¹² The gauntlet had been thrown, so to speak, and the task of *rendering the incarnation intelligible* was taken up with renewed apologetic and philosophical passion. The third wave of KC officially commenced as Stephen T. Davis, Brian Hebblethwaite, and David Brown all produced resuscitations and defenses of kenotic models of the incarnation in the 1980s.¹³ In a

⁸ Hick retained this fundamental orientation, writing nearly 25 years later that “[the] assumption that Jesus’ combined deity and humanity is a literal truth...will satisfy many good Christian people. It will not, however, satisfy any who realize that the fully God, fully man mystery is a philosophical proposal. It is not a divine revelation but a human creation. And its mysteriousness consists in the fact that it is a form of words with no intelligible meaning,” (“Literal and Metaphorical Christologies,” in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. M. Meyer and C. Hughes [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001], 150).

⁹ See *ibid.*, 151-152.

¹⁰ Don Cupitt, “The Christ of Christendom,” in *Myth of God Incarnate*, 142-143.

¹¹ See the comments and summary, in Ross Langmead, *The Word Made Flesh: Towards an Incarnational Missiology*, American Society of Missiology Dissertation Series (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 31-32. Stephen Davis also uses the expression; see his *Logic and the Nature of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 119.

¹² This has always been the role of kenotic christology—seeking to defend orthodox claims by re-articulating them in the midst of critique. Thus, the complaint that kenosis is a “liberal” trajectory in christology is ill founded, or at least ill stated. David Brown makes this point repeatedly in his *Divine Humanity: Kenosis Explored and Defended* (London: SCM Press, 2011), esp. 24-25, 40-41, 126.

¹³ Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God*, esp. Ch. 8, which proffers a kenotic model explicitly against Hick’s critiques; David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985) esp. 102-158, 219-271, with

work also clearly meant (in its title and content) to counter *The Myth of God Incarnate*, Thomas Morris produced a philosophical-apologetic christology that, though it did not endorse kenosis as its own position, saw kenosis as the only other viable candidate for a coherent christology.¹⁴

But third wave KC has also been set in sharp relief over the past two decades through the continued historical work on the gospel narratives, e.g. in what have come to be known as the “Third” Quest and “New” Quest for the historical Jesus.¹⁵ Both these trajectories have produced pictures of Jesus Christ that have resulted in much defensive maneuvering on the part of christologians. The New Quest has proven the most vituperative to orthodox commitments; a main branch of such scholarship is Robert Funk’s “Jesus Seminar,” which, in the emblematic publication of *The Five Gospels*, proclaimed that:

It was once assumed that scholars had to prove that details in the synoptic gospels were *not* historical. D.F. Strauss undertook proof of this nature in his controversial work.[...] The current assumption [in scholarship] is more nearly the opposite and indicates how far [we have] come since Strauss: the gospels are now assumed to be narratives in which the memory of Jesus is embellished by mythic elements that express the church’s faith in him[...].¹⁶

As is well known, the Jesus which emerged from the Seminar’s sifting of the supposed mythic elements in the gospel narratives was more of a wandering, iconoclastic cynic than the God-man of Chalcedon. The historicity of many distinctive aspects of the career of Jesus

explicit mentions of Hick, et al. at 222, 239; Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987) which is introduced as a body of essays entirely focused on the debates sparked by *The Myth of God Incarnate*—a form of kenotic christology is explicitly affirmed, esp. in Chaps. 4-7.

¹⁴ See the discussion in Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Cornell University Press, 1986), 89-102, where he is critical of kenosis on some fundamental grounds (mostly provided *ab initio* by his commitment to an Anselmian account of deity) but treats it as a serious contender to the mantle of most coherent incarnational strategy.

¹⁵ In short, the Third Quest sees the originary backdrop of Judaism as paramount in interpreting Jesus in his historical milieu, and is often, from E.P. Sanders onward, associated with the so-called “New Perspective on Paul.” The “New” Quest is distinct from the Third Quest on several fronts, primarily in its focus on the alleged interpretive constructions given to the gospels by early Christian communities, a hermeneutical strategy aligned closely with Bultmann and the resultant developments of form criticism. For robust discussion and distinctions, as well as critical commentary on both movements, see Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 28-124.

¹⁶ *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997 ed. [orig. 1993]), 4-5.

were called into question. Such conclusions should hardly have been unexpected, but the Jesus Seminar's pointed attempts to disseminate their findings quite widely beyond academia spurred many theologians to respond. C. Stephen Evans' interdisciplinary work *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith* thus appeared a few years later, citing *The Five Gospels* and related works, claiming that, in contrast to their denuding of the gospels of their historical force, "much of what is religiously significant about Jesus lies precisely in the historicity of his story, and much is lost when the story is emptied of that historicity[...]."¹⁷ Notably, Evans' arguments for the historicity and rationality of traditional christology also featured a strong kenotic understanding of Christ's person.¹⁸

The Third Quest also caused its own share of christological worry, primarily issuing from the work of Wright, who had, for a variety of reasons, been identified as an ally by many relatively conservative Christian theologians. But that alliance was sorely tested when Wright wrote the following: "Jesus did not, in other words, 'know that he was God' in the same way that one knows one is male or female, hungry or thirsty, or that one ate an orange an hour ago. His 'knowledge' was of a more risky, but perhaps more significant, sort: like knowing one is loved. One cannot 'prove' it except by living it."¹⁹ C. Stephen Evans also responded to this, suggesting that Wright was operating on the basis of methodological naturalism by denying Jesus a divine source of knowledge,²⁰ and further adding that "a commitment to what is called 'kenotic Christology' does not lead to any such [naturalistic] methodology."²¹ This exchange between Wright's statement and Evans' response calls to

¹⁷ C. Stephen Evans, *The Christ of History and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), vi.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, chap. 6, esp. 132-136. This chapter also aligns itself in the two-decades long response to the metaphorical christology of Hick and others, see 120-122.

¹⁹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 652-653. See further Wright, "Jesus and the Identity of God," *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998): 42-56.

²⁰ "Methodological Naturalism in Historical Biblical Scholarship," in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 195.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 198.

mind the pivotal role that was played by the self-understanding and consciousness of Jesus in the second wave of KC, in British thought, typified in the reflections of Charles Gore.²²

§2 The Commitments and Deficiencies of Third-Wave KC

The foregoing discussion has been necessarily concise, but it has intended to highlight the fact that third-wave KC has emerged over the past three decades and has seen itself as both a defender and renovator of traditional (two natures) christology, over and against doctrinal, philosophical, and historical challenges (e.g. Hick, the various “Quests”, etc.). It thereby perpetuates the *mediating* character that also attended the first and second waves of KC.²³ Mediation, as a mode of theology or a description of such a mode, has been taken to mean a variety of different things since it was first employed in nineteenth century Germany.²⁴ My application of the term to KC follows the usage and thinking of Donald Dawe, who identifies kenoticists as “mediating” figures in the following sense:

They felt the necessity for uniting in their theology Christian orthodoxy, usually as interpreted in the doctrinal formulas of their own confessions, with the valid insights into Christian faith and history that were coming from the philosophical and critical historical studies of their time.[...] [Such kenotic thinkers] were united in the desire to incorporate into the structure of Christian thought set by the ecumenical creeds....the valid insights of modern historical and philosophical scholarship.²⁵

Dawe asserts that kenoticists often see denunciations of traditional dogma not only as attacks to defend against but also as occasions for retooling foregoing doctrinal formulations, thus

²² Sections from Gore’s major statements on this topic are helpfully drawn together in the recent thematic anthology of his writings: *Charles Gore, Radical Anglican*, ed. by P. Waddell (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), 47-56.

²³ Again, the first wave was German and characterized most prominently by Thomasius; the second wave was English (and, to some extent, Scottish) and characterized most prominently by Gore.

²⁴ See the analysis of the terminology and its various applications by Matthias Gockel, “Mediating Theology in Germany,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth Century Theology*, ed. by David Ferguson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 301-318, esp. 301-306.

²⁵ Dawe, *Servant*, 91. See also comments by T.R. Thompson, “Nineteenth Century Kenotic Christology,” in *Exploring Kenotic*, 77. Ramsey speaks of *Lux Mundi*, the first place where C. Gore propounded a kenotic christological outlook (essentially initiating second-wave KC), in a similar fashion: “The writers were a group of young teachers in theology who [embraced] a common desire to grapple with the intellectual questions which Christians were having to face at the time.[...] Novelty lay in the willingness of a group of High Churchmen to treat contemporary secular thought as an ally rather than as an enemy” (*An Era in Anglican Theology: From Gore to Temple* [London: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960], 2-3).

rendering them more relevant and cogent in the midst of current intellectual and existential climes.²⁶ C. Stephen Evans and Stephen Davis underscore this dimensionality of third-wave KC: “[Christians] must be able to explain in contemporary terms, both to themselves and to the unbelieving world, who Christ is. Such explanations are especially necessary in times (like ours) of Christological ferment and confusion.”²⁷

Reflective of this orientation is the fact that all major waves of KC discourse—from Thomasius to Charles Gore to the present day—have been overlaid by two fundamental theological commitments: (1) a focus on Christ’s *true humanity* and (2) a focus on Christ’s *current significance for the church*.²⁸ These two commitments can be viewed in an interlocking way: the more that a proper focus on the humanity of Christ is neglected, the harder it then becomes to understand his relevance and significance for the life of the people who constitute the church in the present day. We will proceed to illustrate third-wave KC’s allegiance to these commitments, and in so doing we will be focusing our attention on a handful of principal thinkers. The spearhead of third-wave KC has been composed by a trio of prolific and similar voices: C. Stephen Evans, Stephen Davis, and Ron Feenstra.²⁹ Alongside these, the work of David Brown, Thomas Morris, and Peter Forrest—though differing in certain important ways from that of the other three thinkers³⁰—highlight further

²⁶ Thomas Senor makes a similar point about the emergence and continuance of kenotic christology: “Drawing on Many Traditions: An Ecumenical Kenotic Christology,” in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102-103.

²⁷ Davis and Evans, “Conclusion: The Promise of Kenosis,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 313.

²⁸ These focuses have always characterized the major voices of KC, and demonstrate why one of Thomasius’ first major works on kenotic christology was entitled “Contributions to a Churchly Christology” (“Ein Beitrag zur kirchlichen Christologie,” *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche* [Neunter Band, 1845]) and why Gore’s first foray into the topic came in the publication of *Lux Mundi*.

²⁹ T.R. Thompson groups them likewise (though he includes David Brown, whom I separate from this trio slightly): “Nineteenth Century Kenotic,” 103.

³⁰ The differences can be summed concisely as follows: (1) David Brown is a part of the third wave of KC (and could be in fact considered one its initial proper voices—see his 1985 work *Divine Trinity*, esp. 231-234), but he is more revisionist with tradition and more open to the findings of textual-historical criticism in his handling of scripture than is the triad of Davis, Evans, and Feenstra (who are all relatively “conservative” in these regards). See e.g. Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 3-25, 172-219.

(2) Thomas Morris is a conservative theologian himself whose skill in philosophical theology, and apologetic interest in meeting the charges of Hick and others, have made him one of the most notable expositors of the logical force of kenotic christology (though he himself does not ultimately subscribe to the view): see his

key elements of the current discourse surrounding the advocacy of kenotic forms of christology. All of these figures have authored or contributed to multiple major publications on KC in the past three decades. In the discussion which follows I will focus most of my attention on their works, though other, less formative, contemporary kenoticists will be brought to bear where appropriate.

1.2.1 – Christological Commitments

In his summative introduction to an important and recent collection of essays on kenotic christology, C. Stephen Evans delineates the movement's commitment to a full exposition of Christ's humanity, saying that "the [kenotic] attempt to understand the identity of Jesus is valuable" because many Christians who "ardently affirm the divinity of Jesus are not comfortable with Jesus' *full humanity*."³¹ Gordon Fee's essay in the same collection relates several anecdotes from his teaching career in which his students are repeatedly scandalized by Fee's unflinching declaration of Jesus' humanity.³² He goes on to state that his students could be described as regularly subscribing to "a kind of naive docetism."³³ Evans broadens the application of this realization, stating that a "mild docetism" runs through much "popular piety" within the Christian faith,³⁴ and Stephen Davis significantly preempts a flagship

Logic, esp. 87-107; "The Metaphysics of God Incarnate," in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, Vol. 1, edited by Michael Rea (Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 217-224.

(3) Peter Forrest is much more beholden to an aggressive form of kenotic Christian *theism* than any of these other thinkers, though his exposition of his own kenotic christology would place him in the rough orbit of third-wave KC as well; see his *Developmental Theism* (Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 168-187; "The Incarnation: A Philosophical Case for Kenosis," *Religious Studies* 36 (2000): 127-140.

³¹ Evans, "Introduction: Understanding Jesus the Christ as Human and Divine," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 3, emphasis added.

³² Fee, "The New Testament and Kenosis Christology," in *Exploring Kenotic*, 26-27.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁴ Evans, "Introduction," 3. Among prominent historical kenoticists, the second-wave KC advocates A.B. Bruce, Hugh Ross Mackintosh, and Frank Weston present perhaps the most sustained anti-docetic volley against christological tradition: Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 4th edn. (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1895); Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912); Weston, *The One Christ*, 2nd edn. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1914), esp. 68-78. See also Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 89, 118, 146.

discussion of his own KC position by twice denouncing docetism.³⁵

Third-wave KC has consistently enumerated important implications which flow from their commitment to Christ's humanity. One such implication concerns the use of scripture. Evans and Fee focus sharp attention on the "very human" portrait of Jesus in the gospels,³⁶ and KC advocates have long noted that many forms of past christology have avoided, or even distorted, passages which portray Jesus as lacking in knowledge or beset by human frailty.³⁷ Over and against the notion that KC hinges solely on the interpretation of the "kenosis hymn" found in Philippians 2.6-11, third-wave advocates argue for the breadth of the biblical witness to be brought to bear on christology in a holistic and integrated sense.³⁸

A related implication radiates from KC's stated commitment to articulating Christ's significance for the church. Specifically, it concerns the church's use of scripture and scripture's relationship to theological methodology (especially its oft-utilized philosophical constructs). Across myriad encounters with non-kenotic forms of christology, especially those which attempt to defeat kenosis on the philosophical premises of divine immutability, eternity, absoluteness, aseity, or perfection, KC proponents claim that "biblical teaching ought to trump disputed *a priori* theological intuitions."³⁹ Evans, Davis, Feenstra, and Brown agree that philosophical systemizations are not sufficient to override what seems, to them, to be the "picture of Jesus that the four evangelists paint."⁴⁰

³⁵ Davis, "Jesus Chris: Savior or Guru?" in *Encountering Jesus*, 47-49.

³⁶ Evans, "Introduction," 3; idem., "Kenotic Christology and the Nature of God," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 195-196, 199; Fee, "New Testament and Kenosis Christology," 35-42.

³⁷ David Brown's survey does a masterful job at showing how strongly this point is sustained throughout the first and second waves of KC: *Divine Humanity*, esp. the sections on Gess, Godet, Garvie, and Gore: 62-75, 104-108, 135-138.

³⁸ E.g., Fee, "New Testament and Kenosis," 30-42; Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 4-14.

³⁹ Davis and Evans, "Conclusion," 317. See also Ron Feenstra, "A Kenotic Christological Model of Understanding the Divine Attributes," *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, esp. 154-164.

⁴⁰ Quote from Davis and Evans, "Conclusion," 318. For Feenstra's similar affirmations, see "Kenotic Christological Model," esp. 159-163; Brown states this less stridently, being more open to historical criticism in terms of the biblical text (*Divine Humanity*, 173-183). On the questions of divine immutability and aseity in particular, see Davis, "John Hick on Incarnation and Trinity," in *The Trinity*, edited by S.T. Davis, D. Kendall, G. O'Collins (Oxford University Press, 1999), 263-264.

Another implication of KC's commitments emerges when Evans claims that kenotic christology involves real "implications for the practical life of Christians and the Church."⁴¹ Though he does not expound on this point in detail, he seems to imply that these practical implications will involve the sacraments of the church and Christ's current relationship to them. Contrasting kenotic christology with versions of christology which deny Jesus' full divinity, Evans says that the "practical consequence [of non-divine christologies] will be that practices such as the Eucharist and Baptism must be understood differently from the way they have been traditionally, if they are continued at all."⁴²

A final implication has to do with christology's effect on the life of the Christian. Evans describes this by pointing out how an undistorted view of the humanity of Christ conveys a powerful solidarity with the Redeemer, reflective of his true sharing in the full depth of human difficulty and travail. A christology that is even implicitly docetic, according to Evans, "makes it difficult for Christians to think of Jesus as fully identifying with the human condition (and thus with their own situation)."⁴³ This is why, third-wave KC claims, the issues surrounding kenotic christology cannot be seen as "a purely theoretical affair."⁴⁴ David Brown provides further commentary to this end, writing at length on the significance of the kenosis of Christ for understanding God's willingness to stand in camaraderie with an afflicted created order and "embroil divinity in the contingencies of human existence."⁴⁵

It should be emphasized that all of these resultant implications are interlocking and cohesive, and that they are largely shared by principal third-wave KC thinkers. To sum up and synthesize, our survey yields the following four implications which attend third-wave

⁴¹ Evans, "Introduction," 3.

⁴² Ibid. See also Forrest, *Developmental Theism*, 180-183.

⁴³ Evans, "Introduction," 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 189. See further 188-193. In his earlier work, wherein Brown presents cases for both kenotic christology and a more traditional model without electing one over the other, he still makes the point that a kenotic understanding of the incarnation "would enable God to experience directly the human situation in a way that is impossible in [more traditional formulations]" (*Divine Trinity*, 271).

KC's commitments to an exposition of Christ's *humanity* and his *churchly significance*:

- (1) the importance of an integrated and holistic approach to scripture (that is, not being selective in attention to the biblical text);
- (2) the importance of not allowing *a priori* philosophical intuitions or deductions to disproportionately direct christological work;
- (3) the necessary role that Christ's deity and kenosis play in the sacramental thinking and acting of the church;
- (4) the practical value of a kenotic understanding of the depth of Christ's solidarity with the human situation.

This pair of commitments and their resultant four implications certainly pave a distinctive path for a christological program. But it remains to be seen how effectively third-wave KC has been able to "make good" on these commitments. Indeed, as the next sections will elucidate in detail, these alleged commitments of kenotic christology are often eclipsed by another, and more overt, commitment: the commitment to *render the incarnation coherent* against primarily *conceptual* critiques. This fundamental orientation has led to a problem in the "christological attentiveness" in KC. We now turn to a detailed explication of this issue.

1.2.2 – The Problem of Abstraction and Christological Attentiveness

Especially in its more apologetically oriented modes,⁴⁶ KC has largely been concerned to employ the "idea" of kenosis in an "analytic" fashion, that is, seeking to "make sense" of traditional christological statements through the semantic entailments or certainties that can be derived via the analysis of the meanings and definitions of terms, and thereby carrying on

⁴⁶ I have already illustrated this at length for the ongoing third wave. For historical commentary revealing the similarly apologetic motivations of the first wave (which sought to counter the varied legacies of both Schleiermacher and Left-Wing Hegelianism), see Dawe, *Servant*, 89-93; Alister McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990* (Intervarsity Press, 1994), 36-80.

the bulk of its discourse in purely conceptual or abstract registers.⁴⁷ KC proponents have fixated most of this abstract discourse on the issues arising from the ascription of divine attributes to Jesus' personhood.⁴⁸ On most treatments of KC, it is christology's presumed ontological and metaphysical difficulties which stand to be "resolved" via the proper deployment of kenosis as a conceptual, sense-making device.⁴⁹ Basically, insofar as many critical treatments of christology have claimed that traditional doctrine is incoherent, kenosis is seen by its third-wave advocates as the mediating idea whereby the incarnation's conceptual coherence might be convincingly defended. In fact, this is precisely how C. Stephen Evans describes what he identifies as the *primary* reason for pursuing a kenotic form of christology, averring that it "may allow Christians to give an answer to criticisms that what the Church asks them to believe is impossible and/or unintelligible."⁵⁰

This commitment to the conceptual coherence of doctrinal statements is the most pervasively resounded in the literature of third-wave kenotic christology.⁵¹ The goal and function of the entire undertaking is readily described by its protagonists as "a theory that *explains* the Incarnation,"⁵² or "an attempt to *get clear* on the person of Jesus,"⁵³ or an articulation of the incarnation that "*accounts* for perplexing biblical claims."⁵⁴ In the words of

⁴⁷ I am employing the term "analytic" (or "analytical") in the Kantian sense in which it is employed by Paul Janz, referring to modes of reasoning that "are concerned solely with what reason can come to by itself, or can establish by itself, i.e. purely by a conceptual *analysis* of a certain hypothetically 'given' or a presuppositionally specified subject matter" (*Command*, 39).

⁴⁸ See Brown: "The objection [from critics] here would be that the doctrine of the Incarnation is inevitably prone to be incoherent, as soon as one tries to apply both human and divine attributes to the one person, a hopeless, irresolvable muddle being the result" (*Divine Trinity*, 252).

⁴⁹ The doctrinal framework is seen to consist in the (largely analytical or definitional) philosophical issues that are "left open" by Chalcedon—they are listed thusly: "Are the two 'natures' individual entities of some sort, or is a 'nature' here to be taken as an abstract entity, a set of properties? Does having both a divine and human nature imply that Christ has both a human and divine mind? Does the duality of natures really allow for the unity of the person?" (Evans, "Introduction," 2).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Commenting on the christologies of Brown, Davis, and Feenstra, James Anderson correctly states that these thinkers "have sought to defend and refine earlier kenoticism in the face of subsequent criticisms [and also] have offered their treatment in the explicit context of developing *logically consistent* interpretations of the doctrine of the Incarnation" (*Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of Its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status* [Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 2007], 81).

⁵² Davis, "Is Kenosis Orthodox?", 113, emphasis added; also "Jesus: Savior or Guru?", 53.

⁵³ Davis and Evans, "Conclusion," 313, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Feenstra, "Kenotic Christological Method," 139, emphasis added.

T.R. Thompson: “It is the goal of a kenotic christology to *make... understandable* how it is that the pre-existent Son can enter into a fully human condition while retaining both his divinity and unity of person.”⁵⁵

By way of illustration, it is not uncommon for third-wave KC thinkers to list human attributes (e.g. non-omniscience) and divine attributes (e.g. omniscience) side-by-side, describe their contradictory ramifications for the person of Christ, and then “apply” kenosis as the coherence-making technique by which the incarnation can be logically understood.⁵⁶ Of course, the thinkers display variation in the specific mode and tone of this application. Brown, characteristically, states things fairly radically: “Divine attributes apply exclusively before the Incarnation, human attributes apply exclusively to the period of the Incarnation, and divine attributes again exclusively to the post-Incarnation period[.]”⁵⁷ (This statement reflects Brown’s pronounced sympathy for the kenotic model of W.F. Gess, the most radical of the first-wave kenoticists, whereas most other contemporary KC advocates favor the reasoning of Thomasius as a first-wave representative.⁵⁸) Thomas Morris, though not himself a kenoticist, has offered an alternate suggestion for how kenosis can intelligibly render the human possession of divine attributes.⁵⁹ His suggestion, which has been gratefully taken up by active kenoticists like Davis and Feenstra,⁶⁰ is worth quoting at length:

It is possible to reject a kenotic analysis of any divine attribute such as omniscience and yet square the kenotic perspective with strong modal claims for deity by specifying that the conditions or requisites of divinity, the properties ingredient in or constitutive of deity, are not simply the divine attributes... but rather are properties composed of these attributes *qualified by* kenotic limitation possibilities.[...] What

⁵⁵ “Nineteenth-Century Kenotic,” 77-78, emphasis added.

⁵⁶ E.g. Davis, “Savior or Guru?,” 50-54; more recently in *idem.*, “The Metaphysics of Kenosis,” in *Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 119-122. See also Law, *Kierkegaard’s Kenotic*, 35.

⁵⁷ *Divine Trinity*, 257.

⁵⁸ For Brown’s sympathetic treatment of Gess, see *Divine Humanity*, 62-69. Brown notes, as I do, that Evans, Davis, and Feenstra “follow Thomasius” (244-245). Brown ultimately comes to prefer Martensen’s kenotic model (radicalized) over that of Gess (he briefly circumscribes a critique of Gess in *ibid.*, 244). T.R. Thompson is another notable third-wave figure who has expressed a preference for the Gessian model: see “Nineteenth-Century Kenotic,” 111.

⁵⁹ *God Incarnate*, esp. 96-102.

⁶⁰ E.g. Stephen Davis, “John Hick on Incarnation,” 262; Feenstra, “Kenotic Christological Model,” 152.

would be claimed is that it is not precisely *omniscience* which is a requisite of deity. It is rather a distinct property, the property of being omniscient-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise, which is a logically necessary condition of deity.⁶¹

Forrest and Feenstra have also developed modal renderings of the divine attributes along these lines, both relying heavily on Morris' analysis.⁶² And while such conceptual argumentation is often incisive and adroit, and obliges unswervingly to meet certain critics on the grounds of an abstract discussion of divine and human ontologies, I would suggest that, as a mode christologically significant discourse, it is importantly deficient.

This deficiency fundamentally revolves around what I will refer to as *christological attentiveness*. This terminology requires some explication. In every arena of discourse, a given field of study is defined predominantly by its subject matter, that is, the objects or sources of concern to which the study directs its attention. Different fields clearly have different concerns; that is, they "pay attention" to different things and orient themselves to differing ranges of human inquiry and exploration. The concerns of a field of study are pursued most effectively when directed by a proper "attentiveness" to the fitting object(s) of its study. The issue, then, with many third-wave forms of KC, could be articulated as follows: one form of attentiveness which should (indeed, according to KC's own stated commitments) characterize the study of christology is *historical, particular, and engaged with spatio-temporal events in the world*. But third-wave KC's primarily analytical apologetic focus causes it to consistently seek to "defend" its christological affirmations, and to do so primarily through *conceptual* avenues. And while such avenues have a place in christological discourse, third-wave KC pursues them to the almost wholesale neglect of more concrete

⁶¹ Morris, *God Incarnate*, 99.

⁶² Forrest, "Philosophical Case," 228-232; Feenstra, "Reconsidering Kenotic Christology," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: philosophical and theological essays*, ed. by R.J. Feenstra and C. Plantinga (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 140-142. Senor sees Morris' suggested strategy as rather *ad hoc* and instead suggests renovating our understanding of the attributes more integrally rather than modifying them with Morris' proposed caveat—thus he takes a path similar in some respects to Thomasius (see "Ecumenical Kenotic Christology," 104-110).

christological attentiveness to the contingencies of empirical history. Thus, its christological statements tend often toward abstract categories and speculative ontological discussions which are remote from the world of history and action, the world of space and time.

It deserves to be stated here quite clearly that I am not saying that abstract thought *per se* has no use in christology; abstraction and deduction and other such logical and conceptual operations are necessary and key elements of rational inquiry and understanding. Moreover, Donald Mackinnon (a thinker to whom we will return in our next chapter) has made a resonant and enduring case for ontological considerations in the christological enterprise.⁶³ The issue, rather, is that KC's attention is fixated so paramountly on this aspect of christology that it inhibits much of KC's potential contribution to its other claimed commitments.⁶⁴ By way of illustrating and supporting this critique, I will proceed in the next several sections to analyze the discourse of third-wave KC thinkers, taking care to note specific ways in which the attention to *conceptual coherence* compromises KC's commitments to Christ's *humanity* and *ecclesial significance*. This analysis advances the overall agenda of the thesis by circumscribing a specific and problematic mode of kenotic christology that will serve as a critical foil for Moltmann's unique form of KC later in this study.

1.2.3 – Christ's Humanity and the Issue of *A Priori* Parameters

As already expressed in more general terms above, third-wave KC consistently attends predominantly to abstract and ontological categories in order to render the incarnation "coherent." In both Davis and Morris, for instance, we find explicit defenses of the "logic" of the incarnation—intended to counter the work of Hick and others—which name kenosis as

⁶³ See e.g. Donald Mackinnon, "'Substance' in Christology: A Cross-Bench View," in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, edited by John McDowell (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 244-253.

⁶⁴ Our thesis is focusing on KC in this regard, but it could well apply to other schools of christological reflection that are current in philosophical debate. See Cross, "The Incarnation," and Senor, "Ecumenical Kenotic Christology," for an effective survey of examples.

one of the most productive means for explicating the ontological composition of Christ in a lucid and orthodox manner.⁶⁵

For Davis, the primary concern is to demonstrate the logical (conceptual) feasibility (intelligibility) of the doctrine of the incarnation. How can one being be both God and man? Cognitive coherence is the directing goal.⁶⁶ But in order to match swords with critics of the philosophical basis for traditional christology, Davis sees himself compelled to separate the term “God” from its biblical, historical, and ecclesiological dimensions:

When we ask whether the incarnation is possible, i.e. whether God can become man while remaining God, we must specify in what sense we are using the term ‘God’. One possibility is that the term ‘God’ is a proper name, i.e. a term denoting Yahweh, the being who alone (so Christians believe) is divine. Another possibility is that the term ‘God’ is a title or descriptive term for any divine being.[...] Unless otherwise indicated, the term ‘God’ in this chapter will be used in the second way. I will be asking the question: *Can any truly divine being also be truly human?*⁶⁷

Here it is made clear that the term “God,” when discussed in the context of the incarnation’s logical coherence, is being discursively reduced to an analytically reified deity-concept—apart from the “Yahweh” of scripture, in whom Christians believe. This deity-concept will bear all the typical definitional constraints necessarily derived from axiomatic (and tautological) properties of divinity—aseity, simplicity, infinity, incorporeality, the omni-attributes, etc. Kenosis, *ab initio*, thus appears as a *method for conceptualizing*, or re-conceptualizing, the *idea* of “deity,” and thus to render coherent that deity’s act of incarnating itself, within these philosophically and cognitively orchestrated parameters.⁶⁸

In Morris’ landmark work *The Logic of God Incarnate* we find a similar range of

⁶⁵ Thomas Senor refers to his elucidation of his own kenotic christology as an exercise in “developing a *philosophically satisfying* christology” (“Ecumenical Kenotic Christology,” 89, emphasis added).

⁶⁶ “I am going to try to show that the statement ‘Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man’ is coherent.... I hope to present a convincing case that ‘Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man’ is entailed by a coherent statement or series of statements” (Davis, *Logic*, 119).

⁶⁷ Ibid., 120. Emphasis original.

⁶⁸ Many kenotic christological thinkers have taken issue with at least some divine attribute or another; Davis, for instance, takes special care to emphasize that he does not think omniscience ought to belong to the “essential” properties of God (ibid., 121, 126-128). Immutability, however, stands apart as the traditional attribute most roundly criticized by kenoticists; Brown’s commentary is representative: *Divine Trinity*, 256-257.

concerns and similar initial methodological and hermeneutical moves. Morris avers that his account of the incarnation (which is conceived with impressive force at the intersection of analytic philosophy and Anselmian theology) preserves doctrine and also “stands triumphant against all contemporary challenges of a philosophical nature.”⁶⁹ In Morris, then, we find a clearly parallel apologetic maneuver, in-line with third wave KC as a whole and exemplified specifically in what we have just seen in Davis.

However, a very particular sort of challenge confronts this fundamental starting point within christological reflection. Categories arising from the rational distillation of ideas are cognitive objects; they are abstract. That is, they do not exist in the world of space and time. Yet it is only in the world of space and time that God has revealed Godself and that the incarnate, human life of Christ has taken place (and continues to take place). Thus, rather than a fundamental basis in abstract categories (concerning ontological properties, predicates, attributes, etc., all secured by deductive, intellectual operation) it is rather the specific *life* (in empirical history) of Jesus and the *life* of the church (in the concrete existence of past and present space-time) in the world that must direct our attention to Jesus’s humanity and what that humanity means. Christology originates from, and must be continually shaped and informed by, the historically-manifested, divinely causal force of revelation, the revelation of God in Christ. Insofar as christology turns toward a program of argumentation concerning a humanity that is subordinated to *a priori* conceptual parameters, it simultaneously turns away from the real-world events which animate the historical progression and continuing efficacy of Jesus’ human life. In subsequent chapters of this thesis, this spatio-temporal focus as a component of christological attentiveness will be shown to be necessary in any christology which hopes to effectuate relevant and praxiological reflection upon and awareness of the

⁶⁹ *God Incarnate*, 14. Further: “The book as a whole should be viewed as a defense of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation, the two-natures view of Christ, against contemporary philosophical attacks” (16).

mode of Christ in the world today.

The *a priori* starting points which are seen in Davis/Morris catalyze a prominent issue which comes, in many cases, to characterize the abstract program of many KC discussions. One such issue is what we have alluded to above as the self-referential nature of the discourse. This can be found, for example, in its preoccupation with the supra-sensible divine “essence” and human “essence” and their posited attributes, properties, and/or parts. In spite of their rigor and commendability on other fronts, many such discussions of properties, attributes, essences, substances, and natures can tend to remain enclosed in abstract analytics or “conceptual machinery,” to use a phrase that Thomas Senor applies to his own rendering of divine/human properties in the service of his kenotic christology.⁷⁰ Brian Hebblethwaite well notes that even in the midst of our trinitarian and incarnational discussions, we have little ground for suggesting what God can and cannot do on the basis of ontological supposition—what matters is what the church has come to believe *has been done in history*, particularly in Jesus.⁷¹

However, we have noted above that third-wave KC proponents do consistently make reference to the “portrait” of Jesus in the gospels. In fact, we have seen that they habitually designate this portrait as the very catalyst for their position, and further that they claim an integrated and holistic approach to scripture as an implication of their christological commitments.⁷² As Stephen Davis puts it, “[For] many kenotic theorists, the primary motivation for the theory is not logical or metaphysical but biblical.”⁷³ These facts might

⁷⁰ “Ecumenical Kenotic Christology,” 108.

⁷¹ See “Jesus, God incarnate,” in *The Incarnation* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 24-25.

⁷² C. Stephen Evans, Ron Feenstra, and Stephen Davis all declare the significant place of scripture in the initiation of their christological and theological investigations, sometimes even radically juxtaposing their advocacy for “the biblical God” over and against “the God of the philosophers” (a view of God they attribute to more-traditional christological thinkers). See esp. Evans, “Kenotic Christology and the Nature of God,” 192-194; Feenstra, “Kenotic Christological Model,” 158-164.

⁷³ Davis, “Metaphysics,” 125; see also 133. The work of Peter Forrest on kenotic christology, to date, has been almost solely motivated by philosophical concerns with little attention to biblical material. But this is unique to Forrest among the major advocates we are discussing.

seem to undercut the point I am making here about speculative and self-referential argumentation obscuring a clear focus on Jesus' historically manifested, scripturally recounted humanity. To address such an objection, I turn in the next section to examine the kenoticists' use of scriptural material.

1.2.4 – Christ's Humanity and the Problem of Scriptural Fragmentation

Don Cupitt once argued that kenotic christology is “not a theory designed to account for facts about Jesus, but a theory designed to explain how one can go on believing in the incarnation in a time when the old arguments have broken down.”⁷⁴ Stephen Davis disagrees with Cupitt, responding that “[the kenotic] theory is primarily designed to account for the biblical picture of Jesus, especially the kenosis hymn in Philippians and the human and divine characteristics attributed to Jesus in the gospels.”⁷⁵ This is not an uncommon move among third-wave kenoticists: when the speculative or abstract nature of their program is highlighted, they claim to be fundamentally rooted in the biblical witness itself, usually with reference to Phil. 2:5-11 and the gospels.⁷⁶ The point of this, seemingly, is to tacitly claim that their program can resist the charge of speculative abstraction owing to its reliance on, and reference to, the text of scripture. However, as we will see, the manner in which many KC advocates call upon scripture characterizes many of the selfsame problematic tendencies we have already identified. To anticipate: when third-wave KC advocates refer to scripture, they nearly always do so by isolating a particularly perplexing or confusing action or saying of Jesus, which is then taken as needing to be explained, or rendered intelligible, by reference to his (conceptually defined) kenotic state.

⁷⁴ “Christ of Christendom,” in *Myth*, 137. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁵ Davis, *Logic*, 128. See also Davis, “Metaphysics of the Incarnation,” 133.

⁷⁶ Gordon Fee provides a nice summary of the biblical basis that is said to underlie contemporary kenoticism: “New Testament and Kenosis,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 25-44. Brown notes that biblical scholars, rather than theologians, were the most radical of the early kenoticists; see his representative commentary on both Gess and Godet, *Divine Humanity*, 62-75.

For example, KC proponents emphasize that Jesus admits that “he does not know” the date of the parousia (Mk 13.32);⁷⁷ they emphasize the passage that claims Jesus “grows in wisdom” (Lk 2.52);⁷⁸ they emphasize isolated passages that portray Jesus’ “frustrations.”⁷⁹ Stephen Davis has commented on how well a kenotic theory “fits” with these isolated, illustrative moments from the gospel narratives.⁸⁰ However, this sort of treatment of scripture is, at best, fragmentary; none of these discussions attend to the narratives in question with any sustained depth or contextual detail, and without any of the requisite attention to the historical materiality, lived sociality, personal relationships, enacted decisions, or specific accomplishments of Jesus—the passages are instead treated as providing particular subject matters, or “data,” for analytical investigation and metaphysical resolution (e.g. “the human properties,” “the divine attributes,” the “unity of the natures,” the “divine self-limitation,” etc.).

Of significance for the concern of scriptural fragmentation, Stephen Davis declares that even if Cuppitt’s point, cited above, about kenotic theories not attending to actual facts about Jesus were true, “it would not damage kenotic theories of the incarnation in the slightest.”⁸¹ This is a striking statement, for it seems to imply that even if KC were not interested in “account[ing] for facts about Jesus,” it would remain unharmed in its theoretical power. This seems to be a tacit admission that it is primarily the theoretical or, more precisely, the analytically descriptive power that ultimately matters for this form of christology. This much we have noted in our foregoing section, but what we are seeing here

⁷⁷ Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?”, 130; Feenstra, “Kenotic Christological Model,” 146-154. Evans, “Nature of God,” 199.

⁷⁸ Davis, “Kenosis Orthodox?”, 130. Evans, “Nature of God,” 199.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Davis, “Kenosis Orthodox?” 130; see also idem., *Logic*, 129-130 for his brief discussion of “high” christology passages in John’s gospel, noting that his theory is “consistent with” them. But the passages’ bearing on the lived life of Jesus are not discussed at all; the passages function as a simple example of non-contradiction of the varied concepts Davis is employing. Simply stated, this seems backwards—the biblical revelation ought to proceed the philosophical rendering of anything, not afterward merely being found to be “consistent” with such rendering.

⁸¹ Ibid., 128.

is the further point that the theoretical focus is pervasive not just in philosophical argumentation pertaining to the divine attributes but also in terms of scriptural hermeneutics and focus.

True, there are some instances where third-wave kenoticists allude to treating the biblical witness to Christ's history in a less fragmentary, more holistic fashion.⁸² Most significant among these would be Evans' claim that "the idea of Christ's Incarnation as kenotic in character is supported not merely by individual passages of Scripture, but by the character of Jesus' life and death as a whole."⁸³ (Though, even here it must be noted that Evans is expressly focusing upon "the idea" of the incarnation.) This comment reads as though it is intended to introduce a developed, thorough focus on the alleged kenotic elements throughout Jesus' historical actions and relationships. But Evans offers only a few generalized sentences in this direction⁸⁴ before quickly returning to heightened scrutiny of the question of the abstract divine attribute of immutability.⁸⁵

In short, third-wave KC has mainly utilized scripture as an avenue for discussion about the abstract *natures of Jesus* (and their alleged attributes) in conceptually definitional terms, rather than focusing on *the historical human Jesus* as a specific, contextual, relational, social, material person. Christ's humanity, as the character and quality of a specific human

⁸² The opportunities to present a holistic christology in a kenotic tenor are often clearly missed. A key example is Evans' book *The Historical Christ & The Jesus of Faith*. Though the work is clearly apologetic in tone and focus (its preface mentions the work of Hick and other less-traditional scholars who it intends to counteract), it still claims to be focused on Christ as a historical individual. Given Evans' interest in KC, we would expect kenosis to be integrated into this study and into the varied discussions of Christ's acts as a critical, public individual. But this is not the case; kenosis serves a prominent role in only a single chapter, and that chapter is, perhaps predictably, on the question of "Is the Incarnation Logically Possible?" (116-136).

⁸³ Ibid., 196.

⁸⁴ The rest of the passage reads as follows: "The New Testament portrait of Jesus tells a story of a person who takes no thought for the ordinary interests that dominate most human lives. He has no wife or home, no career or interest in the accumulation of possessions. Instead he gives himself wholly to the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the nurture of his followers. He finally gives his very life as 'a ransom for many,' not shirking a painful and shameful death for the sake of the redemption of human beings" ("Kenotic Christology and the Nature of God," 196). This is one of the best specific passages on the *historically rendered* humanity of Christ in third-wave KC discourse. But its isolation and short length simply make it an exception that proves the rule.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 196-197.

being in first-century Palestine, must involve consideration of his space-time person, i.e. his capacities for thought, feeling, emotion, suffering, relation, agency, decision-making, and accomplishment, arrayed in relation to himself, his family, his disciples, his society, and to the broader cultural forms of life with which he interacts through speech and activity.⁸⁶

Though KC advocates claim to be moving from concrete items in the biblical witness to their theological suppositions, their mode of approaching scripture repeatedly serves to fragment the career of Christ into instances of isolated datum which are ostensibly troublesome to traditional formulations of christological doctrine, and thereby stand to be speculatively resolved.

Continuing with a close reading of the kenoticist's own works, we will see in our next two sections that the commitment to Christ's churchly significance is also impaired along similar lines. Though C. Stephen Evans never quite demarcates what he means by the "practical significance" of KC for the church, we will on analysis be able to divide the "churchly significance of Christ" into two discrete (but related) subjects: (1) the *ascension of Christ*, which has been discussed at length in third-wave KC and which has a great deal to do with how Christ's presence and significance for the church today is understood, and (2) the intersection of christology and the lived activity of the church, that is, *Christian praxis*.

1.2.5 – Ecclesial Significance and the Issue of Kenosis at the Ascension

Fundamental to the link between Christ and the church today is our understanding of the ascension. In making this claim, I am following a trend of renewed attention to the ascension that was inaugurated with the publication of Douglas Farrow's landmark *Ascension and*

⁸⁶ Representatively for such a holistic understanding of anthropology, see Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell (New York/London: T&T Clark, 1985); F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Ecclesia.⁸⁷ In that multi-faceted study, Farrow acknowledges the various permutations that have afflicted Christian discourse on the ascension, saying that today the doctrine “is something of an embarrassment.”⁸⁸ But Farrow’s most distinctive contribution is found in both his clarion call for a return to a focus on the bodily ascension of Jesus and in his tenacious defense of its key role in defining ecclesial identity:

It is the divergence of Jesus-history from our own that gives to the ecclesia its character and its name. It is the divergence of Jesus-history from our own that calls for a specifically *eucharistic* link: for the breaking and remoulding, the substantial transformation of worldly reality to bring it into conjunction with the lordly reality of Jesus Christ. The kind of ecclesiology we wish to do is quite impossible, then, without careful attention to the ascension, however difficult and unpromising that doctrine may appear today.⁸⁹

The bridge from Christ to the church (as well as for understanding Christ “with” the church) is instantiated in ascension theology; Farrow’s detailed work shows that ecclesiology has always been deeply affected by whatever view of the ascension (or lack thereof) was most operative.⁹⁰ Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that KC’s thinking on Christ’s ecclesial significance will take much of its coloring from how Christ’s kenosis is seen to relate to his ascension.

The first and second waves of KC focused a fair amount of energy on the exalted state of Christ. Thomasius, after all, was a strongly confessional Lutheran and was adamant that the assumed humanity of Christ was glorified in its post-resurrection state and borne into a heavenly existence, entailing the acquisition of ubiquity which Christ retains forevermore.⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Ascension & Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). Other writings within this trend would include: Anthony Kelly, *Upward: Faith, Church, and the Ascension of Christ* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014); José Granados, “The First Fruits of the Flesh and the First Fruits of the Spirit: The Mystery of the Ascension,” *Communio* 38.2 (Spring 2011): 6-38; Kelly M. Kopic and Wesley Vander Lugt, “The Ascension of Jesus and the Descent of the Holy Spirit in Patristic Perspective: A Theological Reading,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 79.1 (Jan. 2007): 23-33. Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ’s Continuing Incarnation* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004); and another, more recent work by Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

⁸⁸ *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁰ See *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 41-164; also *Ascension Theology*, 16-49.

⁹¹ See Feenstra’s apt summation of Thomasius on this: “Reconsidering,” 131-132.

But the exaltation presents difficult issues for kenotic thinkers. Many of them have regarded the ascension (or even the resurrection) as the *conclusion of Christ's kenosis* and thus the re-instantiation of any previously emptied divine attributes.⁹² Again, Thomasius is representative of such a viewpoint.⁹³ But, the critical question then arises: if Christ is able to retain his true humanity and re-assume all of the divine attributes to his person, then it seems that the divine attributes in their fullness are compatible with human nature after all,⁹⁴ and this raises a question over the whole claim that an ontological kenosis was necessary to enable Christ's human incarnation in the first place.⁹⁵ Otherwise stated, if the kenosis is that necessary divine movement which facilitates the union with humanity, then the termination of the kenosis would seemingly also be the termination of the humanity in the glorified Christ.⁹⁶ So, we now must ask, how have third-wave KC thinkers addressed such issues surrounding Christ's ascension?

David Brown had suggested that the ascension question could be resolved by foregoing the humanity of Christ altogether at the exaltation, putting forth the somewhat exotic claim that the humanity could legitimately be preserved only as "a remembered experience of the Second Person of the Trinity."⁹⁷ (Brown has since moved away from this

⁹² Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic*, 61.

⁹³ Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk*, 78. Feenstra, "Reconsidering," 132; Thompson, "Nineteenth Century Kenotic," 84.

⁹⁴ Law's statement is representative: "If the ascended Christ retains his human nature and receives back the divine attributes he renounced during his earthly ministry, does this not mean that divine and human attributes can indeed exist together?" (*Kierkegaard's Kenotic*, 62, see further 62-63).

⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, 62-63. Feenstra thinks that Stephen Davis has fallen into a conceptual trap of sorts here in his KC; see Feenstra, "Reconsidering," 145-146. Thomasius, for his part, is insistent that it is the Christic transformation of Christ's assumed human nature—through his obedience and glorification—that "enabled his human nature to become the locus of the full glory of God" (Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk*, 79). Cf. Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 46-48.

⁹⁶ This form of the critique was made famous by D.M. Baillie's promulgation of it in *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 97-98.

⁹⁷ Brown, *Divine Trinity*, 234. Further: "The divine attributes apply [to Christ] exclusively before the Incarnation, the human attributes exclusively to the period of the Incarnation, and divine attributes again exclusively to the post-Incarnation period" (*ibid.*, 257). It should be noted that these are suggestive points by Brown, detailing strategies for showing the "coherence" of incarnational doctrine. Brown's more recent work on kenosis does not pursue such lines on the ascension in any clear way: *Divine Humanity*, 259-263.

position in light of critiques.⁹⁸) Ron Feenstra finds such a solution problematic on numerous grounds,⁹⁹ agreeing with Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic confessional traditions that Christ's humanity must be retained in his glorified state¹⁰⁰ (a point that is also resolutely and importantly affirmed by Transformation Theology, a point which will occupy us in our next chapter¹⁰¹). However, Feenstra does recognize that the ascension question poses a problem for a kenotic outlook, and so he makes the conceptual move of separating the incarnation from the kenosis. Although the incarnation and kenosis of Christ coincided in their initiation, Feenstra thinks that the Logos could have become incarnate with no self-emptying involved, and thus could have still retained full expression of the divine attributes (though how those attributes would have functioned in union with the human nature is not explained). Feenstra says that the Logos *chose* to undergo kenosis during his earthly life in order to “share our lot or condition during his life on earth.”¹⁰² But what exactly this “sharing” consists in, and why kenosis is necessary for it, and why such a sharing is no longer important following Christ's ascension, Feenstra does not address.¹⁰³

Such a vague rendering of the issues does little to dispel them. Again, the whole logic of kenosis, from Thomasius onward, has been that to live a truly human life, divine attributes must be “emptied” or somehow relinquished. C. Stephen Evans seeks to concur with Feenstra and also clarify the position somewhat by focusing on *the kind of body* that Jesus takes on in

⁹⁸ Ibid., 244.

⁹⁹ Feenstra, “Reconsidering,” 147.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 245-247; also Forrest, “Philosophical Case,” in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, ed. by Michael Rea (Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.

¹⁰¹ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*: “We cannot deny the fullness of his humanity if we assert that he lives” (18).

¹⁰² Feenstra, “Reconsidering,” 148. See the critical discussion of Feenstra on this point in Theodore Zachariades, *The Omnipresence of Christ: A Neglected Aspect of Evangelical Christology* (UK: Paternoster, 2015), 71-72.

¹⁰³ Peter Forrest, for his part, mentions two things that Christ needed to be able to embrace in his earthly ministry that required kenosis: horrific suffering and genuine temptation (“Philosophical Case,” 233). With this every kenoticist would agree. But it is still not clear why the cessation of suffering and temptation means that the kenosis itself would be concluded (since no KC advocate limits the kenosis to only these two things), nor is it said why it is assumed that the ascended Christ no longer suffers (or should no longer be enabled to suffer), nor is it clear on Forrest's account how this alleged cessation of suffering (and temptability) could be included in the truly human, ascended person.

the incarnation: “I suggest that we understand Feenstra’s suggestion to be the claim that becoming incarnate in an *ordinary* human body requires a kenosis.”¹⁰⁴ The point of this modification is to argue that, since Christ’s post-resurrection body “differs dramatically from our ordinary human bodies,” the kenosis of the divine attributes is no longer necessary and Christ can therefore receive all of them to his glorified self without annihilating his true humanity.¹⁰⁵

Regardless of these arguments, the overarching ascension theology for both Feenstra and Evans dictates that, though the humanity of Christ continues in his ascended state, the *kenosis* of Christ is long concluded.¹⁰⁶ The kenosis was a thirty-year experience in the historically human life of the Logos, nothing more.¹⁰⁷ It was an “exception” to the normal divine mode of operation. Stephen Davis also agrees with this; Christ is still human, but no longer kenotic in any sense.¹⁰⁸ And, more recently, Peter Forrest, though a very different thinker than the others, still concludes that “the kenosis did come to an end.”¹⁰⁹ By retaining the notion of the kenosis mainly as an incarnation-effectuating ontological episode, all of these theologians follow in the wake of Thomasius by terminating the kenosis at Christ’s exaltation. This means that there is, in fact, no view of the kenosis as a continuing reality for Jesus Christ, and thus kenosis plays no role in Christ’s presence and acting in the world today.¹¹⁰

The issues here are manifold. Despite the tacit admission that kenosis is serving as a *conceptual* maneuver for “making sense” of Jesus’ human qualities in the gospels, this sort of earthly-only kenosis also leaves wholly undeveloped the ramifications for a continuing

¹⁰⁴ Evans, “Kenotic Christology,” 201.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 201-202.

¹⁰⁶ Also Forrest, “Philosophical Case,” 232.

¹⁰⁷ Feenstra, “Kenotic Christological Model,” 153.

¹⁰⁸ Davis, “Kenosis Orthodox?,” 114.

¹⁰⁹ Forrest, “Philosophical Case,” 232-(233).

¹¹⁰ See Forrest’s discussion of the sacraments for an example of how this plays out in philosophical reasoning: *Developmental Theism*, 180-183.

kenosis in the Christic life. If kenosis were the manner in which the greatest act of divine humiliation and grace was undertaken, should it be seen only as an “exception” and only to characterize a single thirty-year period in the eternal life of the Son? What then would Christ’s kenosis mean for the contemporary church, except as a past element of the earthly ministry? Moreover, another question is provoked: why is it *necessary* for the kenosis of Christ to end? These questions remain relatively unexplored within third-wave KC, leaving underdetermined a vital aspect of their discourse: Christ’s contemporary presence. In fact, across all third-wave KC literature, there is virtually no commentary on the *Christus praesens*, nor any interaction with sacramental theology, nor any thinking on how Christ is currently relating to his church today.¹¹¹ Questions abound, centering on either the necessity of the kenosis in the first place or the reality of the ascended Christ’s humanity.¹¹² This mode of christology has focused to such a degree on a coherent rendering of incarnational doctrine that these other aspects of christology, which have great bearing on ecclesiology and Christian identity, have been neglected. This trend continues when we next consider the relation between the kenosis of Christ and Christian praxis.

1.2.6 – Ecclesial Significance and the Problem of Missing Praxis

Third-wave KC has not articulated anything like a defined praxiological dimension, despite the potential that is seemingly latent for such in the wider context of the Philippians 2 “kenosis hymn.”¹¹³ This lack of attention to Christian praxis is reflective of the scant focus on

¹¹¹ Forrest provides only a slight exception to this trend in his discussion of the “real presence” of Christ, but that discussion actually makes very little of kenosis (ibid., 180-184).

¹¹² Farrow is careful to underline the fact that Christ’s humanity must be maintained when considering the ascension: “It is frequently said that the humanity of Christ used to be the great problem for theology but that today it is his divinity which is distracting and difficult. Our study suggests that the case is otherwise. It is still the humanity of Christ over which we are prone to stumble, and what is required today more than ever is a doctrine of the ascension that does not set his humanity aside” (*Ascension and Ecclesia*, 13).

¹¹³ See Philippians 2.2-11. There is a marked line of biblical scholarship arguing for an *imitatio Christi* in this passage and throughout the epistle: See Teresa Kuo-Yu Tsui, “Kenosis in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians,” in *Godhead Here in Hiding*, edited by T. Merrigan and F. Glorieux (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 242-252. John Paul Heil, *Philippians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010),

the Christic implications for ecclesiology overall. For example, none of the essays from leading kenoticists in the volume *Exploring Kenotic Christology* relate KC to ethics, praxis, ministry, or to broader church-society interactions.¹¹⁴ Given the fact that KC's stated commitment to "practical significance" implies some measure of influence which flows from the christological suppositions into the practical life of Christians, this appears as a deficiency, or at the least an under-explored area of thought where that commitment can be more markedly fulfilled. Kenotic christology, with its intonations of humility, sacrifice, other-seeking love, and obedience, certainly calls out for praxiological implications in the life of the church, and it is at the very least mysterious that third-wave KC has not inclined in this direction.¹¹⁵ This praxiological lacuna, when viewed in light of our foregoing analysis in this chapter, could in fact be seen as a necessarily derivative consequence of third-wave KC's analytical and conceptual orientation.

Evans and Davis, in a jointly written essay, do seem briefly to move toward some articulation of christologically rooted praxis when they offer a description of how Christ's kenotic relationship with the Father and Spirit can be meaningful for the life and actions of the Christian today:

The kenotic account highlights... the way a truly human Jesus as the Son of God provides a model for us of how human life is to be lived. For we too can live our lives in dependence on the Father and in union with the Spirit, and thus be united to Christ as well. Even the miracles Jesus performs do not separate him from humanity; in fact, he explicitly tells his disciples that if they have faith they will have access to the same

113; John Reumann, *Philippians*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (Yale University Press, 2008), 317; W. Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3," in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 103-126. A minority voice does exist that reads against the *imitatio Christi* in this passage, e.g. Bernd Wannenwetsch, "The Whole of Christ and the Whole Human Being: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Inspiration for the 'Christology and Ethics' Discourse," in *Christology and Ethics*, eds. F. LeRon Shults & Brent Waters (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 88.

¹¹⁴ With some minor exception in the essay of Ruth Groenhout ("Kenosis and Feminist Theory," 303-312), though even there the comments are suggestive rather than directive and vague rather than substantial.

¹¹⁵ Not that kenosis is never employed in praxiological or ministerial contexts; my point here is that these uses of kenosis are not derived clearly or rigorously from specifically kenotic forms of christology, and that the proponents of third-wave KC never move from their christological points to praxiological ones. A recent article that provides at least a slight exception to this trend is David R. Purves, "Relating Kenosis to Soteriology: Implications for Christian Ministry amongst Homeless People," *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, Vol. 35.1 (2013): 70-90. But Purves' article is only generally ethical and quite abstract, and thus falls short of concrete directives for churchly praxis grounded in the kenosis of Christ.

miraculous power he himself has shown[.]¹¹⁶

Such a line of discourse seems resolutely aimed at a vigorous delineation of ecclesial significance, with the potential for focused and specific attention on the practices of the church in the world. However, Evans and Davis do not expound the implications of Christ's kenosis for praxis in any more detail than this, and this passage is quite isolated in the writings of the principal third-wave KC proponents we are here considering.

On balance, however, we should raise a point that both acknowledges the more fundamental issue at-play in this particular deficiency in KC and anticipates one of the key contributions of Transformation Theology to this thesis. The point, rendered in its most basic expression, is that a clear praxiological connection between theological *narratives* and specific Christian *acts* is notoriously elusive. Narrative forms of theology encourage us to “live within” communities that are shaped by the biblically and theologically conveyed “story” of God's dealings with the world; the narrative theology of Stanley Hauerwas is a resonant current example of such reflection. Yet, as Oliver Davies trenchantly acknowledges, “the Christian narrative does not, in general, tell us what to do in *this* particular situation.”¹¹⁷ Charles Taylor, in his helpful discussion of “the self in moral space,” indicates that our identity is most fundamentally rooted in our *commitments* which allow us to “take stands” in the midst of complex ethical situations.¹¹⁸ This critical moral space “between narrative and act,” which is occupied by living selves in space and time, must be “traversed in the moment of free judgment”—this is praxis at its most basal level, in the complexity and small spaces of real-world encounters.¹¹⁹ Since kenosis has a narrative character inherently,¹²⁰ and since this

¹¹⁶ Evans and Davis, “Conclusion: The Promise of Kenosis,” 320.

¹¹⁷ *Theology of Transformation*, 73.

¹¹⁸ *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27.

¹¹⁹ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 73-74.

¹²⁰ See e.g. Bruce Fisk, “The Odyssey of Christ: A Novel Context for Philippians 2:6-11,” in *Exploring Kenotic*, 45-73.

colors a good deal of its theological applications, it becomes very difficult to ascertain specifically *how* kenosis relates to specific Christian acts as such. While this difficulty is significant, Transformation Theology, as an expression of theological questioning directed, fundamentally, to the nature of the human act itself, will serve to helpfully highlight some ways in which Moltmann's christology at least partially bridges this gap between kenotic narrative and kenotic praxis.

§3 – Conclusion: Toward the Furtherance of Kenotic Commitments

The plot of this chapter should not be misconstrued. It has not consisted, as many interactions with third-wave KC have, in a critique of the notion of divine kenosis (or kenotic incarnation) as such. (My study is fundamentally interested in the exploration and application of the notion of kenosis in christology, in particular as we shall be analyzing it in the christology of Jürgen Moltmann.) Rather, this chapter has contextually framed the emergence of contemporary KC, analyzed the claimed christological commitments of that movement, and then critically interrogated third-wave KC as to its success in fulfilling those commitments. By focusing that interrogation via the notion of christological attentiveness, KC's overriding focus on intellectual coherence was unveiled and shown to imperil its other christological commitments: namely, Christ's humanity and his churchly significance.

As noted in the opening of this chapter (and in the Introduction), third-wave KC is critically presented here in order to provide a foil for Moltmann's own unique version of kenotic christology. Regarding Jesus' humanity and his churchly significance, Moltmann's KC will, later in this thesis, be shown to do a more effective job of "making good" on these two commitments, greatly due to his differently arrayed christological attentiveness.

But this notion of attentiveness, though we have introduced it and utilized it thus far in the study, stands in need of greater elucidation and refinement before it will be useful in

our examination of Moltmann's christological thought. More specifically, though this chapter has singled out a deficient or suspect mode of christological attentiveness (in third-wave KC), I have yet to clearly enumerate what a more productive mode of christological attentiveness might look like. To accomplish this, our next chapter enlists the joint work of Oliver Davies and Paul Janz as it emerges in the stream of theological discourse known as "Transformation Theology." As a recent program focused on theological method and the importance of a theological hermeneutics that is keyed to empirical reality and the ethical realm of specific human activity (rather than to abstract categories), Transformation Theology will pivotally serve in the construction of a fitting heuristic bridge between the deficiencies of third-wave KC and the unique kenotic christology of Moltmann; it will help us frame our discussion of Moltmann's christological attentiveness and equip our investigation with key questions and categories moving forward.

TRANSFORMATION THEOLOGY
AND THE FRAMING OF CHRISTOLOGICAL ATTENTIVENESS

In Chapter One, we saw that third-wave KC proclaims a desire to more fully illuminate Christ's full humanity and his ecclesial significance, but that it harbors key deficiencies in its overemphasis on abstract modes of christological reasoning. Third-wave KC will thus serve as a critical foil for Moltmann's own KC; Moltmann's thinking will be shown to fulfill similar christological commitments but in a more effective, more concrete manner, thereby presenting a kenotic christological outlook characterized by deeper historical attention, more evident ecclesial application, and clearer relevance for Christian praxis.

Transformation Theology (hereafter TT), relatedly, will be serving the role of helping to frame Moltmann's KC, and in this sense it brings something strategic to our study that Moltmann, on his own, does not. Specifically, many of Moltmann's assumptions relating to theological method and hermeneutics, while certainly operative, are left implicit in his thought. Moltmann's christological attentiveness is not singled out and described in any detailed way in Moltmann's own work. TT, on the other hand, provides an overt methodological program in terms of theological attentiveness and orientation, focusing with keen precision on empirical reality and embodied activity, thereby establishing various terms, categories, and questions which will be useful for distilling and highlighting the unique focuses and themes which characterize Moltmann's own expression of kenotic christology.

To that end, this present chapter is focused strategically on three closely related tasks: descriptively arraying some of the major themes of TT's theological attentiveness generally; exhibiting its principal statements on christology specifically; and constructively disposing

those statements into what I will call “transformational heuristic questions for christological attentiveness.” These heuristic questions will focus on three major topics pertaining to (respectively), the historical *achievement* of Jesus, Christ’s current *presence*, and the forms of *praxis* enabled by Christ’s lived (and ongoing) accomplishments and relationships. Along the way, Paul Janz and Oliver Davies will be taken as the principal articulators of TT, though at key junctures similarly oriented insights will also be pointed up and synthetically absorbed from Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Donald MacKinnon—each of them being important interlocutors for TT as concerns christology.¹

§1 Transformation Theology’s Rerouting of Theological Attentiveness

TT, as discussed briefly in the Introduction, presents an orientation which speaks on a primarily methodological and hermeneutical level.² In essence, TT calls Christian reflection, the lifeblood of theology, to give greater place to the specific, experiential, sensible, and spatio-temporal *ground* of the Christian faith. Revelatory events, occurring, witnessed, and experienced in the thick of history, are the fundamental basis for Christian self-understanding and the life of faith.³ As such, any theological reflection which fundamentally orients itself to an abstract program of analyticity or speculation as the basis of its truth claims (as we have seen, for example, in certain articulations of third-wave KC) risks divorcing itself from its indispensably historical ground. This “very ground” of theology and Christian identity is Jesus Christ, who is only truly encountered in the world of embodied life, not in the domain of discursive propositions or ideas. TT is, in its own words, “[An] endeavour which finds its points of theological reference never anywhere else but in and through the world, which is to

¹ Bonhoeffer and MacKinnon feature prominently in Janz, *Command*: e.g. MacKinnon, 33, 102, 148; e.g., Bonhoeffer, 50-53, 145-146, 163-173; they are also closely aligned in supporting argumentation at various points (e.g. 53, 146-148). Davies expresses key agreement and dialogue with Bonhoeffer throughout *Theology of Transformation*, e.g. 27, 67-68, 142.

² See “Prologue” in *Transformation Theology*, esp. 2-6.

³ See esp. Janz, “Revelation as Divine Causality,” in *Transformation Theology*, 63-64, 67-69.

say incarnationally, just as the ongoing and living reality of the incarnate Christ himself demands.”⁴ Concerning theological attentiveness specifically, TT pursues a twofold program consisting in (1) a “rejuvenat[ion] of causal and sensible attentiveness” and (2) a “reinvigoration of practical and motive attentiveness.”⁵ We analyze each of these aspects in turn below.

2.1.1. – Causal and Sensible Attentiveness

TT emphasizes that there are two broadly construed methods of accounting for objects, events, and phenomena. These are designated as (1) *causal-sensible* accounting and (2) *conceptual* accounting.⁶ The first of these proceeds through describing causes that are experienced in sensible terms, that is, in the everyday world of life, understood and encountered spatio-temporally. The second sort of accounting operates on the level of discursive mental activity such as logical deduction, abstraction, and ratiocination. TT holds that present-day theology has too often neglected the first of these and privileged the second.⁷ The hard sciences, and even the social sciences, have remained attentive, by and large, to both causal-sensible and conceptual accounting, but when we look to theology

over the past two centuries, we find that for an array of reasons this twofold kind of attentiveness has with a few exceptions almost entirely disappeared from view. Or more exactly, we find that the question of causal explanation based on the dynamic interactions between bodies in space and time has in one way or another become entirely subsumed under the mental authority of conceptual explanation[.]⁸

Paul Janz designates this one-sided mode of accounting as “conceptually cognitive monovision”⁹ and perceives within it far-reaching effects for theology: that academic reflection and

⁴ “Prologue,” in *Transformation Theology*, 4.

⁵ Janz, *Command*, 34 and 80 respectively, emphasis added.

⁶ See Janz, *Command*, Chapter 2, esp. 21-22; see also idem., “Divine Causality,” 64-66.

⁷ The most pronounced discussions to this end emerge in the work of Janz, e.g. “Divine Causality.”

⁸ Janz, *Command*, 21.

⁹ Ibid., see also Janz, “What is Transformation Theology?” *American Theological Inquiry* Vol. 2.2 (July 2009): 12.

systematization of doctrine thereby become less concerned with the “world” as such and more concerned with only intellectual schemas that are overtly abstract in form and reasoning, thus neglecting to impact or draw upon the actual events and experiences in time and space that are the true causal foundations of the Christian faith.¹⁰ As Janz puts it: “[If] God is truly alive in his revelation at the center of life today... [then] theology must be attentive through all human faculties and may not confine itself to the discursively mental.”¹¹

In the thought of Donald MacKinnon, a related point is promulgated specifically in the context of christological accounting.¹² There, MacKinnon enforces the demarcation (originating in philosophy of logic) between first-order and second-order propositions. In relation to christology, first-order propositions “are ‘about’ Christ” whereas second-order ones “are about *propositions* ‘about’ Christ.”¹³ To recapitulate this with language of our own, we would say that first-order propositions about Christ concern the embodied, historical reality, relationships, and activity of Jesus—these are, broadly speaking, christological statements, but we will also occasionally refer to them as “Christic” statements in order to convey their proximity to the actual embodied person of Christ, and to distinguish them from second-order christological propositions which encompass more broad doctrinal language that systematizes and thematizes the Christic categories, including doctrinal and conceptual language relating to ontological questions.

MacKinnon recognizes, of course, a certain unavoidable and even necessary role for ontological thinking in christology; e.g. in simply considering the relation between Jesus and

¹⁰ On the point of “causal” vs. “conceptual” ways of accounting, see Janz, “Revelation as Divine Causality,” 70-73.

¹¹ “What is Transformation Theology?”, 34.

¹² Kenneth Surin designates MacKinnon’s focus on “how” theologians speak and think about Christ (that is, “how” they “do” christology) as “meta-christology”, and says, rightly, that MacKinnon inclines more to these christological discussions than he does to doctrinal christology as such; see Surin, “Some Aspects of the ‘Grammar’ of ‘Incarnation’ and ‘Kenosis’: Reflections Prompted by the Writings of Donald Mackinnon,” in *Christ, Ethics, and Tragedy*, edited by K. Surin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 107n2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 96(-97). See Mackinnon, “Substance’ in Christology,” 246-247, 251 and also, “Does Faith Create Its Own Objects?”, 221 both in *Philosophy and the Burden of Theological Honesty*, ed. by John McDowell (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

God the Father, we verge on questions of an implicitly ontological nature (the relation of two “persons”), and such questions are helpful tools for “advancing our understanding to enable us to see what it is that is at issue in the simpler, more direct, more immediately moving christological affirmations of the gospel.”¹⁴ Alongside this, and with corresponding incisiveness, Paul Janz emphasizes a strong opposition to anything like an overarching “theological ontology,” for such an extension of controlling ontological conceptions inevitably draws God onto the same “level” of (conceptually reified) “being” as that of worldly beings.¹⁵ In summing the sentiments of MacKinnon and Janz on these scores, we can emphasize that both first- and second-order propositions must exist in discourse about Christ, but they must retain a critical balance with one another, wherein those of the first-order are primary in christological attentiveness, so that the concrete life of Christ is not dimmed by overriding attention to the christo-*logical*.¹⁶ It is upon actual historical and spatio-temporal reality, the embodied (and continuing) life of Christ, that the church depends and by which christology should be directed.¹⁷ Theology needs to cultivate an attentiveness to this fundamental “incarnational ground,”¹⁸ that is, the historically-attested events which form and animate the Christian community. TT pushes the theologian to ask, in approaching and appropriating scriptural content, *what really happened in embodied history?*¹⁹ And what does the sort of accounting which results from this question mean, concretely, for the work of God in the midst of embodied existence today? As MacKinnon bluntly puts it: “Christians are

¹⁴ “‘Substance’ in Christology,” 246; on the inescapability of ontological categories (whether explicit or implicit), see *ibid.*, 244-247. Janz allows for “the importance and value of a properly modest and rigorous ontology” (*Command*, 59), but is especially wary of its employment in christological questions, for reasons we’ve seen.

¹⁵ *Command*, 58-60.

¹⁶ Again, MacKinnon: “To recognize the use of ontological categories as something indispensable in theological work is not for one moment to identify that work with the use of such categories in *rebus divinis*. *The part is not the whole*” (*ibid.*, 245, emphasis original). Janz likewise will refer to the necessity of a “twofold attentiveness” in “Divine Causality,” 75-76.

¹⁷ Janz, “Divine Causality,” 89-94.

¹⁸ Janz, *Command*, 39.

¹⁹ Especially in reference to Christ: Janz, *Command*, 134-135, 137-138; “Coming Righteousness,” 89-90.

[those] who believe that, as a matter of fact, *certain events happened*.”²⁰ Christology should be the last of all theological loci to seek any speculative retreat from contingent and particular history.²¹

It should be noted clearly here that TT of course is not opposed to the deployment of inductive, abductive or even deductive reasoning within certain bounds, so long as such reasoning is thoroughly grounded in real-world happenings and does not verge into self-referential tautology.²² In terms of epistemology, the TT orientation on the use of “reason” is effectively Kantian (on a particular reading of Kant’s epistemology, presented most forcefully in the work of Janz²³) insofar as it advocates a “humble” or chastened place for speculative reasoning and encourages its necessary grounding in empirical realities. Ontology *per se* cannot and should not be avoided, but what Kant calls a “proud ontology,” conducted via the operations of allegedly “pure reason,” which does not recognize the anchoring authority of sensibly encountered life, can only produce “certain rational illusions” which, if ontologically reified, overleap the limits which must attend to reason as a purely conceptual and abstract endeavor. Such a critical orientation resides at the heart of Kant’s first Critique.²⁴ There, Kant levels his attack at what he refers to as “dogmatism,” by which he means at least partly the groundless reification of pure ideas which claim jurisdiction over the whole enterprise of human knowing, beyond the limits of experience. Any such dogmatic pursuit of

²⁰ “Our Contemporary Christ,” in *Borderlands of Theology and Other Essays*, edited by G.W. Roberts and D.E. Smucker (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011 ed. [orig. 1968]), 83, emphasis added.

²¹ Janz employs the “retreat” metaphor also in this context (theology retreating from embodied history and toward abstraction): *Command*, 3, 33, 164. Janz likewise frames the movement toward analytical self-definition in terms of a seduction (“the selfsecuring lures of analyticity”, 43). MacKinnon likewise bemoans the constant temptation to move theologically away from the true contingency and risky history of Jesus of Nazareth (“Contemporary Christ”, 83, 86-87).

²² Janz, “Divine Causality,” 71-73.

²³ At greatest depth in *God, The Mind’s Desire* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123-167.

²⁴ E.g. “[The] understanding can never overstep the limits of sensibility within which alone objects are given to us. Its principles are merely rules for the exposition of appearance; and the proud name of an ontology that pretends to provide, in a systematic doctrine, synthetic a priori cognitions (e.g. the principle of causality) of things in themselves must give way to the modest name of a mere analytic of pure understanding” (Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by W.S. Pluhar [Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1996], A247/B303).

cognition via “pure concepts” illegitimately assumes sovereignty over what Janz describes as the causal “authority” of the given external world, or, more specifically “the causal dynamism of the embodied world.”²⁵ Janz sums the key outcome of this Kantian limit to speculative reasoning by declaring that “discursive reason must always, *for its own very integrity*, hold itself to account before the tribunal of the real empirical world in space and time.”²⁶

But unbridled speculation via the conduits of abstract concepts is not the only way in which Christian theology can “point away” from the world of real, experienced life. Oliver Davies, for his part in formulating the epistemological and hermeneutical basis for TT, discusses the related theological tendency to rely on metaphor, especially indexical metaphors relating to distance or time,²⁷ to describe the human relationship to theological realities:

Indexical reference to what is not in space and time is not reference at all, and thus, by implication, can have no real meaning.[...] If the object pointed to is not in fact in space and time, and has no referential existence, then what we are left with is the act of pointing itself: the act of pointing *away* [from the world].[...] But the Christian, like anyone else, lives only in the world of space and time. And so by the internalization of such a metaphorical conceptual paradigm which points *out* of the world, the Christian self is drawn to live under alienation *within* the real world, of where there can be no real ‘outside’. Thus we Christians who live by this paradigm, may find that we live but poorly in the world, and not at all in any other.²⁸

At the roots of its fundamental axis of attentiveness, then, TT echoes the dictum (paraphrasing a well-known Bonhoefferian position) that “because in the reality of Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of the world fully, therefore theology may not look away from the world but nowhere else to the world of real embodied life to

²⁵ *Command*, 25-26. See Janz’s related and important discussion on the Kantian critique of “subreption” in *Mind’s Desire*, 154-156.

²⁶ *Command*, 26.

²⁷ The specific target on which Davies focuses in order to make his larger point is T.F. Torrance’s use of the metaphor of “height” and his indexical use of geometric concepts to discuss the incarnation in *Space, Time, and Incarnation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), in which see esp. 67-75.

²⁸ “Interrupted Body,” in *Transformation Theology*, 43.

engage with the revealed reality of God.”²⁹ TT, as a statement on theological method, opposes any route by which empirical reality might be evaded, whether that be unbridled abstract cogitation or obstructive metaphorization.

2.1.2. – Motive and Practical Attentiveness

Since the strong focus on causal-sensible attentiveness is such a basic feature in the redirection of attentiveness advocated by TT, we will be able to address the closely related topic of motive-practical attentiveness in shorter order. In so doing, we direct attention principally to Paul Janz’s distinct emphasis on what he calls “appetitive” or “motive” reasoning, which he discusses in contrast to “conceptual” or “discursive” reasoning. The latter is “a formal exercise of reason” that transpires within “the cognitive domain;”³⁰ in short, it is used in the “ordering of *percepts and concepts* for thinking.”³¹ The former, however, refers to that form of reasoning employed in the “ordering of *appetites* (or desires) and *motives* for bodily action.”³² It is attention to this second form of reasoning that Janz sees to be lacking in many forms of theological discourse today. More precisely, when desire and appetite do feature in contemporary theological discussion they are still often treated essentially discursively as themes under the remit of conceptual reasoning, and thus without breaking through to a proper attentiveness to the fundamentally different kind of reasoning actually involved at the first-order level in the relation of human desires and motives to decision and action.³³

²⁹ Janz, “What is Transformation Theology?” 11.

³⁰ Janz offers as examples the sorts of intellectual cogitations that accompany mathematical operations, literary interpretation, ethical judgments, etc.

³¹ *Command*, 78-79.

³² *Ibid.*, 79.

³³ There are notable exceptions to this neglect, of course. Aside from TT, the work of James K.A. Smith is resonantly focused on the themes of desire, formation of appetites, and enacted life: e.g. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). Intersections with overtly “postmodern” forms of philosophy and theology have generated work on desire as well, e.g.: *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology*, ed. by Jan-Olav Henriksen & F. LeRon Shults (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011).

Drawing on Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant, Janz develops and makes central the ways in which our desiring faculty manifests itself in embodied action—or, more specifically, in the “free causal agency of enacted decisions,”³⁴—and moreover how such action is that which animates the progression of human life and history, as desiring beings enact their will upon the material, space-time world.³⁵ According to Janz, everything human beings do, even cognitive reasoning itself, is ultimately “organized on the basis of some motivating *desire*.”³⁶ With the aid of insights from Kant’s work on “practical reason,” he pinpoints that the ordering of many of our desires, when dealing with issues of moral value and not mere pragmatic execution, is determined by something else, something which immediately emerges in our deepest self as a kind of “law.” Janz refers to this judging faculty as “ought-consciousness” or “moral consciousness.”³⁷ This inner law which confronts us with a sense of moral obligation is what motivates our will to enact our desires in the world in ethical charged situations, thereby affecting the world in particular, morally-colored ways. As Janz sums this relation:

The whole force of free causality is that as embodied beings, humans can through the *will* bring their own *rational* law of desire to bear on the laws of the nature mechanism [the deterministic world of natural laws] in a causal ‘making real’ of desired ends in embodied life through enacted rational decision.³⁸

Now, this sort of reflection on human desiring and acting, while instructive, does not as yet reflect any clear christological significance. But its implications for such become more clear when Janz proceeds to argue that our ought-consciousness—indeed our whole activity of rational moral judgment—is in fact reflective of our sinful state before God.

Hereby Janz emphasizes that the plight of unrighteous humanity is not simply a

³⁴ *Command*, 144.

³⁵ Also referred to as the “faculty of appetition”, “desire,” “will,” etc. See, e.g., Janz, *Command*, 9-10, 81-85, 100-111, 141-143. The most pronounced and important discourse occurs in Chapter 5 of *Command*.

³⁶ *Command*, 86, emphasis added.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

matter of believing the wrong things about God or a deficient intellectual capacity, but that it is also deeply entangled in the biblically derived notion of “covetous desire”³⁹ or, indeed, the “deceitful desires” of our “old self” (see Eph 4.22). For Janz, this *cor curvum in se*—Luther’s “turned-inward heart”—is what alienates human beings from righteous obedience to the will of God;⁴⁰ it is “a radical alienation from God by a corruption of desire.”⁴¹ Human sinfulness, on this rendering, manifests itself via the operation of our moral judgments. The story of “the fall” in Genesis 3 conveys humanity’s acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil—that is, moral consciousness. Janz thus takes this to illustrate that humanity’s fall was a “fall into moral consciousness,”⁴² and he agrees with Barth in saying that “when [Adam] sinned... he became ‘ethical man.’”⁴³ Once human moral consciousness was inaugurated, we became a “law unto ourselves,” rationally judging the world and bringing it under the jurisdiction of our own covetous desire through the imposition of our own autonomy.⁴⁴ This character of our practical or motive reasoning is so humanly pervasive and powerful that even the Mosaic law, which comes from God, cannot be received as the divine law that it is but will instead invariably be “misread as essentially a moral code.”⁴⁵

There are several points at which such an “appetitive harmatology” could be expounded at greater depth or debated. But we are here only briefly summing it in order to underscore TT’s attentiveness to *desire*, *will*, and *action*. This aggressively pursued attentiveness provides a counterbalance and corrective to any system of theology which only

³⁹ Ibid., 144.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 132. Janz well notes that, biblically speaking, humanity is not separated from God’s love, but from his *righteousness*.

⁴¹ Ibid., 107.

⁴² Ibid., 113.

⁴³ *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 2.2, 517; quoted in Janz, *Command*, 113.

⁴⁴ “[In] the fall away from God into the knowledge of good and evil through a corruption of desire we have become a *law unto ourselves*. This law unto ourselves which we have become, in other words, is an autonomous (self-regulating) moral law by which we bear our own measure of righteousness irremediably within us, in the immediacy of our desiring and motivating intellect for the question of how shall we live” (ibid., 114).

⁴⁵ *Command*, 120. Janz offers further argumentation to this point in Chapters 6 and 7 of *Command*.

(or even primarily) emphasizes humanity's problem as one confined to intellect or thought. Fundamentally, TT says, we are sinful because we do not "will" as God wills. We want our will to be done, and so we ignore our fellows and try to control our world and dismiss any complexity or contingency which threatens us. As Davies puts it: "We reason as an agent when we seek to get our way in the world.... [We] reduce the complexity of the world... through the active pursuit of our own self-interest."⁴⁶ If this sort of disordered, grasping, autonomous desire is the plight (or at least a significant part of the plight) of humanity in its alienation from God, then attentiveness to it will have a significant bearing on TT's christological reflection, as we shall see in later sections of this chapter.

2.1.3 – Implications of TT's Theological Attentiveness

A perceptive question at this point would well be: what follows? What follows from such a refocusing of theological attention along these causal-sensible and motive-practical lines? Not surprisingly, with its concentration on embodied realities as attested in the scriptures and manifested in the church and the world through desired ends and enacted decisions, TT has distinguished itself through an acute focus on both ethics and praxis.⁴⁷ Thus, TT is not only concerned with the transformation of theological attentiveness along methodological and hermeneutical lines;⁴⁸ it is also deeply concerned with giving a richly theological account of the transformation of the world itself, in line with the redemptive transformations wrought in Christ.⁴⁹ It is this focus on Christian acts *as acts* that animates TT's ethical focus and highlights its unique contours: "Ethics is a project of transformation, a project of disrupting our concepts and theories and the ways we act."⁵⁰ TT's ethical edge summons it to be

⁴⁶ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 170.

⁴⁷ See e.g. Chapters 5 and 6 in *Transformation Theology*.

⁴⁸ "Prologue," 2-4; Janz, "Divine Causality," 64.

⁴⁹ "Prologue," in *Transformation Theology*. 2-6.

⁵⁰ Clemens Sedmak, "The Disruptive Power of World Hunger," in *Transformation Theology*, 136.

attentive to the ways in which our contemporary world cries out for transformation—in the face of endemic poverty, oppression, and grotesque evil. These realities face us and call for response; human suffering is a “given” of worldly experience before which any retreat into abstraction can be most pernicious; a non-dogmatic epistemology here, therefore, has direct ethical implications.⁵¹

But this ethical attentiveness does not stop merely by attending to the plight of the world; theology, as a distinctly ecclesial practice, should also maintain focus on the church’s post-resurrection and post-Pentecost *kairos*. The broken world and the transforming ways of God do not stand wholly apart from one another; Christ and the Spirit work redemptively through ecclesial realities to bring about change. TT is committed to what it calls the “incarnational reality” of Christian existence, and we will see in our next sections that this orientation is dependent on its strong reading of Christ’s ascended state and heavenly session.⁵² TT encourages, via the critical use of reason, attention to God’s revelatory acts *within* the world and especially to Christ’s continued lordship over the world in his glorified state.

All of this, clearly, has strong praxiological implications. Incarnationally grounded theology operates with its face turned toward the world,⁵³ pursuing participation in Christic realities in the midst of an ecclesially formed intelligence that sustains and informs Christian acts.⁵⁴ The church’s mission—under the continuing lordship of the Son and the enduring power of the Spirit—is an ongoing mission, and thus theological accounting must show

⁵¹ Janz, *Command*, 31-32.

⁵² Relatedly, see Doug Farrow’s discussion of “The Politics of the Eucharist,” in his *Ascension Theology*, 89-119.

⁵³ “Transformation Theology at its heart is resolutely and uncompromisingly a *theology in the world*” (“Prologue,” 4).

⁵⁴ As Davies puts it, “If the *imitatio Christi* or following of Christ in the pattern of enacted love in his name, is the foundation of our discipleship in him, and if this is a Christian calling and so the basis of our ecclesial belonging in the ground of the Church, then Transformation Theology....will provide a more fundamental mode of ecclesial thinking which can point to the foundations of our faith and to the ways in which we belong to one another in Christ” (*Theology of Transformation*, 143).

resolute awareness for what can be called “ecclesio-experiential” input. What are the church’s current struggles and contexts, in the thick of particular places and specific times, in the warp and weft of material, embodied existence? Theological reflection cannot stand apart from these inputs as a detached academic discipline—it must be thoroughly grounded by and bound to the world, directing its attentions to the center of actual life—in Janz’s words, there must be “a certain dependence on and therefore a certain subservience...to the causal dynamism of the reality in which we found ourselves alive.”⁵⁵ TT’s shared ground with certain forms of liberation theology here becomes apparent; there is agreement between this aspect of TT and Gustavo Gutierrez’s famous designation of theology as “critical reflection on praxis” which then informs further praxis.⁵⁶ For both liberation theology and TT, theology comes *after* praxis and proceeds *alongside* praxis.⁵⁷ It is in this steadfastly “world facing” sense that Davies has compellingly suggested that true transformation theology is in fact “first-order” theology—it is a “theology of the act” and involves Christian acting in the world first, and academic reflection on that action second.⁵⁸

For TT, the efforts of professional theologians are to help effectuate understanding and awareness in order to empower further ecclesial activity and reflection. Doctrinal intellection alone cannot be the whole of the theological enterprise:

In other words, theology—academic theology—is called to help us to recognize [Christ] there, at the turning points of the historical world in our own ‘everyday’ situational reality, more quickly and more fully. It is called to create a Christian culture in which this recognition itself becomes embodied as a central part of what it is to be a Christian in today’s world.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Command*, 33.

⁵⁶ Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. by Caridad Inda & John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 5-8.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 9. See Davies’ nuanced and largely sympathetic interactions with liberation theology in *Theology of Transformation*, 24-25, 86-88, 142.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 139-143. Further: “Theology of transformation is distinctive as a theology to the extent that—as an act-oriented theology—it *knows its own limits*.[...] [Theology] needs to rediscover its own proper nature as being in service to the Christian act. We need to relearn a certain humility, but also a certain wisdom in the recognition of the distinction between second- and first-order theology. [F]irst-order theology belongs to the act itself. First order theology is the Christian intelligence that grounds our Christian acts” (142).

⁵⁹ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 55.

It is along these wavelengths that even the more radical statements of Dietrich Bonhoeffer resonate: “[The] reality of God is disclosed only as it places me completely into the reality of the world.”⁶⁰

It then should be quite evident how the outlook—the *attentiveness*—that is pinpointed by TT is useful for the agenda of this thesis, in both a critical and constructive dimension. First, TT’s critical edge similarly targets the sort of deficiency in “christological attentiveness” which we diagnosed in third-wave KC in Chapter 1, and it provides even more elements of insight and lines of reasoning on that score. Second, TTs constructive stance—that is, the sort of attentiveness it *advocates* rather than censures—establishes principles and criteria which dynamically frame the ecclesial relevance to which a program of christology attains, and this it does by critically disallowing any retreat into speculative abstraction when the questions of embodiment, concreteness, or action-in-the-world are pressed. It is a fuller exposition of this christologically constructive dimensionality of TT’s attentiveness which will occupy the remainder of this chapter. In our next section, we will focus on TT’s specific discussions pertaining to Jesus Christ.

§2 Jesus Christ in “Transformational” Perspective

In what follows I will be aiming to examine the major christological statements of Janz and Davies, while also turning to MacKinnon and Bonhoeffer on occasion to elucidate further the fundamental nature of certain christological points. The whole exploration will be in the service of clearly arraying a christological attentiveness that is more focused on Christ himself and less on christology-as-concepts (though not, certainly, to the complete neglect or refusal of the latter).

⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 59.

2.2.1 – Janz, MacKinnon, and the Accomplishment of Jesus Christ

Paul Janz’s discussion on “Christ, Reality, and History,”⁶¹ begins with a characteristic TT question: “What actually happens in the world when in the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth ‘the Word became flesh’, or when ‘God becomes man’?”⁶² In setting out an answer, act-oriented theology looks to the biblical accounts to see what *happened* and what was *achieved* in the particular embodied life of Jesus and to be affected by it in the center of the lived life of the church.⁶³ On this basis, TT focuses on the historical texture and concrete, enacted progressions of Jesus’ life.⁶⁴ It is the historical actions—or, to use the more specific TT language, the “enacted decisions”⁶⁵—of the man Jesus of Nazareth which give shape to a transformationally attentive christology. If it is the entirety of Jesus’ life that matters (and not just the first and final chapters of the gospels—the birth, the death, and the resurrection), then the habitual compartmentalizing of the gospel history which often transpires in theological discourse must be avoided. Paul Janz makes this clear:

It is not right, in other words, as we can be apt to do in doctrinal theory, to treat “incarnation”, “cross” and “resurrection” collectively as the three thematically central Christological loci without equally acknowledging that the real power and efficacy of these events hangs inalienably on what the man Jesus accomplishes in his mortal life.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Janz, *Command*, Chapter 8. Cf. also Janz, “Divine Causality,” esp. 79-83; “Coming Righteousness,” esp. 89-94.

⁶² Janz, *Command*, 137.

⁶³ Janz, “Divine Causality,” 63-64. Hebblethwaite provides a summary of the “particularity” of the Incarnation which accords well with this point in TT: “The particularity of the Incarnation, the fact that if God was to come to us in person it would have to be at a particular time and place in history, certainly, as I say, [...] means that we...cannot enjoy precisely the same face-to-face human encounter with God incarnate...Our personal commerce with God is through the spiritual and sacramental presence of the one who did tread the hills of Palestine, whose character and acts we read about in the Gospels” (“Jesus, God Incarnate,” in *The Incarnation*, 24).

⁶⁴ Note Mackinnon’s words: “[In the gospels, we] notice a deep concern with the texture of every situation in which [Jesus] is involved” (“The Tomb Was Empty,” in *Philosophy and the Burden*, 259).

⁶⁵ Janz, *Command*, 141-146.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 147. N.T. Wright makes a similarly concerned point from the perspective of his New Testament and early Christianity scholarship: “It would not be much of a caricature to say that orthodoxy, as represented by much popular preaching and writing, has had *no clear idea of the purpose of Jesus’ ministry*. For many conservative theologians it would have been sufficient if Jesus had been born of a virgin (at any time in human history, and perhaps from any race), lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, and risen again three days later” (*Jesus and Victory of God*, 14, emphasis added).

Importantly, as we will see later in this study, Moltmann makes a very similar sort of point central to his own christological work.⁶⁷ The work of Jesus should not be considered in discrete and unrelated sections—it is the *full* accomplishment or achievement of his life and his faith which should direct our theological thinking and categories. And this accomplishment will be colored, inevitably, by the distinct historical context and contingent sociality of Jesus as a Jewish man, in his own time and space, as recounted in the biblical materials. Knowledge of Christ in this register is therefore, in Donald MacKinnon’s words, “[knowledge that] inevitably draws on one’s own experience of human life... together with... awareness of the cultural and historical particularities of the society in which Jesus lived and whose needs he immediately addressed.”⁶⁸ Such a “transformational”⁶⁹ outlook accords with what Moltmann himself refers to as a “holistic christology.”⁷⁰

What, then, is the accomplishment that Christ lives out? In MacKinnon’s rendering, it is his “faith,” which can only be articulated as something *achieved*, for faith is not a concept but a form of human believing and acting, and therefore an occurrence that is actualized in temporal life: “If Christ has faith, and if that faith is uniquely creative, it has to be understood as something *achieved*, an affirmation of God in relation to mankind not in word only but in *deed*.”⁷¹ Similarly themed is the thinking of Janz, who identifies Christ’s accomplishment as his lived righteousness, that is, his accomplishment of faithfully living in full obedience to the will of God.⁷²

⁶⁷ Moltmann argues for an implicit expansion of the Nicene and Apostles Creeds so that they more holistically capture *the full spectrum of the life* of Jesus, see *WJC*, 150 (more broadly, see the entirety of Chapter 3 in that work).

⁶⁸ MacKinnon, “Does Faith Create...?”, 221.

⁶⁹ We will, moving forward in this thesis, be employing the adjective “transformational” in the sense of “in-step with the program of theological attentiveness which characterizes Transformation Theology.”

⁷⁰ See *WJC*, 3, 119.

⁷¹ MacKinnon, “Does Faith Create...?”, 214, emphasis added.

⁷² Janz also quotes MacKinnon’s reference to Jesus’s “historically achieved innocence” in this same vein (*Command*, 148). See further D. MacKinnon, “Some Notes on the Irreversibility of Time,” in *Explorations in Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 97.

We will recall from our earlier discussion that TT promulgates what we might call an “appetitive understanding of sin.” In TT sin is not described in terms of a distortion of the intellect, or in simple willful rebellion against known standards and proper motives, but rather as a fundamental corruption of desire.⁷³ The effect of this on christological reflection now becomes apparent: on the reading of TT, human reconciliation to the righteousness of God requires a human will that aligns its desires completely with divine prerogatives for human existence. It is here, then, at the intersection of a covetously desiring human being and the lived righteousness of God (a “better righteousness,” to use Bonhoeffer’s phrase⁷⁴) that Janz locates the specific, historical accomplishment of Jesus Christ. For Jesus, by entering into the finite human situation, “inhabit[s] the law of covetous desire,” and yet nevertheless he succeeds in living his life “in the perfect unity and obedience of a fully human will with the perfect will of God.”⁷⁵

When it comes to discussing the person of Christ, TT does not focus on metaphysical minutiae or a balancing of ontological properties in the midst of two abstractly-conceived “natures.” Christ, in his historical activity, demonstrates who he is by enacting God’s righteousness in the midst of human embodiment and activity in space-and-time, which fundamentally entails the operation of human desire:

The oneness of Jesus with God, that is, the full divinity of the man Jesus, is not the unity of two speculatively generated supra-sensible essences coming together abstractly in an ideal realm of ‘substance’, as reassuring as such false dogmatic securities may be for the demands of a purely cognitive understanding of this oneness.[...] [It is in] the perfect unity of real embodied human will with the will of the Father, and not on the level of metaphysical ‘essences’ or philosophically abstracted and thus purely speculative ‘substances’, that Jesus is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1.15) and ‘the exact imprint of his being’ (Heb. 1.3).⁷⁶

Janz avers that Christ did not come to teach about the “essence” of God or abstract

⁷³ *Command*, 109-116.

⁷⁴ E.g. Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015 ed.), 85-89, 114-117.

⁷⁵ *Command*, 144, 148.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 148, 149.

metaphysical axioms pertaining to a divine “nature,” but rather he consistently directed attention to the *will* of God.⁷⁷ To borrow a phrase from the work of Dale Allison, Jesus is “the embodiment of God’s will.”⁷⁸ This is the testimony of the gospel narratives; they do not speak in terms of two mysteriously united pieces of ontology, but of a first-century man, chosen by God to carry out God’s righteousness on earth, and to bring that righteousness “into death, thus destroying death.”⁷⁹

This certainly attends to the gospel sources with both sensible-causal and practical-motive attentiveness, focusing on embodied realities and enacted desire. But, it may be asked, does this articulation not impoverish the Christ of the church to some extent? If Jesus is “the only man who has ever lived in full obedience to God,” then this makes him highly unique, but seems to possibly resemble a “degree christology,” or possibly a resuscitation of Schleiermacher’s *Urbildlichkeit* with its “absolutely potent God-consciousness.”⁸⁰ To pose the issue a different way, we might return to the classic division between Christ’s person and work: If a major part of the *work* of Christ is his historically realized righteousness, conforming his will as a man to the will of the Father, what is it about his *person* that is unique enough to establish and accomplish such an achievement?⁸¹

It can be rightly surmised that TT will naturally answer this important question in a

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, 149-150; “Coming Righteousness,” 90-91. Some of the most pertinent passages referred to by Janz are: Jesus comes to reveal and do the Father’s *will* (Jn 4.34, 5.36, 6.38); Jesus comes to enact the Father’s *commandment(s)* (Jn 12.49-50, 14.31, 15.10); those “who resolve to do the *will* of God will know whether my [Jesus’] teaching is from God” (Jn 7.17); not all who call Jesus “Lord” will enter the kingdom, but only those that “do the *will* of my Father” (Mt. 7.21); all who “do the *will*” of the Father are Jesus’ brothers and sisters (Mt. 12:50); and, of course, the Lord’s prayer, which prays that the Father’s “*will* be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6.10).

⁷⁸ Allison, “The Embodiment of God’s Will: Jesus in Matthew,” in *Searching for the Identity of Jesus*, edited by B.R. Gaventa and R. Hays (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 117-132.

⁷⁹ *Command*, 147. Cf. the first sermon following the ascension of Christ, especially the language applied by Peter to Christ: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst” (Acts 2.22).

⁸⁰ E.g. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. P.T. Nimmo (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2016 ed.), 364, 367. On which, see the excellent work by Catherine Kelsey, *Thinking About Christ with Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 51-56.

⁸¹ Catherine Kelsey rightly draws attention to the need for such a unity in the person and work of Christ (on the basis of Schleiermacher’s own incisive analysis of this relationship), *ibid.*, 69-74.

different manner than forms of christology which focus on an analysis of the classical philosophical concepts (*ousia*, *physis*, etc.). Any such recourse to an in-depth speculation about two natures and their variegated, analytically conceived properties would be beyond the hermeneutical limits that transformational discourse sets for itself, as we have seen.⁸² What then does TT do with Chalcedon? Both Janz and Davies are nuanced in their handling of that tradition. They have both evinced an affirmation of the creedal language, in tandem with an explicit avoidance of any theorizing intended to “resolve” the conundrum of the two natures, nor even to give any positive content to those natures as such. Janz, in fact, proposes that all of the most distinctive “revelational claims” of Christian theology⁸³ are united precisely in the fact that “they derive the *basis* of their authority explicitly from their *inability* or indeed refusal to be ‘resolved’ into broader systems of explanation.”⁸⁴ Significantly for this thesis, Janz targets the resolution-seeking, abstract mode of many “kenotic approaches” to christology. He sees such christological systems often functioning as

mechanisms which purport to be able to draw the authority or finality of the incarnation and the cross more fundamentally into a doctrinally analytical system of resolution, and to ‘validate’ it within such an ideality. [Such] approaches are... an illegitimate tautological shortcut.... The essential point here is that kenosis, in its causally embodied *reality*, in no way *solves* the theological problem of God’s relation to the world on the cross, it rather *defines* the problem in its full and sheer intractability[.]⁸⁵

Janz elsewhere praises theologies where “kenosis... is precisely not viewed as an opportunity for semantic resolution within structures of meaning, even doctrinal meaning.” He notes examples of this less-speculative kenotic approach in Rowan Williams, Schleiermacher, Bonhoeffer, Rahner, and MacKinnon, and he critically juxtaposes these with the use of

⁸² On the “limits” of TT, see Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 142; see also “Prologue,” in *Transformation Theology*, 5.

⁸³ He lists these claims as “incarnation, resurrection, Ascension, creation *ex nihilo*, eschaton” (“Divine Causality,” 79).

⁸⁴ Ibid. See relatedly, *Mind’s Desire*, 173-185.

⁸⁵ “Divine Causality,” 84.

kenosis in Jüngel and Moltmann.⁸⁶ While Janz's point here may hold good for Moltmann's use of kenosis as a broad principle of theological conceptuality, this thesis will attempt to show that Moltmann's use of kenosis *in his christology specifically* is very much focused on causal, embodied, historical, and relational categories, and as such does not fall into the "resolving" procedure of third-wave KC's christological apologetics. But this is to anticipate the work of later chapters in this thesis.

In short, it is evident that Janz' stated critique above comports with and furthers our concerns about third-wave KC raised in Chapter 1: *the focus on a resolution to the "problem" of the two natures results in a misplaced attentiveness and effectively trammels potential contributions to other, vital christological commitments.*⁸⁷ To avoid such a predicament in its own christological attentiveness, it has been the standard move of TT to focus on the historical person (i.e. the *hypostasis*) of Jesus, and also on the continuing endurance/presence of that Christic existence in concrete terms.⁸⁸

But in attending to the *material*, rather than the motive or appetitive, dimension of christology, cannot something about the unique *person* of Christ be said? TT has answered this in the affirmative. If in Janz we see the development of an appetitive (that is, action motivated by desire) understanding of the work (accomplishment) of Christ, it is in Oliver Davies that we discover the development of a complementary material understanding of the person of Christ, or "a new Christological reading of the body of Jesus."⁸⁹ It is to an examination of this that we now turn.

⁸⁶ "Coming Righteousness," 105.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 105-107, esp. 106.

⁸⁸ See e.g. *Command*, 146-147; "Divine Causality," 79-80; Davies, "The Interrupted Body," 45-46; *Theology of Transformation*, 59.

⁸⁹ "Prologue," in *Transformation Theology*, 6.

2.2.2 – Davies and the Body of Jesus Christ

Davies offers a striking thesis: “the body of Jesus is itself the site of a cosmic drama.”⁹⁰ It is important to take full measure of this assertion; it is not any repetition of *Christus Victor* atonement motifs—it is not saying that Jesus wins a victory on the cross in the midst of a cosmic drama (though this is certainly not ruled out). Rather it is claiming that his very *hypostasis*, his very embodied existence, is *itself* the site of a cosmic drama. Davies assumes Chalcedon as normative for establishing the unity of what the church has called the “divinity” and the “humanity” of Jesus, but proceeds to describe this unity on this basis of a historical coinherence that changes through a process of intensifying transformation. In short:

While the historical body of Jesus manifests all the properties which we associate with our own bodies, it is also the case that it is an extraordinary body.[...] [In Jesus, we see a] progression from an embodiment which is primarily human (though within the context of the hypostatic union of the two natures) to an embodiment which is primarily divine (though still within that same union) [and] we can point to the Easter period as the focal point in that transition.⁹¹

What such a schema allows Davies to argue, firstly, is that the embodiment of Christ is perpetual once begun.⁹² Once materiality becomes an aspect of the life of God through the incarnation of Jesus Christ—once God has “drawn near” as “God with us”—this means that though the embodiment of Jesus *changes* (in striking ways⁹³) it never *ceases*. Following the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus’ body has “a new relation to space and time” and remains fundamentally related to it. As the divinity of Christ becomes more revealed in the course of his earthly life, and finally his glory is not concealed at all,⁹⁴ he is taken from view—the body ascends and vanishes amidst the clouds, withdrawing its visible presence. It is at this point, says Davies, that christology has often erred, seeing Christ and his redemptive

⁹⁰ “Interrupted Body,” 46.

⁹¹ Ibid. See further Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 110-18.

⁹² “Interrupted Body,” 43-47.

⁹³ We can highlight the retaining of wounds/scars, as well as the ability to pass through walls and cover great distances nearly instantaneously, as just some of the distinctions of Christ’s “resurrection body” (see e.g. Jn 20.19, 26-29).

⁹⁴ Something that is previewed by the Transfiguration: Luke 9.31-32; Mark 9.2-3; Matthew 17.2.

work today as “figurative and detached from the senses: from our here and now.” But he goes on to claim that “it is the exact opposite which is the case.”⁹⁵

But what can this mean for the church? How is Christ “here and now” with us, post-ascension? It is at this point that TT calls upon a robust pneumatology; it is claimed that the Spirit “makes real to us the body of Christ.” More fully: “[It is] through the advent of the Spirit that the presence of Christ in the fullness of his humanity becomes universally possible to those to whom he is known in the Spirit through faith.”⁹⁶ In many ways, Davies’ builds on John Calvin’s proposed relationship between the ascended Christ and the present Spirit; Christ’s heavenly embodiment is still local (rather than ubiquitous, as in Luther’s thought) and made presently accessible to us by the Spirit (rather than available to us only by memory, as in Zwingli).⁹⁷ Davies claims that though Christ is no longer visible, he is still “available to the senses” albeit “in an entirely new way.”⁹⁸ While provocative, these statements are also somewhat obscure; we will endeavor below to make them more clear.

Davies emphasizes that the Johannine tradition clearly relates the advent of the Spirit with the absence of Jesus,⁹⁹ and Paul’s writings further develop “a profoundly intimate link between the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ.”¹⁰⁰ We must remember that, foundationally, TT is concerned to be theology that is “turned toward the world.”¹⁰¹ As discussed in Chapter 1 (where we first began to utilize the notion of christological attentiveness), theology as a discipline has an “object” of its study—it is after all the object of the study of a given

⁹⁵ “Interrupted Body,” 50.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ E.g. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), 4.17.18,29. See Doug Farrow’s perceptive discussion of the differences in the dominant Reformation theologies of the ascension: *Ascension and Ecclesia*, 172-180. For Davies’ commentary on Calvin: “Lost Heaven,” 19-21; *Theology of Transformation*, 9-10, 140, 251.

⁹⁸ “Interrupted Body,” 50.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 49, 50-51.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹⁰¹ Davies will use the substantival phrase “Theology in the World” to simultaneously designate and describe the critical theological directionality of this line of thinking. See *Theology of Transformation*, Chapter 2, esp. 52-57; also “Interrupted Body,” 56.

discipline that determines that discipline and forges its unique concerns. On this basis, Davies poses the following key question:

But what determines us [in Christian theology]? What is our present material object? We have...presented the case that this must be the living or exalted Christ who is our present material as well as formal object. It is not only the idea of Christ who is our object but also his reality. This is not only a past reality (as recorded in Scripture for instance), but also a present one. And so we can speak of Jesus Christ as the present material and formal object of our thinking.¹⁰²

Thus, in this sense, all of TT is determined by Christ(ology), which is both its object (focus) and proper “ground” (basis). This is its definitive statement on the import of christological attentiveness. Importantly, this means that TT is not only concerned to speak about christological “ideas” but also about “Christic” realities.¹⁰³ For TT, the exalted Christ, including his exalted body, now has a unique but real Christic relationship to the world, and this relationship is said to be *mediated by the Spirit*. Davies takes great pains to discuss what he sees as an unfortunate trend in theology whereby the Spirit is seen to “substitute” for the now-ascended Christ.¹⁰⁴ Rather than substitution, Davies sees in the New Testament a portrayal of pneumatological “mediation.”¹⁰⁵ Such a notion is certainly not unique to Davies; it underlies many sacramental theologies (with the notion of *epiclesis*, etc.) and, of course, as noted, the thought of Calvin. However, the idea of pneumatological mediation does seem to resist a clear *prima facie* understanding, and so begs the question: what does it mean, precisely, to say that the Spirit “mediates” the presence of the exalted Christ? A full exploration of this question is beyond the scope of our present project, but in the thought of Davies, at least, the point seems to be that Christ’s literal presence is brought into our sensibility through the work of the Spirit (in Calvin’s words, the Spirit “truly unites things

¹⁰² *Theology of Transformation*, 54.

¹⁰³ I’m employing the christological/Christic distinction because it very helpfully conveys one of the major points of TT reflection on Christ’s current reality. However, the major TT proponents have not widely employed the term “Christic” in their writing to date.

¹⁰⁴ “Interrupted Body,” 44.

¹⁰⁵ See, *Theology of Transformation*, 26, 88-93; “Interrupted Body,” 50-54.

separated in space”¹⁰⁶). That is, we can encounter Christ in a genuinely perceptual way that is beyond the standard epistemological distinction between “subjective” and “objective.” Said yet another way, the pneumatically enabled perception of Christ is not in the form of a concept developed within human cognition (subjective) nor as an object in continuity with the old created order (objective). It is something truly new—Christ is the new creation in embodied and transformed person—and as such he can only be encountered in the experience of the “powers of the age to come” (Hb 6.4), that is, the power of the Spirit.

As an attempt to present a tangible (and famous) example of this sort of real Christic encounter, Davies returns many times to the Damascus Road experience of Paul and its varied recountings in scripture.¹⁰⁷ He makes much of the key role of the Spirit in Paul’s encounter with Christ: Paul’s ordinary sensate organs (eyes, in this case) are overwhelmed to blindness by the Christic presence (Acts 9.8-9), and it is only by the impartation of the Spirit by Ananias that he regains his capability of visual perception (Acts 9.17-19). Though not highlighted by Davies, a complementary parallel of sorts is present in Acts 8, where Stephen can “see” Jesus “in heaven” but only *after* the text informs us that he is “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7.55-57).

We will return to some of these key points in our next sub-section. But it should not be missed that what TT wants to posit here is the current universality of Christ (he can be present by the Spirit “at any place and at any time”), and that this universal and embodied relationship to the spatio-temporal world is a direct result of his exaltation.¹⁰⁸ What this means is that it is in the midst of Spirit-mediated, Christic transformations of *this world* that theology must operate and upon which it must focus. Praxis must command our attention.

¹⁰⁶ *Institutes*, 4.17.10. This spatial unboundedness is a radicalization of the spatial ambiguity which characterizes the resurrection accounts of Christ’s body, wherein Christ passess through walls, covers vast distances instantaneously, etc.

¹⁰⁷ “Interrupted Body,” 44-45, 52-54; *Theology of Transformation*, 122-131.

¹⁰⁸ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, e.g. 130.

2.2.3 – TT and the Worldly Place of Jesus Christ

The way in which the praxiological emphasis of TT takes its bearing from (and exercises its own bearing on) christology can be seen perhaps most clearly in Davies' "ontology of Christological encounter."¹⁰⁹ Christ's being now inhabits a sphere that we cannot circumnavigate—it resists our current experiential and reasoning apparatus. Directly related to the points in our foregoing section, TT emphasizes that when Christ is presently "encountered" in the life of the church, it would be a mistake to see this merely as a subjective, inward experience (as in some pietistic traditions) or an objective, outward event (as in some charismatic traditions). Calling attention again to the post-ascension "appearance" of Jesus to Saul on the Damascus Road, Davies argues that this appearance contains numerous ambiguities which are suggestive of a sort of dual-perceptibility that resembles both objective event and subjective experience, yet simultaneously repels each categorization:¹¹⁰

If, therefore, in his 'Damascus road' embodiment, Christ was neither 'objectively present' in the ordinary sense of the term, but neither was he 'subjectively present' in the ordinary sense of the term, then it appears on the basis of the account in Acts that his exalted form defies the normal categories of subjectivity and objectivity altogether.[...] The suggestion here then is that the 'non-objectifiability' of the exalted body results not from its failure to be real, or from its being only partially real, but rather from our own incapacity as creatures to grasp the full depth of the reality that is disclosed in it.¹¹¹

This outlook provokes one of TT's major orienting, critical questions: "Where is Jesus Christ in the world today?"¹¹² The answers of TT to this question are resonant: Christ is in "[the] poor and vulnerable, the sacraments, the Church, and in the Bible."¹¹³ Davies unpacks these aspects of Christic presence in the following important piece of theological reasoning, worth

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 130; see further 129-133.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 127-131; "Interrupted Body," 44-45, 52-53.

¹¹¹ *Theology of Transformation*, 129.

¹¹² See *ibid.*, Chapter 1, esp. 4-5; see also 61-64.

¹¹³ Ibid., 58; see also "Interrupted Body," 56-57.

quoting at length:

As exalted, he cannot be directly present, since—according to Scripture and tradition—the created order has not yet been transformed in accordance with the transformation effected in the body of Jesus in such a way that it can sustain such an immediate presence. The presence of Christ has to be mediated, therefore, by created materiality; it has to be hidden. This mediation takes place through divine rather than created agency, however, and rests within the regenerative purposes and power of God. It is something that we specifically associate with the agency of the Spirit in the power of God.¹¹⁴

This is why the ecclesiological and experiential dimensions of TT are so important: Christ is the formal and material object of theological concern, and this means, on Davies' argument above, that christology must look to this-worldly locales, environments, situations, and interpersonal dimensions in an effort to perceive the hidden presence and activity of Christ.

Scripturally speaking, Christ uses very direct language to radically identify himself with the poor, needy, and suffering (see Mt 25.34-40) as well as with the church (see Acts 9.4-5). He exists in solidarity with the poor,¹¹⁵ and he commissions, suffers with, and works through the church.¹¹⁶ These are the “modes” of his presence today, according to TT. It is a presence which is only effectuated via his exalted (transformed, mediated, world-encountering) self and the power of the Spirit to “make this real” for us “in the actuality of our sensible living.”¹¹⁷

This thick reading of Christic presence and pneumatological mediation fundamentally orients the ecclesial significance of TT's christological attentiveness, and this significance largely consists in its praxiological implications. The arena of praxis, for TT, is the arena of enacted decisions, motivated by our desiring, appetitive reasoning. To quote Janz once more: “passional desires most essentially *are.... motivations for action.*”¹¹⁸ This means that the

¹¹⁴ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 125.

¹¹⁵ On this, see also the important essay by Sarah Coakley, “The Identity of the Risen Jesus: Finding Jesus Christ in the Poor,” in *Searching for the Identity of Jesus*, 301-322.

¹¹⁶ For the poor, see Davies *Theology of Transformation*, 5, 63, 85-86; for the commissioning of the church, e.g. Davies, “Interrupted Body,” 54-55.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹⁸ *Command*, 89, further 88-91.

praxiological force of TT is perceived most acutely when the link between Christ's presence today and the mode of Christian acting in the world is made explicit, as in Davies:

Life in the church is always temporal, of course, structured between past and future. But it is also fundamentally *present*, where presence is the presence to sensibility of the risen body of Christ, made fully particular and universal through its ascended state, in a way that changes our experience of the world. To be a Christian then is to live within or from out of this entirely unique relation, which is expressed as a 'following', or discipleship of church practice and concern....as we enter into the givenness of the sensible real: of the 'everyday'.¹¹⁹

TT's discussions of Christic presence are thus irreducibly discussions also about Christian action even in the most mundane contours of worldly situatedness. Davies' thoughts here display deep parallels with Bonhoeffer's radical equation of the church with the worldly presence of Christ's exalted self: "Between his ascension and his coming *the Church is his form and indeed his only form.*"¹²⁰

We will be providing further exposition and application of these notions in TT in the final chapter of this thesis, but this brief outline of the central themes of TT's christological attentiveness have been suggestive enough to orient the reader for our discussion moving forward. I turn now briefly to a few critical considerations of TT's framing of its particular mode of christological attentiveness. Though there is much fertile material within TT that will aid us in the framing of Moltmann's unique KC in this thesis, its proponents have yet to fully address certain important questions which hang over aspects of their paradigm.

2.2.4 – Critical Considerations for TT's Christological Attentiveness

Conversations about doctrinal christology tend to follow well-worn pathways. In many respects, TT departs from those pathways and raises vital issues in a refreshing way, as we have seen. However, the strategy and intended contributions of our study beg us to ply TT

¹¹⁹ Davies, "Interrupted Body," 56.

¹²⁰ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. E.H. Robertson (San Francisco: Harper, 1978), 58, emphasis added.

with two concerns, and these concerns hinge around the tightly related topics of incarnation (as a metaphysical idea) and Chalcedon (as a creedal parameter for christological orthodoxy). Does TT's stand against abstraction inhibit it from affirming the incarnation as a doctrine or Chalcedon as a framework? The reason for pursuing these concerns is simple: if our study hopes to rehabilitate kenotic christology via alleged correctives offered in Moltmann's doctrine of Christ, and if those correctives are going to be framed in critical terms proffered by TT, then we need to be sure that TT is not transmitting its criticisms and ideas from a place lacking in commitment to orthodox christological frameworks.¹²¹ For third-wave KC, in spite of the issues we have noted in it, is fundamentally concerned to show a kenotic reading of Christ to be both orthodox in a broad sense as well as ecclesially relevant.¹²² So TT must be interrogated along the following lines if it is to be appropriated successfully in the project of rehabilitating a creedal, kenotic, ecclesially relevant christology.

First, it is admittedly unclear precisely to what extent TT allows for consideration of the incarnation itself. To be sure, the language of incarnation is present, but owing to the concentrated focus on Christ revealing not God's "being" but rather his divine righteousness, the incarnational affirmations of TT take on somewhat ambiguous dimensions, at least in some of Janz's work. One of these dimensions emerges in the clear intensity with which Janz affirms the relationship between Jesus and the Father on the grounds of the revelatory obedience of Christ, e.g., "[The] 'being' or reality of God revealed in Jesus Christ is nothing less than the re-advent of the original righteousness of God from which we have become alienated.[...] a righteousness which is actually *accomplished* and enacted causally by God himself in embodied history in the real world."¹²³ We will remember that this affirmation is dependent on Janz disbaring any cogitation of the Jesus-Father relation along the lines of

¹²¹ Meaning, broadly and with room for nuance of interpretation, the Chalcedonian Definition.

¹²² See, e.g., Davis, "Is Kenosis Orthodox?" in *Exploring Kenotic*.

¹²³ Janz, *Command*, 133-134.

supra-sensible “essences” or “speculatively ontological or metaphysical projections.”¹²⁴

Indeed, so thoroughly is this line followed by Janz that the “unity” of Jesus and the Father is said to only be addressed insofar as we speak about “what Jesus Christ really accomplishes or achieves” in his lifetime, specifically his “righteousness and innocence.”¹²⁵

Now if such declarations are faced squarely and in isolation, it will seem apparent that TT verges on some variety of a “degree christology” or “exemplar” model for understanding Christ—he is the righteous man of God, and God’s “God-ness” is known in him not because of any unity of metaphysical being (i.e. “consubstantiality”) but because he obeys God’s will—thus, in the spirit of Schleiermacher’s *Gottesbewusstsein* christology or John Hick’s inspiration christology,¹²⁶ the traditions concerning Christ’s virginal conception, his eternity, and his pre-existence would seem to be diminished in favor of a more volitional and praxiological model.¹²⁷ Importantly, though, it is directly after these implications arise that Janz states “[none] of this is by any means to suggest that Jesus ‘becomes’ the God-man or that he ‘achieves’ divinity through what he accomplishes in his life. It is not, in other words, to jeopardize Christ’s divinity from his birth[.]”¹²⁸ Valuable as they are, such assurances are only necessary because of the possible implications of what has gone before.

Second, and closely related, is the question of Chalcedon specifically. Certainly Janz and Davies both semantically assent to the divinity of Jesus along Chalcedonian lines, even sometimes using the Johannine language of “eternal Logos” or “incarnate Word.”¹²⁹ But it is never quite clear if they are affirming the formalities of such language while filling it with

¹²⁴ Ibid., 146-147.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 147.

¹²⁶ E.g. in Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §88-93; e.g. in Hick, “An Inspiration Christology for a Religiously Plural World,” in *Encountering Jesus*, 18-22.

¹²⁷ Compare Janz’s statement that “the oneness of Jesus and God is... the utter openness of this one real human being... to the divine will” (148) with the classic articulation in Schleiermacher of Christ’s “unhindered potency of God-consciousness” (*The Christian Faith* [T&T Clark, 1999 ed.], 365).

¹²⁸ Janz, *Command*, 147.

¹²⁹ E.g. Paul Janz, “Coming Righteousness,” in *Transformation Theology*, 89, 96; Davies, “Interrupted Body,” 46.

fresh meaning, leaving the notorious ontological insinuations of Chalcedon behind, or if they are affirming it in the spirit of Chalcedon itself, but electing to focus on other, long neglected and underemphasized, aspects of the incarnate life of Christ.¹³⁰ These ambiguities on the part of TT, however, are perhaps best construed as arising from the christological tradition's own infamous obscurities,¹³¹ coupled with the unique methodological reorientation for theology that TT promulgates. As we have seen, much of the TT concern with abstraction in christology is that it can often serve to domesticate the true transcendence that confronts the world in Christ as God-with-us.¹³²

Having addressed some concerns within the christological outlook of TT, we are now prepared to appropriate its insights in the formation of important principles for the framing of a non-abstract, ecclesially relevant christology. Our next section is devoted to developing such a framing by the formulation of three *heuristic* questions, that is, questions about Jesus Christ that are so constructed as to force christological discourse to grapple with Christ's lived history, continuing presence, and significance for Christian praxis.

§3 Heuristics for Christological Attentiveness

All of the above points have been unavoidably summative, and have not been able to draw out all the careful nuance and critical circumspection that TT has thus far given to many of its statements. However, we have covered enough territory to be able to formulate a series of three heuristic questions which distill the major TT emphases for christology. These questions arise organically from our exposition of TT's outlook on christology thus far, and

¹³⁰ Janz' discussion of Chalcedon in *Command* (147) affirms the "challenge" of Chalcedon, and articulates that challenge as only necessitating that Christian theology grapple with the "person" of Jesus, not the posited two natures.

¹³¹ Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition'," in *The Incarnation*, 143-163. Also Brown, *Divine Humanity*, Chapter 1; Alloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: Volume 2, Part 1: From the Council of Chalcedon to Gregory the Great* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 3-14.

¹³² Janz makes these points with force in *Mind's Desire*, 203, 216-217.

will aid this thesis in the framing and exploration of Moltmann's kenotic christology.

2.3.1 - The Question of Christic Accomplishment

“What is accomplished in the world in the life of Jesus?” - This question pushes christology to avoid giving grounding primacy to speculative abstraction regarding the creedally posited “two natures” or their properties. These two natures are affirmed, but they are not discussed apart from their embodiment in history, and that embodiment comes in the one, historical, concrete, actual, and *continuing* person of Christ. As Janz says, discussion about these natures and what properties they may or may not contain, or how they may or may not be fused, or how they may or may not constitute a human mind (or soul or essence or substance, etc.) can tend toward “speculative imaginings”—and as such they can serve to point away from the actuality of Christ as a real, living, self. In line with its roughly Kantian orientation on epistemology, TT “knows its own limits” and thus deliberately keeps its discussions from undue speculation.¹³³ In short, when christology is plied with this question, it is being tasked with maintaining integrity in its reasoning by not overleaping the bounds of human conceptual reasoning, allowing “empirical” reality to exercise authority and even limit its abstractions.¹³⁴ Said differently, “what is accomplished in the world” is always an empirical, rather than abstract, question; thus it consistently refocuses christology on the lived life of Christ and disallows a retreat into metaphysical supposition.

While not necessarily denying the secondary value or even the theological indispensability, within clear epistemological limits, of ontological discussion of the two natures, *the grounding theological orientation to the divinity and humanity of Jesus, as well*

¹³³ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 142.

¹³⁴ Janz, *Mind's Desire*, e.g. 145-152, 168-169. Though Janz leans heavily on Kant to sustain the notion of empirical integrity in the use of reason, he does admit that Kant's usefulness to theology is limited insofar as “transcendence in the Kantian scheme of things is precisely *not real*, as theology demands, but purely ideal or purely mental[.]” Mackinnon's use of the tragic as an entry into the transcendent as a finality of non-resolution is appropriated by Janz to ameliorate this deficiency in the Kantian outlook (ibid., 170-185; 201).

as his relations with the Spirit and the Father, should be articulated along lines that direct attention to the actual, historical life and ministry of Jesus, with a view to these as intrinsically and fundamentally related to the significance of his death and resurrection. This promotes a focus not fundamentally on conceptual considerations of Christ's ontology, but on his lived righteousness—the historical achievement of his life and all its varied implications.¹³⁵ What does Jesus “live out”? How are the worldly realities that he encounters changed or transformed by him? In short, what is Christ's accomplishment (in the past, in the gospel histories) and what is Christ accomplishing now?

3.4.2 - The Question of Christic Presence

“Where is Jesus Christ?” – This question pushes christological reflection to avoid seeing Christ and the world (that is, present empirical reality) as disjunctive or detached from one another. Christology does not “end” with a substitution of the Holy Spirit after the ascension. The lordship of Christ, as emphasized in all the classic “high christology” passages of the New Testament, is intimately and foundationally bound up with the world itself and that very world becoming new. Christ continues, and this question is intended to make christology attentive to this present, space-time reality. The linchpin for this sort of attentiveness is a refocused understanding of the ascension and its significance. When Jesus is treated purely in terms of his “past” existence in first-century Palestine,¹³⁶ without attention to his living reality today, Christian reflection naturally migrates away from Jesus' lived social and physical contexts in the past and also neglects the materiality of Christ's existence presently

¹³⁵ Of course, for lived sinlessness to be something that can be meaningfully construed as an “accomplishment,” we must entertain, on the apparent witness of the gospel narratives themselves, that *it was in fact a possibility for Christ to sin*. This has been a consistent emphasis of many forms of kenotic christology as well, and thus represents one, among many, areas in which the christological concerns of KC and TT align.

¹³⁶ Admittedly, for some christology that focus is not solely on the “past” Christ, but also on the “future” or returning Christ. But even this dual emphasis leaves out what we are here emphasizing: *the present Christ*.

and that existence's significance for materiality itself.

Moreover, the living and continuing relationships of Christ must be emphasized, and seen to exist in continuity with his earthly life. The ascension is not an addendum to the incarnation and resurrection, but is rather their next and continuing chapter. This means that Christ's earthly accomplishments manifested by his enacted decisions (obedience, healing, solidarity, etc.) will be seen to exist in continuity with Christ's continuing accomplishment in the world, via his Spirit, through his church. A strong reading of the exaltation leads organically and concurrently to thinking of the church in a Christic way; the church is the mode of Christic presence and action in the world, as Bonhoeffer rightly emphasized.¹³⁷ Thus, christology automatically entails "christopraxis" (to borrow a phrase from Moltmann).¹³⁸

3.4.3 The Question of Christic Praxis

"What has Jesus Christ made possible in the world?" - This question motivates christology not to remain always in the form of second-order statements about how we conceive and understand Christ and his work, with no resultant specific praxiological implications. If Christ is a continuing reality, and if his resurrected and exalted state contains profound implications for the future of this world and those who live in it, then his righteousness automatically entails a mode of life and a form of praxis, a way of being "Christic" in the world, as a Christian. As Davies states it: "Jesus' entry into heaven makes concrete new possibilities for our embodied existence."¹³⁹ Thus, Christology should treat Christ as a

¹³⁷ E.g. "The Church is the body of Christ. Here body is not only a symbol. The Church *is* the body of Christ, it does not *signify* the body of Christ. When applied to the Church, the concept of body... is a comprehensive and central concept of the mode of existence of the one who is present in his exaltation and humiliation" (*Christ the Center*, 59).

¹³⁸ Moltmann, *WJC*, esp. 41-43.

¹³⁹ Davies, "Evolution, Language and the Biblical Text: Towards a Theological Synthesis," *Theologians on Scripture*, ed. by Angus Paddison (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 50.

continuing reality with a continuous and real affect on the world, in and through the material means of history via the confluence of the divine will and humanly enacted decisions.

Whatever is said about Christ, his kenosis, his accomplishments, his relationships to the Father, the Spirit, and to others, will be shown to have direct praxiological implications for the mode of Christ's activity today, i.e. his church.

§4 Conclusion – Attentiveness Reframed

This chapter has focused on TT. After delineating some of the principal and distinctive elements of its theological venture, our discussion focused on its specific implications for the framing of christology, especially in terms of “christological attentiveness.” We found much in TT's emphases that augmented the critique of KC in Ch. 1 and that further sharpened the specific mode of christological attentiveness that would be needed in order to not fall victim to the same deficiencies. In order to array this clearly, we distilled our discussion of TT's christological outlook into three “heuristic questions” for christology.

These three questions, which attend resolutely and respectively to the historical, presential, and praxiological dimensions of Christic realities, are intended to serve as a constructive tool in our investigation of Moltmann's doctrine of Christ. Because this thesis will argue that Moltmann favors a particular form of kenotic christology, and because TT's christological attentiveness so readily highlights various deficiencies that can readily attend kenotic christologies, our heuristic questions are strategically suited for framing Moltmann's specific christological contribution and distinguishing it from other forms of KC. The goal, then, of my usage of TT and these TT-inspired critical questions is to help sharpen the exploration and application of Moltmann's specific form of christological attentiveness and what it means for his own unique kenotic christology.

But this is to look ahead to later chapters of the thesis. More immediately, we turn our

attention to Moltmann's program and christology generally; this will supply the needed backdrop for our more focused and specific exposition of his kenotic christology in the later chapters. Chapter 3 commences this process by introducing Moltmann's thought, investigating his theological methodology, and addressing the important, controversial question of Moltmann's stance on the Chalcedonian Definition.

MOLTMANN'S CHRISTOLOGY (I)

THEOLOGICAL METHOD AND CREEDAL AFFIRMATIONS

This chapter begins our exploration of Moltmann's christology in earnest, an undertaking which will occupy the next four chapters of this thesis. The goal of said exploration will be twofold: a synthesis of the most prominent christological themes across Moltmann's major publications, as well as a multi-facted demonstration of the kenotic core of his christological program. The final chapter of this thesis will then apply our three transformational heuristic questions (Ch. 2) to Moltmann's christology (Chs. 3-6) in an effort to demonstrate that though the christology is kenotic, radically kenotic even, it does not succumb to the same issues of christological attentiveness which vex certain other forms of KC (which we saw in Ch. 1).

Our current chapter will proceed by first identifying the christological center of Moltmann's theology (showing how it is the implicit base of other, oft-assumed centers of his theology, such as eschatology and the Trinity). We will then elucidate various facets of Moltmann's unique approach to the theological task, and then synthesize these and apply them in a discussion of Moltmann's stance on the Chalcedonian Definition.

§1 The Christological Center of Moltmann's Theology

In his first major work, *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann claims that "from first to last... Christianity is eschatology,"¹ establishing the eschatological focus which characterizes his

¹ *TH*, 16. See the comments on the eschatological-christological dialectic in Williams, "Moltmann on Jesus Christ," 106; also D. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1974), 121-128.

thinking. But it is shortly thereafter that he gives eschatology its own centering content, and that, explicitly, is christology: “Christian eschatology speaks of Jesus Christ and *his* future. It recognizes the reality of the raising of Jesus and proclaims the future of the risen lord.”² Even more clearly he states that there “can be no christology without eschatology and no eschatology without christology.”³ In his next major (and “most enduring”⁴) work, *The Crucified God*, it is the cross of Jesus Christ that is spoken of as “the centre of all Christian theology... it is in effect the entry to [theology’s] problems and answers on earth.”⁵ Theology’s fulcrum for Moltmann hereby comes to balance on both christological and staurological affirmations: “Christ the crucified alone is ‘man’s true theology and knowledge of God’.... God’s being can be seen and known directly [*sichtbar und direkt erkennbar*] only in the cross of Christ.”⁶ Moltmann’s centering on these points echoes quite clearly the rhetoric and sentiment of the young Luther’s *theologia crucis*.⁷ The cross becomes, for Moltmann, the measure and criterion for all statements about God and the way in which God relates to the world—christology and its cross are determinative for all. This is not only a matter of doctrinal content, but also of theological method, as John Webster notes:

[Moltmann’s method] is bound up with a theological and spiritual conviction that the cross is not so much an acceptable part of the conceptual and symbolic apparatus of Christianity as an irritant: the cross is that which refuses to be dealt with, which cannot be rendered harmless and domestic. The cross, far from offering clarity and security to Christian faith and theology, stands as a symbol of the unsettled character of our dealings with God.⁸

² Ibid., 17. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen sums well the relationship between Moltmann’s christology and eschatology: “Moltmann’s eschatology is integrally related to Christology in that Christian faith is grounded in hope for the future based on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ” (*Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 148. See also Bauckham’s “The Future of Jesus Christ,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 16 (1997): 97-110.

³ HTG, 95; see also “Theology as Eschatology,” in *The Future of Hope*, ed. F. Herzog (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 23-34.

⁴ ABP, 200.

⁵ CG, 204. See also his much later statement in *CoG*, where he states that christology “is the centre of Christian theology” (100).

⁶ CG, 212 (German: 197); see also Kärkkäinen, *Christology*, 151; Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis’* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2005).

⁷ See Theses 19 and 20 of Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation; further: Alister E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross* (Malden, MA / Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1985), 148-151.

⁸ Webster, “Jürgen Moltmann: Trinity and Suffering,” *Evangel*, Vol. 3.2 (1985), 4.

Moltmann's intense focus on a "crucified christology" famously forged the basis for his wide-ranging critique of classical theism⁹ and sprung the floodgates for his burgeoning social trinitarianism. In fact, as early as *The Crucified God* Moltmann found the centermost point of discussing the Trinity in the cross of Christ,¹⁰ and it is this same sentiment which concludes his preface to *The Trinity and the Kingdom* only a few years later: "[The] cross of the Son stands from eternity in the centre of the Trinity."¹¹ Significantly, following *Trinity and the Kingdom*, it has been Moltmann's highly dynamic, perichoretic, social model of the triune God that became his heuristic bridge into a vast spread of doctrinal territory.¹² These new explorations were certainly catalyzed by trinitarian theology, but, as noted, for Moltmann the Trinity is properly revealed in Christ and his cross.

Thus we can safely say that Moltmann's christology is, in fact, fundamentally prior to and constitutive of his diverse theological trajectories, as J. Scott Horrell implies:

Moltmann convincingly argues... [that] it is Jesus' suffering and death on the cross that[...] now makes untenable a unipersonal God, especially one who is impassible in the sense of many classical interpretations. The relationship of Jesus Christ with the Father and the Spirit rolls back the roof of our human existence for us to peer into the self-giving love between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.¹³

Beyond serving as both the origination and framework for his robust trinitarian project, Moltmann's christology also funds his ethics—through his unique articulation of "christopraxis" and God's kingdom (which is embodied in Christ's very person, not just in

⁹ See the protracted discussion and critique in *CG*, 207-27; such critique is anticipated by *TH*, 140-142.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 235-249; in a key passage he quotes and expounds on the following from B. Steffen (*Das Dogma vom Kreuz. Beitrag zu einer staurozentrischen Theologie*, [Güterloh: Bertelsmann, 1920]): "The scriptural basis for Christian belief in the triune God is not the scanty trinitarian formulas of the New Testament, but the thoroughgoing, unitary testimony of the cross; and the shortest expression of the Trinity is the divine act of the cross, in which the Father allows the Son to sacrifice himself through the Spirit" (*CG*, 241).

¹¹ *TK*, xvi.

¹² The Trinitarian reflections become foundational throughout his remaining work, but most prominently in *GC*, esp. 9-20, 94-104, 258-270; *SpL*, throughout; *HTG*, throughout; *SW*, esp. Chs. 3-8.

¹³ Horrell, "The Eternal Son of God in the Social Trinity," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, eds. Fred Sanders & Klaus Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2007), 58.

his proclamation or actions)¹⁴—as well as his ecclesiology, wherein the messianic family of the body of Christ enters into cruciform solidarity with the poor in an open friendship that imitates the other-seeking nature of Christ’s social relationships. Ecclesiology presupposes christology fundamentally in Moltmann’s thought:

The doctrine of the church...is indissolubly connected with the doctrine of Jesus, the Christ of God. The name the church gives itself—the church of Jesus Christ—requires us to see Christ as the subject of his church and to bring the church’s life into alignment with him. Thus ecclesiology can only be developed from christology, as its consequence and in correspondence with it.¹⁵

In light of the foregoing evidence for the centrality of Moltmann’s christology to his entire theological endeavor, the question we broached in Chapter 1 becomes yet more pitched: why is there so much focus on other arenas of Moltmann’s theology in current English scholarship, yet without a parallel, sustained focus on his christology?¹⁶ A preliminary answer, and one that those familiar with Moltmann might expect, is that his christology develops over time and through various conversations with theology past and present. It is extremely multi-faceted and different works and eras in Moltmann’s career reflect differing emphases within it. Thus, when viewed in isolated synchronic chunks, Moltmann’s christology can seem disjointed and unwieldy—evocative, but less than coherent.¹⁷ Such a state of affairs, however, begs for a careful analysis of Moltmann’s christological statements and themes *in toto*, to see if there is in fact any teleology to them after all. This is one of the key tasks for the present and following chapters: providing crucial topographic data in the hopes of systematizing the variegated terrain of Moltmann’s christology.

¹⁴ *WJC*, xiv, 41-43, 116-136; also *JCTW*. See also Timothy Harvie, “Living the Future: The Kingdom of God in the Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10.2, 2008: 150-153.

¹⁵ *CPS*, 66. See further 67-132. Bauckham, *Theology*, 122-123; Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1983 [orig. 1981]), 110-112.

¹⁶ Again, as in the Introduction, we gladly note the exception (which proves the rule) in Watson’s *Towards a Relevant Christology*.

¹⁷ This variety of criticism emerges in Cowdell, *Is Jesus Unique?*, 23-46; as well as in Williams, “Moltmann on Jesus Christ,” 117-121.

Because Moltmann is a highly “contextual” thinker,¹⁸ and one whose mode of theological expression often confounds expectations, it will serve us well first to situate Moltmann’s christological ruminations; we shall do so throughout the remainder of our present chapter by (1) piecing together key themes in his overarching theological method and (2) by posing key classical christological questions—those funded by Chalcedon—to Moltmann’s thought.

§2 Situating Moltmann’s Christology – Methodological Considerations

As noted above, the christology is diffused across a wide range of works and at least forty years of theological development. Over such a stretch, even among the most systematic of thinkers, we would expect progression, change, and even revision—and Moltmann is not renowned for his systematizing propensities.¹⁹ (In fact, Moltmann has shown few qualms for admitting when commentators are better at tracking systematic structures in his thinking than he is himself!²⁰) Though the full breadth of the christology is difficult to delineate, there are certainly key *loci* in Moltmann’s major published works that contribute pivotal and complementary aspects to his christological vision. These major focused discussions are found in: *The Crucified God* (esp. Chapter 3-6); *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Chapter 3); *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Chapter 3); *The Way of Jesus Christ* (esp.

¹⁸ I comment on Moltmann’s contextualizing tendencies in more detail below. Note A. Jeroncie’s characterization of Moltmann as a “theologian of the moment” in *A Peaceable Logic of Self-Integration: Jürgen Moltmann’s Theological Anthropology and the Postmodern Self*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Chicago, 2008), 46.

¹⁹ Cowdell (*Is Jesus Unique?*) and Williams (“Moltmann on Jesus Christ”) express frustration with this as it relates to Moltmann’s christology. Though the reality of Moltmann’s less-systematic (and less “logical”) theology can be counted on to annoy interlocutors at times, some take a favorable view of it, noting that Moltmann’s understanding of theology as “conversation” rather than a “dogmatic” or “timeless” system (e.g. *TK*, xi-xiv), as well as his view of the provisionality of theological assertions in light of always-oncoming eschatological reality (e.g. *TH*, 33, 203), seem substantive enough reasons for Moltmann to embrace the somewhat circuitous investigation that he does. See the exposition of Moltmann’s theological methodology (below) for further discussion on these points.

²⁰ See, e.g., his comments concerning Bauckham’s first attempt to systematically explain his theology: “[Bauckham] demonstrates the consistency and coherence of the thought even where I myself had the feeling of being led by spontaneous inspiration or of only being carried back and forth” (“Foreward” in Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, vii).

Chapters 3-7); *History and the Triune God* (Part 1, Chapter 4); and *Jesus Christ for Today's World*.²¹ Besides a general awareness of the principal locales wherein Moltmann develops his christological ideas, it is important also to bear in mind the methodological distinctiveness of Moltmann. Since method in theology, as well as heuristic structures and relations to the philosophical pressures of the Enlightenment, are important constructive aspects in determining the depth of the potential interface between Moltmann and the concerns of Transformation Theology as we have treated it thus far in this thesis, we need to explore some of his unique methodological proclivities before detailing the depth of his christology.

In the final essay collected in *History and the Triune God* (1991), Moltmann attempts to sum up his theological trajectory to that point: “I would have at least to say that I am attempting to reflect on a theology which has: a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, [and] a political responsibility.”²² This passage is sometimes cited in commentary on Moltmann’s methodology, but his next (and concluding) sentence of the essay is not: “In and under that it is certainly a theology in pain and joy at God himself, a theology of constant wonder.”²³ We will be taking each of these four statements as keys for unfolding the varied aspects of Moltmann’s approach to the theological task, elucidating our points via references to pertinent examples from his major works.

3.2.1 – Moltmann’s “Biblical Foundation”

What could “biblical foundation” mean for Moltmann? If one pursues a short trek through secondary scholarship on his work, it will be noted that his relationship to and use of

²¹ In his relatively brief exposition of Moltmann's general christology, Kärkkäinen gives a rather strange listing of christological *loci* in Moltmann, including *Theology of Hope* but neglecting *Trinity and the Kingdom*, *History and the Triune God*, and *Jesus Christ for Today's World* (see *Christology*, 147). Ryan Neal offers a list close to that presented here, though it also oddly neglects *Trinity and the Kingdom* (see *Theology as Hope*, 153).

²² “My Theological Career,” in *HTG*, 182.

²³ *Ibid.*

scripture can often be singled out as a point of critique.²⁴ Some interlocutors have exhibited concern with an alleged surplus of speculative theological *construction*, accompanied by a lack of detailed exegesis. Matthew Bonzo has recently presented a standard version of this criticism in reference to Moltmann's ethics: "Moltmann's ethical insights do not rely directly upon exegesis. Rather, they emerge from his understanding of the doctrine of Trinity, itself more a construction than a result of exegesis.[...] Moltmann's references to scripture are used more as proof-texts for his particular philosophical position than in sustained exegetical analysis."²⁵ Such criticism concerning exegesis and "proof-texting" could readily be raised, in some form or fashion, against many systematic and philosophical theologians, and Moltmann has acknowledged such critique only by way of referencing other important thinkers who have handled scripture in much the same fashion as he does.²⁶

But the other, and more important, side of this critique is the implication that, in place of "proper exegetical analysis", the ideas of the given theology are assembled *apart* from scripture, and then forced onto it, like an inorganic interpretative brace, forcing scripture into a particular (ideological) framework. Richard Clutterbuck has referred to this purported tendency as an "instrumentalist use of doctrine."²⁷ Focusing in particular on Moltmann's trendsetting (and contentious) social trinitarianism,²⁸ Clutterbuck claims that this doctrine, in

²⁴ E.g. Sung Wook Chung, "Moltmann on Scripture and Revelation," in *Moltmann and Evangelical Theology*: 1-16.

²⁵ Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other*, Distinguished Dissertations in Christian Theology 3 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 9-10.

²⁶ Moltmann notes that some scholars "have ironically criticized my use of the Bible as a 'use *a la carte*', although it is no different in principle from the way Karl Barth or Basil the Great used Scripture" (*ET*, xxi).

²⁷ See his essay, "Jürgen Moltmann as Doctrinal Theologian," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 48.4 (Nov. 1995): 489-506.

²⁸ Moltmann inaugurated what has been called "the new trinitarian thinking" (Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 73-74) primarily in his promulgation of three themes: (1) A social model of the Trinity, whereby the persons of the Trinity are all independent centers of will, but that are unified in volitional agreement and self-sacrificial love (*TK*, esp. 17-20, 198-199; *SpL*, 309); (2) a "trinitarian understanding of history", describing the Trinity's relationships in constant movement throughout historical and revelatory events, with different trinitarian persons assuming differing roles and directives at different times (*TK*, esp. 89-96); and (3) the social Trinity also being an "open Trinity" insofar as it (a) exposes itself to the world through its changing interactions with history and (b) draws the world evermore into its divine life through the mediation of the Son and Spirit (*ibid.*)—this process will be consummated at the eschaton. Cf. the summary of the "objectives" of "Christ's

Moltmann's hands, "is *instrumental* in promoting and justifying a particular form of society"²⁹ and later commenting that it is "unclear" if Moltmann's position grows out of Christian doctrine proper or whether it is motivated by "the alien claims of something exterior to Christianity."³⁰

This sort of criticism, in varying forms, has been leveled at Moltmann throughout his career, and for his part he has not addressed it in detail, especially as it relates to his social doctrine of the Trinity. A possible reason for Moltmann's lack of engagement with the critique is that it often takes its primary shape simply from a flat denial of what Moltmann himself claims: that his doctrine of the Trinity derives "from the biblical history."³¹ From very early in his career, Moltmann has made it quite clear that he thinks "Christian theology must be biblical theology."³² This is a key point. When Moltmann describes his social Trinity model, he maintains that it is the *history* of Jesus and the early church, as recounted in the gospel and Acts narratives, which provides the major point of departure for his theological reflections.³³ It is the concrete specificity of Jesus' life and death and resurrection, as mutually constitutive events in time and space, rather than abstract ontological considerations, which gives direction to his statements about Christ;³⁴ it is from the movements of the specific Jesus-focused history of the gospels that Moltmann draws and shapes his conception of the trinitarian persons, roles, and interactions within history.³⁵ As

history" and the "Spirit's history" in *SpL*, 233-234. Moltmann eventually takes to using the term "primordial Trinity" to refer to the Trinity "from eternity"—but there is no effective difference between this primordial Trinity and the open Trinity except the progression of time (see *SpL*, 294-295, 299). For a short summary of Moltmann's view that also conveys some of the more common criticisms, see John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 33-34.

²⁹ Clutterbuck, "Doctrinal Theologian," 492, emphasis added.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 501.

³¹ Most clearly in *TK*, 64-90; also *CPS*, 53-56; "The Trinitarian History of God," in *FC*, 82-85.

³² Moltmann, "Christian Theology and Its Problems Today," in *The Experiment Hope*, ed. and trans. by M. Douglas Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 6.

³³ *CG*, 241-243; *TK*, 64-65; "Creation, Covenant, Glory," in *HTG*, 131; "The Trinitarian Story of Jesus," in *HG*, 70-89.

³⁴ *TH*, 141-142.

³⁵ Stephen Williams, in discussing Moltmann's Trinity and its relation to scripture, claims that it is characterized by "meticulous adherence to the biblical narrative, albeit interpreted[...] in the context of New Testament theology" ("Jürgen Moltmann: A Critical Introduction," in *Getting Your Bearings: Engaging with*

Moltmann says: “The new trinitarian thinking, in contrast [with foregoing trinitarianism focusing on God’s differentiated subjectivity], starts from the interpersonal and communicative event of the acting persons about whom the biblical history of God tells. It has to do with Jesus the Son, and with God whom he exclusively calls ‘Abba, my dear Father’, and with the Holy Spirit who in fellowship with him is the giver of life.”³⁶ Joy Ann McDougall, in her important work on divine love and trinitarian theology in Moltmann, refers to this as Moltmann’s “biblical-narrative approach,” and notes that while it does resist “tidy schematization,” we should expect nothing less, since Moltmann often explicitly grounds himself not in systematizing speculation³⁷ but in the economic (historical, bodily, material) interactions of God with history.³⁸ In a representative passage on his approach to scripturally-informed doctrine, Moltmann states that he is pursuing

[The] special experience and the particular practice in the context and in the movements of the history of God. That cannot be called ‘abstract’. To be abstract rather means isolating a single event from its history, the special experience from the context of life to which it belongs....Abstract, isolating thinking [*abstrakte, isolierende Denken*] must hence be set aside by integrated thinking [*integrierende Denken*] and must be guided into life.³⁹

While certainly admirable as a methodological principle in theological construction, and clearly resonant with the non-speculative emphases of TT, it must be stated that Moltmann has not always lived up to the non-abstraction standard he has set for himself. Bauckham in particular has praised Moltmann’s historical and concrete focus in the biblical narratives while also correctly lamenting various dimensions of Moltmann’s trinitarian thinking that do

Contemporary Theologians, edited by Philip Duce & Daniel Strange [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009], 111).

³⁶ SRA, 149-150.

³⁷ Moltmann often places himself in firm opposition to speculative modes of theologizing, especially as it concerns the doctrine of the Trinity. Schleiermacher and Kant both serve as shields which Moltmann uses to guard against speculating “in heavenly riddles” (CG, 207) and as combatants when he seeks to demonstrate the practical relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity (TK, 2-3, 6-7).

³⁸ See McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 12-13. Though Matthew Bonzo is aware of McDougall’s work (see *Indwelling the Forsaken Other*, 17) and, as we’ve seen, would disagree with McDougall on this point, he does not address her statements on this aspect of Moltmann’s method (nor the similar points of John O’Donnell in *Trinity and Temporality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 115).

³⁹ CPS, 51; I have modified Kohl’s translation slightly.

at times verge on needless and ungrounded speculation.⁴⁰

Moltmann has positioned himself to treat doctrine in a thoroughly economic key ever since he adopted Karl Rahner's dual-principle: "The Trinity is the nature of God and the nature of God is the Trinity... The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."⁴¹ (Far from claiming that God is a purely immanent force in the unfolding of world history, Moltmann's more assertive declarations of such an economic priority are simply meant to safeguard the following double-axiom: "statements about the immanent Trinity must not contradict statements about the economic Trinity. Statements about the economic Trinity must correspond to doxological statements about the immanent Trinity."⁴²) Since the trinitarian relationships are rooted and expounded in this economic key, and the unfolding of those loving relationships in the midst of this-worldly history are a major red thread for Moltmann's overarching theology,⁴³ a good number of his seemingly speculative reflections are anchored in concrete details of the biblical history—its accounted events which emerged in space-time contexts. This will be important for us as we explore his christology. Also of importance for the shape of our overarching project is that a key interface with TT can here be noted: Moltmann is not firstly concerned with deductive speculation from general or *a priori* philosophical reifications, nor with re-conceptualizing doctrine in mere reference to itself; he is concerned with the biblical

⁴⁰ Bauckham, *Theology*, 163-170.

⁴¹ *CG*, 240. See also *TK*, 147-160; "The Theology of the Cross Today," in *FC*, 76. By the time he began work on the second half of his "Contributions to Systematic Theology" (the volumes on pneumatology, hermeneutics, and eschatology) Moltmann's use of this Rahnerian principle was more developed. The exposition in *SpL*, 291-294, represents its clearest application to Moltmann's notion of "trinitarian history"—the differing roles and relationships exemplified throughout the occurrences of the biblical narratives—and reduces the "immanent/economic" distinction entirely to what Moltmann simply calls the "primordial Trinity" and the "Trinity in the sending." But it is also within this most-developed discussion that we find his approving reference to Yves Congar's mitigation of Rahner: "The economic Trinity thus reveals the immanent Trinity—but does it reveal it entirely? There is always a limit ... The infinite and divine manner in which the perfections that we attribute to God are accomplished elude us to a very great extent. This should make us cautious in saying "and vice versa." (ibid, 291n42, citing: Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. D. Smith [London and New York, 1983] Vol. III, 16).

⁴² *TK*, 154. See also *CPS*, 54-55; Bauckham, *Theology*, 174.

⁴³ A "discovery" which he generously attributes to McDougall; see Moltmann, "Foreward," in McDougall, xiii.

trajectory, historical narrative, and embodied realities.

But here we should take pains to avoid distortion. Moltmann is not a straightforward “biblicist” who concerns himself simply with “what the text says” and sees in that text a series of propositions that must be doctrinally reconciled. It is true that, on his own admission, and in the contours of his doctrinal developments, Moltmann is fundamentally directed by the biblical texts, particularly the narrative history of Jesus. But his handling of scripture itself is dynamic, and continuously looks to this-worldly realities in unfolding diverse aspects of the revelatory materials.⁴⁴ As far as christology is concerned, this is best exemplified in Moltmann’s rejection of the from-above/from-below dichotomy; theological work, on Moltmann’s view, should not be abstracted from historical vicissitudes, and likewise giving due place to real and lived history does not undermine the integrity of theological assertions.⁴⁵

It is here that we must come to grips with what I will refer to as Moltmann’s *promissory-messianic hermeneutic*. Moltmann’s wide-ranging and deep-reaching theological journey begins and ends with eschatology. This has long entailed an understanding on his part of revelation *as promise*.⁴⁶ God acts in history; in that acting he promises changed circumstances, novelty, liberation, and life; he promises newly creational and redemptive movements.⁴⁷ We see in scripture God’s promises to the Israelites and others, and we see them fulfilled by God in history (promissory), but we also find promises that have yet to be

⁴⁴ He is particularly concerned to trace liberating and healing motifs as they are developed through scripture’s unfolding witness, understood with a strong sense of “progressive” revelation (necessitated by his eschatology). See his detailed discussion in *ET*, 87-133. For an appropriation of Moltmann on this score, see Raúl Vidales, “How Should We Speak of Jesus Today?” in *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, ed. by José Míguez Bonino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 148-150.

⁴⁵ See *WJC*, 69. Cowdell accuses Moltmann of inconsistency, as well as “fideism” and “literalism”, on this point (*Is Jesus Unique?*, 38-39, 46), the substance of such objections being that Moltmann is not “critical enough” in his theological use of scripture.

⁴⁶ See Olson, *Journey of Modern Theology*, 458-463.

⁴⁷ Bauckham (*Messianic Theology*, 112) emphasizes that this fundamentally anchors Moltmann in this-worldly concerns—revelation is not about the conveyance of propositional truth from “out there” somewhere, but is rather about acts of God in the midst of people in history and space-time contexts.

fulfilled, and that now will only be fulfilled under the auspices of the continuing lordship of Christ and work of his church (messianic).⁴⁸ But more than this, Moltmann will sometimes read key biblical events in both a promissory and messianic way;⁴⁹ they are fulfillments of past promises that posit still further promises for God's work in the world.⁵⁰ Relatedly, Moltmann will also emphasize the certain key events of the Christian faith (especially in the life of Jesus) will need to be read both "historically" and "eschatologically" in order to unravel their full significance in both origin and trajectory.⁵¹ This is important for understanding Moltmann's christology, as it allows him to affirm multiple facets in his christology that give the appearance of not cohering in any straightforward fashion. However, when some of these facets are read as "fulfilled promise" and others are read as "oncoming messianic fulfillment", many such tensions readily dissipate.⁵² In noting this salient hermeneutical movement we have hereby crossed from Moltmann's "biblical foundation" to his "eschatological orientation."

3.2.2 – Moltmann's "Eschatological Orientation"

Moltmann's interpretive approach to scripture and history, while not immune from critique,⁵³ is fundamentally tied to real categories of sensible-embodied experience in which true novelty is available via the advent of decided action, or enacted decision. Eschatology is not about detached truths concerning the world's political and religious future (fundamentalism) or moral ideals that dawn upon the human heart (romanticism) nor about radical self-

⁴⁸ E.g. *TH*, 50-58; *CG*, 162; *ET*, 125-130; *HTG*, 67, 182; *SpL*, 39, 51-53.

⁴⁹ He will refer to this, for instance, as "anticipations of the remembered future" (*CoG*, 141).

⁵⁰ Cf. "The Word of the gospel makes Christ present.... It thrusts through the times of history and makes its way to us because it carries with it the promise of his presence.... The gospel is remembered promise" (*SpL*, 232).

⁵¹ See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 64, 70-71; Olson, *Journey of Modern Theology*, 461-462; Watson, *Relevant Christology*, 145-150.

⁵² For an underappreciated example of Moltmann employing this approach in his christology, see the discussion in "Theology as Eschatology," 24-34.

⁵³ Chung raises several issues from an evangelical perspective: "Moltmann on Revelation and Scripture," 5-6, 10-16.

actualization under religious impetus (existentialism). All of these approaches cleave the world into a dualistic schema; either between God and creation, or past and future, or interior and exterior realities. Moltmann's eschatology is different from these—it is forward-moving and, indeed, messianic insofar as time's progression and the changes that are wrought thereby are seen as fundamental to the redemptive shaping of reality.⁵⁴ As Olson correctly says, "If anything is axiomatic for Moltmann, it is that the future is new and not an extension of the past."⁵⁵ Such an outlook has received validation from many quarters in late-modern theology, not least of which includes the ever-burgeoning scholarship of N.T. Wright, which continues to see eschatological categories and the inbreaking, oncoming kingdom as the fundamental linchpins around which the gospel hope and reign of Christ revolve.⁵⁶ In discussing his self-designated "hermeneutics of hope," Moltmann writes,

Every promise thrusts towards the fulfilment of what is promised. Every covenant with God thrusts towards God's all fulfilling presence. From the standpoint of the fulfilment, every promise is therefore literally a *pro-missio*, a sending-ahead [*eine Voraus-schickung*] of what is to come, in the way that the daybreak takes its colours from the rising sun of the new day. In this respect God's promise is 'gospel' in the heralding of his coming (Isa 52:7: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings ...').[...] For all the differences, there must already be an identification between what is to come and the promise in which what is to come is announced. As the one who will come, Christ is present now in his word and Spirit. In the present promise, the future is made present [*die Zukunft gegenwärtigt*].⁵⁷

This hermeneutical openness, relating quite clearly to what we have already called his promissory-messianic outlook, conditions Moltmann's handling of biblical texts and orients his entire treatment of doctrine: "Throughout history as the biblical writings tell it, God's history of promise runs like a scarlet thread of hope. It is at once a history in word and a

⁵⁴ See, e.g. *CoG*, 22-46.

⁵⁵ Olson, *Journey of Modern Theology*, 459.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., the following from Wright: *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003); *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008); these themes are presented more devotionally in the sermon texts of "The New Creation" & "That the World May Be Healed," in *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit* (London, UK: SPCK, 1992): 59-70, 119-122.

⁵⁷ *ET*, 102 (German: 99).

history in act. Talk about ‘the mighty acts of God’ is not the language of acts which are finished and done with; it is *zukunftsverheißender Geschichte*.”⁵⁸

Importantly, Moltmann employs this eschatological hermeneutic to counter the very notion of reality as something that can, in all its travail and complexity, be resolved by a series of self-enclosed concepts. A purely inferential or deductive approach to understanding life, doctrine, or God is, for Moltmann, untenable in light of a faith that is truly eschatological. The world is always being revised and transformed under the continuing lordship of Christ, and thus it is God’s future that has final say, not any past definition, theorem, grammar, or system.⁵⁹ Olson, again, conveys this well: “Because he holds to such an eschatological epistemology, it is no wonder that Moltmann does not elevate rigid rational consistency and systematic coherence as theological virtues.”⁶⁰ Further, Moltmann states

[P]romise reaches out beyond what is existently real into the sphere of what is not yet real, the sphere of the possible, and in the word anticipates what is promised. In so doing it opens up what is existently real for the futurely possible, and frees it from what fetters it to the past: if things are fixed and finished (*rebus sic stantibus*) reality can be reduced to a concept, and defined; if they are in process (*rebus sic fluentibus*) they can be influenced only through anticipations of a possible future.⁶¹

In short, if the rules of (finite) reason, or the dogmatic pronouncements of theology’s past, were to hold ultimate sway in theology, Moltmann is unabashed about referring to such a condition as “petrification,” and sees it as opposed to the onward-coming nature of God’s kingdom.⁶² Conserving, fundamentalist, and legalistic forces always draw Moltmann’s suspicion on this account.⁶³

Moltmann’s consistent opposition to such “petrifying” forces comes to the fore quite

⁵⁸ “Future-promising history,” (ibid., 56 [German, 62]. Cf. also 126-128, wherein Moltmann relates these ideas to the “kingdom of God” and refers to this also as the “scarlet thread” of “biblical theology”. Cf. Olson, *Journey of Modern Theology*, 459.

⁵⁹ *ET*, 102-106.

⁶⁰ Olson, *Journey of Modern Theology*, 459.

⁶¹ *ET*, 102-103.

⁶² *ET*, 102-103. Similar themes were being enumerated as early as *TH*, 203. After his “pneumatological turn” (coinciding in significant ways with his cosmological turn in the mid-1980s), Moltmann also emphasizes the de-valuing of diversity and plurality as a sign of such petrification: *SpL*, 184.

⁶³ See, e.g. Moltmann, “Christian Theology and Its Problems Today,” in *The Experiment Hope*, 1-2.

clearly whenever he detects them in certain currents of thought proceeding from Enlightenment anthropocentrism. In his analysis of such currents, Moltmann doggedly works to break down dualistic structures of thought which have served to resolve history, humanity, and the divine into discrete, controlled dichotomies which are subject to analytic “objectivity” and allow for their definitions and speculative relations to be called upon in the construction of various self-referential systems of doctrine. We can note briefly several examples of Moltmann’s reactions to such tendencies. In *Theology of Hope* he signals his opposition to Enlightenment and Neo-Protestant arrangements which opposed *history to theology* as such, advocating for a new understanding of history beyond the pale of an enclosed metaphysical system and more engaged with the true possibility of emergent novelty as a result of God’s acts.⁶⁴ Later he would starkly confront two dominant modernist polarities: the metaphysical opposition between *humanity and nature*⁶⁵ (critiquing this is at the root of Moltmann’s turn to cosmology with the 1985 publication of *God in Creation*⁶⁶), and the anthropological dualism between *mind and body*.⁶⁷ Finally, in his later pneumatology especially, Moltmann advocates for a disintegration of the conceptual dualism between *spirit and matter*.⁶⁸ In the face of these problematic dichotomies, Moltmann praises the “new

⁶⁴ *TH*, esp. 174-180; “Theology as Eschatology,” 2-3; cf. idem., “Gottesoffenbarung und Wahrheitsfrage,” in *Parrhesia: Karl Barth zum achtzigsten Geburtstag* (1966), 149-172. Moltmann writes that Christian thinkers should allow the resurrection to be the determinative element in their understanding of history, and that they “[need] no longer regard the historical method and its view of history as being final and inescapable in its substantio-metaphysical form, and thus veer off into the subjective decision of faith, but that we seek new ways of further developing the historical methods themselves[....] [We] must divest ourselves of all hard and fast presuppositions about the core or the substance of history and must regard these ideas themselves as provisional and alterable” (*TH*, 179). Such themes are resounded elsewhere, e.g. *JCTW*, 76-82.

⁶⁵ “We shall only be able to reduce history to human and natural dimensions if [modernity’s] anthropocentrism is replaced by a new cosmological theocentrism. The creatures of the natural world are not there for the sake of human beings. Human beings are there for the sake of the glory of God, which the whole community of creation extols” (*GC*, 139). Cf. also his concern to not perpetuate a dualism between “nature and history,” *CoG*, 136.

⁶⁶ This turn had been anticipated by numerous developments in his thinking during the 1970s—see *ABP*, 211-212.

⁶⁷ Chapter X in *GC* bears the title (quoting Friedrich Oetinger) “Embodiment is the end of all God’s works.” Throughout this chapter Moltmann continually returns to embodiment, that is, “human reality in the history and surrounding field of God’s creation, reconciliation and redemption” (244). Moltmann argues that all the works of God in the midst of his people are aimed at increasing (not decreasing) and reshaping (not removing) bodily, sensible, material reality (esp. 244-246).

⁶⁸ See *SpL*, 226-229.

psychosomatic view of the human being, and the ecological viewpoint which stress the continuity between nature and civilization.”⁶⁹

These critical themes resonate on many fronts with the outlook of TT which we described and applied in our foregoing chapter, and seem to indicate a similar critical focus at the heart of Moltmann’s vision. For TT recognizes that the dualisms characteristic of modernity have contributed, in sundry ways, to the “un-grounding” of Christian doctrine.⁷⁰ With the advent of Neo-Protestant Liberalism generally, Christian theology gave up its roots in history (for that became the sphere of historical critics), present human life (which had become the sphere of the social sciences), and the natural world (the sphere of the hard sciences). Moltmann thoroughly rejects these tendencies, seeking to reclaim much of the territory that doctrine has vacated over the past two centuries and abolish the dualistic thinking that has facilitated it.⁷¹ Alongside eschatology, the arenas of discourse in which Moltmann most readily combats these dualistic trends are in his pneumatology and christology, and perhaps nowhere more fiercely than at their interface.⁷² In fact, it can be said with little reserve that it is nearly impossible to understand Moltmann’s opposition to divine impassibility and the from-above/from-below distinction in theology without reference to his christology, since the former encourages a thoroughgoing and radical dualism between the world and God and the latter often foments a bitter polarity between faith and history.⁷³ Moltmann wants to see these surmounted—most especially due to the negative ramifications for the life of the church that arise out of such dichotomies⁷⁴—and often takes bold steps in the attempt to do so.

⁶⁹ *EthH*, 61, see further 61-62.

⁷⁰ See Janz, “What is Transformation Theology?”, 16-22.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Moltmann, “Theology as Eschatology,” 5-6.

⁷² *WJC*, 73-78; cf. also *SpL*, 65-73. Here it becomes evident why McGrath pinpoints Moltmann’s christology (alongside Jüngel’s) as the “end of the Enlightenment” and its various christological impasses (*Modern German Christology*, 202-211).

⁷³ A very similar stance against dualism in christology is prominent in the work of Colin Gunton. See esp. his *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: SPCK, 1997), Chapter 4.

⁷⁴ See his denunciation of “false alternatives” in Christian thinking and acting: “Problems Today,” 4-6.

This thoroughly holistic orientation to history, nature, and human life itself naturally causes a pitched ethical focus to arise in Moltmann's work and, given his situation as a German academic after WWII, that ethical dimension consistently assumes political overtones.⁷⁵

3.2.3 – Moltmann's "Political Responsibility"

In light of his eschatological orientation, it is no surprise that Moltmann's work on political and ethical issues is consistently oriented toward the transformation of the *status quo*.⁷⁶ This is in fact how he understands "messianic" as the central category in Christian eschatology—messianic refers to that which disrupts the "power of history," which is Moltmann's oblique reference to the manner in which the ideology of the powerful conditions their view of the future as unchanging and fixed. Messianic realities, then, are the emergence of God's liberating "possibilities" from ideologically frozen visions of history and possibility.⁷⁷ Moreover, Moltmann believes that current ethical and political realities ought to inform theology and determine the way in which it engages the principal objects of its study.⁷⁸ The contemporary context must hold weight; theology must be a *correlational* enterprise.⁷⁹ In his christology for instance, as we will see in subsequent sections of this chapter, it is very clear that ecology, Judaism, and feminism (among other concerns) are given significant weight

⁷⁵ Two of the most recent and important monographs on Moltmann's ethical contributions and political outlooks are, respectively, Timothy Harvie's *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope* (2009) and Nigel Goring Wright's *Disavowing Constantine* (2007).

⁷⁶ "Problems Today," 8.

⁷⁷ *CoG*, 45-46; see also Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 167-168.

⁷⁸ Clear examples abound: in *CG*, the Holocaust loomed large in Moltmann's theological psyche, as well as the response of protest atheism to theodical issues, see esp. xi-xii, 249-252, 273; *GC* emerged out of a sustained meditation on the reality of nuclear weapons and industrialism, see esp. 12-13, 136-137; owing in no small part to his late wife Elisabeth's Moltmann-Wendell's work in feminist theology, Moltmann has also been preoccupied with the theological rootings of patriarchalism and power politics, see *TK*, 162-166; *SpL*, 239-241; *ET*, 289-292.

⁷⁹ Olson explicitly compares Moltmann's correlational tendencies to Tillich's: *Journey of Modern Theology*, 459-460. Of course, Tillich's understanding of this was heavily determined by his brand of existentialism, which is not shared by Moltmann (see B. Loomer, "Paul Tillich's Theology of Correlation," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 36.3 [July 1956]: 150-156).

which shapes both his theological attentiveness and his interaction with tradition. His correlative approach is unique in its coupling of both historical and political interest (again, growing out of his situation as a post-Auschwitz German).⁸⁰ He describes this inclination in his theology as having its *Gesicht zur Welt*⁸¹—which helps us to see the thematic and critical connection to a movement like TT.

Correlational models of theology always run the risk of theological compromise or assimilation;⁸² the questions and themes encountered in prevailing cultural and academic forces can turn theology away from its fundamental rootedness in the history and accomplishment of Christ.⁸³ But Richard Bauckham rightly states that Moltmann does not often succumb to this possibility in his correlational movements:

[For Moltmann] Christian theology does not become relevant by allowing itself to be determined by its contemporary context, but by being faithful to its own determining centre and criterion, which is the crucified Christ.[...] Moltmann's method... aims to find the contemporary relevance of the Christian faith in doing justice to the theological heart of the Christian faith[.]⁸⁴

Fundamentally, this aligns Moltmann with theological motifs that are both “act-oriented” and based in fundamental christology. For Moltmann, Christ, praxis, and changed existence in the world are all interlocking strands of the ongoing pilgrimage of the church and form the true contours of engaged correlational theology:

Every meditation on Christ is a submitting to this alteration [in one's own existence.] That is why *it is this first of all that permanently changes the practice of life in the world*. Meditation about the hard fact of Christian faith cannot become a flight from practice, nor can practice become a flight from this fact. In this way meditation and

⁸⁰ Well illustrated in the first two chapters of GSS.

⁸¹ *ET*, 115-116 (German, 110): “[The] programme of ‘talk about God with a face turned to the world’ and ‘talk about God in our own time’ became for us the painful task of talking about God with a face turned to the Jews and to Auschwitz” (115-116). Moltmann attributes this “directional thrust” to Johann Baptist Metz (*ABP*, 156).

⁸² “Problems Today,” 2-3.

⁸³ Olson notes a version of this criticism as applied to Tillich: *Journey of Modern Theology*, 384.

⁸⁴ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 62. This is evident early in Moltmann's career: “The relationship is indeed a dialectical one: Christians exist, act, suffer, and speak in the present, with the open Bible in their hands, as it were. Whoever closes the Bible in order to speak more effectively and contemporaneously no longer has anything new to tell his age. Whoever breaks off the conversation with the present in order to read the Bible more effectively merely engages in sterile monologues” (“Towards the Next Step in the Dialogue,” in *Future of Hope*, 157).

practice, *turning to Christ and turning to the world*, belong together, just as, in extreme cases, Christian mysticism and martyrdom do. We turn to the *meditatio crucis*, in order to experience the salvation of the broken world and to participate in it.⁸⁵

This orientation in Moltmann's theological method can then be discussed along the lines of a *correlational praxiology*; he does not correlate theology with contemporary concerns for the sake of trendiness—he explicitly claims that Christian thought should produce “an anti-chameleon theology” that retains prophetic power by not blending into any given cultural milieu⁸⁶—but for the sake of effecting or communicating the power for transforming circumstances in the world,⁸⁷ such transformations being fundamentally originated in Christ and what he has done and continues to do. Thus, there is no disentangling concern for life in the world, christology, and eschatological transformation in Moltmann's thought.⁸⁸ It is in line with this ethos that he can say, adapting Trotsky, that theology is a “permanent reformation” which remains “breathless with suspense[...] a story that is constantly making history, an event that cannot be concluded in this world, a process that will come to fulfillment and to rest only in the Parousia of Christ.”⁸⁹ Moltmann makes this point ecclesially significant whenever possible; theology serves the church insofar as it provides direction and insight for genuine Christian acting in the world: “[Christians should] become men and women who can think independently and act in a Christian way in their own vocations in the world.”⁹⁰ It should be clear at this point that there are numerous points of

⁸⁵ Moltmann, “The Trinitarian History of God,” in *FC*, 81–82. Non-latin italics are mine.

⁸⁶ “Problems Today,” 3.

⁸⁷ Moltmann states, “I am not so concerned with correct doctrine as I am with concrete doctrine; and thus not concerned with pure theory but with practical theory,” (“An Autobiographical Note,” in A.J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1988), 204. Quoted in Grenz, *Rediscovering*, 74.

⁸⁸ Bauckham highlights that “the strength and appropriateness of these [methodological] structures lie in their biblical basis, their christological centre, and their eschatological openness. They give Moltmann's theology a relevance to the modern world which is achieved not only without surrendering the central features of biblical and historic Christian faith, but much more positively by probing the theological meaning of these in relation to contemporary realities and concerns” (*Theology*, 26).

⁸⁹ Moltmann, “*Theologia Reformata et Semper Reformanda*,” in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, ed. by David Willis-Watkins, et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 121.

⁹⁰ “Problems Today,” 11.

confluence between these Moltmannian emphases and the outlook of TT, especially in terms of worldly and praxiological attentiveness.

What then of tradition? Consistently this question emerges in the secondary literature, with many thinkers taking exception to Moltmann's alleged lack of focus on traditional theological schemas or creedal affirmations. There are at least two determinative motifs which serve to characterize Moltmann's approach to theological tradition. First, he prioritizes his theology of the cross and makes it a determinative criterion for theological expression. (He adopts the axiom *theologica crucis dicit quod res est*—the theology of the cross says what is truly the case.⁹¹) Following Luther, he treats *theologia crucis* as opposed to *theologia gloriae* and, in so doing he perceives a God who, in the freedom of his own love, sovereignly chooses to enter into the suffering of the cross on behalf of humanity—this means that God suffers in solidarity with the oppressed and is not defined in abstract categories of power, control, or passionlessness, but is rather known in terms of sacrificial, transformational, and other-seeking love.⁹² This pronounced critique of certain facets of “classical theism”⁹³ means that, respecting tradition, Moltmann is highly critical of forms of theology which have aligned with God's immutability and sovereign power and from these attributes derived corollary justifications of oppressive political/social realities, or fostered inhuman conditions under the auspices of divine implacability.⁹⁴ This gives Moltmann's theology of the cross a

⁹¹ *ET*, 83; *CG*, 213.

⁹² This will be a theme to which we return many times, as it is key to deciphering Moltmann's view of kenosis. The most important and fullest expressions of this outlook on divine suffering are in *CG*, Chapter 6 and *TK*, Chapter 2. See also *JCTW*, Chapter 2, and the essay “The Crucified God and Apathetic Man,” in *The Experiment Hope*.

⁹³ This term was of course popularized by Charles Hartshorne (see e.g. *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* [New York: SUNY, 1984], xi, 1, 6)—Moltmann does not apply it himself (and he certainly disagrees with process thought on many fronts), but he does use other, similarly-intended terms, e.g. “the god of Parmenides” (*TH*, 84), the “apathetic god” (*TK*, 25, 218; “Cross Today,” *FC*, 68).

⁹⁴ *CG*, 321-329. In *TK*, the range of this political critique will take on trinitarian dimensions, with a lack of emphasis on God's sociality seen to justify what Moltmann calls “political and clerical monotheism” (192-202).

critical edge with which he confronts several foregoing developments in Christian thought.⁹⁵ Proceeding in tandem with this line of critique, Moltmann is also quite harsh with any form of the church that inhabits a realized chiliasm, merges political aspirations for power with religious triumphalism,⁹⁶ or neglects communal ecclesiology in favor of hierarchical authoritarianism.⁹⁷

Second, and directly related to Moltmann's promissory-messianic hermeneutic, no systematization in the past can ever be seen as definitive in light of the eschatological future. Whereas this focus, as we have seen, allows Moltmann to resist some of the detrimental strains of Enlightenment philosophy, it also provides yet another critical edge which he applies to past formations of Christian thought. In his early work, Moltmann referred to this as an "eschatologizing approach to tradition [*Eschatologisierung des Traditionendenkens*]."⁹⁸ However, it has been noted by Clutterbuck that, in spite of this, "Moltmann's own practice as a theologian shows that it is not possible to be as radically independent of tradition as he suggests[.]"⁹⁹ Clutterbuck is right about this, as any perusal of Moltmann's major works will demonstrate. Almost all of his formulations, even those that are stated in the most striking terms, arise out of some engagement (often constructive) with theological tradition. Graham Buxton has commented lucidly on this score, stating that "[Moltmann] is acutely aware that he offers suggestions—not dogma—within the *communio sanctorum*."¹⁰⁰

On my reading, then, the motif of *conversation* is the most productive way of viewing

⁹⁵ Moltmann's exposure to the Frankfurt School further fortifies this aspect of his methodology. See CG, 221-227; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 66-67. Jon Sobrino, in his analysis and appropriation of Moltmann's christology and staurology, also makes these connections (*Christ the Liberator* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001], 265-269) but does not notice that these elements were already emerging in nascent form in *Theology of Hope* (see e.g. 28-33).

⁹⁶ The most resonant, and historically wide-ranging, discussion of these tendencies appears in CoG, Chapter III, esp. 131-184.

⁹⁷ This latter point Moltmann perceives as deriving from an insufficient view of God's triunity, cf. *ibid.*, 183; TK, Chapters V and VI; CPS, Chapter 6.

⁹⁸ TH, 298 (German: 274).

⁹⁹ Clutterbuck, "Doctrinal Theologian," 496. See further, 495-496.

¹⁰⁰ Buxton, "Moltmann on Creation," in *Moltmann and Evangelical Theology*, 49. See Moltmann, CoG, xiv.

Moltmann's interactions with past theology, and this is, in fact, the motif that he himself regularly employs (that is, once he had progressed through his most radical phase of

Theology of Hope and *The Crucified God*):

My intention was not a new system and not a dogmatics of my own or another theological textbook; I wanted to make my 'contributions' to the ongoing dialogue of theology over the centuries and continents. My contributions to theology presuppose an intensive *conversation* between theologians past and present, and take part in this conversation with proposals of my own. Human theology is theology on the road and theology in time.¹⁰¹

This conversational strategy is animated by Moltmann's constructive-yet-critical stance toward a myriad of thinkers throughout the course of his major works.¹⁰² Examples are numerous, but to take one: in an article on the proper trajectory of Christian hope, Moltmann refers to both Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas as his "theological contemporaries in the only church,"¹⁰³ and then participates in theological dialogue with each of them as though they were living peers. It is thus appropriate to refer to Moltmann as a "critical ecumenist"—engaging in ongoing discussion with historical developments in theology as well as seeking to work through critical present-day divisions in theology. There is no interpretive authority to which Moltmann feels himself tied; his primary directions are taken from the historical faith, the biblical texts, and the life of the church today, in all its pluriformity. His dialogical approach to tradition lends his discussions a vitality which can, admittedly, sometimes be clouded by the dismissive handling of some important past theological formulation or nuance.¹⁰⁴ So, as he is critical with tradition, so Moltmann's own method invites critical

¹⁰¹ *ABP*, 286. His first major employment of this "conversation" motif appears in *TK*, xii-xvi; see also *GC*, xv-xvi.

¹⁰² E.g. with Luther in *CG*, 207-214, 222-235; Augustine and Gregory of Nazianus in *GC*, 234-240; Schleiermacher in *SpL*, 221-226; Barth in *HTG*, 125-140; Calvin, A.A. Van Ruler, and Dorothee Sölle in *CG*, 256-267; "Theology as Eschatology," 26-27. We can also note the ecumenical interactions with present-day theology (e.g. with representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church on the Trinity: *TK*, 178-185; *ABP*, 85-87, 291-293; with liberation theologians concerning social justice and solidarity, *ET*, 217-248). See also the conversation concerning political and ecumenical dialogue in *HTG*, 176-180.

¹⁰³ "The Christian Hope—Messianic or Transcendent?" in *HTG*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ Though somewhat critical of Moltmann's handling of traditional doctrine, Clutterbuck eventually states, "By insisting that 'Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, and Schleiermacher' become our conversation partners, Moltmann is at least implying that successive expressions of Christianity are not incommensurate with

reading.¹⁰⁵

3.2.4 – Moltmann’s “Constant Wonder”

Finally, and briefly, we should note that though the charge of “undisciplined speculation” has sometimes been leveled at Moltmann’s theology,¹⁰⁶ there are three significant ways in which this charge is deflected with relative consistency throughout his work.¹⁰⁷ The first has already been mentioned, but it bears repeating: Moltmann is imminently concerned with *practicality*, in the sense that his theology is a theology turned toward the world and the circumstances of the church within it. Stephen Williams has noted that, at its core, “Moltmann’s thought is anything but abstract in its intention.”¹⁰⁸ In assessing his own theological legacy, Moltmann confesses his past concern that the simple act of writing a book on trinitarian theology (referring to *The Trinity and the Kingdom*) would cause people to think he had “[acquired] the odour of abstract and unpractical theological speculation.” However, to his satisfaction, “the opposite proved to the case” as his trinitarian outlook was both investigated in the biblical history and found relevant in a variety of contemporary ecclesiological contexts.¹⁰⁹ As both Michael Cook and Simon Cowdell have observed: “Moltmann’s Trinity concerns the

each other and that, because they point towards a common future, signs of continuity should be expected and looked for.” (“Doctrinal Theologian,” 499; see also 502).

¹⁰⁵ When writing Forewords for new works on his theology, Moltmann often praises other thinkers when they “take him to task” or critically engage with his thought; in this sense, not only does he engage in a critical conversation with other theology in his own work, but in fact welcomes it from other thinkers; see Moltmann, “Foreword,” in McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, xi-xiv; Moltmann “Foreword,” in Harvie, *Moltmann’s Ethics of Hope*, ix-x.

¹⁰⁶ Bauckham mentions the recurrence of this charge: *Theology*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ This is not to say that the charge is completely without merit. However, Stephen Williams, who is an appreciative-yet-critical interpreter of Moltmann, has consistently emphasized areas that are often touted as speculative in Moltmann but which are, under close examination, grounded in either the historical revelation of God or the present realities of his church. See Stephen Williams, “Moltmann: A Critical Introduction,” 79-124, esp. 95, 97, 116.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 77. Of course, Williams believes that Moltmann sometimes espouses perspectives that cannot be fully demonstrated by the events recorded in the Bible. See, e.g., his points about Moltmann’s understanding of God’s relationship to history, *ibid.* 110-111.

¹⁰⁹ *ABP*, 231.

cross and is not about ‘thinking’; it is not a matter of speculative metaphysics.”¹¹⁰

Alongside his practicality, which concerns the concrete nature of many of Moltmann’s theological proposals and reflections, we need to note his emphasis on doxology, which often concerns the areas of his thought that do verge on speculation. Again, we look to his social, eschatological understanding of the Trinity. Rather than seeking to thematize God within any self-enclosed systematization, Moltmann comments that

in ordering these doctrinal tenets in theology, it is not a question of one schematic arrangement over another. The doctrine of the Trinity has *a doxological form*, since it expresses the experience of God in the apprehension of Christ and in the fellowship of the Spirit. This means that in this doctrine no definitions are permissible which simply pin something down, as a way of ‘mastering’ it. [*keine Definitionen zulässig die etwas feststellen, um es beherrschen zu wollen*] [...] ‘Concepts create idols. Only wonder understands,’ said Gregory of Nyssa. And this wonder over God respects God’s unfathomable mystery, however great the delight in knowing.¹¹¹

The doxological backdrop to Moltmann’s theology hints at the genuinely blurry boundary between “speculation” and “theological wonder,” or what Moltmann calls in one place “theofantasy.”¹¹² The texts and traditions and liturgies of the Christian tradition drive the theologian’s mind to pursue more deeply the ways and acts of God.¹¹³ It is in this context that Moltmann, when verging on speculation, can claim that theology-as-worship might go beyond the explicit testimony of the scriptures or the concrete experiences of the church today, though without ceasing to be fundamentally *rooted* in these things.

Having traversed a detailed, though cursory, survey of Moltmann’s methodological tendencies, we can now summarize them as well as note their significance for studying his christology:

- *Promissory-Messianic Hermeneutic* – This is the real source of most perceived

¹¹⁰ Cowdell, *Is Jesus Unique?*, 35—drawing on Cook’s *The Jesus of Faith: A Study in Christology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 181.

¹¹¹ *SpL*, 73 (German: 86); also *ibid.*, 301-306; *ET*, 26; *TK*, 152-153.

¹¹² *ET*, 25.

¹¹³ This is perhaps nowhere more clearly perceived, or experienced, in examining the doctrine of the Trinity in general in the life of the church, which has given rise to the greatest heights of doxological insight as well as speculative abandon. See *TK*, 151-154.

“dialectic” in Moltmann, and any christological construct should be passed through this hermeneutic in *both directions* (from the past as promise, from the future as messianic) in order to fully understand its implications.

- *Anti-dualism* – The dichotomizing schemes of many Enlightenment philosophies are starkly opposed by Moltmann; in christological interpretation it will force Moltmann to consider christology within new fields of thought and fresh affinities (ecology, relational and developmental psychology, psychosomatic anthropology, *et cetera*).
- *Correlational Praxiology* – In an attempt to echo Bonhoeffer’s pressing query: “Who is Jesus Christ for us *today*?” Moltmann has said that to turn toward the world cannot be separated from turning toward Christ and considering, once again and always, his significance for the church and the cosmos.
- *Critical and Conversational Ecumenicism* – All areas of theological inquiry are shaped by those who have spoken in the past. Moltmann’s christology seeks, fundamentally, to dialogue with creed and canon and theologians of historical import, but also to correlate christological insights with the questions of the present day.
- *Doxological Tendency* – Again, the line can be blurry between doxology and speculation, but one wonders if this is avoidable. Regardless, in his more abstract formulations, it will be worth noting what is most key for Moltmann’s point, and to see if it cannot be articulated in a more grounded, less speculative tenor. Furthermore, we should note that Moltmann has never been afraid of overemphasis in the interest of making a point in a given context (especially in his early work),¹¹⁴ and he appreciates

¹¹⁴ On overemphasis as a deliberate aspect of his theologizing: *TH*, 11-12; “My Theological Career,” 173-174. Even balanced commentators can find such overstatements to be a serious methodological liability at times; e.g. Neal, *Theology as Hope*, 55n79. Some commentators, however, run to this well too often rather than engaging with the clear and dominant lines of Moltmann’s thematic progressions—e.g. Antony Clarke’s persistent references to Moltmann’s “imprecision” and “inconsistency” (*Cry in the Darkness*, 69, 70, 72, 78-79, 89).

the evocative and poetic capacities of theology in a way that few scholars do.¹¹⁵ Thus, in thinking through his christological doctrine as we proceed through the next sections of this chapter, "doctrine" might be better replaced by "portrait" or "tapestry"—a series of brushstrokes or threads, all contributing to the whole, but needing to be "stood back from" if they are going to be adequately taken in.

Having given a relatively thorough explication of Moltmann's methodology and mode of presentation in his theology, we now turn our attention to specifically doctrinal questions relating to his christology. The remainder of this chapter will look at the issue of Moltmann's relationship to the Chalcedonian Definition and the notion of the "two natures" of Christ.

§3 Situating Moltmann's Christology – Creedal Considerations

We have seen that Moltmann is a contextual and correlational theologian rooted in the biblical narratives and interpreting them through a number of doctrinal and contextual grids, including eschatology and the contemporary concerns of the church. We want to now explore how Moltmann's theological proclivities cause his christology to take on certain aspects when it is placed in light of traditional Chalcedonian emphases.

3.3.1 - Christology, Context, and Creed

Bauckham has stated that "[Moltmann's christology] is one of the few recent christologies which is capable of reinvigorating christological thinking, expanding its horizons and realigning it with the church's task of witness to the contemporary world."¹¹⁶ Moltmann has

¹¹⁵ On the value of the poetic and even pictorial articulation and representation of ideas, see Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, 162(n137); Moltmann, "Foreword," in McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, xiii-xiv. There is a further unmined topic in Moltmann studies relating to the importance of art and iconography for this theological method, e.g. Andrei Rublev's classic picture of the Trinity (*TK*, xvi; *ET*, 305); medieval "mercy seat" images of the Trinity at the cross (*ABP*, 195; *ET*, 305); Joachim of Fiore's *specifically pictorial representation* of the three interlocking rings of trinitarian history (see "Messianic or Transcendent?", 102-106; *CoG*, 143-144; *SpL*, 297-298 and the references there). Further references to significant artwork which motivated and inspired Moltmann can be found in *ABP*, 191; *CG*, 6.

¹¹⁶ *Theology*, 199.

always been concerned with the *kairos* in which his theology emerges and to which it speaks, and this is certainly the case with his christology—in his view, as the soteriological questioning of theology’s current horizon shifts, christology must shift along with it.¹¹⁷ Appropriately enough, questions arise concerning what such a *correlational* view of theology might do with doctrinal *tradition*. Here we recall Moltmann’s enduring propensity to see all theology as a provisional conversation; no aspect of tradition is allowed to go unquestioned, but nor should it be summarily or presumptuously tossed aside. The present concerns and past traditions of the church dynamically engage with each other on the road to richer and more applicable formulations of the faith. Christologically speaking, there are of course plenty of time-ensconced categories to go around; methodologically, Moltmann champions what he sees as useful and critiques, ignores, or de-emphasizes what he deems less vital. But it is very rare—contrary to some of his less-sympathetic interlocutors—that Moltmann flatly contradicts creedal affirmations. And along the way, it is certainly not always the newest or trendiest forms of theology that receive his approval.¹¹⁸

Another characteristic of Moltmann’s christology that deserves, but seldom receives, targeted discussion is his determinative concern with Judaism. As a post-WWII German who became aware of the dawning horror of the death camps only when he was imprisoned as a P.O.W., Moltmann has been clear that the looming shadow of those events fueled his attention to both human suffering and Jewish categories of understanding.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Jewish thinkers are hugely important to Moltmann’s work overall,¹²⁰ and in his longest work on

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 200. This is quite typical of the correlational approach that Moltmann adopts throughout his work: “If it is correct to say that the Bible is essentially a witness to the promissory history of God, then the role of Christian theology is to bring the remembrances of the future to bear on the hopes and anxieties of the present” (Moltmann, “Problems Today,” 8).

¹¹⁸ Bauckham rightly highlights that in Moltmann’s dual evaluation of patristic christology and liberal Enlightenment christology, he favors the cosmological emphasis (though not the substance metaphysics) of the early church and denounces the “Jesusologies” of modernity, *Theology*, 200-201; see Moltmann, *WJC*, 46-63.

¹¹⁹ The horror and shame of the Holocaust is made clear across Moltmann’s work, e.g. *GSS*, 169-172; *CG*, xi; *JCTW*, 108-109; *ET*, 4, 115-116; *ABP*, 29.

¹²⁰ Most notably Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, Abraham Heschel, and Schalom Ben-Chorin.

christology, he emphatically states, “In this christology...I wanted the Christian-Jewish dialogue to be continually present.”¹²¹ This sensitivity to Judaism has a two-fold effect on Moltmann’s christological work: (1) It intensifies his vision of Christ’s particular historical Jewishness, that is, his developmental and social context; (2) it is a factor (among several) that causes Moltmann to often avoid discussion of certain tradition-specific categories in Christian theology, or to discuss them in oblique or creative ways. This second effect will be readily evident as we turn in our next sub-section to consider the question of Christ’s two natures specifically.

3.3.2 – Chalcedon and the “Two Natures” of Christ

It should be striking to us that across the writings of serious theologians there are multiple dimensions of disagreement concerning just how Moltmann relates to what we might call Chalcedonian christology (or the traditional two-natures framework). Donald Macleod remarks that “[in] *The Way of Jesus Christ* Moltmann achieves the extraordinary feat of writing 300 pages on Christology without once mentioning Chalcedon.”¹²² Macleod is incorrect about this; Moltmann does discuss Chalcedon and two-nature formulations in that particular work¹²³ and elsewhere. But it is not an area where Moltmann presents an abundance of specific discourse, and other commentators have aligned with Macleod’s concerns insofar as they disapprovingly note Moltmann’s neglect of a sustained and careful account of where he stands before the Chalcedonian formulation.¹²⁴

Beyond these voices, however, there is further disagreement. Don Schweitzer holds that though Moltmann focuses on the trinitarian relationships of Jesus, he in fact *assumes* the

¹²¹ WJC, xvi; see also JCTW, 108-109.

¹²² *Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 145.

¹²³ WJC, xiii, 47-53.

¹²⁴ E.g., Williams, “Moltmann on Jesus Christ,” 104-113.

truth of the “hypostatic union” in Christ.¹²⁵ Peter Schmiechen, on the other hand, maintains that Moltmann *qualifies* “the language of two natures... though his intent is not to reject these categories but to incorporate them into a larger eschatological perspective.”¹²⁶ And different still, Ryan Neal states directly that Moltmann “rejects” two-natures christology.¹²⁷ What are we to make of this plurality of interpretation?

Upon examination of these commentators (and the portions of Moltmann’s work which inform their analyses) it can be seen that all three evaluations have correctly identified certain aspects of Moltmann’s complicated relationship to christological tradition.¹²⁸ Especially in light of our above discussion of Moltmann’s theological methodology, it must be said that Schmiechen has most clearly detected the key controlling principle for Moltmann. Though often critical of traditional theology, Moltmann makes it quite clear if he patently rejects some aspect of it (e.g. divine impassibility¹²⁹), and no such patent rejection can be found for the two-natures conception *per se*.¹³⁰ Ryan Neal’s citations of Moltmann which are meant to support his judgment that Moltmann “rejects” the two-natures framework all refer to passages where Moltmann is discussing how, in his estimation, two-natures christology can or has been problematic for a deep understanding of the cross (insofar as the human nature alone suffers and thus safeguards the divine nature from being affected), but none of these passages¹³¹ feature an outright rejection of a two-natures conception. Moltmann

¹²⁵ *Contemporary Christologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 78.

¹²⁶ *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 135. He will later (140) note that Moltmann seems to imply only one nature in Christ at times—e.g. in *CG*, 231-234—but does not attempt to constructively reconcile these two observations.

¹²⁷ See “Jürgen Moltmann,” in *Companion to the Theologians*, ed. Ian S. Markham (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 375; also see *Theology as Hope*, 47-48.

¹²⁸ Bauckham is quite right to state the matter simply as “Moltmann is not content with the way in which Chalcedonian Christology could speak of God’s suffering and death[....]” (*Theology*, 54), but he does not then go on to delineate any more precisely how Moltmann handles the “two natures” in light of that discontentment.

¹²⁹ See *CG*, esp. 273-274; “Can God Suffer?” in *FC*, 69-72; *TK*, esp. Chapter 2.

¹³⁰ Moltmann certainly critiques some traditional understandings of the divine-human-person model, but saying that he “rejects” the framework, without qualification, may be going beyond the evidence. Note Neal’s ameliorating comments in his related footnote, 154n11.

¹³¹ Neal cites the following: *WJC*, xiii-xv, 53, 136ff.; *CG*, 227-235; *FC*, 62-64.

never declares that his christology is anti-Chalcedonian, and he has had many opportunities to do so. Moltmann rarely, if ever, rejects any revered part of theological tradition in a broad or wholesale fashion. As Schmiechen notes, Moltmann will instead absorb traditional formulations into some new, unique synthesis, thus retaining them in some form.¹³²

In light of this, both Schweitzer and Neal appear to be partially on-target in their evaluations. As we will see clearly in our subsequent chapters, Moltmann affirms both the deity and the humanity of Christ, but he does so in ways that resist direct parallel to a standard Chalcedonian account. Nevertheless, some version of a two-natures conception (or at least comfort with such a conception) is latent in Moltmann, and Neal may recognize this, for, even in the midst of discussing his own assessment that Moltmann rejects two-natures christology,¹³³ he does quote the following passage from Moltmann's writing: "the cleavage [*der Riß*] of death on the cross goes right through God himself, and not merely through the divine and human [*gottmenschliche*] person of Christ."¹³⁴ This mention of an assumed divine-human person for Christ is significant (and seems to be the sort of declaration which fuels Don Schweitzer's opinion). Furthermore, in *The Way of Jesus Christ*, after presenting his pneumatological christology (to be examined much more fully later on), Moltmann quickly moves to state that "Spirit christology is not directed against the doctrine of the two natures."¹³⁵ Both of these quotations come in passages where Moltmann could easily dismiss

¹³² Bauckham also notes this methodological trend: *Theology*, 200.

¹³³ See Neal, *Theology as Hope*, 47; he references also John Webster's critique of Moltmann's view of two-natures christology: Webster, "Trinity and Suffering," 5. However, Webster stops short of saying Moltmann rejects two-natures formulation outright, and he clearly detects the specific issues that Moltmann takes with the doctrine's past uses; Webster's analysis is largely compatible, therefore, with the more holistic analysis of Moltmann's stance that I am favoring here.

¹³⁴ "Theology of the Cross Today," in *FC*, 65 (German: 73). Cf. Neal's comments on this passage (*Theology as Hope*, 48).

¹³⁵ My translation. German: "Geist-Christologie ist auch nicht gegen die Zwei-Naturen-Lehre gerichtet" (*Weg Jesu Christi*, 93). Moltmann is inclined to make this point often—that Logos christology and Spirit christology correspond rather than conflict. See his major work on pneumatology, *SpL*, 17, 72, 232-234. The recent work of Myk Habets is among the most successful, nuanced presentations of these two (Spirit and Logos) christological paradigms working in tandem; see *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010); significantly, Moltmann is a very consistent interlocutor for Habets in this work. Ian McFarland has recently theorized a "pneumatic Chalcedonian" that offers several insights

the two natures model wholeheartedly, had he a mind to do so.¹³⁶ In this sense, then, while Schweitzer's comment that Moltmann "assumes" the two-natures model is too simple, it hints at the retaining-yet-modifying approach that Moltmann adopts. The most significant example of such an approach to the doctrine is still to be found in *Crucified God*.¹³⁷ There we find him, after criticizing traditional formulations (which he sees as functioning mainly to protect the ostensible impassibility of Christ's divinity), speaking approvingly of Luther's expanded conception of the *communicatio idiomatum*, but noting that Luther saw the entwining of the divine and human histories inconsistently, mainly as a result of his under-developed trinitarianism.¹³⁸ Such discussion invites the notion that if the two natures conception can be preserved apart from a classical, apathetic model of theism, Moltmann is willing to let it stand.¹³⁹

We might then hold together the three seemingly contrary analyses as follows: Since two natures christology is a traditional doctrine, Moltmann dialogues with it, assumes the truth that he detects in it (Schweitzer), rejects the interpretations of it that he finds problematic (Neal¹⁴⁰), and incorporates it into a wider eschatological, trinitarian perspective (Schmiechen). And, in fact, Moltmann himself makes this quite clear: "The ancient church's doctrine of the two natures [of Christ] will have to be taken up once again in the framework

along these lines: "Spirit and Incarnation: Toward a Pneumatic Chalcedonianism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.2 (April 2014): 143-158.

¹³⁶ In the passage from *FC* (65), for instance, Moltmann continues to emphasize "going beyond" the two-natures model, seeming to want to retain the doctrine, but formulate it afresh and in the midst of new concerns and concepts—and, notably, without a commitment to a "classical" conception of the immutable, impassible divine nature.

¹³⁷ See esp. *CG*, 227-235. Webster's analysis is helpful here, though he is critical of Moltmann's view of the doctrinal history: "Trinity and Suffering," 5.

¹³⁸ Scholarship on Luther's view of the *communicatio* has been vexed, with some scholars arguing that Luther is innovative if inconsistent (similar to Moltmann's analysis) and others arguing that he is traditional, albeit rhetorically unclear. See the excellent work by David Luy, *Dominus Mortuus: Martin Luther on the Incorruptibility of God in Christ* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2014), esp. Introduction and Chapter 3.

¹³⁹ This will be further demonstrated when we examine Moltmann's particular outlook on kenosis.

¹⁴⁰ Neal eventually describes Moltmann as avoiding the establishment of "a firewall, a static separation of human and divine effectively keeping suffering the divine and the divine from suffering," (47). This is a fair summation of Moltmann's worries with this tradition, especially in *Crucified God* and *Future of Creation*. Rob Lister notes this as well: *God is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 136-137.

of the post-modern, ecological paradigm, and will have to be newly interpreted.”¹⁴¹

But what precisely is this “new interpretation” that Moltmann offers? We must leave this question aside for the moment, for the answer he provides acquires both its force and clarity from the manifold, intersecting layers of his multi-dimensioned christology. The full exposition of this christology, including its nuanced (and often implicit) view on the kenosis of Christ, will be the subject of our next three chapters.

§4 Conclusion – Christological Preliminaries

This chapter has served a straightforward goal by initiating the thesis’ examination of the christology of Jürgen Moltmann. Moltmann’s theological methodology has been presented, and will be referred to often as we set about the important task of unfolding the diverse aspects of his christological program. An initial exploration of how his method affects his doctrinal construction was seen in our preliminary look at his view on Chalcedonian, two natures christology. These steps have set the stage, so to speak, for the key exposition of his christology which will populate our next several chapters: Chapter 4 will focus on the thematic range of Moltmann’s christology, detailing the various lines of thinking about Christ that he uniquely integrates; Chapters 5 and 6 will focus entirely on presenting the details, depth, and relevance of kenosis in Moltmann’s christological thought.

¹⁴¹ WJC, 215.

MOLTMANN'S CHRISTOLOGY (II)

PRINCIPAL CHRISTOLOGICAL THEMATICS

Our previous chapter analyzed the methodology of Moltmann, and then applied those insights to the contentious issue of his outlook on Chalcedon. This chapter will continue our exploration of his christology by engaging in what we can call a thematic analysis, which intends to show that Moltmann's christology contains several diverse themes which animate its pluriform expressions throughout his career. We will demonstrate through synchronic investigation how these different areas of focus all play a role in Moltmann's fully mature, integrated thinking about Christ.

This chapter proceeds by use of thematic categorical designations that are helpful in organizing Moltmann's christological thought. Only some of these designations are explicitly used by Moltmann (e.g. "messianic christology" and "pneumatological christology"); others are my own heuristic invention for the purpose of organizing and drawing together other key themes (e.g. "promise christology," "firstborn christology"). As discussed in Chapter 3, Moltmann often resists hard-and-fast categorical breakdowns of his christological suppositions. Regardless, this strategic survey of his thought, as it emerges from a critical reading of his major works, is important for determining the contours of his christology and especially the importance of kenosis within that christology.

§1 Moltmann's Messianic/Promise Christology¹

Messianic christology as a category is quite at home with Moltmann; after all, his own title for his six-volume “contributions” to theology is “messianic theology,”² and the subtitle for his largest work on christology is “Christology in Messianic Dimensions.” But what precisely does Moltmann mean by this? On the simplest level, the category arises from Moltmann’s *promissory* outlook on revelation and theology, hence the additional term for this facet of his christology: promise. Like “hope,” “promise” is a simple term that bears massive significance for comprehending Moltmannian theology. God’s revelation, knowledge of God, indeed, even God’s very divinity, are understood within the framework of promises that break into the present and contradict it with a future or eschatological reality.³ God’s making of promises that contradict the transience and death of the present world, and God’s faithfulness and wisdom in bringing those promises to fruition, are the principal providential framework which bookends Moltmann’s conception of theology and history, and they serve this role from the earliest stage of his thought.

The logic of promise has significant implications for this part of Moltmann’s christology. Promises naturally contain a two-fold sense: the past (in which the promise is made, requiring trust in the promise-maker) and the future (in which the promise is fulfilled, vindicating the character and capability of the promise-maker). Moltmann emphasizes that, as messiah, Jesus possesses such dimensions in distinct array: he is the fulfillment of many messianic promises (and he is thus the future of those past promises) and he is himself an eschatological promise for the oncoming future of redemption (thus standing, for us, in past history as that which promises a future reality). This important interplay partially constitutes

¹ “The doctrine of the Christ is the doctrine of the anointed Messiah.... Christology is nothing other than messiology,” (Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. M.D. Meeks [Fortress Press, 2007], 100).

² *GC*, xvii; *WJC*, xiii.

³ E.g. God’s revelation: *TH*, 42-45; knowledge of God: *GC*, 60-65; God’s divinity: *TH*, 143.

“the dialectic of christology and eschatology” in Moltmann’s thought.⁴

4.1.1 - Promised Messiah.

“Are you the one who is to come?”⁵ This question reverberates powerfully within Moltmann’s christology;⁶ he in fact deems it the “earliest question about Christ.”⁷ Moltmann clearly perceives in Jesus of Nazareth the forceful emergence of a reality that comes to meet the expectations of the Old Testament:

In terms of open questions of the Old Testament and the apocalyptic promises, and the existential experience of Israel in exile and alienation, Jesus is revealed as the one who fulfills these promises.... If we start from this point, it is no longer a matter of indifference or chance that Jesus was a Jew, appeared in Israel, came into conflict with the guardians of his people’s law, and was condemned and handed over to the Romans to be crucified....⁸

And such expectations are not general, but grounded in the distinctly messianic range of Israel’s prophets:

Isaiah 61.1ff. puts [the] gospel into the mouth of the end-time messianic prophet, who is filled with the Spirit of the Lord and brings about salvation through his word. In relation to God, [the promised messiah] proclaims the direct lordship of Yahweh without limits and without end, and in relation to human beings, justice, community and liberty. His message is addressed to the poor, the wretched, the sick and the hopeless, because these are the people who suffer most from God’s remoteness and human hostility.

It is thus of paramount importance that Jesus was a Jew, and that he manifested particular realities that were promised by Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Jews, in the Old Testament. Jesus’ specifically situated humanity is not a result of historical happenstance; it has abiding significance for all christological thinking, for it indicates that whoever Christ is, he stands in the auguring light thrown by the Old Testament, taking its “law and promise” as both his “presupposition [*Voraussetzung*]” and his “conflict

⁴ See, e.g., “Trinitarian History,” in *FC*, 86-88.

⁵ Mt 11.3 and pars.

⁶ *CG*, 98; *WJC*, 28; *JCTW*, 119.

⁷ *CG*, 99.

⁸ *Ibid.* See also *JCTW*, 119.

[*Konflikt*].”⁹ It is at the intersection of the promises and the law that we see Jesus’ distinct teaching and vision for the kingdom emerge, as well as his unique vision for his own person as the inaugurator of the kingdom. As Moltmann puts it, “On the basis of the identification of his message with his person Jesus can be called ‘the incarnation of the promise of the kingdom.’”¹⁰

In Jesus’ response to the question (posed by the followers of John the Baptist) about whether or not he was the one to fulfill the promises of old, Matthew 11.2ff. indicates that the “events which took place around Jesus and his word speak on his behalf, for they are signs of the messianic age.”¹¹ Moltmann does not stress that Jesus was the fulfillment of OT prophecies (nor does he deny it) but rather that Jesus consciously brought into effect messianic realities: “I am assuming that Jesus understood himself and his message in the expectation categories of this messianic hope, and that his followers saw him in these categories too, so that Jesus is linked with the messianic hope in a primal and indissoluble sense [*ursprüngliche und unablösbare Weise*].”¹²

For Moltmann, the messianic “secret” of Jesus emerges in the face of two questions. The first we have already noted: “Are you he who is to come?” The second comes from Jesus himself, to his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mk 8.29 and pars.). To both questions, Moltmann avers, Jesus either answers to the messianic role “indirectly” or without “affirming or denying.”¹³ Though Jesus stands in the light of the OT, he also will cast light of his own, for this is not simply a new-but-predictable reality—it is something unexpected. The

⁹ *TH*, 141-142 (German: 127). By this, Moltmann foreshadows his more cogent explication later in his work; Jesus simultaneously fulfills those promises of Israel and confounds their expectations in relation to those promises as the suffering, dying messiah.

¹⁰ *CPS*, 82. Moltmann here cites Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalypse,” *New Testament Questions of Today* (Fortress Press, 1969), 122.

¹¹ *CG*, 98.

¹² *JCTW*, 110-111 (German: 97); further, *WJC*, 137. The evaluation of Jesus’ self-consciousness which sees him deliberately acting in a messianic fashion has appeared in scholarship since the original “quest for the historical Jesus” but has received some of its most forceful recent articulation in the work of N.T. Wright; see *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Parts I & II.

¹³ *CG*, 98; *WJC*, 138.

disciples and those surrounding Jesus wanted to identify him analogically with something known and foretold, but Jesus instead gives

himself and the disciples an answer of his own: the announcement of his suffering [Mark 8.31ff.].... Whether [the disciples' and peoples'] yardstick is Elijah or John the Baptist, the figure of the messiah or the Son of man, ideas of this kind, if they lead to preconceived judgments about what is to come, make the experience of what is new impossible or contradictory. Jesus does not reject the titles. He suspends them, and takes the path of suffering that leads to the cross.¹⁴

Thus, in his clear role of completing the promises of the Old Testament faith, Jesus also introduces a staggering new reality, the reality of the messiah's cross. In this sense, Jesus both fulfills and redefines "messiah"—this is a key point for Moltmann, because it intrinsically binds together one of his most directive christological categories—the messianic—with self-sacrificial suffering.¹⁵

4.1.2 - Messiah's Promise

Not only does Jesus bring promise to pass in himself, but he is also himself a promise of what is to come. As fulfillment of past promises, he is an inaugurating fulfillment that promises still something more to come:

If the Christ event contains the validation of the promise, then this means no less than that through the faithfulness and truth of God the promise is made true in Christ—and made true wholly, unbreakably, for ever and for all.... 'All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen' (II Cor. 1.20).... On the other hand, the gospel itself becomes unintelligible if the contours of the promise are not recognized in it itself. It would lose its power to give eschatological direction... if it were not made clear that the gospel constitutes on earth and in time the promise of the future of Christ.¹⁶

The emergence of the "new promise" of Christ's gospel is made manifest in the resurrection, and thus the two promises (the promised messiah and messiah's promise, using the language

¹⁴ Ibid. Further: "Jesus' true 'messianic secret' is therefore *the secret of his suffering*. He did not 'claim' the messiahship; he suffered it" (ibid., 139, emphasis original).

¹⁵ In *SpL* Moltmann states that Jesus offers "a new definition to the notion of the messiah. This idea is now newly defined through Jesus' own experiences.... The *fact* of Jesus' messiahship was derived from his endowment with the Spirit in baptism; but now its *content* is defined through the vista that stretches forward towards his death. What is known as 'the messianic secret' is unveiled in Jesus' sufferings and his dying" (63).

¹⁶ *TH*, 147-148.

we have adopted here) must be seen dialectically, or, in the spirit of some of Moltmann's later work, *perichoretically*—past and future, promise and what-is-to-come, cross and resurrection, all mutually interpreting and informing the other as interrelated moments.¹⁷

What is the content of this promise made in Christ and brought through Christ? “Christ's resurrection has an added value and surplus of promise [*Mehrwert und einen Verheißungsüberschuß*] over Christ's death.... it promises a ‘new creation’ which is more than ‘the first creation’ (Rev 21:4: ‘For the first... has passed away’).”¹⁸ The resurrection presents a new hope in the midst of the world, and confirms Jesus as not only a promised person, but as a person who brings another promise, the promised (and renewing) end of the old world order.¹⁹ He is both the messiah of past prophecy and of eschatology: “[The] gospel is not a utopian description of some far-off future. It is the daybreak of this future in the pardoning, promising word that sets people free.”²⁰

§2 Moltmann's Solidarity/Firstborn Christology²¹

Moltmann's theology hinges on the “crucified God.” The cross stands as the revelatory linchpin around which all else revolves.²² (More accurately: the cross shows that God is

¹⁷ See “Theology as Eschatology,” 25-27. Again, as discussed above, it should be emphasized that Moltmann does not do away with the harshness of dialectic, but that the dialectic is always between the brokenness of the current state of affairs and God's redeeming *eschaton*. As far as other realities are concerned, Moltmann is often concerned to demonstrate a dualism-dissolving coinherence and mutual formation, not a paradoxical, eschatologically-resolved dialectic.

¹⁸ *WJC*, 186 (German: 208); see further, 215, 223; *TH*, 202-215; *ET*, 100: “‘To believe in Jesus Christ means *living* from the promises of God’ [Iwand, *Predigt-Meditationen* (n.4), 165].... The promised life becomes lived promise and living hope, and the life lived in hope becomes the *real promise* of its own fulfillment in ‘the life of the world to come’.”

¹⁹ Moltmann also lends this a trinitarian dimension, speaking of the Holy Spirit's procession also as promise of the new creation, see *ibid.*; *TH*, 212; *SpL*, 7, 155, 280—but Moltmann makes it clear that the Paraclete itself was promised by Jesus (158, 232).

²⁰ *WJC*, 96; “The gospel is remembered promise” (*SpL*, 232).

²¹ “Jesus' cross requires christology... but it is also the mystery behind all christologies, for it calls them into question and places them in constant need of revision” (*CG*, 86).

²² Alan Lewis artfully refers to Moltmann as a “Holy Saturday theologian,” due to the fact that he is unafraid of testing Christian convictions “against the reality of suffering, death, and doubt” (*Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001], 215).

immanent, historically-involved and relational,²³ and this doctrinal step undergirds the later-expanding orbit of Moltmann's theology; the cross is clearly primary when it comes to his controlling theological hermeneutic.) If viewed from the hill of Golgotha, Moltmann claims to perceive that "a mild Docetism runs through the christology of the ancient church."²⁴ The content of this docetism, in Moltmann's view, is primarily perceived in the early church's unwillingness to attribute any measure of suffering to God, due to an allegiance to the Platonic *apatheia* axiom.²⁵ But if the cross is not to be "evacuated of deity,"²⁶ then worldly suffering must have some genuine meaning for God, and, for Moltmann, God must truly be able to experience some measure of suffering.²⁷

4.2.1 - Christ Crucified

Moltmann argues, famously, that the divine Son genuinely experienced suffering at the cross, and that this suffering affected the Trinity itself. The Son suffered the death of the person of Jesus on the cross; the Father suffered because of the suffering of the Son; the Holy Spirit served as the bond of suffering, co-willing love that held them in unity even in the midst of their most profound separation, the separation of the cross.²⁸ "God himself is involved in the history of Christ's passion"²⁹ becomes the staurological axiom for Moltmann. Instead of seeing on the cross a disunity between the divine and human aspects of Christ, he powerfully

²³ "We are bound to talk about God's vulnerability, suffering, and pain, in view of Christ's passion, his death on the cross and his descent into hell. God experiences suffering, death and hell. This is the way he experiences history" (CPS, 64).

²⁴ CG, 89, cf. 227-228. Latent docetism in christology is a theme to which Moltmann returns: e.g. "Cross Today," 75n47; SpL, 250.

²⁵ This is the initial point-of-departure for Moltmann's "revolution in the concept of God" (see CG, 187-207), and is well-illustrated across the following protracted discussions: CG, 267-274; "Cross Today," 67-71; TK, Ch. 2.

²⁶ CG, 214.

²⁷ "What does the cross of Jesus mean for God himself?.... a serious fault of earlier Protestant theology was that it did not look at the cross in the context of the relationship of the Son to the Father, but related it directly to mankind as an expiatory death for sin" (CG, 201).

²⁸ WJC, 172-175; CG, 240-247; TK, 80-83.

²⁹ TK, 21.

declares a unity of divinity with the hellish realities of pain, abandonment, and loss. Just as the identity questions are key for the messianic and promissory aspects of Moltmann's christology, here it is the experiences of Gethsemane and Golgotha—and Christ's own words in the midst of those human experiences—which form, quite literally, the crux of christology's *agon*:

[In Gethsemane] comes the prayer that in its original version sounds like a demand: 'Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me' (Mark 14.36).... Is the prayer for deliverance from death? I think it is fear of separation from the Father, horror in the face of 'the death of God'.... This *unanswered prayer* is the beginning of Jesus' real passion—his agony at his forsakenness by the Father.³⁰

'My God, why has thou forsaken me?' (Mark 15.34). He hung nailed to the cross for three hours, evidently in an agony which reduced him to silence, waiting for death. Then he died with a loud cry which is an expression of the most profound rejection [*tiefste Verworfenheit*] by the God whom he called 'Abba', whose messianic kingdom had been his whole passion, and whose Son he knew himself to be.³¹

Thus, the sufferings of Christ, from the garden to the grave, must be seen (in Moltmann's view) as "the history of the passion which takes place between the Father and the Son."³²

This aspect of his christology occasioned a famous critique by Dorothee Sölle. In short, Sölle's reading of *The Crucified God* led her to see a sadistic movement of the Father against the Son on the cross—a sort of "divine child abuse." Moltmann's response has always been to repeat, rather than correct, what he argued in *The Crucified God*: Jesus willingly accepted the cup of suffering ("Not my will, but thy will be done") and, given his own predictions of his suffering and his commitment to the Father's will, was not coerced in any way to the cross. And the Father is not remote from Christ's passion, but out of love for the

³⁰ Ibid., 76. The language here is just as strong as Luther's own, see *ibid.*, 77. Cf. Martin Luther, "A Meditation on Christ's Passion," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writing*, ed. T.F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 126-131.

³¹ TK, 78 (German: 93).

³² Ibid., 76. There are times when Moltmann seems to imply that the Trinity is constituted in history via the cross (cf. CG, 239-247). This led to substantial criticism, as it definitively imperiled numerous items of creedal orthodoxy and smacked heavily of a staurological Hegelianism—Bauckham's early work on Moltmann highlights these issues well: see *Messianic Theology*, 106-110. With his later addition of a robust social doctrine of the Trinity, however, Moltmann is able to treat the cross as the key *revelatory* event of the trinitarian relationships and the trinitarian shape of history, rather than the constituting origin of the Trinity (see TK, 62-83; cf. Chapter XII in *SpL*).

Son the Father suffers also as the Son dies.³³ Such trinitarian co-suffering, says Moltmann, is hardly the locus of sadism.³⁴ This sort of “trinitarian theology of the cross” is what forms the heuristic connection between Moltmann’s assault on impassibility and his promulgation of a social trinitarian framework.³⁵ In Ryan Neal’s words: “For Moltmann, the historical activity of God in the life of Jesus governs one’s view of the Trinity.... Thus, a proper theology of the cross, removed of the philosophical presupposition of impassibility, avoids merely allowing divine passibility: it elevates it to a constitutive element of God’s experience.”³⁶

This facet of Moltmann’s christology—its original offense, one could say—has caused no end of consternation, and no end of inspiration.³⁷ The crucified Christ, apart from any predetermining metaphysical axioms, allows Moltmann to explore fresh horizons. In connection with our previously examined dimension of the christology, it is this cross—this “revolution in the concept of God”³⁸—that not only counters the Stoic deity of apathetic detachment, but also the zealous, militaristic messianic outlook of first-century Jewish hope. The promised messiah brings a twist to the picture—he is the suffering (genuinely suffering, in robust trinitarian terms) Son of God.³⁹

What are the consequences of the cross’s revelation of such a passionate God? What does this suffering *mean*? This is the key question of Christ’s *Leidenschaft*—“Why was it

³³ CG, 241-246.

³⁴ Moltmann on Sölle’s criticism: ABP, 198-200; WJC, 175-177.

³⁵ See the connections initiating in CG, 235-249, then fully articulated in TK, 61-90.

³⁶ Neal, “Jürgen Moltmann,” 375.

³⁷ For consternation: Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross: An Analytical Look at the Problem of Pain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994), 72-76, 81-82—Blocher focuses acutely on the alleged Hegelian tendencies in *Crucified God*, though he aligns Moltmann and Hegel more closely than the evidence allows—cf. the lucid and rigorous discussion in Siu-Kwong Tang’s published disseration, *God’s History in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, European University Studies XXIII (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996), esp. Chapter 4.

For inspiration, we can note especially the work of Jon Sobrino: *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), esp. 28-33, 179-235.

³⁸ “This is where the revolution in the concept of God is to be found which makes faith in the crucified God necessary. For here a God did not merely act outwards, out of his untouchable glory and his supreme sovereignty. Here the Father acted on himself, i.e., on the self of his love, his Son; and therefore the Son suffered from himself, the self of his love, his Father.[...] [This] overcomes[s] the apathetic God who cannot be touched or troubled either by the human history of suffering or by the passion of Christ” (“Cross Today,” 67).

³⁹ WJC, 153, 178-179; “Trinitarian History,” 93-94; SpL, 299; TK, 22-23.

necessary for the Christ to suffer these things?” (Lk 24.26),⁴⁰ or as Moltmann has alternatively phrased it, “What can knowledge of the ‘crucified God’ mean for helpless and suffering men?”⁴¹ The next theme of his christology is specifically focused on an answer to this question.

4.2.2 - Christ in Solidarity: The Suffering Brother

This aspect of Moltmann’s christology receives marked underscoring in his thought, and is tremendously important for understanding the “extent” of the incarnation. To what degree does Christ’s lowliness bring him close to humanity? To what nadir does the humiliation of the Son of God plummet? For Moltmann, it is only by internalizing the particular, real, and deeply human face of Christ that we understand the true horror and beauty of the cross: Christ with us, a co-experiencer of life’s tragedies, even to the point of knowing what it is like to be apart from God in the despair of death. This is an idea drawn not only from that enduring statement of Bonhoeffer’s,⁴² but also from Moltmann’s own experiences as a guilt-ridden prisoner of war:

I read Mark’s Gospel as a whole and came to the story of the passion; when I heard Jesus’ death cry, ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’ I felt growing within me the conviction: this is someone who understands you completely, who is with you in your cry to God and has felt the same forsakenness you are living in now. I began to understand the assailed, forsaken Christ because I knew that he understood me. The divine brother in need [*der göttliche Bruder in der Not*], the companion on the way, who goes with you through this ‘valley of the shadow of death’, the fellow-sufferer [*der Leidensgenosse*] who carries you, with your suffering.⁴³

In his earthly life, but especially on the cross, Christ is intensely identified with the lowly. For Moltmann, this is identification *pro nobis* and *per se*; Christ experiences the feelings and pain which belong to the poor, the sick, the abandoned, and the despised of society. God

⁴⁰ CG, 181; “Justification and New Creation,” in FC, 158; WJC, 171.

⁴¹ CG, 252.

⁴² “Only the suffering God can help,” a phrase which Moltmann calls on often: e.g. CG, 47; JCTW, 40; IEB, 70.

⁴³ ABP, 30 (German: 41).

himself comes close; he does not remain “mysterious, incomprehensible;” he is revealed as “the human God, who cries with him and intercedes for him with his cross where man in his torment is dumb.”⁴⁴ Here Moltmann broaches no theodicy—he dares not; the atheism of protest weighs too heavily on his mind and theology.⁴⁵ Instead he speaks of Christ’s identification in our pain, his understanding of our situation because he himself has made it a part of the divine history. Moltmann states: “The Father has become different through his surrender of the Son, and the Son too has become different through the experience of his passion in the world.... God ‘experiences’ something which belongs essentially to the redemption of the world: he experiences pain.”⁴⁶

The motif of Christ as the suffering brother, or as the companion, is dominant in Moltmann’s christology,⁴⁷ and hugely integral for his christological ethics (or “christopraxis”).⁴⁸ But this is not the final depth of the incarnation, for Moltmann will eventually resound the claim, following his “cosmological turn” in the 1980s,⁴⁹ that Christ identifies even with the created order of nature itself, suffering for its sufferings, and bringing those sufferings to a proleptic, apocalyptic end on Golgotha. Christ, in taking on flesh, the “stuff” of the order of this world, is able to die representatively not just for poor humanity, with whom he has identified, but also for the sighing creation, liberating it all through his identification with wretchedness:

As an anticipation of universal death, Golgotha is the anticipation of the end of this world and the beginning of a world that is new.[...] What has already happened to

⁴⁴ *CG*, 252.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 219-227, 249-252. Stephen Williams notes that Moltmann’s loyalty to the concerns of protest atheism could be rendered a bit more critically, insofar as Moltmann never “seems to question the ‘good faith’ of ‘protest atheism’” (“Critical Introduction,” 114).

⁴⁶ “Trinitarian History,” 93.

⁴⁷ It is in fact the first answer he gives to the question of “why did the Christ have to suffer these things?” in *JCTW*, 38-40.

⁴⁸ *WJC*, 41-43, 118-119, 215. Also *JCTW*: “Acknowledgment of Christ and discipleship of Christ are two sides of the same thing: life in companionship with Christ. We need an answer to our questions which we can live and die with. That means that every *christology* is related to *christopraxis*.” (2, emphasis mine).

⁴⁹ Moltmann notes that following his early preoccupation with time, history, and revelation, his theology increasingly turned toward a concern for the categories of space, nature, and cosmology—a shift most clearly marked by his 1985 Gifford Lectures, published as *GC* (1985). See *ABP*, 211-212.

Christ is representative of what will happen to everybody: it is a happening *pars pro toto*. Consequently he has suffered vicariously [*stellvertretend erlitten*] what threatens everyone. [...] He did not suffer the sufferings of the end-time simply as a private person from Galilee, or merely as Israel's messiah, or solely as the Son of man of the nations. He also suffered as the head and Wisdom of the whole creation, and died for the new creation of all things. [...] 'Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world', wrote Pascal. But the reverse is also true. In the agony of Christ this world finds its end.⁵⁰

Golgotha is not only identification with people; it is identification with the whole created order, with all of the "former things" (Rv 21.4). The agony of the first heaven and the first earth, subject to transience and tragedy, is given its end on the cross, in Christ. This is not simply identification in order to understand or to give sympathy; in Moltmann, this emphasis has become identification (or representation) in order to *transcend, liberate, and transform*. And the picture of such a transformed condition is provided in the vindicating resurrection of Christ—the other side of the dialectic. Here we find the heart of what Moltmann calls his "eschatological christology"—the christology of Easter.

4.2.3 - Christ Risen

For Moltmann, the future is the empty tomb—death dead, life alive forevermore. And the empty tomb, the trinitarian nature of God, and the cross of god-forsakenness, must all be held together: "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."⁵¹ This evocative language points to the christological reality that is perhaps the most preeminent in Moltmann's thought—appearing as early as the third chapter of *Theology of Hope*: "The resurrection has set in motion an eschatologically determined

⁵⁰ WJC, 155 (German: 176), 157. This powerful point was made by Moltmann nearly twenty years before as well: see his "Theology as Eschatology," 4-5n6, wherein he calls the "rock of atheism" (the presence of suffering) the same thing as the "stumbling block" of the cross—perhaps the clearest and most poetic summary of his anti-theodicy sentiments.

⁵¹ CG, 249.

process of history, whose goal is the annihilation of death in the victory of the life of the resurrection.”⁵² In the existential situation of the disciples following the death of Jesus, Moltmann notes that whatever shape their experience of Jesus took, it “must plainly be of such a kind that it *compelled* proclamation to all peoples and the continual formation of new christological conceptions.”⁵³ This proclamation, the formation of Christ’s very church, constitutes itself in that body which has determined to live in light of Christ’s eschatological reality. Moltmann has no time for anthropocentric existentialisms or wistful utopia,⁵⁴ for these do not treat the historical, reality-bearing encounter with God as something true and necessary; he sees instead a new era inaugurated by the resurrection of Christ, and it is an era in which the church can live, even in its contradictions with the present world. Essentially, then, the resurrection is a very worldly reality: the church is called to bring about transformative realities in space and time,⁵⁵ shaped by, empowered by, and given hope by the resurrection life of Jesus.⁵⁶ (All of these patently *transformational* trajectories, which resound so firmly with the outlook of TT, will be clearly returned to with concentrated focus in the final chapter of this thesis.)

Moltmann’s understanding of these transformational realities is quite concrete, and his *Church in the Power of the Spirit* was the first attempt to make clear the practical (ecumenical, social, interreligious) ramifications of this world-transforming view of the resurrection. As his thought turned increasingly to the actual, physical nature of the world, via nature and cosmology and ecological concerns, the new creation became something of

⁵² *TH*, 163.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁵ Such realities have been discussed variously by Moltmann, but come across most clearly in *PL*, Chs. 3 and 6. In *TH*, Moltmann emphasizes more the cruciform nature of these realities—“namely, persecution, accusation, suffering, and martyrdom” (195).

⁵⁶ *CPS*, 192. This is the initial origin of Moltmann’s specific terminology of “messianic”—mediating the future rule of God into the broken spaces of the present world; this is a mediation which is “stirred up” by the conditions which humanity finds itself beset by; the messianic existence under the cross and in light of the empty tomb strains toward change (see Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and Power*, 167-168).

significance for nature itself as well. If Christ died the death of the old creation on the cross, then his resurrection serves as the birth of that new creation:

With the raising of Christ, the vulnerable and mortal human nature we experience here is raised and transformed into the eternally living, immortal human nature of the new creation; and with vulnerable human nature the non-human nature of the earth is transformed as well. This transformation is its eternal healing[...]. In Christ's resurrection human nature in its primordial form triumphs over its unnatural imprisonment in transience [*ihre unnatürliche Gefangenschaft in der Vergänglichkeit*].⁵⁷

The intersection of new creational realities with Moltmann's vision for the church (as "the body of Christ") will form a major component of the later, more constructive movement of this thesis in the final chapter.

4.2.4 - Christ in Glory: The Firstborn Brother

This eschatological christology,⁵⁸ standing alongside the cross as the dual-event in which the old creation is proleptically dissolved and the new creation anticipatorily irrupts, thus moves beyond identification to *transformation*. And though he does not deny some place to individual, interiorized models of "salvation,"⁵⁹ Moltmann's aim is both broader and deeper.⁶⁰ The deathly state of humanity is defeated by the resurrection—Christ is the firstborn from the dead.⁶¹ His solidarity, imparting comfort and hope to a seized and broken world, does not end at the cross only to be rendered hollow by a non-bodily resurrection and ethereal continued existence, apart from the lowly continuance of those who follow him. No, Moltmann emphasizes that Christ's firstborn status is such because it is from among "many brothers."⁶² As Christ goes, so too the adopted sons and daughters of God will go; in fact, it is

⁵⁷ *WJC*, 258–259 (German: 281–282).

⁵⁸ *TH*, 192–201; Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, 121–128.

⁵⁹ *WJC*, 45.

⁶⁰ He speaks about going beyond, or further than, "personal" salvation toward more holistic, liberative, and universal understandings: *CG*, 4; *GC*, 35.

⁶¹ "The process of the resurrection from the dead has begun in him, is continued 'in the Spirit, the giver of life', and will be completed in the raising of those who are his, and of all the dead. The eschatological question about the future of the dead is answered christologically" (*CoG*, 69).

⁶² See *TK*, 120–121; Moltmann, "I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God," in *HTG*, 35–43.

Christ who makes such transformative adoption possible. Opening a new way of thinking about God and new way of relating to God, Jesus, who unprecedentedly called God “Abba”, calls upon the lowly of the world to also possess this depth of relationship (see Rm 8.15; Gal 4.6).⁶³ This representative christology is thus not a matter of penal substitution or sacrifice for sin,⁶⁴ but a matter of proleptic path-clearing—Christ makes a way, a cruciform way, and the church is made up of those who follow him on that way:

Believers enter into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings and take the impress of the cross—become cruciform [*werden kreuzförmig geprägt*]. They hope to become of like form with the transfigured body of Christ in glory (Phil. 3:21). That is why we can talk about both ‘our crucified Brother’ and ‘our risen Brother’. What is meant is the whole form of existence which is lived by Jesus Christ and which takes its stamp [*geprägte*] from him. Fellowship with Jesus the brother means ultimately participation in the liberation of the whole enslaved creation, which longs for the ‘revealing of the liberty of the Sons of God’ (Rom. 8:19, 21) and for the experience of the ‘redemption of the body’ (Rom. 8:23).⁶⁵

But this is not all, and we can see the addition waiting to be made at the end of the just-quoted passage. Moltmann’s reference to the “enslaved creation” here precipitates his much fuller understanding of cosmological rebirth in Christ that appears in *The Way of Jesus Christ*.⁶⁶ We must remember that soteriological concerns (the dreads and anxieties of the present moment) are, for Moltmann, always pressing in on christology, forcing it to say more and to say it differently, perhaps, than it has before. The nuclear threat to the fabric of the world, as well as the destruction wreaked by pollution and depletion, increasingly has pushed a cosmological consciousness onto the forefront of the public scene. Moltmann, seeing

⁶³ WJC, 142-150; Moltmann, “I Believe in God the Father,” in *HTG*, 10-18.

⁶⁴ For an excellent recent discussion on atonement and sin in Moltmann, see McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 147-151. Moltmann has asked: “Is atonement necessary?” and replied with “I believe that it is.” But the atonement that he goes on to discuss is not Anselmian (between man and God) but social (between human beings); Christ suffers for the victims and pays for the sins of the oppressors against the victims; see *JCTW*, 40-42. It is interesting that scholarly opinion again divides here: Schweitzer sees in Moltmann an “Anselm-like emphasis on the efficacy of Jesus’ death” (74) and Schmiechen sees in Moltmann a completely “tables-turned” version of Anselm, where God has to provide some “satisfying” answer to stricken humanity (305-306). Again, both outlooks correctly name aspects of Moltmann’s integrated outlook, but both miss the larger, christologically-rooted, picture that we are here delineating.

⁶⁵ *TK*, 121 (German: 136).

⁶⁶ Esp. 252-263; see also the simplified discussion in *JCTW*, 82-87.

himself as a practically-oriented, dialogical, theologian-of-the-moment, feels that the salvific nexus of Christianity can respond to this threat, and thus doctrinally should direct attention to it. Such is the function of a christology that is truly “post-modern,” according to Moltmann.⁶⁷ This is the root of Moltmann’s “cosmic christology,” and it is nowhere more cosmic than in Christ’s redemptive, transforming headship over creation.⁶⁸ The key passage below ties together these myriad themes—solidarity with humans and nature, redemption through resurrected transformation—that we have examined in this section:

[Christ] died in solidarity with all living things, which have to die although they want to live. [...] If his resurrection is the death of death, then it is also the beginning of the annihilation of death in history, and the beginning of the annihilation of death in nature. It is therefore the beginning of the raising of the dead *and* the beginning of the transfiguration of the mortal life [*der Verklärung des sterblichen Lebens*] of the first creation in the creation that is new and eternal. Christ is then in person not merely ‘the first born’ of the dead who are reborn through the eternal Spirit of life. He is also ‘the first born’ of the whole reborn creation (Col. 1:15). In raising him, God brought not merely eternal life for the dead but also the first anticipatory radiance of immortal being for mortal creation.⁶⁹

The suffering messiah and the eschatological promise: these are the entwined dimensions we have noted to this point—they concern Christ’s past and his future, and they concern Christ’s cross and his resurrection. But we have said little thus far about Christ’s birth, baptism, life, teaching, or purported miracles. This has been deliberate, as it reflects the actual pacing and focus in the diachronic development of Moltmann’s christology. His earliest works (*Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*) focused intently on the resurrection and the cross, respectively—though Moltmann always emphasized that they needed to be read in the course of Christ’s entire earthly life. But it is in *The Way of Jesus Christ* that Moltmann most fully

⁶⁷ “Post-modern” for Moltmann means a christology that is not ancient (metaphysically focused) or modern (historically focused), but one that understands humanity’s place in the world *relationally* (ecologically, socially, etc.). See *WJC*, xv-xvi.

⁶⁸ Moltmann in his early theology eschews the use of the term “Logos” and utilizes more mystical, Jewish categories to discuss this aspect of his christology, identifying Christ as primordial Wisdom. On occasion, one can find him making explicit his identification of the Logos and Wisdom: *ET*, 339. In his later, more pneumatologically textured thinking, Moltmann became more comfortable using the term Word to refer to the second person of the Trinity, and worked out his trinitarian history in a complex interweaving of Word, Spirit, and Wisdom in *SpL*, Chs. 2-3.

⁶⁹ *WJC*, 253 (German: 404). See further, *CoG*, 92.

illustrated the thematic interconnection between Christ's "messianic mission" and his sufferings and resurrection.⁷⁰ The next dimension of his christology is the most focused on these themes.

§3 Moltmann's Pneumatological/Developmental Christology⁷¹

At the beginning of *The Way of Jesus Christ*, Moltmann, with characteristic candor, says the following

I have not based this christology on the christological dogma of the patristic church but—as far as I was able—have cast back historically and exegetically to the histories of the biblical tradition, in order with their help to arrive at new interpretations of Christ which will be relevant for the present day. So this christology is also a *narrative christology*[.]⁷²

It is in this volume that Moltmann finally articulates a thoroughly trinitarian Jesus—not just at the cross, but all the way through his earthly life. And here is where Moltmann fully posits, elaborates on, and defends his "Spirit Christology." Pneumatology, it should be noted, was the last piece of his trinitarian theology to mature, but as concerns his christology it had been brewing for some time; in *Theology of Hope*, the Spirit is explicitly linked with Christ's *resurrection*;⁷³ in *The Crucified God*, the Spirit's christological range was expanded to the *crucifixion* as that event took on its deeply trinitarian form;⁷⁴ and in *Trinity and the Kingdom* it is mentioned that Jesus' *ministry* took place through the Spirit, but the details are sparse.⁷⁵ These threads come together in his pneumatological christology, to which we now turn.

⁷⁰ See J. Linahan, *The Kenosis of God and Reverence for the Particular: A Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann*. (Marquette University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1998), Ch. 3, esp. 128n2.

⁷¹ "In the power of the Spirit Christ is sent from God... into this divided world" (*ABP*, 172).

⁷² *WJC*, xv, emphasis mine.

⁷³ *TH*, 57, 68, 84.

⁷⁴ Moltmann is still not tremendously clear on the Spirit's role at this juncture though; see the points concerning the Spirit in *CG*, 245-248. McDougall is right to see at this stage of his trinitarian thinking a quite Augustinian account of the Holy Spirit—as the *vinculum caritatis*, the bond of love between the Father and the Son. "Moltmann also inherits the weak points of Augustine's model, namely, whether this understanding of the Spirit...can assure the Spirit's full personhood..." (McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 48); see also Bauckham, *Theology*, 152-154.

⁷⁵ *TK*, 66, 74.

4.3.1 - The Christ in the Power of the Spirit

From first to last—birth to resurrection—Christ is seen as a man thoroughly dependent on the Spirit. He is born of the Spirit, baptized with the Spirit, and he ministers and heals via his endowment with the Spirit.⁷⁶ So pervasive is Christ's reliance on the Spirit, according to Moltmann, that at Golgotha it is not that Christ chooses not to supernaturally come down from the cross, but rather that he *cannot* do so. The obedient Son has gone to his death, and must bear it in powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*) and forsakenness (*Verlassenheit*),⁷⁷ and this serves to intensify the recounting of Christ's suffering and abandonment even beyond its stark portrayal in *The Crucified God*.

Such a pneumatological outlook accomplishes at least two salient tasks: (1) it renders the trinitarian dimensions of Moltmann's christology more well-rounded and coherent (and also, as it turns out, biblical—note simply the number of biblical citations in *The Way of Jesus Christ* compared to the central chapters of *The Crucified God*); (2) it allows Moltmann to articulate the eschatological promise—the recapitulation of the world and birthing of the new creation—in Christ in an even clearer way, for the Spirit is the bridge, the *mediation*, between Christ's mission and the mission of the church:

Through Jesus Christ, the Spirit is sent upon the gathered community of his followers, so that its efficacy spreads.... This shows that Jesus was not baptized into the Spirit as a private person, but *pars pro toto*, representatively, as one among many, and as one for many. He received the Spirit for the sick whom he healed, for the sinners whose sins he forgave, for the poor whose fellowship he sought, for the women and men whom he called into his discipleship. He received the Spirit... as the messiah of God's new creation.⁷⁸

In this sense we can see that though the Spirit is the animating and empowering force in the life of Jesus, it is also a thematic which stands in continuity with the eschatological, re-

⁷⁶ *WJC*, 73-94.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110 (German: 130).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

creative outlook of the christology's other dimensions.

We must here return briefly to the issue of Christ's divinity. It is, after all, a potential of pneumatological christologies to lean toward "degree christology" or even "adoptionist christology." And the language that we have noted thus far from Moltmann would hardly seem to resist such a reading, especially when we take into account his discomfort with the tradition of the virginal conception of Jesus. And so, having already discussed Moltmann's complex relationships to the two-natures tradition, we must now revisit his standing on the person of Christ in light of his pneumatological thematics.

In light of our discussion of the two-natures in Chapter 3, we need not overly exercise the topic here. Three more points will be concisely made. First, all questioners about Moltmann's view of traditional christology must understand his hesitancy to use patently "incarnational language" in light of his expressed theological concerns. The following passage needs to be quoted at length to illustrate this:

The differentiation between the two natures bears the mark of incarnation christology, and does not derive from the particular history of Jesus himself. It is drawn from a general metaphysics of the world. Attributes are ascribed to the divine nature of Christ which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 'the Father of Jesus Christ', never knew. His faithfulness is transformed into a substantial immutability, his zeal, his love, his compassion—in short his 'pathos', his capacity for feeling—are supplanted by the essential apathy of the divine. The passion of his love and its capacity for suffering [*Die Leidenschaft und die Leidenschaftlichkeit seiner Liebe*] can no longer be stated.... It is more appropriate, then, to start from Jesus' special relationship to God, whom he called Abba, dear Father, in order to elicit from this mutual relationship between the messianic child and the divine Father what is truly divine and what is truly human. By first of all developing christology and the doctrine of God in specifically Christian—which means trinitarian—terms, we are not denying the task of christology in the framework of metaphysics in general. But the New Testament is not concerned about the relationship between Christ's human and his divine nature. It is concerned with Jesus' relationship as child to the Father, and with God's relationship as Father to Jesus.⁷⁹

In short, insofar as the two-natures conception has functioned as merely a defense mechanism

⁷⁹ Ibid., 53 (German: 71). See also Pannenberg's similar discussion: "Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs als dogmatisches Problem der frühchristlichen Theologie," in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, Band 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 296-346.

for a classical conception of an impassible God, Moltmann finds it faulty.⁸⁰ Moltmann does not “deny” the role of metaphysics in christology; his point is that the New Testament history does not formulate such metaphysical axioms for us, and we should be exceedingly cautious about importing such notions into our understanding of God.⁸¹ For our purposes, it is worth noting that this degree of metaphysical circumspection immediately separates Moltmann from some of the more contentious trends in third-wave kenotic christology, while also aligning him, to some degree, with the more chastened theological epistemology of TT.

Second, this point on Moltmann’s part does not entail that he denies the “divinity” of Jesus. At the risk of stating the obvious, many of Moltmann’s most enduring contributions to contemporary theology have been bound up with *trinitarian* themes. If the Son is not divine, he is not a member of the divine Trinity. If the Trinity is missing the Son, then it is not the Trinity. Without the Trinity, quite literally, there is no Godhead.⁸² Regardless of Moltmann’s nuanced and sometimes imprecise language—appearing, we must note, in a work that is self-consciously focused on a non-metaphysical, narrative-shaped, dialogical-with-Judaism christology—the inner nexus of his theology comes undone if Jesus is merely a divinely adopted man or a man who is gradually divinized.⁸³

⁸⁰ Mentioning the heritage of Aristotelian impassibility, Moltmann notes that it raises “the difficult problem of the two-nature Christology: the divine nature is incapable of suffering, the human nature is capable of suffering. But what then really happened on the cross?” (“Dialogue,” in *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981], 63).

⁸¹ Elsewhere, Moltmann will be quite clear that he *does* assume a metaphysical reality for Christ’s divinity: “Understood in metaphysical terms, Jesus’ divine Sonship means his eternal divine nature...” (“I Believe in Jesus Christ,” *HTG*, 31).

⁸² Moltmann is unambiguous about this; see “I Believe in Jesus Christ,” 38-39. On balance, we should note that with the publication of *CG*, Moltmann appeared to argue, in certain infamous places, that the Trinity itself was actually historically constituted by the event of the cross, or that the Trinity “emerged” from that “eschatological” happening (most notoriously, 247-255). Not surprisingly, endless critical questions emerged in response to Moltmann’s language here, and he has responded in several forms—see the series of essays, *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmann Buch “Der gekreuzigte Gott,”* ed. Michael Welker (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1979). Moltmann has taken care not to reiterate such troublesome language, preferring to speak of the cross as *revealing* the Trinity: “The cross is at the centre of the Trinity. This is brought out by tradition, when it takes up the Book of Revelation’s image of ‘the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world’ (Rev. 5:12). Before the world was, the sacrifice was already in God. No Trinity is conceivable without the Lamb, without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son” (*TK*, 83). Tang, *God’s History*, makes similar points: 127-136.

⁸³ See also *CG*, 245.

Third and finally, Moltmann presents numerous passages in which the divinity, or divine status, or latent divinity, of Jesus is affirmed. To wit: “The one God whom all men seek in their finitude and transitoriness became man in Jesus [*in Jesus Mensch geworden*].”⁸⁴ In speaking of the cross Moltmann calls it an event between “the Father and the Son” and then qualifies this as being between “God and God.”⁸⁵ He can discuss a perichoretic relationship between the Father and the Son which “is constitutive [*konstitutiv*]” and “equally primal [*gleichursprünglich*]”⁸⁶ for both, and he discusses how the Son is “eternally begotten” of the Father, an “eternal” member of the Trinity, and the only member of the Trinity who had to “become man [*Mensch werden*].”⁸⁷ It is perhaps in *The Way of Jesus Christ*, which as we’ve seen contains some of the least traditional christological statements, where Moltmann makes his viewpoint the most clear: Christ is “divine,” but that divinity ought to be understood in terms of relational, self-giving trinitarianism, not in terms of a static, substance metaphysics:

“[We shall examine] the shifting facets of the divine person Jesus Christ which reflect his relationship to God—Spirit, Son, Logos, Wisdom, Kyrios, and so forth. We understand these, not as hypostases of the divine nature, but as trinitarian relations in God; or in other words: divine self-relations [*Selbstverhältnisse Gottes*] in which Jesus discovers and finds himself, and through which believers delineate his divine mystery.”⁸⁸

This quote not only serves to conclude this initial discussion of the “divinity” of Jesus Christ in Moltmann’s thought, but it also leads us to the final element of the christology that we will here discuss: the developmental progression of Christ’s past and present life.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 88 (German: 84). Moltmann makes this affirmation in the midst of critiquing the immutability-impassibility framework for the divine, but he is not critiquing this affirmation as such.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 151.

⁸⁶ *WJC*, 143 (German: 164).

⁸⁷ *TK*, 166-167 (German: 184).

⁸⁸ *WJC*, 71–72 (German: 91).

4.3.2 - The Christ in Development

For Moltmann, remarkably, the dependence of Christ on the Spirit and the Father entails not just a lack of self-originating power for miraculous acts; his depth of humanity also entails a self-consciousness in which Jesus, quite literally, must *come to know* who he truly is. Jesus develops; he changes; he grows. Not just in his understanding of his person, but in his very person itself.⁸⁹ Here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the christology, Moltmann is driven by a plain reading of numerous biblical texts: texts wherein Jesus lacks knowledge; texts which explicitly state that Jesus “grows” and “learns;” and texts which seem to imply genuine alterations in his self-understanding.⁹⁰ These texts, which Moltmann handles with profound seriousness, indicate to him that Jesus is, in some sense, “not yet the messiah” and that he is “on his way to being the messiah.”⁹¹ This “way” is one of the chief meanings that Moltmann identifies for the title of his central christological work, *The Way of Jesus Christ*.⁹² Jesus is on his way to a goal, and that way possesses stages of genuine development in which Jesus grows in the midst of his social and trinitarian relationships:

The more modern (and especially feminist) concepts about Jesus’ being as *being-in-relationship* take us a step further [than the older models of nature and substance]. But they do not yet enter into Jesus’ being as a *being-in-history*, and the ‘learning process’ of his life and ministry, his experience and his suffering. Here we shall try to take up the different christological concepts of person and integrate them, so as to arrive at a fuller, richer portrait of the person of Jesus Christ. We shall look at the divine person, the person in his messianic ministry, the public person commissioned by God, the person in the warp and weft of his relationships [*im Beziehungsgeflecht ihrer Gemeinschaften*], and the person in the emergence and growth of his own life history [*im Werden ihrer Lebensgeschichte*].⁹³

This is not to say that Jesus’ perceives himself in ordinary terms, but it is to say that Jesus’

⁸⁹ Among recent commentators, Bingaman is one of the few to give this dimension of the christology any examination: *All Things New*, 62.

⁹⁰ Moltmann points either implicitly or explicitly to: (1) the numerous passages where Jesus asks questions to gain information, (2) statements that Jesus “grew in favor with God and with man” (Lk 2.52) or that he “learned obedience through suffering” (Hb 5.8), and (3) pericopes (usually involving women) where Jesus is seemingly challenged and appears to alter his thinking (e.g. Mt 15.1-28).

⁹¹ E.g. *WJC*, 111.

⁹² *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 136–137 (German: 158).

self-understanding *grows*—he is not seen by Moltmann as being perfectly cognizant of his divine status, fully inhabiting his Lordship, and or to be merely “condescending” or “accommodating” or “testing” when he asks questions or learns things. He is truly the messianic person in his becoming, and Moltmann perceives at least five stages in the messianic journey of Christ: the “mediation of creation” before his earthly life;⁹⁴ his earthly life, constituted by the “messianic mission of Jesus to the poor;” the “apocalyptic passion of Jesus” on the cross; the “transfiguring raising [*verklärenden Auferweckung*] of Jesus from the dead;”⁹⁵ and finally, after the earthly life, “the coming One” of God’s eschatological kingdom.⁹⁶ This developmental process is key for both Moltmann’s narrative christology and his trinitarian, panentheistic eschatology. Taking the biblical histories and traditions of scripture, and the true humanity of the Son, in such a sweepingly serious way causes Moltmann to perceive a development in the second person of the Trinity—a true journey and true progression of work and experience, which only concludes at the reconciliation of all things.

This developmental aspect of Moltmann’s christology is, implausibly, almost never discussed at-length in the secondary literature on this thought.⁹⁷ Thus, it has not been explored in what manner this element of the christology might (or might not) cohere with the other thematic facets. In fact, the question of the christology’s praxiological import and conceptual unity remains yet to be robustly addressed in Moltmann scholarship. This is owed, I argue, to the fact that Moltmann’s unique view on Christ’s kenosis has been so little examined. Its role within his christology is key, and each of the categories addressed in this chapter conceals an element of great import for understanding Moltmann’s kenotic christology.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 288-290.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 71 (German: 90).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 321-326.

⁹⁷ Excepting Bingaman, *All Things New*, 61-62, but even there the discussion is limited.

§4 Conclusion – Looking Toward Moltmann’s KC

As we have noted in the Introduction and Chapter 3 already, Moltmann’s christology has been one of the least examined aspects of his overarching theology, with many of the core thematics we have delineated in this chapter being hardly discussed at all, even among prominent commentators. This present chapter has thus differed from nearly all interactions with Moltmann’s christology in the current English literature, most of which isolate only one or two of Moltmann’s christological themes, with the aim of using them to explicate some other aspect of his theology.⁹⁸ Moreover, in order to see how Moltmann’s conception of kenosis functions in its full christological application, it has been important for us to circumscribe the myriad themes of Moltmann’s christology more generally.

By way of summary: this chapter’s service of achieving a preliminary understanding of the themes of Moltmann’s full-bodied christology can be summarized as follows: *The divine Son becomes human, and as such he is the pneumatologically-empowered, promised messianic person, who, through his suffering-in-solidarity and eschatological resurrection, develops into his divine Lordship as the firstborn of the new creation, carrying all the world with him toward redemption.* This is an effective initial rendering of the basic contours of Moltmann’s christology. It is thorough, insofar as it takes account of the varied streams which he consistently propounds in his writing about the history and significance of Christ. However, it admittedly remains a somewhat disparate array of christological topicality; its consistency in terms of theological vision or narrative remains questionable. Thus, we are

⁹⁸ Representative recent examples would include: Brock Bingaman, *All Things New*, 45-62, which briefly highlights some unique dimensions in Moltmann’s christological thought, but only as necessary background for a study of his anthropology; Matthew Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other*, 52-68, details with admirable insight the cosmic dimensionality of Moltmann’s christology, but does so in service to his overarching examination of Moltmann’s trinitarian ethics of discipleship; Muller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 167-181, gives an admirable look at the notion of the messianic in Moltmann’s christology for the sake of developing an outlook on Moltmann’s views of the kingdom, but leaves the christology’s other dimensions untouched.

still compelled to ask: What binds these compelling, yet scattered, themes of Moltmann's messianic christology together? And, furthermore, once the christology is perceived in its full orbit, what description and understanding of ecclesial realities or Christian action/praxis can be derived from such christological suppositions?

It is our contention that in both these key areas (christological cohesion and christological implication) Moltmann's understanding of *kenosis* both constitutes and empowers his vision for God's inbreaking, transformational future for the world, effectuated in the person of Christ. In short, for Moltmann (and this will be argued at length over our next three chapters) *kenosis* is how Christ inaugurates and presently sustains the world's *transformation* (that is, the altering of interpersonal, natural, and social circumstances in a kingdom-focused manner). My claim will be that it is this *kenotic-transformational motif* that is fundamental to arraying Moltmann's diverse christological thematics into a cohesive picture. And so, it is to the subject of kenosis in Moltmann's doctrine of Christ to which we specifically turn in our next chapters.

MOLTMANN'S CHRISTOLOGY (III)

HERMENEUTICS AND THE KENOSIS HYMN

We now embark on the centermost venture of our study. The task before us now is not only to show that Moltmann is a kenotic thinker when it comes to christology, but also to display the unique delineations of his kenotic christology. Neither of these goals have been undertaken at length in any prominent study on Moltmann's christology to date.

In order to avoid any abstract or *ad hoc* definition of kenosis that would be forced inorganically onto Moltmann's christological thought, this chapter will begin with an examination of the kenosis hymn in Philippians 2, taking brief stock of various lines of interpretation across theological history before presenting an analysis of Moltmann's own outlook on (and use of) the passage.

§1 Philippians 2.5-11 and Its Christological Interpretations

The text of Phil. 2.5-11, often surmised to be a hymn of the early church, reads as follows in the NRSV:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God [μορφῇ θεοῦ], did not regard equality with God [εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ] as something to be exploited [ἀρπαγμὸν], but emptied himself [ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν], taking the form of a slave [μορφὴν δούλου], being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¹

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

The passage is early (if not pre-Pauline), evocative, theologically-weighted, and linguistically difficult. Every form of christology, kenotic or not, has had to come to terms with the passage, and its treatment in exegetical history is worth analyzing for the light that it will cast on Moltmann's thought concerning the "kenosis" of Christ.²

I will here be highlighting what we see to be three general trends in the interpretative history of the passage: the traditional interpretation (which sees the kenosis as *concealing* the divine qualities in Christ), the radical interpretation (in which kenosis consists in the *abandoning* of divine qualities in Christ), and a contemporary interpretation that has lately become quite prominent in exegetical scholarship, wherein the kenosis has been viewed as *revelatory* of God's character and action. This survey will pay dividends when we turn to the question of which of the three exegetical trajectories Moltmann seems to accord with most readily.

5.1.1 – Concealment (Traditional) Interpretation

In the earliest days of christological creed and controversy, the passage was readily appropriated to specific doctrinal ends. Responses to Arian forms of christology defined the initial patristic theologizing of the Philippians 2 hymn. Athanasius in particular standardized the understanding of the passage's terminology. "In the form of God" [μορφῇ θεοῦ] was taken as parallel with "equality with God" [εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ] and thereby glossed as the divine substance of the Second Person of the Trinity (Athanasius called it "the essential nature of the Word"³). This reading of the "form of God," when combined with the Hellenistic assumption of divine immutability,⁴ meant that the "self-emptying" (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, v. 7) was seen to

² Kenosis derives from the verb ἐκένωσεν in v. 7.

³ *Orationes contra Arianos*, 1.41, in *The Orations of St. Athanasius: Against the Arians*, trans. by W. Bright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1873), 42.

⁴ Dawe notes: "In the Greek conception the essence of divinity was existence beyond change and suffering and death.[...] [The] acceptance of passion or change in God was tantamount to saying that God was no longer divine. For the essence of divinity was unchangeableness," (*Servant*, 16, 53).

entail a hiding or concealing of divine qualities in the midst of the human nature's assumption: "[the Word] humbled himself" with reference to the assumption of the flesh."⁵

Pannenberg notes that "Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, and others who connected Phil. 2:7 with the coming of the Logos in the flesh meant by the term 'self-emptying' (*kenōsis*, *exinanitio*) the assumption of human nature."⁶ Further, this meant that ἀρπαγμὸν ("grasped" or "exploited," v. 6) could only mean that Christ did not need to "grasp" after equality with God "because he already possessed it."⁷

In essence, then, the hymn was taken to refer to an "obscuring of the divine glory during the earthly ministry of Jesus.... Kenosis was the assumption by the Second Person of the Trinity of a veil of human flesh by which incarnation was possible."⁸ Gregory of Elvira stated this interpretation perhaps most clearly: "Note that when the sun is covered by a cloud its brilliance is suppressed but not darkened. The sun's light, which is suffused throughout the whole earth...is presently obscured by a small obstruction of cloud but not taken away.... Christ...does not lessen but momentarily hides the divinity in him."⁹

Augustine lent his pen to this perspective when he wrote: "It was thus that he emptied himself: by taking the form of a slave, not by losing the form of God; the form of a slave was added, the form of God did not disappear."¹⁰ This line of theological reasoning was followed thereafter for centuries of christological reflection. It can be seen to also underlie the thinking of Reformation luminaries like Calvin:

[Christ] suffered his divinity to be concealed under a veil of flesh. Here, unquestionably, [Paul] explains not what Christ was, but in what way he acted. Nay, from the whole context it is easily gathered, that it was in the true nature of man that Christ humbled himself. For what is meant by the words, he was "found in fashion as

⁵ Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos*, 1.41.

⁶ Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 308. For Augustine's view on the passage, see *Sermon 4*, 5, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latin (Turnholt, 1953), 41, 21f.

⁷ See Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos*, 1.40; also Dawe, *Servant*, 30.

⁸ Dawe, *Servant*, 30.

⁹ *On the Faith*, 88-89, in Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina (Turnhout: Belgium, 1953-), 69:244.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Sermon 4*, 5, Corpus Christianorum, 41, 21; see also Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2012), 189.

a man,” but that for a time, instead of being resplendent with divine glory, the human form only appeared in a mean and abject condition?¹¹

Martin Luther’s christology also made a clear “tapeinotic” application of the kenosis hymn (where the “[self]-humbling” [*etapeinōsen* – v.8] is taken as a synonym for *ekenōsen* in v.7¹²): “Christ did not empty himself once for all; rather he constantly emptied himself throughout his earthly life.”¹³ These two complementary ideas—(1) kenosis as the hiding of divinity in the assumption of the flesh manifested in (2) the humble bearing of the human life of Christ—in large part dominated traditional understandings of the passage.¹⁴

5.1.2 – Abandonment (Radical) Interpretation

When first-wave KC burst onto the Continental theological scene (most distinctly in the work of Thomasius and Gess), fresh exegetical directions were brought to bear on the passage’s interpretation. For these properly “kenotic” schools of thought the “kenosis of Philippians 2:7 and context (vv. 6-11) was...taken as a real self-relinquishing, limiting, or emptying of divine attributes, powers, prerogatives, and/or glory by the pre-existent Logos upon the event of the Incarnation.”¹⁵ For Thomasius in particular, the assumption of human nature and the simultaneous generation of the *una persona* entails, of logical necessity, a giving-up (a self-divestment—*Entäußerung*) of certain divine attributes in order to make manifest a truly human life. Thus, what is “emptied” in the Phil. 2 hymn are those attributes of divinity that could be abandoned without negating the divine nature in its essence:

[Thus] we shall have to posit the Incarnation itself precisely in the fact that he, the eternal Son of God, the second person of the deity, gave himself over into the form of human limitation, and thereby to the limits of a spatio-temporal existence, under the

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.13.2.

¹² Coakley also presents the basic shape of a tapeinotic reading of the hymn: “*Kenosis* and Subversion,” 7-8. The term “tapeinotic” is my own.

¹³ Quoted in Paul Athaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 194 (see further 194-197).

¹⁴ See the summary in Dawe, *Servant*, 53-83; Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 25-30; cf. also Coakley, “Does Kenosis Rest on a Mistake?” in *Exploring Kenotic*.

¹⁵ Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century Kenotic,” 75.

conditions of human development, in the bounds of an historical concrete being, in order to live in and through our nature the life of our race in the fullest sense of the word, without on that account ceasing to be God.¹⁶

Thomasius famously distinguished between what he termed the “immanent” attributes (which are divinely essential) and the “relative” attributes (which are not essential, because they only relate to the governing of the contingent created order). It is this second category of attributes, which includes omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, that Thomasius sees as relinquished by the assumption of humanity.¹⁷ Thus Thomasius felt he could say that though Christ truly abandoned certain properties only ascribable to divinity upon becoming incarnate, he still “lacks nothing which is essential for God to be God.”¹⁸ The immanent attributes of the Godhead—love, faithfulness, holiness, etc.—are retained fully in the incarnation.¹⁹ Subsequent reflection on this phase of kenotic christology has seen a “real *novum*” introduced into christological discourse by Thomasius, who was willing to fully embrace some literal understanding of divine self-limitation (while simultaneously foregoing divine simplicity and immutability).²⁰ But the self-emptying of the Logos in the kenotic

¹⁶ Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk*, 48.

¹⁷ See Welch, *Protestant Theology*, 238.

¹⁸ Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk*, 73; see also 94.

¹⁹ See Thompson, “Nineteenth-Century Kenotic,” 83; Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 49-51; cf. Welch’s comments in *God and Incarnation*, 67-69n10, as well as the classic summary in A.B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876), 179-187. As seemingly simple as the christological formulation is in Thomasius, commentators often verge on distorting it—see, for instance, Pannenberg’s critique in *Jesus—God and Man*, wherein he accurately describes Thomasius’ kenotic christology (310-311) but thereafter posits the following critique: “Attributes essential to his divinity cannot be absent even in his humiliation unless the humiliated were no longer God” (312 [emphasis added], cf. too 315); Pannenberg is staging this as a critique of Thomasius, though it is something with which Thomasius manifestly would agree, which is why he posits the division between the immanent and relative attributes in the first place. Arguably, Barth commits the same kind of misrepresentation when he sums up all radical kenotic models as “self-limitation or *de-divinisation*” (*Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, 183). Again, this fairly attains, perhaps, to Gess or Godet, but less so to Thomasius. Thomasius had argued that immutability was inappropriately described in foregoing theology, and this consideration alone, if granted, defangs many of the usual critiques of him. If not granted, then the immutability point should be the subject of critiques of Thomasius, rather than his rendering of the kenosis itself. Hans Urs von Balthasar sees this more clearly than most: *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. by Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 31. Sarah Coakley is also more balanced in her interaction with Thomasius: “*Kenosis and Subversion*,” 18-19.

²⁰ Ibid., 19. Anna Mercedes disagrees, strangely, and claims that Thomasius is simply expositing an extension of his Reformation heritage, see *Power For: Feminism and Christ’s Self Giving* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2011), 30. Mercedes’ thinks that Thomasius does not revise his classical doctrine of God enough, for he still sees God as free from dependency on the world (29).

christology of Gess was yet more extreme. Whereas Thomasius supported the abandoning of some attributes possessed in the pre-existent state, Gess argued for their complete abandonment in order for the Logos to be transformed, quite literally, into a human person.²¹ As Gerald Hawthorne states, for Gess, “the presence of any divine attributes would destroy the reality of Jesus’ humanness.”²²

5.1.3. – Revelatory (Contemporary) Interpretation

The “concealment” and “abandonment” schools of thought represent two stark variations in the dogmatic interpretation of Phil. 2.5-11, and they serve as a remarkable cautionary tale for both biblical scholars and theologians. David Brown well conveys the fact that the passage’s vexed interpretation should “alert us to the difficulty of keeping the question of exegesis distinct from our own particular theological prejudices.”²³ For the ancient christologies, the majesty of God in Christ as the immutable almighty had to be preserved in the face of ancient challenges like Arianism, and so the hymn was appropriated to those ends. For the nineteenth-century kenoticists, the radical humanity of the incarnation had to be emphasized in the face of ever-growing post-Enlightenment critiques of dogmatic history. Ultimately, however, in both cases, there seems to have been a certain determinative sense in which the passage was commandeered by foregoing doctrinal concerns, rather than being used to formatively direct those doctrinal concerns.²⁴ Gratefully, much contemporary scholarship has studied the passage with more critical awareness of such ingrained presuppositions, and this more neutral work has opened new avenues in understanding.

Thus we now turn to a spectrum of scholarship on the passage that is both recent and

²¹ On Gess’ model of kenotic christology, see Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 62-65; cf. Bruce, *Humiliation*, 187-197.

²² Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock [reprint], 1991 [orig.]), 206.

²³ Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 10.

²⁴ See the comments in Coakley, “Kenosis and Subversion,” 105.

integrative, encompassing many of the foregoing interpretive issues into a fresh outlook on the passage. This interpretation takes the kenosis of Christ to be not a concealment of divinity, and not an abandonment of any foregoing aspect of that divinity, but a revelation of the divinity's character and nature; hence we can call this the "revelatory" interpretation. The major interlocutors who have recently promoted such an understanding include Gerald Hawthorne, N.T. Wright, Richard Bauckham, Gordon Fee, and Michael Gorman.

But before discussing the philological and grammatical specifics of this line of exegesis, we need to render a baseline understanding of the "logic" of the kenosis hymn. In its most basic sense, the hymn is serving a strongly practical (or even ethical) role in the letter to the Philippians. Commentators as diverse as Dunn, Hawthorne, Brown, Hurtado, and Wright recognize that the hymn is calling the Philippians to account using the example of Christ's sacrificial humility as a kind of paraenesis.²⁵ Thus the basic logic appears as follows:

Have this mind among you... (v.5)

*...That **though** he was in the **form of God** (v.6)...*

*...He... did not... **grasp at... equality with God** (v.6)...*

*...But rather **emptied himself** (v.7)*

...Therefore God highly exalted him (v.9)

Interpretative debate abounds about each of the bolded phrases above, and they are each key to the passage's intentional force overall. Thus we engage each in turn.

μορφῇ θεοῦ - the *form of God* (v. 6). Hawthorne well notes the sizable diversity of

²⁵ Dunn: "the hymn serves the purpose of illustrating or commending a habit of mind," ("Christ, Adam, Preexistence" in *Where Christology Began*, eds. R.P. Martin & B.J. Dodd [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 74); Hawthorne: "[the] Christ-hymn presents Jesus as the supreme example of the...self-giving service that Paul has just been urging the Philippians to practice (*Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, TX: 1983], 79); Brown speaks of the text primarily as an "ethical injunction" (*Divine Humanity*, 8-9, 13) and notes the agreement by Oliver Quick on this point ("An ethical sermon" in Quick's *Doctrines of the Creed* [London: Nisbet, 1938], 82); Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5-11" in *From Jesus to Paul*, eds. P. Richardson & J.C. Hurd (Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984), 113-126; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 1991), 87.

interpretations that have attended the use of *morphē* here.²⁶ James Dunn and other thinkers have seen *morphē theou* as a “near synonym” for *image of God*, and have used this alleged linguistic association to fund their perception of an Adam-Christology in the passage.²⁷ Dunn’s reading has been contested on multiple grounds,²⁸ his equivocation between *form* and *image* perhaps most forcefully. The principal difficulty with his reading, according to Fee, is simply that the Philippians hymn features no “*verbal* correspondence with the Genesis account” at all.²⁹ Furthermore, the synonymity of *morphē* and *eikōn* has been questioned effectively enough³⁰ to beg the question of why, if Paul intended an overt Adam-Christ correspondence, *eikōn* was not the word employed rather than *morphē* (especially when Paul has no reservations about using *eikōn* in relation to Christ elsewhere, e.g. 2 Cor 4.4). Furthermore, the equation between *eikōn* and *morphē* “comes to grief fundamentally in the fact that it cannot be adopted for the second occurrence” of *morphē* in the passage (“*form of a slave*” v.7).³¹

Another chief candidate for the meaning of *morphē* here has been “status” or “condition,”³² which certainly seems to make contextual sense, but is, according to Hawthorne, simply unattested in the wider Greek literature.³³ However, concerning both these contested interpretations there is diversity, with N.T. Wright joining Dunn in seeing at least some degree of an Adam-Christ correspondence at work in the passage;³⁴ and though Bauckham disagrees with this (claiming that Wright is “trying to have his cake and eat it

²⁶ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 81-84.

²⁷ Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Preexistence,” 77.

²⁸ Many of them well-summed in C.A. Wanamaker, “Philippians 2:6-11: Son of God or Adam Christology?” *New Testament Studies* 33.2 (April 1987): 179-193.

²⁹ Fee, “New Testament and Kenosis,” 31.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, 31n12; David Steenburg, “The Case Against the Synonymity of *morphe* and *eikon*,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34 (1988): 77-86.

³¹ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 82. See also Herbert, *Kenosis and Priesthood*, 93.

³² See Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 96; *idem.*, *Carmen Christi* (1983 ed.), xx.

³³ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 83.; also *idem.*, “In the Form of God and Equal to God,” in *Where Christology Began*, 99.

³⁴ Wright, *Climax*, 57-61.

too”³⁵), he does appear to favor an understanding of *morphē* along the lines of status or condition, and he also takes the strongest reading of an Isaiah 53 background to the hymn, over and against an Adam-Christ reading.³⁶ Clearly, then, even among the scholars who, as we will see, all favor what we are calling the revelatory interpretation of the passage, there is some fundamental diversity about the background (e.g. Old Testament) correspondences within the hymn. Regardless, the specific meaning of *morphē* is left open by all of these positions unless additional exegetical information is brought to bear. Thus we will return to *morphē theou* after analyzing other aspects of the hymn.

ἄρπαγμόν – the *grasping* (v. 6). A prominent line followed by Dunn, Ralph Martin, and others is that this grasping is meant in a snatching or seizing sense—it is referring to the attempt to get something which one does not already possess (often referred to as the *res rapienda* understanding of the term).³⁷ On this reading, the “object of this [seizing]” is the εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in v.7, and for Dunn this clearly recalls Genesis 3.5 and the original temptation of humanity (thus furthering his reading of the Adam-Christ correspondence).³⁸ But this notion of grasping after something in order to possess it has been reduced in plausibility due to the work of C.F.D. Moule and Roy Hoover, whose philological investigations have offered a strong reading of *harpagmos* that is more sharply defined by its immediate linguistic context. Moule had originally argued for an understanding like “acquisitiveness” (an abstract disposition of *seeking-to-gain*) and thus understood *harpagmos* as an attitude rather than an

³⁵ Bauckham, *God Crucified* (Eerdmans, 1999), 57.

³⁶ Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 57-61; he refers to the notion of an Adam typology in the passage as a “red herring” in the history of interpretation (57). Wright sees the themes of Suffering Servant and Last Adam as mutually contributory: *Climax*, 59-61.

³⁷ Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Preexistence,” 77. See also Martin, *Philippians*, 96-98.

³⁸ Dunn, “Christ, Adam, and Preexistence,” 76-77. Another way of understanding *harpagmos* is “clinging” (in a greedy or selfish sense—known as *res retinenda*), among other slight variations in meaning. Cf. the discussion in Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997 ed.), 135-153 and the further critical (and corrective) discussion in Wright, *Climax*, 62-81.

action.³⁹ But Hoover's work went even further and identified the term as part of an idiomatic expression that combines with the verb ἡγήσατο in order to convey the sense of "something to be used for one's own advantage."⁴⁰ It is this sense which is agreed upon by a growing contingent of Philippians scholars (Fee, Wright, Hawthorne, *et al.*), as evidenced by its adoption in the NRSV (reflected in the English translation of v.7 above).

But what theological weight do these considerations lend to the passage overall? N.T. Wright, building strongly on Hoover's idiomatic understanding of *harpagmos* ("to take advantage of"), makes the point that "the object in question—in this case equality with God—is *already* possessed [by Christ]. One cannot decide to take advantage of something one does not *already* have."⁴¹ In contrast to those views which see the hymn as portraying Christ deciding not to try and attain something, Wright argues that what is actually presented is Christ who, though "in the form of God" does not "take advantage of" (or "exploit") this status. This point is strengthened when *morphē theou* is defined not from the wider Greek literature (which, as noted above, is quite difficult) nor from a questionable correspondence with *eikōn*, but from the internal context of the passage itself:

τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in close connection with ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is the regular usage of the articular infinite (here, τὸ εἶναι) to refer 'to something previously mentioned or otherwise well known'. [...] We should therefore expect that τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ in our present passage would refer back, exegetically, to ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, and might even suggest the stronger translation 'this divine equality.'⁴²

In short, the *form of God* is summed, paralleled, and defined by the phrase "equal with God."⁴³ Hawthorne well notes that *morphē* ought not be loaded with undue ontological

³⁹ C.F.D. Moule, "Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5-11," in *Apostolic History and the Gospels*, eds. W.W. Gague and R.P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 266.

⁴⁰ See Hawthorne, "Form of God," 102; Moule's position can be found in "The Manhood of Jesus in the New Testament," in *Christ, Faith, and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology*, ed. S.W. Sykes & J.P. Clayton (Cambridge University Press, 1972), 95-110. Hoover's solution is presented in his "The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution," HTR 56 (1971): 95-119.

⁴¹ Wright, *Climax*, 82. Emphasis mine.

⁴² Ibid., 83. So too Hawthorne, "Form of God," 104.

⁴³ Fee adopts this reading strongly, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 206-207; as does Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Eerdmans, 2009), 41-42.

baggage, though it is certainly referring to Godlikeness in a non-philosophical semantic range,⁴⁴ and Wright’s exegesis here allows this to stand.⁴⁵ Thus what we have in the passage is an understanding of Christ’s pre-human existence in which equality with God is possessed (thus making Jesus “divine”) but where Christ’s attitude to that divine equality is not exploitative or self-seeking. Rather than divinity being understood in terms of “taking advantage” it is understood as self-emptying and self-sacrificing in humility.

ὑπάρχων, ἐκένωσεν – the participle and the emptying (vv. 6, 7). The final element of this line of exegesis comes into focus when we consider that the participle ὑπάρχων has been argued by Moule (and followed more recently and forcefully by Wright, Gorman, and others), as being causative—“*because* he was in the form of God”—rather than concessive—“*although* he was in the form of God.”⁴⁶ That is, the self-emptying does not provide any sort of exception to or abandoning of the form of God. Rather it was *illustrative* of the fact that Christ was in the form of God that he emptied himself. This fundamentally shifts the understanding of kenosis in the passage. For, on this interpretation, it is quite correct to say that when Christ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν he is *demonstrating* or revealing his divinity, and not doing something that obscures it (as in the traditional interpretations) or that is an exception to the divine life (as in the radical interpretations). Gorman is emphatic here: “Kenosis, therefore, does not mean Christ’s emptying himself of his divinity (or of anything else), but rather Christ’s *exercising* his divinity, his equality with God.”⁴⁷ Wright expresses it similarly, saying “ἐκένωσεν does not refer to the loss of divine attributes but—in good Pauline fashion—to making something powerless, emptying it of apparent significance. The real

⁴⁴ See Hawthorne, “Form of God,” 104; see also *ibid.*, 98, where Hawthorne agrees with criticism of his own earlier phrasing, which leaned more heavily on metaphysical definitions, in *idem.*, *Philippians*, 83-84.

⁴⁵ Hence why Hawthorne concludes his description of his own position by quoting Wright at-length: “Form of God,” 104-105.

⁴⁶ See Moule, “Manhood of Jesus,” 97; Wright, *Climax*, 83; Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Spirituality* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 10, 22-29. (Note that Gorman argues that both senses [causative *and* concessive] are intended simultaneously, as a way of challenging and undermining ancient conceptions of power-focused deity.)

⁴⁷ Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 28.

humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation.”⁴⁸

Such an interpretation—that the *kenosis reveals God’s divinity itself rather than an exceptional mode of being undertaken by that divinity*—clearly challenges the radical forms of kenotic christology, especially in their more aggressive first- and third-wave philosophical articulations.⁴⁹ This is clearly different than (and actually often staged in contrast to) the radical kenotic school of thought; but, we should ask, is it truly distinct from the more traditional interpretation? The recent exegetical progression challenges this viewpoint as well. Demurring from Calvin, Barth, and other proponents of the traditional “concealment” view of the incarnation,⁵⁰ Gorman asks, “But is it really the case that Christ’s self-emptying or humility *hides* his divinity? Is it not rather Paul’s point that the humility of the incarnation and cross *reveals* the divine majesty, like a *transparent* curtain? ‘Look here to see true divinity,’ calls Paul. [...] It is the constitutive character of the divine identity that this narrative reveals.”⁵¹ Both Gorman and Wright are unanimous, along with Fee and Bauckham, that what the hymn presents

is not simply a new view of Jesus. It is a new understanding of God. Against the age-old attempts of human beings to make God in their own (arrogant, self-glorifying) image, Calvary reveals the truth about what it meant to be God. Underneath this is the conclusion, all-important in present christological debate: incarnation and even crucifixion are to be seen as *appropriate* vehicles for the dynamic self-revelation of God.⁵²

Wright’s own emphasis on the word *appropriate* drives home the key exegetical—and hence doctrinal—shift. Becoming man and dying does not conceal divinity and does not entail its

⁴⁸ Wright, *Climax*, 84.

⁴⁹ E.g. Thomasius, Gess (first-wave); Feenstra, Evans; Forrest (third-wave).

⁵⁰ We noted Calvin above; Barth follows a line very close to Calvin in his commentary: *The Epistle to the Philippians*, trans. J.W. Leith (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1962), 63-64, referring to the life of Christ as an *incognito* (64), perpetuating the concealment motif.

⁵¹ *Inhabiting*, 28, 29.

⁵² Wright, *Climax*, 84, emphasis original. For similarly emphatic affirmations, see Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 25-27; Bauckham, *God of Israel*, 45-46; Fee, *Philippians*, 210-211.

abandonment (in either an explicit or tacit sense); becoming man is appropriate or “proper” to the Son; dying is the course of his divine love. Read in this way, the vexing question of kenosis instead becomes “revelatory of the ‘humility’ of the divine nature.”⁵³ Graham Ward, quoting F.F. Bruce, concurs, saying that “the implication is not that Christ, by becoming incarnate, exchanged the form of God for the form of the slave, but that he manifested the form of God in the form of the slave.”⁵⁴ It is in this sense that we can unify also the tapeinotic and kenotic aspects of the hymn, which means that we must go beyond positions that claim “Jesus’ kenosis was *sociopolitical* rather than *metaphysical*,”⁵⁵ for Christ’s “tapeinosis” (humble bearing of his life in the world) is reflective of the kenotic divine economy at large and involves the real suspension of things that had characterized the divine life “prior to” the incarnation (majesty, glory, splendor, etc.—cf. Jn 17.5).⁵⁶ Here then we find exegetical foundation for discussion of the “humanity of God.”⁵⁷

Having examined, then, these three different lines of exegesis and theological interpretation of the passage, we can turn to Moltmann’s use of the passage. This foregoing analysis will help us to see, though Moltmann never delves into at-depth exegetical work, where his hermeneutical appropriation of the passage stands and what its implications are.

§2 Moltmann’s Interpretation of the Kenosis Hymn

That Moltmann rarely engages in sustained exegesis is simply a fact of his theological method, a fact often highlighted and critiqued, and one conceded by Moltmann himself.⁵⁸

⁵³ Sarah Coakley, “Kenosis and Subversion,” 10.

⁵⁴ Ward, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*, edited by L. Gardiner, et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 22.

⁵⁵ Nancey Murphy and George F.R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 177.

⁵⁶ For an example of a reading of the passage without these exegetical points (especially those concerning *morphē* and *harpagmos*) cf. John G. Gibbs, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption According to Phil. II 5-11,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 12.3 (1970): 270-283.

⁵⁷ A key phrase and idea in both Barth and Moltmann; see *The Humanity of God* (C.D. Deans, 1960) and “The God With the Human Face” in *HG*, respectively.

⁵⁸ Moltmann, “Adventure of Theological Ideas,” *Religious Studies Review* 22, no. 2 (1996): 104.

Accordingly, we rarely find detailed engagement with the linguistic, philological, or grammatical aspects of pertinent sections of scripture. However, he calls upon certain verses often enough that a sort of assumed exegesis emerges with relative clarity.⁵⁹ This has certainly been the case with the kenosis hymn of Philippians 2.

Moltmann's earliest significant employment of Phil. 2 in a christological context comes in *The Crucified God*. Discussing the notion of "taking up one's cross" Moltmann connects this to an imitation of Christ "who abandoned [*aufgab*] his divine identity and found his true identity in the cross (Phil. 2)."⁶⁰ This language of *abandonment* or *giving-up* the divine "identity" immediately recalls more radical interpretations of the hymn (e.g. Thomasius, Gess), and this trajectory seems at least partially confirmed by Moltmann's later comment that the poor of the world "find in [Christ] the brother who put off [*verließ*] his divine form and took on the form of a slave (Phil. 2)."⁶¹ The implication here that the divine form of Christ was somehow vacated or left behind in the kenotic course of the incarnation seems to be following radical kenoticist assumptions.

However, Moltmann also seeks to make a clear distinction between himself and foregoing radical schools of kenotic thought:

God's incarnation 'even unto the death on the cross' [Phil. 2.8] is not in the last resort a matter of concealment [...] When the crucified Jesus is called the 'image of the invisible God', the meaning is that *this* is God, and God is like *this*. God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity. The nucleus of everything that Christian theology says about 'God' is to be found in this Christ event. The Christ event on the cross is a God event. [...] So the new christology which tries to think of the 'death of Jesus as the death of God', must take up the elements of truth [*Wahrheitsmomente*] which are to be found in *kenoticism* (the doctrine of God's emptying of himself).⁶²

This passage is of monumental importance for understanding Moltmann's own brand of

⁵⁹ E.g. Mark 15.34 ("My God, why have you forsaken me?"), 1st Cor 15.28 ("...that God may be all in all.").

⁶⁰ *CG*, 16 (German: 21).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49 (German: 51). See also *JCTW*, 39; *ET*, 213, 233.

⁶² *CG*, 205 (German: 190)

kenotic christology. Here we see several diverse doctrinal hints, all of which allow us to locate Moltmann within our three-fold typology of Phil. 2 interpretations. Moltmann clearly states that the incarnation and suffering of Christ are revelatory and “not a matter of concealment,” thereby distancing himself from traditional interpretations of Phil 2.5-11.⁶³ And here Moltmann, in slight contrast to what he seems to have implied earlier, makes the *divinity* of Christ *causative* for the death “even unto the cross;” divinity is expressed in the incarnation—“the meaning is that *this* is God and God is like *this* [*das ist Gott und so ist Gott*].”⁶⁴ This presents an interpretation of Christ’s self-emptying that is in general agreement with the revelatory interpretation we outlined above, though Moltmann is writing at a time before this interpretation gained such prominence among English authors. His language relating to the passage is admittedly less controlled than what we find among the exegetes, but Moltmann does not often return to the language of “giving-up” the divine form in exchange for the servant one, preferring instead the language of “emptying [*Entäußerung*]” and “self-giving [*Selbsthingabe*].”⁶⁵ Moreover, it is clear in many passages that Moltmann intends the kenotic servanthood and self-giving suffering of Jesus to be illustrative for the proper understanding of divinity itself; the serving God who seeks the liberation of humanity through self-sacrificial love.⁶⁶

Both Barth and Pannenberg were dismissive of what they saw as the clear heterodoxy and absurdity of radical kenoticism.⁶⁷ But, as indicated in the final sentence of the quotation above, Moltmann adopts a more textured relationship to the mediating kenotic thought of the nineteenth-century. Both early in his career, in *The Crucified God*, and in his more recent

⁶³ He takes Paul Althaus to task for advocating this sort of concealment language while simultaneously critiquing the traditional doctrine of divine immutability: *ibid.*, 206 (discussing Althaus, article on ‘Kenosis’, in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. III [Tübingen, 1959], 1243ff.).

⁶⁴ *Gekreuzigte Gott*, 190.

⁶⁵ E.g. *TK*, 81 (German: 97); *WJC*, 173; *SW*, 51.

⁶⁶ E.g. *Human Dignity*, 42; *CoG*, 303-304; *TK*, 59-60, 118-119; *CG*, 270-278; *GSS*, 181-185.

⁶⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4.1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010 ed.), 176, see further 175-177; Pannenberg, *God and Man*, 311-312. But Pannenberg may betray a deeper indebtedness to this tradition than his critiques indicate: see the discussion in Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 226-227.

work, e.g. *Science and Wisdom*, Moltmann has attempted to sift foregoing kenoticism and dialogically appropriate certain emphases from it.⁶⁸ Most fundamentally for Moltmann, kenoticism tried to “understand God’s being in process,”⁶⁹ that is, apart from classically defined divine attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, etc., bound together by the immutability axiom), which were derived “from Aristotle’s general metaphysics” but that “have very little to do with God’s attributes according to the history of God to which the Bible testifies.”⁷⁰ In kenoticism, the incarnation and the cross do not just mean something for us (soteriology) but they also mean something for God (theology).⁷¹ But this theological meaning does not, as in Thomasius *et al.*, consist in an idiosyncratic dividing of the divine attributes and ascribing only some of these to the incarnate Christ.⁷² Moltmann is instead driven to see kenosis as a revelation of God, and here he seems to have initially been inspired by the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar.⁷³ Balthasar interprets the kenotic life of Christ as primarily revelatory in terms of the Trinity; the trinitarian relations are always kenotic in Balthasar’s thought—for instance, the Son is eternally obedient to the Father in kenotic love—and thus the kenotic dimensions of the incarnation are, at least partly, a temporal expression of the eternal relations of the Trinity.⁷⁴ As Steffen Lösen (erstwhile student of Moltmann) writes of Balthasar: “The extra-trinitarian kenosis of God serves the ever-dramatic inner divine life of the mutual glorification of the divine persons.”⁷⁵ Moltmann adopts this interpretation whole-

⁶⁸ The key passages are *CG*, 200-207 and *SW*, 55-58.

⁶⁹ *CG*, 206.

⁷⁰ *SW*, 56; cf. *WJC*, 53. Brown agrees that this is the core alignment which Moltmann appreciates in the kenotic christologians of the nineteenth-century, *Divine Humanity*, 227-228.

⁷¹ Moltmann most famously states this notion in *CG*, 201; see also, “Cross Today,” 62-64, 72; *WJC*, 152; *ET*, 304; *ABP*, 192.

⁷² Moltmann claims that this brand of KC on its own results in “impossible statements” (*CG*, 206) that are “unsatisfactory” (*SW*, 56). In that sense, at least, he aligns with most major twentieth century theologians in relegating the Thomasian model of “dividing the attributes” to theological impossibility.

⁷³ See the praise accorded Balthasar in *CG*, 202; *SW*, 57-58.

⁷⁴ See Balthasar, *Mysterium*, vii-viii, 25; cf. also Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Person, Kenosis and Abuse: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation,” *Modern Theology* 19:1 (January 2003), 46-48; Ward, “Kenosis, Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” 15-68.

⁷⁵ Steffen Lösel, *Kreuzwege: Ein ökumenisches Gespräch mit Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 158, my translation.

heartedly, and his own social trinitarianism eventually comes to depend on an understanding of perichoresis between the three persons that is essentially a pluriform kenotic relation, constitutive of the triune identity of the Godhead.⁷⁶

But this is not the whole story. Moltmann's kenotic christology remains somewhere between this revelatory school of thought and the more radical "abandonment" outlook from the nineteenth-century. In order to illustrate the difference, we must first make a critical point in regards to the revelatory interpretation. All of the contemporary exegetes we cited earlier as supporting the revelatory interpretation have maintained that the christological kenosis reveals that God is a God who loves in sacrificial ways and is willing to humble himself for the sake of his creation's redemption. But these same thinkers are so resistant to being identified with the nineteenth-century radical kenoticists that they consistently refuse to follow through on the underlying logical and doctrinal force of their exegetical claims. *What* does the divine Son sacrifice? In what specific aspects of his existence is the divine Son *humbled*? These questions are often treated as though the position itself does not necessitate any positive answers to them, as seen in the representative passages below:

It is not necessary...to insist that the phrase ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν demands some genitive of content be supplied [emptied himself *of* something]....Rather, it is a poetic, hymnlike way of saying that Christ poured out himself.⁷⁷

Christ did not empty himself *of* anything; he simply "emptied *himself*," poured himself out. This is metaphor, pure and simple.... Pauline usage elsewhere substantiates this view, where this verb means to become powerless or to be emptied of significance.⁷⁸

The phrase "emptied himself" in 2:7 should not be read as a reference to the divestiture of something (whether divinity itself or some divine attribute, or even as self-limitation regarding the use of the divine attributes), but "figuratively," as a

⁷⁶ TK, 18-20, 63-64, 149-150, 171-178; cf. "Trinitarian Personhood on the Spirit," in *Advents of the Spirit*, 312. Lösel notes confluence between Moltmann and Balthasar in these points: *Kreuzwege*, 159.

⁷⁷ Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 86.

⁷⁸ Fee, *Philippians*, 210-211. Fee's reasoning here is problematic not only along the lines discussed in the body text above, but also insofar as he banks much of his argument on "Pauline usage" (210, 211), as do the sources he cites (Silva, Hoover, Wright). But the verb is *never* used reflexively (emptied him/her/itself) by Paul elsewhere, and, of course, if it is a pre-Pauline hymn, then the wording is likely *not original to Paul* anyways.

robust metaphor for total self-abandonment and self-giving.⁷⁹

All of these statements argue that nothing constitutive of Christ's pre-incarnational existence is given up (or, for Gorman, even *limited*) by the incarnational act. But the logic of the Philippians passage does not seem to allow for this; the paraenetic point fails without a sacrifice (a giving-up, a surrendering) of some ability, status, or capacity on the part of Christ. Moreover, these same commentators seem to be tacitly aware of this, for they *imply* quite clearly that Christ did, in fact, give up *something*, however vaguely stated, even in the same context in which they deny that he gave up anything.⁸⁰ Fee's example, the second quotation above, demonstrates this most immediately: he claims that no genitive of content is required in Phil. 2.7, but he then indicates that Paul's usage of the emptying language elsewhere *does* imply some genitive of content—for to become “powerless” (Fee's own language) is to be emptied *of* power, and to be emptied *of* significance (Fee's own language) is clearly indicative of some content (“significance”) for the emptying. The other commentators use similarly ambiguous formations.⁸¹

The corrective to such inconsistency can be phrased quite simply: to be sacrificial means to sacrifice *something*; to be humbled means to be diminished, limited, or divested in *some way*. Ben Witherington makes the point effectively:

[*Ekenōsen*] must have some content to it, and it is not adequate to say Christ did not subtract anything since in fact he added a human nature. The latter is true enough, but the text says that he did empty himself or strip himself.[...] The contrast between verses 6b and 7a is very suggestive; that is, Christ set aside his rightful divine prerogatives or status. This does not mean he set aside his divine nature, but it does indicate some sort of self-limitation.⁸²

⁷⁹ Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 21(n54).

⁸⁰ For Hawthorne, “[Christ] set aside *his rights*” (86); for Fee, elsewhere he writes that Christ “limit[ed] certain *divine prerogatives* that...seem incompatible with him being truly human” (“New Testament and Kenosis,” 34); for Gorman, “[Christ] renounced *all privilege*” (*Inhabiting*, 21n55), all emphases mine.

⁸¹ Sykes, who is critical of radical KC, still states of Phil 2.7 that “we have a biblical text which affirms that Jesus *divests himself of the glories of heaven* and humbles himself” (“Strange Persistence,” 360, emphasis added).

⁸² *Friendship and Finances in Philippi* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 66.

In short, some “genitive of inferred content” seems to be necessitated, though this is certainly not to say that we are thereby permitted to speculate in any sort of detail about the precise nature of that content. One cannot undertake a sacrificial act that does not impose a sacrifice *of something*; sacrifice and humility imply content, else they surrender meaning. Moltmann gets at this quite strongly with his notion of “active suffering” or willing vulnerability. He argues that loving sacrifice-in-relation entails, at the most basic level, the surrendering of some level of security or status or power, because one has opened oneself up to another in relationship—the “other” can “affect” oneself.⁸³

So, does Moltmann supply some genitive of content for the emptying of Christ? The answer is somewhat complex, and requires us to unfold Moltmann’s kenotic framework still further. Moltmann will say, somewhat unclearly, that “Christ’s emptying of himself is not a partial or ostensible self-emptying, but a whole and genuine emptying of his divine form...as well as his divine power.”⁸⁴ Throughout his discussions on the kenosis of Christ, Moltmann is concerned to indicate that divine *omnipotence* is not possessed by Christ. But, theologically speaking, Moltmann sees God self-electing a non-omnipotent existence (in some sense) upon the determination to create a truly free world that is different from Godself: “God permits an existence different from his own by limiting himself.... [God] withdraws his omnipotence.... God limits and empties [*begrenzt und entäußert*] himself.”⁸⁵ However, Moltmann is keen to emphasize that this initial movement of divine kenosis “reaches its perfected and completed form [*vollendete Gestalt*] in the incarnation of the Son.”⁸⁶

Since omnipotence entails both maximality of knowledge (omniscience) and presence (omnipresence), the incarnate Logos is also emptied of these things. But this appears to be

⁸³ See Moltmann’s initial statement in *CG*, 230. Cf. Bradley Hanson, *Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 28-29.

⁸⁴ “God is Unselfish Love,” in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, edited by J.B. Cobb and C. Ives (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 118.

⁸⁵ *TK*, 118, 119 (German: 134).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 118 (German: 133).

Thomasius and company all over again. How can Moltmann be affirming the revelatory interpretation of Phil. 2 and critiquing the radical kenoticists, and yet be sounding so much like them in discussing his own kenotic christology? The reason is two-fold. First, as noted above, Moltmann sees divinity as having always been defined by kenotic inner-relationships within the Trinity and kenotic outer-relationships to the created order and its freedom. There is even a sense (and this is Moltmann in his more Hegelian register) in which the kenosis of God in relation to the world causes a degree of change in the divine life; indeed the trinitarian relationship can even be said to alter through time, insofar as the persons assume different “roles” in the progression of salvation history.⁸⁷ Most importantly for us, omnipotence, omnipresence, and, indeed, omniscience have already, to some extent, been relinquished by God upon the world’s creation, in order to “let be” a truly free “other” who can respond to the sacrificial love of God.⁸⁸ Thus, for Christ to “radically” give up the exercise of divine rights/powers/capacities, is rightly revelatory of the God who *already* has been self-emptying in such ways. This is a prominent difference from third-wave kenoticists who generally see the kenosis of Christ as an *exception* to the foregoing mode of divine-world relations, and it also shifts the grounds of possible criticism. For instance, Sarah Coakley accuses Moltmann of allowing for “seepage” of human properties into his conception of God.⁸⁹ But Anna Mercedes effectively responds to Coakley, saying that “[if] God’s nature is always kenotic, no seepage has taken place—only an eroding of a classical theology of God’s nature.[...] Coakley assumes that the human is contaminating the divine rather than that God was always so ‘contaminated’ by God’s love for creatures.”⁹⁰

Second, Moltmann has long maintained that there ultimately must be a dialectic (an

⁸⁷ E.g. *ibid.*, 174, 210.

⁸⁸ *TK* argues that “For the sake of freedom, and the love responded to in freedom, God limits and empties himself. He withdraws his omnipotence.” (119). *SW* speaks of “a *restriction* of God’s omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience, so that those he has created may have room to live” (63).

⁸⁹ Coakley, “*Kenosis and Subversion*,” 23-24; *Powers and Submissions*, xiv-xv.

⁹⁰ Mercedes, *Power For*, 32.

illuminating contrast between two apparently oppositional ideas which leads to a fuller conception beyond either of them) between the divine attributes in their maximal expression and in their kenotic limitation. Stated simply, Moltmann maintains that “only God can limit God.”⁹¹ Only the power of an omnipotent being could willingly invoke the freedom to act in ways that are less than omnipotent. Moltmann draws support for this thesis from Kierkegaard, who states, “Only almighty power can withdraw itself by surrendering itself,”⁹² as well as Gregory of Nyssa: “[That] the omnipotent nature should have been capable of descending to the low estate of humanity provides a clearer proof of power than great and supernatural miracles.”⁹³ This, once again, demonstrates that Moltmann is arguing for the “form of God” to be dialectically exemplified in the giving up of that form’s maximal expression. There is also a sense in which Moltmann may be following (implicitly) some part of the kenotic logic of Thomasius, for Thomasius posited that to “renounce” omnipotence was tantamount to divesting oneself of such power completely: “Renunciation of the use is thus here *eo ipso* divesting of the possession...Thus we say simply: During his earthly state of life the redeemer was neither omnipotent nor omniscient nor omnipresent.”⁹⁴

The beginning of Moltmann’s kenotic christology is thus neither in the concealment nor abandonment camp; his overarching kenotic theology means that his christology reads Philippians 2 as revelatory for divinity itself. Likewise Colin Gunton (in the midst of a salvo against radical forms of kenotic christology) writes that “it seems not inappropriate to speak of a self-emptying of God, but only if it is understood in such a way as to be an *expression* rather than a ‘retraction’ of his deity.”⁹⁵ This well sums the trajectory that initializes Moltmann’s KC, and thus, we can call the baseline outlook on kenotic christology that we

⁹¹ SW, 62, but articulated long before in terms of the “active [voluntary] suffering of love” in CG, 230.

⁹² Quoted by Moltmann in SW, 64, citing *Gesammelte Werke*, Abteilung 17 (Düsseldorf, 1954), 124.

⁹³ Quoted by Moltmann in CG, 205n20, referencing *Or. cat.* 24, ET by J.H. Srawley (SPCK, 1917), 77.

⁹⁴ Thomasius, *Christi Person*, 70.

⁹⁵ Gunton, *Yesterday and Today*, 172, emphasis original.

find in Moltmann a “radical revelatory” model. This entails real limitations applied to the divinity of Christ in his becoming human, in keeping with the kenotic ways of the God-world relationship. The thematic thrust of this is conveyed by Moltmann in the following passage:

[If] the significance of the Son’s incarnation is his true humanity, then the incarnation reveals the true humanity of God. That is not an anthropomorphic way of speaking, which is therefore not in accordance with God’s divinity; it is the quintessence of his divinity itself [*der Inbegriff seiner Göttlichkeit selbst*] [...] His strength is made perfect in weakness. The traditional doctrine about God’s kenosis has always looked at just the one aspect of God’s self-limitation, self-emptying and self-humiliation. It has overlooked the other side: God’s inward limitations are outward liberations [*Einschränkungen Gottes nach innen sind Freisetzungen nach außen*]. God is nowhere greater than in his humiliation. God is nowhere more glorious than in his impotence. God is nowhere more divine than when he becomes man.⁹⁶

And though the kenosis of Christ in Moltmann is revelatory of the way in which God relates to the world, this should not obscure for us the fact that Moltmann perceives this as always involving real sacrifice on the part of God. Whether in the incarnation or in wider contexts in which he carries through the theme, Moltmann’s kenotic language consistently embraces this directive element: God’s willing suffering. We see this reflected in his range of kenotic terminology, which is scattered throughout all of his major works. Margaret Kohl, Moltmann’s most prominent English translator, has rendered Moltmann’s kenotic language in English variously as self-negation (translating *Selbstnegation*),⁹⁷ self-restriction (*Selbstbescheidung*),⁹⁸ self-humiliation (*Selbsterniedrigung*),⁹⁹ as well as in the more standard kenotic parlance of self-emptying ([*Selbst-*]*Entäußerung*)¹⁰⁰ and self-limitation (*Selbstbeschränkung*).¹⁰¹ These terms and their variants, emerge at various points in the unfolding of Moltmann’s kenotic christology across his major works.

⁹⁶ TK, 119 (German: 133-134). I have modified Kohl’s translation slightly in the English.

⁹⁷ E.g. GC, 87 [German edition, 100]; cf. Kohl’s translation in SW, 120.

⁹⁸ E.g. TK, 210 [German: 227]; GC, 88 [German: 101]; cf. Kohl’s translations in CoG, 282, 332; SpL, 61; SW, Chapter 4.

⁹⁹ E.g. TK, 27-28, 59, 119 [German edition: 42-43, 75, 134]; GC 102 [German: 113]; cf. CoG, 302-303.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. GC, 88 [German: 101]; TK, 119, 174, 210 [German: 134, 190, 227]; cf. CG, 121, 275; WJC, 138, 178; SpL, 64, 288.

¹⁰¹ E.g. TK, 59, Chapter 4.2; 119, 174 [German: 75, Kapitel 4.2, 134, 190]; GC, 78, 80, 86, 102 [German: 91, 92, 99, 113]; cf. Kohl’s translations in *Sun of Righteousness*, 91; *EthH*, 122. Other, less common, terms used by Kohl in her translations include “self-surrender,” “self-offering,” and “self-renunciation.”

§3 Conclusion – From Kenotic Hymn to Kenotic Christ

This chapter has laid the groundwork for our continuing exploration of christological kenosis in Moltmann through an analysis of his kenotic logic, rooted in his implicit interpretation of the kenotic hymn in Philippians 2. Via a diachronic analysis of three foregoing hermeneutical outlooks on that passage, we were enabled to categorize Moltmann's own treatment of it as a "radical revelatory" model. Moreover, this discovery facilitated our realization of the connection between Moltmann's doctrine of divine passibility and inter-trinitarian kenotic relations with his view of Christ's kenosis specifically. Kenotic christology for Moltmann, is thus found to be fundamentally rooted in his theological presuppositions more broadly, and to be directly expressive of some his most overt theological concerns. From this conceptual basis in Moltmann's theology, we turn next to examine the concrete nature of Christ's kenotic life and ministry in Moltmann's thought.

MOLTMANN'S CHRISTOLOGY (IV)

THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN KENOTIC KEY

Having in our previous chapter outlined Moltmann's treatment of the kenosis hymn and the rooting of christological kenosis in his overall theology, we are now positioned to explore the actual content of Moltmann's kenotic christology as it relates to the historical life of Jesus as conveyed by the gospel witness. This chapter will argue that Moltmann's vision of Christ's kenosis involves four distinct facets or relationships, each of which entail and illustrate a different dimension of radical self-emptying on the part of Jesus.

To anticipate: in Christ's divine relationships, Moltmann envisions his kenosis to be (1) patriological (concerning Christ's *obedient* relation to the Father) and (2) pneumatological (concerning Christ's *dependent* relation to the Spirit). In Christ's earthly relationships, Moltmann sees Christ's kenosis to be (3) social (concerning Christ's *identification* with the oppressed masses); and (4) physical (concerning his *vulnerability* in relation to the mortal "flesh" of cosmic materiality).

While other kenotic thinkers occasionally emphasize a version of one or two of these dimensions (especially relating to the Father or the Spirit) Moltmann's thinking reveals its singularity by the manner in which these four themes are historically grounded, thematically interrelated, mutually informative, and creatively synthesized throughout his christology.

This wide-ranging, relational-kenotic combination is prefaced when Moltmann states that

the complex dimensions of Jesus' life history are obscured if we talk about it in only one of these dimensions—Jesus and God, or God and Jesus—so as to see him either as the heavenly God-man or as the earthly man of God. If christology starts by way of pneumatology, this offers the approach for a trinitarian christology, in which the Being of Jesus Christ is from the very outset a Being-in-relationship [*Sein-in-*

Beziehungen], and where his actions are from the very beginning interactions, and his efficacies co-efficacies.¹

In short, Moltmann's multi-dimensioned kenotic christology views the history of Jesus Christ as a developmental journey of ever-progressing surrendering and self-emptying in the full warp and weft of his manifold relationality. In this chapter, then, we set about the task of examining all four of these relational dimensions of christological kenosis in succession, culminating in a full-bodied statement of Moltmann's narrativial view of Christ's development and self-giving.

§1 Kenotic Mission: The Will of the Father

The progression of the messianic ministry, from baptism to resurrection, is for Moltmann thoroughly animated by Jesus' unique relationship to God the Father, which Moltmann describes as "familiar, intimate, and tender" consisting in "basic trust" and a "real nearness...by which Jesus lived and acted."² Because of his concrete focus on the united and historical person of Jesus Christ, Moltmann spends little time in his early work discussing a relation between Christ's divine and human natures; the divine-human relationship is rather explored in terms of Jesus Christ's relationship to the one he unfailingly called "my Father" and even *Abba*, the language of unprecedented familial standing and closeness.³ Shunning any speculative musing on the two natures, and ascribing "legendary" status to the doctrine of the virgin birth,⁴ Moltmann prefers to use Jesus' own references to God and clues from Jesus' own ministry to explicate his self-understanding and relation to God:⁵ "The relationship to God described by the name *Abba* evidently influenced Jesus' understanding of himself quite

¹ *WJC*, 74 (German: 94).

² "I Believe in God the Father," *HTG*, 11.

³ *TK*, 74-75; *WJC*, 142-145; *ET*, 325-326.

⁴ A point on which I disagree with Moltmann, though the discussion need not detain us here. His longest discussion on it can be found in *WJC*, 78-87. Cf. Pannenberg, *God and Man*, 141-150.

⁵ Cf. Pannenberg, "[One] cannot properly understand Jesus' Sonship without taking his relation to God the Father as the point of departure. [...] This is the common mistake of all theories that attempt to conceive the unity of God and man in Jesus on the basis of the concept of the incarnation of the Logos" (*God and Man*, 334).

essentially, for the results of this relationship to God are clearly evident in the scandalous behaviour passed down to us by tradition.”⁶

However, it should be realized that these considerations do not stop Moltmann from affirming the pre-existent nature of the Father-Son relationship, for the intimate term *Abba* and the specificity of the expression “*my Father*” (rather than the corporately possessive *our Father* or generally designative *the Father*) indicate to Moltmann both a constitutive and originating force for Jesus’ attested relationship to his God.⁷ Contemporary biblical scholarship has affirmed that the *Abba*-designation (and the “filial consciousness”) of Jesus is both unique (though not to the extent first thought by J. Jeremias) and hugely formative for his self-understanding.⁸

Jesus’ full humanity means that he must come to learn his identity, role, and mission; he must “learn” his relationship to his Father and what he is meant to do in history (we designated this earlier as an aspect of Moltmann’s “developmental christology”). Support for the notion of Jesus’ mental and vocational development seems to derive quite readily from the christological statements of Luke’s gospel, where Jesus is said to increase in “wisdom,” “maturity,” “human favor,” and “divine favor” (Lk 2.52).⁹ Moltmann says that Jesus “received his revelation and mission” from the Father, and he pinpoints the baptism as the moment of Jesus’ unique call.¹⁰ We will return to this notion of the messianic call of Jesus shortly. What emerges clearly at this point is that Moltmann affirms: (1) the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity (as we demonstrated in Ch. 5), (2) the true development and learning of that incarnate, historical person, and (3) the Father’s will as constitutive for that development and learning. In short, we perceive a distinct *kenosis* of will, in which the Son

⁶ *WJC*, 143.

⁷ The complex, ambiguous discussion emerges at greatest length in *WJC*, 142-143.

⁸ See Wright, *Victory of God*, 648-649; Witherington, *Christology*, 215-221.

⁹ I have taken ἡλικία as “maturity” here, but even if this translation is not followed for this term, the passage clearly affirms both increasing wisdom and favor before humans and before God.

¹⁰ “God the Father,” 11.

submits to the Father, obeys him, and receives from him his directives, mission, and even sayings.¹¹

It is worth noting again that this is not seen to be any *exception* in the divine relations for Moltmann; it is radically kenotic, but it is revelatory rather than exceptional: “[In this] obedience to God[...] the *self-realization* of the Son of God is also accomplished [...] There is no imaginable condition of the Son of God in which he would not exist in this self-emptying surrendering.”¹² Though Moltmann rarely provides any exhaustive listing of gospel texts to correlate with these suppositions, there are many to choose from, mainly deriving from the Gospel of John, wherein Christ claims to only “do” what he “sees his Father doing”, as well as claiming that he was “sent to do the will of the Father,” and “to complete the work” that his Father had given him to do (Jn 4.43; 5.19-25). “By myself,” says Christ, “I can do nothing,” and he confesses explicitly to not seek his “own will” but rather “the will of him who sent me” (Jn 5.30). (We here note the strong parallel to the emphases of TT’s christological thinking, which we analyzed in Ch. 2.)

Colin Gunton has well noted that christologies which take this obedient-submission motif seriously in terms of Christ’s relation to the Father prove their relevance by sustaining what the old doctrine of dyotheletism intended to preserve:

Were only the divine will being done in the ministry of Jesus with God, so to speak, forcing Jesus into a pattern of behaviour against his will, not only would the gospel stories be falsified, but the real humanity of Jesus would disappear. [...] [In the gospel accounts] we are given the picture of one who was willing to bring it about that his will was also the Father’s so that in his freely accepted obedience both his will and the Father’s are done. [...] [The] dyothelite doctrine, for all its apparent abstractness, was developed in order to preserve the reality of the gospel’s claim that through the human career of a man the saving purposes of God were made real in time.¹³

¹¹ Cf. Jn 8.28-29: “So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that *I do* nothing on my own, but *I speak* these things as the Father *instructed me*. And the one who *sent me* is with me; he has not left me alone, for *I always do* what is pleasing to him.” Emphasis added.

¹² “Unselfish Love,” 118-119.

¹³ *Yesterday and Today*, 91-92. Cf. also Pannenberg’s commentary on the problems of dyotheletism for “tearing apart Jesus’ unity”: *God and Man*, 294. For technical background on the promotion of dyothelitism, see Cyril Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), esp. 103-162.

This makes good sense against the backdrop of Moltmann's consistent attestations; Christ is willing to do the Father's will, and he is not forced into obedience. At times, Moltmann will even resist the language of "obedience and submission" in preference for "freedom and participation"—in Jesus' relation to the Father, he wants to do what the Father wants; he wants to please him; their relationship is real and living, reciprocal and mutually contributory:¹⁴ "He is the child of God, the God whom he calls Abba, dear Father. As the child of God, he lives wholly in God, and God wholly in him [*lebt er ganz in Gott und Gott Ganz in ihm*]."¹⁵

There is a firmly kenotic dimension to the obedient submission here; the Son's divine-human person willingly does the will of another (the Father), rather than his own will (again Jn 8.28). However, for Moltmann, the *extremis* of this dimension of Christ's kenotic relationality emerges in the passion narratives, where Gethsemane and Golgotha serve as the deepest realizations of Christ's kenosis-of-will in relation to the Father.¹⁶ From the tortured prayer in Gethsemane to the death-cry on the cross, Moltmann develops what he calls his "theology of surrender [*Hingabe*]." The Father surrenders the Son to death, and the Son himself surrenders to that surrendering movement. It is in the Gethsemane prayer of the synoptic gospels that Moltmann finds the greatest expression of Christ's kenosis-of-will: "Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want,'" (Mk 14:35–36 // Mt 26.39; Lk 22.42).¹⁷ Moltmann interprets this starkly, saying that "it is only by *firmly contradicting his very self* [*Widerspruch gegen sich selbst fest*] that Jesus clings to fellowship with the God who as

¹⁴ TK, 51-52; 71-74.

¹⁵ WJC, 149 (German: 171).

¹⁶ "The stories of Gethsemane and Golgotha tell the history of the passion which takes place between the Father and the Son" (TK, 76).

¹⁷ Cf. also Jn 18.11: "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Father withdraws from him: ‘Not what I will, but what thou wilt.’”¹⁸

Moltmann returns to this theology of surrender often throughout his major works, and every time, to varying degrees, he is sure to emphasize the darkness and suffering entailed by the christological kenosis-of-will. On a popular level, it is sometimes supposed that Christ’s suffering in Gethsemane is due to his fear of pain and death. Moltmann certainly, out of concern for the *vere homo*, does not want to say that Christ did not feel *any* fear of his oncoming pain,¹⁹ but he does underscore that the extent of Jesus’ agony could not be from a simple anticipation of physical suffering. Many are the martyrs and warriors in history, after all, who have faced bodily torment and death bravely in their human strength. Rather, Moltmann states of Christ that

[We] would be... foolish to see him as an especially sensitive person who was overcome by self-pity at the prospect of the torments of death awaiting him. In the fear that laid hold of him and lacerated his soul, what he suffered from was God. Abandonment by God is the ‘cup’ which does not pass from him. The appalling silence of the Father in response to the Son’s prayer in Gethsemane is more than the silence of death.²⁰

For Moltmann this divine silence, this darkness, this relational abandonment, all convey the true *agon* of Christ’s darkest moments,²¹ both in the prayer in the garden and the cry on the cross. Moltmann emphasizes that Christ is “helpless” and “forsaken” on the cross,²² and that a true separation, however ineffable, has taken place between the Father and the Son.

Moltmann claims that the “Epistle to the Hebrews still retains this remembrance, that ‘far from God—χωρίς θεοῦ—he tasted death for us all’ (2:9).”²³

¹⁸ TK, 76 (German: 92), emphasis added; Kohl’s translation slightly modified. See also WJC where Moltmann references Christ’s “denying of himself” in this moment (166).

¹⁹ TK, 77; cf. also JCTW, 33; EG, 46.

²⁰ TK, 77.

²¹ Cf. PP, 115-119; Moltmann, “Come Holy Spirit! Renew the Whole of Creation,” in HTG, 75-77.

²² WJC, 110.

²³ Ibid., 166. Moltmann is here favoring the textual variant of this passage that preserves χωρίς (“far from” or “apart from”) rather than χάρις (“grace”)—the latter variant yields the more-standard translation: “By the grace of God, he tasted death for us all.” Both variants have strong support in the textual tradition of Hebrews. For further discussion, see Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 155-157. Ellingworth also favors the χωρίς reading, though “with some hesitation” (156).

Moltmann has been accused of excessive rhetoric in his more impassioned descriptions of the theology of surrender. Perhaps most flagrant are his early allusions to the idea that, on the cross, we see “the breakdown of the relationship that constitutes the very life of the Trinity.”²⁴ This phrasing casts considerable question over the preservation of divinity at the cross,²⁵ and could also be seen to imply the dissolution of the Godhead into a historical event, thus rendering itself in need of redemptive reconstitution,²⁶ especially since Moltmann elsewhere defines the Trinity’s existence *in terms of* its constitutive relationships. Myk Habets is certainly correct to note that, in his earlier staurology, “Moltmann overstates his case when he mentions a separation within God—‘God against God’ using the concept of *stasis*.”²⁷ However, Moltmann has tempered this part of his theology in later work, saying in *Jesus Christ for Today’s World* that “God is the one who gives Christ up to death in God-forsakenness, and is yet at the same time the one who *exists and is present* in Christ.”²⁸ This later statement, in short, reflects Moltmann allowing 2 Cor 5.19 to exercise greater control over his staurology.²⁹

This theme of kenotic surrender to the will of the Father also has trinitarian implications, for in Rm 8.32³⁰ Moltmann notes that the Father is the one who *gives the Son up* to death, to be a sin, to be cursed, for the sake of the world.³¹ The underlying Greek term παραδίδωμι, Moltmann emphasizes, is also used to describe the “giving up” of sinners to

²⁴ TK, 80.

²⁵ A criticism raised aggressively by Dennis Jowers, “The Theology of the Cross as Theology of the Trinity: A Critique of Jürgen Moltmann’s Staurocentric Trinitarianism,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.2 (2001): 248-250.

²⁶ Henri Blocher takes exception to the “enmity within God” (Moltmann’s phrasing in CG), as well as to Moltmann’s Hegelian indebtedness; see *Evil and the Cross*, 72-76 (esp. 73).

²⁷ Habets, *Anointed Son*, 167n189.

²⁸ JCTW, 37.

²⁹ This biblical passage reads: θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσειν ἑαυτῷ, (“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”). See also Moltmann, *IEB*, 69-70.

³⁰ “He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, will he not also give us all things in him?” This same “delivering” logic is seen by Moltmann to also underlie other key staurocentric passages (2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13; Jn 3.16).

³¹ CG, 242-243.

godforsakenness in divine judgment (Rm 1.24)—it is an unyielding term of abandonment.³² It is owed mainly to this part of his argument, wherein Moltmann expresses (in biblical terms) the Father’s active role in the Son’s passion, that accusations of divine sadism have been leveled against Moltmann’s staurology (most famously by Dorothee Sölle³³). But we have already seen the element of Moltmann’s perspective that deflects this criticism; the Son himself willingly surrenders to the Father’s surrendering of him—it is a *mutual surrender* insofar as the Son is kenotically willing and desires the Father’s will in obedience, even as the Father’s will is to give him up:

As Rom. 8.32 and Gal. 2.20 show, Paul already described the godforsakenness of Jesus as a surrender and his surrender as love. Johannine theology sums this up in the sentence: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (3.16). [...] Thus in the concepts of earlier systematic theology it is possible to talk of a *homoousion*, in respect of an identity of substance, the community of will [*Willensgemeinschaft*] of the Father and the Son on the cross. However, the unity contains not only identity of substance but also the wholly and utterly different character and inequality of the event on the cross.³⁴

This intense “community of will” is kenotic, for Jesus the Son limits his own desire (for the cup to pass) in order to align his will with that of the Father (that Jesus should embody the kingdom all the way into an unjust death at the hands of ruling authorities). But it is not only the Son’s suffering that is in view here; passibility, passion, and relational trinitarian involvement all animate the cross. Thus, for the Son to suffer death, the Father must suffer the death of the Son as the death of one that he loves.³⁵ The suffering of the loved Son afflicts the Father, and is also a constitutive part of the Father’s surrender—it costs the Son *and the Father* greatly: “In the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at

³² Ibid., 241-242. The term has “an unequivocally negative sense” (TK, 80).

³³ See her *Suffering*, trans. by E.R. Kalin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), esp. 26-32.

³⁴ CG, 244 (German: 231).

³⁵ “And if Paul speaks emphatically of God’s ‘own Son’, the not-sparing and abandoning also involves that Father himself. In the forsakenness of the Son the Father also forsakes himself. In the surrender of the Son the Father also surrenders himself, though not in the same way.[...] The Father who abandons him and delivers him up suffers the death of the Son in the infinite grief of love” (CG, 243). See further Moltmann’s refinements of the *theology of surrender*: TK, 80-83; JCTW, 36-38; “God With the Human Face,” in HG, 77-78.

the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender [*in der Hingabe aufs innigste eins*].”³⁶ This suffering of mutual surrender is what gives rise to Moltmann’s notion of “patricompassionism”—the loving suffering of the Father that, unlike patripassian teaching, differs *in kind* from the suffering of the Son.³⁷ Moltmann’s mature description of this dual-kenotic sacrifice takes the following shape: “[The] giving up of the Son reveals the giving up of the Father. In the suffering of the Son, the pain of the Father finds a voice. The self-emptying of the Son also expresses the self-emptying of the Father. Christ is crucified ‘in the weakness of God’ (2 Cor. 13:4).... ‘In the surrender of the Son the Father also surrenders himself.’”³⁸

But if Moltmann’s trinitarian christology is afoot in this theology of surrender, then what does he say of the Spirit? This mutual suffering of the Father and Son in the passion is first developed in the context of Moltmann’s early pneumatology, which was deficient insofar as the Spirit was not envisioned as much more than the *vinculum amoris* between the Son and Father.³⁹ Eventually, as Moltmann’s pneumatology gains strength and becomes directive for much of his later theology, the Spirit’s co-surrendering role at the cross also materializes: “The surrender through the Father and the offering of the Son take place ‘through the Spirit’ [Heb. 9.14]. The Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation [between Father and Son].”⁴⁰ Moltmann also goes on to describe the Spirit not only as the bond of suffering-separation, but as the partner and power in Christ’s active self-surrender:

³⁶ CG, 244 (German: 231). See also CPS, 95.

³⁷ “Cross Today,” 73; CG, 243. Cf. ABP, 196. See also Herbert, *Kenosis and Priesthood*, 65-66.

³⁸ WJC, 176-177; Moltmann is here also drawing on a (slightly modified) passage from CG, 243.

³⁹ See CG, 252, 256, 275-278. Indeed, at this stage Moltmann’s understanding of the Spirit’s personhood is too under-developed (and Augustinian) to allow for a full-blown trinitarian theology of the cross; see on this point McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 48; Bauckham, *Theology*, 152-154—Neal’s commentary is also helpful: TH, 182-186. Moltmann himself later pinpoints this shortcoming in Augustine’s pneumatology and corrects his own; see esp. “The Trinitarian Personhood of the Holy Spirit,” in *Advents of the Spirit*, edited by L. Dabney & B.E. Hinze (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 313; also Moltmann, ET, 317; cf. TK, 169. Moltmann was also eventually able to sharpen his critique of Barth’s trinitarianism, highlighting an alleged lack of personhood ascribed to the Spirit in the *Church Dogmatics*: see TK, 142-144.

⁴⁰ TK, 82. The reference to Hebrews 9.14 and the Spirit’s role at the cross is earlier highlighted in CPS, 95; cf. also 37n61.

“It is Christ himself who is the truly active one, through the operation of the divine Spirit who acts in him [*Kraft des göttlichen Geistes, der in ihm wirkt*]. In ‘the theology of surrender’, Christ is made the determining subject of his suffering and death through the Spirit of God.”⁴¹ Indeed, not only Christ’s death but also his ministry through and in the power of the Spirit is the next pivotal dimension in understanding Moltmann’s kenotic christology.

§2 Kenotic Efficacy: The Power of the Spirit

As the Johannine testimonies emphasize Jesus’ reliance on his Father’s will, the synoptic testimonies emphasize his dependence on the Spirit’s power. This is the second dimension of the christological kenosis in Moltmann’s thought: Christ’s reliance on the Spirit as “the Spirit-imbued human being who comes from the Spirit, is led by the Spirit, acts and ministers in the Spirit.”⁴² In stark contrast to his earlier, more limited role for the Spirit in the life of Christ, Moltmann’s work following *The Crucified God* is highly concerned with the “trinitarian history” of Jesus, and it thus consistently highlights the radical relational dependence of the Son on the Spirit.⁴³ If the kenosis in relation to the Father is a kenosis of will (seen in the obedient submission of the Son), then the kenosis in relation to the Spirit is a kenosis of efficacy and action, displayed in Christ’s openness to and reliance upon the Spirit’s energies. We shall here briefly trace the extent of Moltmann’s thought on this “Spirit-history” of Jesus, which he glosses as “the coming, the presence, and the efficacy of the Spirit in, through, and with Jesus.”⁴⁴

Moltmann sees the “efficacy [*Wirken*] of the divine Spirit” as the “first facet of the

⁴¹ *SpL*, 63 (German: 76). Cf. the combination of pneumatological themes with the significance of the cross in Moltmann, *SoL*, 16-18.

⁴² *SpL*, 58; also *WJC*, 73.

⁴³ *TK*, 19, Chapter 3; *WJC*, Chapters 3 & 4; *SpL*, Chapter 3. Cf. “The history of Christ is a trinitarian history of the reciprocal relationships and mutual workings of the Father, the Spirit and the Son” (*WJC*, 86).

⁴⁴ *WJC*, 73. On the “history with the Spirit,” see *SoL*, 15.

mystery of Jesus”⁴⁵ and preserves the notion of Jesus’ “conception by the Spirit” or his “coming from” the Spirit,⁴⁶ though, as I have shown, he is strongly reluctant to ascribe any historical value to the notion of the virginal conception.⁴⁷ For Moltmann, the virgin birth and its relevant *loci* (Mt 1.18-23; Lk 2.1-7) were intended to secure certain doctrinal anchors for Christ’s divinity⁴⁸ as well as preserve the true humanity in the face of early gnostic (that is, docetic) speculation. But this latter goal, Moltmann declares, is today better served if we “stress the *non*-virginal character of Christ’s birth.”⁴⁹ This is a highly debatable point on Moltmann’s part. However, Peter Althouse, in his work on Moltmann’s pneumatology, rightly notes that Moltmann still acknowledges a “miracle” in the birth of Jesus; there is, after all, the incarnation of the pre-existent Son when Jesus is conceived, and this is brought about by what Moltmann calls the “motherhood of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰

Jesus’ unique, efficacious, and seemingly public endowment with the Spirit takes place when the Spirit descends on him.⁵¹ The synoptics portray this as occurring immediately after the baptism by John in the Jordan, but the Johannine testimony preserves only the Spirit’s descent on Jesus (Jn 1.32); according to Gary Burge this indicates that the Spirit, not the water, is “all that matters,”⁵² a point with which Moltmann would seem to concur. The Spirit-endowment is taken by Moltmann to be what Jesus is referring to when he says that the

⁴⁵ *WJC*, 73 (German: 92).

⁴⁶ *TK*, 293; *WJC*, 81-82.

⁴⁷ The only extended treatment in his major works comes in *WJC*, 79-87; in a later reflection he says simply that he “took a Protestant view of the virgin birth as ‘birth in the Spirit’” (*ABP*, 345).

⁴⁸ Namely “that [Jesus] is the messianic Son of God and the Lord of the messianic kingdom not only since his resurrection[...], and not merely since his baptism[...] but by his heavenly origin and from his earthly beginnings[...]. [The] aim is not to report a gynaecological miracle. [The] aim is to confess Jesus as the messianic Son of God and to point at the very beginning of his life to the divine origin of his person” (*WJC*, 81-82).

⁴⁹ *WJC*, 84. Pannenberg says much the same: *God and Man*, 146; further 141-150.

⁵⁰ Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days* (London/New York, T&T Clark, 2003) 133. Ian McFarland similarly discusses the virgin birth as an attendant miraculous account that is not a necessity for an establishment of Jesus’ divine ontology: *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 102(n39).

⁵¹ Mk 1.9-11; Mt 3.13-17; Lk 3.21-22; John’s gospel does not recount the event of water baptism but only John the Baptist’s testimony to the Holy Spirit’s descent (Jn 1.32).

⁵² Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 52, 59.

Father has “given the Spirit [to me] without measure” (Jn 3.34), and it appears to be likewise interpreted in the early church’s kerygma as God’s anointing of Jesus “with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10.38).⁵³ From this anointing onward, especially in the Lukan tradition, Jesus is compelled in all things by the Spirit: “The Spirit ‘leads’ him into the temptations in the desert. The Spirit thrusts him along the path from Galilee to Jerusalem.”⁵⁴

We can identify at least four distinct ways in which Moltmann portrays the Spirit’s efficacy in the life of Jesus, wherein the Spirit accomplishes things through him that, in his kenotic human life, he could not accomplish unaided. There is no standardized, categorical description of these four efficacies of the Spirit in Moltmann’s writing; rather they emerge on a careful synchronic reading of his major pneumatological passages.

Firstly, as we might anticipate, the Spirit empowers Jesus in the working of his miraculous acts: “[In] the power of the Spirit [Jesus] drives out demons and heals the sick[...]. The Spirit lends [Christ’s] acts [...] the divine *power* that is theirs.”⁵⁵ For many expositions of christology, this is the major extent of the Spirit’s work during the Son’s incarnate life; rather than attribute the miracles and obedience to the powers of the Second Person of the Trinity, they are attributed instead to the Third.⁵⁶

But Moltmann’s description of the Spirit’s activity goes far deeper than this. Secondly, he claims that the Spirit effectuates Christ’s ministry to “sinners” and empowers him to bring “the kingdom of God to the poor.”⁵⁷ That is, the Spirit enables not just his miracles, but also his prophetic and compassionate mission (as seems to be the major force of

⁵³ *WJC*, 89-90.

⁵⁴ *WJC*, 73. The language of the Spirit’s “compelling” of Jesus is forceful in the gospel text—see Mk 1.12: τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει (“drove” or “impelled”) εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.

⁵⁵ *SpL*, 61...63, emphasis original.

⁵⁶ See, e.g. Bruce Ware, “Christ’s Atonement: A Work of the Trinity,” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, 180-182.

⁵⁷ *SpL*, 61.

Isa 61.1 in Lk 4.18).⁵⁸ This means, importantly, that the kenotic reliance on the Spirit is also empowering Christ's kenosis to the Father; it is by the Spirit's power that the Son is enabled to be perfectly obedient to the Father. (On a critical note, Moltmann provides very little consideration for the Spirit's role in Jesus' life before his baptism—his discomfort with the virginal conception and his complete neglect of the temple incident with the boy Jesus [Lk 2.41-50] are doubtlessly at the root of this lacuna.⁵⁹)

There is a key interrelation between these first two aspects of the christo-pneumatological kenosis that is well formulated by Michael Welker. In an analysis that closely parallels Moltmann's in many respects, Welker emphasizes that though the Spirit's power is manifested in remarkable ways in Jesus' actions, those actions are still distinctly *limited*. The Messiah does not with a single word disband all demonic oppression and illness from all the faithful throughout the land of Israel, for instance. Rather "[Jesus] enters into a variety of individual, concrete stories and experiences of suffering. In the relative weakness and laboriousness of individual concrete acts and encounters, the Messiah intervenes in disfigured, suffering, woe-generating life."⁶⁰ The public ministry, empowered mightily by the Spirit, is thus still kenotic; it proceeds in a limited manner conditioned by the progressions and vicissitudes of human life and encounter.⁶¹

Such expansion of pneumatological christology into both interpersonal and kerygmatic action is reflective of what Max Turner has identified as the scholarly consensus

⁵⁸ "[The Spirit's] energy was the worker of all his works," (WJC, 91). See also Althouse, "Implications of the Kenosis of the Spirit for a Creational Eschatology: A Pentecostal Engagement with Jürgen Moltmann," in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth*, ed. A. Yong (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 155.

⁵⁹ I would echo Greg Liston's pointed question: "Before the indwelling [at the baptism], how did Jesus remain sinless; how did he grow and develop spiritually?" (*Anointed Church*, 46). The Spirit must be operative in some sense on the human Jesus—albeit in a different mode than post-anointing—starting from birth, or, indeed, *conception* (Lk 1.35). This reasoning echoes the rigorous examination given in W.G. MacDonald, *Problems of Pneumatology in Christology*, Th.D. Dissertation (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970), 129-148.

⁶⁰ Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. by J.F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 202.

⁶¹ This is at least one aspect of what Moltmann means in his discussions on the "kenosis of the Spirit," e.g. *SpL*, 61-63.

on the extent of the Spirit's effects in the Lukan tradition.⁶² It also represents the utter limit of the Spirit's Christic activity in the vast majority of biblically-driven Spirit christologies. For instance, Klaus Issler focuses his own "Spirit christology" almost entirely on the notion of "resources" (referring to the power and knowledge that Jesus acquires through his dependence on the Spirit) while simultaneously maintaining that Christ's "own divine power" could have been utilized, though only "infrequently."⁶³ As we show in our next paragraphs, Moltmann's thought goes significantly beyond even this in its understanding of Christ's radical dependence on the Spirit's efficacy.

Thirdly, the Spirit affects Christ's epistemic position; it reveals things to him and leads him into truths. Moltmann avers that the baptism not only makes Christ aware of his messianic office but also enters him into his "unique" Abba-consciousness,⁶⁴ for the heavenly voice says: "You are my *beloved* Son" (Mk 1.11; cf. Mt 3.17).⁶⁵ Moltmann specifies the pneumatological efficacy here, saying that the "Spirit *allows* [*läßt*] the Son to say 'Abba, beloved Father.'"⁶⁶ In short, Christ's consciousness of the immediacy of the Father, and of his incredible communion with the Father, is mediated by the Spirit.⁶⁷ For Moltmann, this Spirit-mediated Abba-communion firmly distinguishes Jesus from foregoing prophets and ensures that his proclamation of the kingdom is not solely about obedience to God (in contrast to John the Baptist's call to repentance) but also about love, intimacy, and adoption

⁶² Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts—Then and Now*, rev. ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 37-41; see also the discussion in Mark L. Strauss, "Jesus and the Spirit in Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament & Christian Theology*, eds. I.H. Marshall, V. Rabens, & C. Bennema (Michigan / Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 268-270.

⁶³ Klaus Issler, "Jesus' Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, 199-217; on Christ's possible-if-infrequent use of his own divine power, see 202-205. See also Strauss' article which, in dialogue with Hawthorne, mainly focuses also on resources and abilities (power and knowledge), "Jesus and the Spirit," 273-283.

⁶⁴ WJC, 90-91.

⁶⁵ I would locate the dawning of Jesus' Abba-consciousness earlier than Moltmann, since he refers to God as "my Father" in the boyhood temple incident (see Lk 2.49).

⁶⁶ TK, 74 (German: 90), emphasis added.

⁶⁷ Habets, *Anointed Son*, also makes this point, with consistent reliance on Moltmann (see 136-138). Liston also makes it, *Anointed Church*, 131-132; he is largely reliant on Habets, and thus on Moltmann by extension.

into the Father's care:⁶⁸ "This theology makes it understandable why Jesus does not merely proclaim as prophet the far-off, sovereign kingdom of God the Lord, but now proclaims as brother the imminent, loving kingdom of his Father."⁶⁹ This dimension of the Son's Spirit-history, his awareness of his relationship to the Father, has been explicated at depth in the work of James Dunn,⁷⁰ though Dunn does not necessarily share all of Moltmann's important "incarnational" commitments. And Gerald Hawthorne certainly discusses the Abba-relation, even stating at one point that the Spirit "enlightened [Jesus'] mind so that he might understand his unique relationship with the Father,"⁷¹ but he does not explicate this dimension of his pneumatology with nearly as much significance for Jesus' ministry as does Moltmann. For Moltmann, this efficacy of the Spirit is operative in Jesus even as the impending darkness of the cross looms: "In Gethsemane too Jesus utters this Abba prayer *in the Spirit of God*."⁷²

This brings us to the fourth, and most distinctive, element of Moltmann's understanding of Christ's kenosis of efficacy. While Myk Habets notes correctly that theological scholarship has often "overlooked [the] role the Holy Spirit plays... in the death, resurrection, and exaltation,"⁷³ the death of Jesus has quite possibly been the most pneumatologically neglected of these three topics.⁷⁴ Fittingly, the Spirit's relation to Christ's death is also the last element of Moltmann's pneumatological christology to come into focus, hinted at in *The Way of Jesus Christ* and developed fully only in *The Spirit of Life*.⁷⁵ We have already noted the intense kenosis of will outlined by Moltmann in terms of the Son's

⁶⁸ "I Believe in Jesus Christ," in *HTG*, 35-36; also *SoL*, 125; *TK*, 163.

⁶⁹ *WJC*, 90. See also Habets, *Anointed Son*, 131-132(n51-52).

⁷⁰ See e.g. *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), esp. 15-67.

⁷¹ *Presence and Power*, 179.

⁷² *SpL*, 63, emphasis added. Althouse, in dependence on Moltmann, states that "the Spirit reveals to Jesus that he is the Son of the Father" ("Implications," 162).

⁷³ Habets, *Anointed Son*, 161.

⁷⁴ See the trenchant analysis by Lyle Dabney, "Pneumatologia Crucis: Reclaiming *Theologia Crucis* for a Theology of the Spirit Today," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 53.4 (2000): esp. 515-523.

⁷⁵ See further on this development in Moltmann's pneumatology: Althouse: "Implications," 161-163.

relationship to the Father, which reaches its crescendo at the cross. That dimension of the kenosis concerns surrender and obedience. So, in keeping with a parallel kenosis of efficacy (or of power), we would expect to find Christ's kenosis with the Spirit expressed in terms of powerlessness on the cross. And this is precisely how Moltmann treats it:

The real theological difficulty of the stories about Jesus' healings, however, is raised by his passion and his death in helplessness on the cross. 'He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One' (Luke 23:35). *But this is just what Jesus apparently cannot do.* The healing powers that emanate [*ausgeht*] from him, and the 'authority' which he has over the demons, are given him not for himself but only for others. They act through him, but they are not at his disposal [*Sie wirken durch ihn, aber er hat sie nicht zur Verfügung*].⁷⁶

As Lyle Dabney (another past student of Moltmann's) has made clear, a *pneumatologia crucis*, a place for the Spirit at the cross, has been difficult to come by in theological history.⁷⁷ The difficulty persists today, in large measure. An incisive expositor of pneumatological christology like Hawthorne, for instance, seems to completely pass over this dimensionality in his otherwise robust pneumatological christology; Hawthorne states simply that the gospels "have nothing to say" about the Spirit and Jesus at the cross.⁷⁸ But this lack of something to say is of great import when, as Hawthorne's study (among many others) makes clear, the gospels express the Spirit's efficacy in *every other* dimension of Christ's lived mission.⁷⁹ Why, then, is the Spirit not referenced, especially in the Lukan writings, during the passion of Christ, the suffering of which had been inexorably precipitated by Jesus' public and Spirit-driven career? It is this strange silence that grants Moltmann's thesis at least some plausibility: the Spirit is not mentioned because its christological efficacies are trammled or withheld in some sense; the Spirit and Jesus are relating in a different manner

⁷⁶ *WJC*, 109–110 (German: 130), emphasis mine.

⁷⁷ See Dabney, "Naming the Spirit: Towards a Pneumatology of the Cross," in *Starting with the Spirit*, eds. G. Preece and S. Pickard (Australian Theological Forum, 2001), 30–40.

⁷⁸ Hawthorne, *Presence and Power*, 180.

⁷⁹ "[The evangelists] agree that Jesus was dependent upon the Spirit for the successful completion of the work God had given him to do in this world throughout *the whole of his life* (cf. John 17:4)" (*ibid.*, 179, emphasis mine).

than before; the efficacy has become an absence of efficacy.⁸⁰ In a way, this fourth dimension of the christo-pneumatological kenosis can be seen as an inversion of the first.

But there is also in Moltmann a concurrent, important sense in which Jesus, in his powerless self-surrender, willingly does not partake of the Spirit's energies. In this sense, there is no reason to see Jesus as somehow "abandoned" by the Spirit on the cross. In fact, a strong reading of Hebrews 9.14 drives Moltmann to bind together staurological suffering and pneumatological empowerment of the will.⁸¹ As he comes to discuss it in *Spirit of Life*, Jesus' kenosis of will even into death is facilitated by the Spirit: "Jesus goes in the Spirit and through the Spirit to his death."⁸² When Christ in the garden states that "the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Mk 14.38 and par.), Moltmann sees this as an affirmation that the Holy Spirit is present and that it even "frames [*formt*]" the kenotic response of the Son: "Not my will, but thine be done."⁸³ The Spirit empowers the kenosis of will by continuing to effect those realities which we've already noted (consciousness of filial relation, enablement of obedience, etc.), while the more obvious miraculous efficacies are withdrawn in the helplessness of the cross. As Kornel Zathureczky incisively puts it, "The power of the Spirit...is the power that makes the kenotic surrender of the Son possible."⁸⁴ This is the groundwork for Moltmann's *pneumatologia crucis*, in which a "kenosis of the Spirit" parallels the kenosis of Christ:

[If] the Spirit accompanies him, then it is drawn into his sufferings, and becomes his *companion* in suffering. The path the Son takes in his passion is then at the same time the path taken by the Spirit, whose strength will be proved in Jesus' weakness. The Spirit is the transcendent side of Jesus' immanent way of suffering. *So the 'condescendence' of the Spirit leads to the progressive kenosis of the Spirit, together*

⁸⁰ Myk Habets, whose recent pneumatological christology is substantially indebted to Moltmann's, takes this cue from Moltmann and focuses intensely on the Spirit's role at the cross: *Anointed Son*, 165-170.

⁸¹ The key phrase refers to "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God." *Pneuma* lacks the definite article in this passage, and so some interpreters have argued against seeing "the Spirit" here. However, Hawthorne provides strong reasoning for a fully pneumatological reading, see *Presence and Power*, 180-184. See also Steven Motyer, "The Spirit in Hebrews: No Longer Forgotten?" in *Spirit and Christ in the New Testament*, 226-227.

⁸² *SpL*, 64.

⁸³ *Ibid.* (German: 77).

⁸⁴ *The Messianic Disruption of Trinitarian Theology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 133.

with Jesus. Although the Spirit fills Jesus with the divine, living energies through which the sick are healed, it does not turn him into a superman. It participates in his human suffering to the point of his death on the cross.⁸⁵

This is a key development in Moltmann's christology and pneumatology.⁸⁶ This now fully trinitarian view of the cross echoes the patricompassionist language, only now in terms of the Spirit: "[The] story of the suffering of the messianic Son of God is the story of the suffering of God's Spirit too. But the Spirit does not suffer in the same way[....] On Golgotha the Spirit suffers the suffering and death of the Son, without dying with him."⁸⁷ This stands at the apex of Moltmann's fully-orbed theology of surrender,⁸⁸ which links inter-trinitarian kenosis with inter-trinitarian passibility, focused in the concrete events which exhibit Christ's kenosis of will and kenosis of power.

At this point in our analysis we need to note, heuristically, that Moltmann perceives the Christic kenosis to be dual-leveled: the first level pertaining to the trinitarian relations and the second pertaining to the distinctly human relations. The first level, which we have just finished examining, concerns the kenosis of Christ in his relations to the Father and the Spirit. The second dimension, to which we now turn, concerns the divine Son's relation to his human context and existence, specifically its *social* and *bodily* aspects. We treat each of these in our following two sections respectively.

⁸⁵ *SpL*, 62 (emphasis original). Moltmann identifies a substantial debt to Dabney's work on these points (ibid., xi, 64n15). Dabney's major arguments on the Spirit's kenosis can be found in L. Dabney, *Die Kenosis des Geistes, Kontinuität zwischen Schöpfung und Erlösung im Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997). See also the comments in Althouse, "Implications," 163-164.

⁸⁶ Though some commentators do not think this distances Moltmann enough from an Augustinian *vinculum amoris* pneumatology. E.g. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, "Jürgen Moltmann," in *Beyond the Pale: Reading Theology from the Margins*, edited by M.A. De La Torre and S.M. Floyd-Thomas (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 247; Jowers, "Theology of the Cross," 245-266.

⁸⁷ *SpL*, 62, emphasis added. See also Dabney, "Pneumatology of the Cross," 53-58. (The appropriate neologism for this kenotic co-suffering on the part of the Spirit would seemingly be "pneumacompassionism," though Moltmann does not employ this particular term.)

⁸⁸ Moltmann also calls it "the theology of *divine co-suffering* or *compassion*" (*WJC*, 178, emphasis original).

§3 Kenotic Identity: The Community of the Poor

In *The Way of Jesus Christ* Moltmann pursues what he calls “an emphatically *social* christology.”⁸⁹ Traditional christology (including kenotic varieties, as we saw in Ch. 1) has focused largely on the abstract relation between the divine and human natures, and Enlightenment-era “quest” christology tended to focus on the relations between the private interiority of Jesus and his cultural-historical environment, or perhaps on the relation between the distant, vague past figure of Jesus and the allegedly embellished icon of the church’s kerygma. But Moltmann moves past these sorts of analyses into a thickly relational accounting of Jesus; he claims that feminist theology in particular compels him to “look at the ‘social’ person of Jesus... his fellowship with the poor and the sick, with the people, with the women, and with Israel.”⁹⁰ What we find at this stage of the christology is an active kenosis-of-identity in which he who possessed a glorious existence in eternity (Jn 17.5) takes on the form of a *slave* (*doulos* - Php 2.7), a term that Moltmann takes very seriously in its socio-historical implications.⁹¹ It is in fact this dimension of kenosis that informs one of Moltmann’s earliest references to the Philippians 2 hymn:

[P]easants [and] slaves find in [Jesus] the brother who put off his divine form and took on the form of a slave (Phil. 2), to be with them and to love them. They find in him a God who does not torture them, as their masters do, but who becomes their brother and companion. Where their own lives have been deprived of freedom, dignity and humanity, they find in fellowship with him respect, recognition, human dignity and hope. They find this, their true identity, hidden and guaranteed in the Christ who suffers with them, so that no one can deprive them of this identity (Col. 3:3).⁹²

This aspect of Moltmann’s kenotic christology is active and participatory; it involves Christ’s entry as a first-century man into risky social and cultural milieus and his willing embrace of

⁸⁹ *WJC*, 71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ On the fact and manner of the humiliating crucifixion of slaves under the Roman Empire, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London, SCM Press, 1977), 51-63.

⁹² *CG*, 49. See further Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 69-70.

lowly, unclean, and even accursed status within those milieus.

Moltmann maintains that Jesus “becomes poor himself, in community with [the poor].”⁹³ In developing his theological understanding of the poor, Moltmann’s schematic range is expansive. Drawing on Korean Minjung theology to interpret the Greek term ὄχλος (variously “people,” “crowds”) in the gospels, Moltmann sees the poor as “the addressee of Jesus’ mission; he came on behalf of the people, his messianic kingdom is meant for the poor, his love is for the many.”⁹⁴ Moltmann provides a survey of the use of ὄχλος in the synoptics and finds it to include the “hungry, the unemployed, the sick, the discouraged...the sad...the suffering.... the subjected, oppressed, and humiliated people... [the] sick, crippled, homeless.... The poor are ‘non-persons’, ‘sub-human’, ‘dehumanized’, ‘human fodder’.”⁹⁵ And it is these that Christ willingly takes on as “his people” and “his family,”⁹⁶ his dining companions, the people whom he seeks out, touches, and heals. Moltmann is fond of noting that the gospel is “partisan [*parteiergreifenden*]” in this way; it is on the side of the ὄχλος.⁹⁷ In this radically kenotic identification Jesus “is one of them”⁹⁸ and when he heals the sick and ritually impure in their midst “he too becomes unclean.”⁹⁹

This becomes one of the most repeated aspects of Moltmann’s christology in its later formulations (that is, in the period subsequent to *The Trinity and the Kingdom*). We have already identified it in Ch. 5 as his “solidarity” christology, though he will also refer to it also as the *Freundschaft*, *Gemeinschaft*, and *Bruderschaft* of Jesus,¹⁰⁰ all entailing a closeness to the downtrodden that is not only representative or illustrative, but that goes all the way to the

⁹³ WJC, 100.

⁹⁴ ET, 254.

⁹⁵ WJC, 99.

⁹⁶ JCTW, 19; WJC, 102.

⁹⁷ WJC, 101 (German: 121); see also CPS, 78-80; “Justice for Victims and Perpetrators,” in HTG, 47-48; JCTW, 17-18; CG, 53.

⁹⁸ WJC, 102.

⁹⁹ WJC, 106.

¹⁰⁰ E.g.: *Freundschaft* in CPS (German), 134-137; *Gemeinschaft* in JCTW (German), 18-19; *Bruderschaft* in TK (German), 103, 130.

point of Christ's personal identification. This kenosis of identity is "realized" or completed by Jesus' degrading public execution on the cross, in which he experienced social, religious, and political violence, as well as the depth of divine silence so often characteristic of human suffering.¹⁰¹ His death at the hands of violent men echoes the situation of the ὄχλος itself, for it is often preyed upon by "men of violence" in the scriptural accounts.¹⁰²

The self-emptying here is absolute, as Jesus identifies to the very nadir of human spiritual, relational, and existential suffering:

'He emptied himself' says the Letter to the Philippians. Betrayed, denied, and left alone by the men who had been his disciples; crucified by the Romans as an enemy of the state, and indeed of the human race; forsaken by God on the cross—so divested [*solchen Entäußerung*], he arrives at the point of our own most profound desolation [*tiefste Elend*].... His history is first of all an expression of God's solidarity with the victims of torture and violence[.]¹⁰³

Astonishingly, the...hymn about Christ in Phil. 2 says that the form of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who humiliated himself, was 'the form of the slave.' If this is a reference to Jesus' humble origins among the humiliated people (ὄχλος) of Galilee, then in his suffering and death Jesus shared the fate of these enslaved people. Wretched and stripped of their rights as they were, it was their misery which Jesus experienced in his own body [*dessen Elend und dessen Entrechtung erfuhr er an seinem Leibe*].¹⁰⁴

In order to most fully identify with the oppressed, Jesus' kenosis of identity effects the abandonment of several layers of communal security, four of which are discussed often and powerfully by Moltmann. (Characteristically, he does not provide a taxonomy of these emphases in any one place, but my reading of his major works has unearthed each of them as a distinct stratum of his discourse.)

The first layer of Jesus' foregone security we have noted implicitly already: Jesus abandons (or does not pursue) financial security or stability; he is economically poor. He is born into a poor household (Lk 2.22-24 records Mary making the appropriate sacrifice for the

¹⁰¹ See Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 84-90.

¹⁰² *CPS*, 79-80; *WJC*, 99-100.

¹⁰³ *JCTW*, 65, (German: 59), cf. also 38-39; *ET*: "The God of the poor is manifested in Christ, who emptied himself 'unto death, even death on the cross'" (233).

¹⁰⁴ *WJC*, 168 (German: 190).

impoverished—“a pair of turtledoves;” see Lev 12.8). In Mt 17.24-27 Jesus has to provide his and Peter’s temple tax via a miracle. Jesus lacks a coin with which to make his point about paying tax to Caesar; one must be brought to him (Mt 22.17-22). Jesus is buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb (implying that his own family is not wealthy enough for a family tomb). The expensive burial spices for Jesus seem to be provided by Nicodemus (Jn 19.38-42). Jesus himself emphasizes his destitute and itinerant status,¹⁰⁵ and his ministry depended on charitable donations.¹⁰⁶ Moltmann states plainly the lack of financial security that attended the course of Jesus’ life: “[He] himself lived as one of the poor... without any income or provision for the future (Luke 9:58).”¹⁰⁷

Second, Moltmann emphasizes the aspect of Jesus’ career that was probably the most scandalous among the masses: he relinquishes the security of his family and even, to some extent, his national heritage. His public vocation seemingly engenders tension with his family (Mk 3.21), a tension which reaches a point of culmination when he disassociates himself from them in full hearing of a public audience: “Jesus said, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’” (Mk 3.33-34).¹⁰⁸ Culturally speaking, this moment would likely not have been seen as a mere rhetorical point on the part of Jesus;¹⁰⁹ rather it has the character of “a formal secession from his family” and, moreover, entails something of a disassociation from his Jewish lineage, for “it is a Jewish mother that makes a person a Jew.”¹¹⁰ N.T Wright’s recent

¹⁰⁵ “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk 9.58).

¹⁰⁶ On the poverty of Jesus, see further Ellacuría, “The Political Nature of Jesus’ Mission,” in *Faces of Jesus*, 85-89. He emphasizes the “fundamental theological value” of Jesus’ poverty, claiming that it “has a socio-theological meaning of the first importance” (87).

¹⁰⁷ WJC, 100.

¹⁰⁸ Moltmann notes the alleged parallels in the other synoptics, but Luke’s account (8.19-21) may well be a separate occurrence, and Matthew, characteristically, softens the scandal by dropping the accusation that Jesus’ was “out of his mind” (12.46-50). See also Dunn’s points in *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 595.

¹⁰⁹ Against James Dunn who calls Jesus’ pronouncement to the crowd simply part of a “vivid repartee” as well as a “molehill” out of which should not be made a “theological mountain” (*Jesus Remembered*, 596).

¹¹⁰ WJC, 143, 144; also *ET*, 254.

work has argued similarly that Jesus was hereby challenging and symbolically reconstructing many of the assumed familial and ethnic assumptions of his culture.¹¹¹ It is this scandalous behavior of Jesus, a seemingly “deliberate breach of the fifth commandment,”¹¹² that enables Moltmann to say that Jesus was “without the protection of a family”¹¹³ as a furtherance of his solidarity with the most outcast members of society.

Third, and perhaps the most obvious, is Jesus’ lack of political security. The course of his public ministry issued a direct challenge to the empirical *status quo*. Such activity would have been clearly “*politisch hochgefährlich*.”¹¹⁴ Examples abound: according to the gospels Jesus publicly denounces Herod the puppet-king as a “fox” (Lk 13.32), and he processes into Jerusalem with donkey and foal, an act that excites messianic fervor to such a degree that the Jewish populace calls urgently for liberation: *Hosanna! (Save us!)*¹¹⁵ (see Mk 11.1-10 and pars.). Such actions bear persecutorial fruit, for we see in the midst of the show trial before the authorities that Jesus is charged with setting himself up as the messianic king (Lk 3.32).¹¹⁶ To claim royal status was seditious and worthy of Rome’s attention—John records soldiers among those who arrest Christ at the Mount of Olives (Jn 18.3), and Mark also preserves the political charge, in ironic fashion, when Jesus himself asks why he is being arrested in the night as if he were a “bandit” (ληστής – Mk 14.38).¹¹⁷ This term is the same one applied to the political rebels who are crucified alongside him (Mk 15.27) as well as to

¹¹¹ See, e.g., *Victory of God*, 398-402, 430-432.

¹¹² This is Schalom Ben-Chorin’s point, which Moltmann follows. See Ben-Chorin, *Mirjam—Mutter Jesu* (Munich: List, 1971), 99ff, referenced in *WJC*, 143 (also in *HTG*, 12). These perspectives, as well as that of N.T. Wright, stand in some contrast to an assessment like Dunn’s (see *Jesus Remembered*, 595-597), which argues against “a severe rupture” between Jesus and his family, since the family is present among the disciples in Acts 1.14.

¹¹³ *WJC*, 100.

¹¹⁴ *WJC* (German), 184. Kohl colorfully translates this as “political dynamite” (English: 163).

¹¹⁵ On the messianic import of the action and the crowds’ reactions, see Moltmann, *ibid.*, 160-161; also Wright, *Victory of God*, 490-493; Witherington, *Christology of Jesus*, 106-107.

¹¹⁶ On this show trial, see William Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), Chapter 10; also Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin/New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1974, rev. ed.), Chapters 3 and 5.

¹¹⁷ *WJC*, 161.

Barabbas, the violent revolutionary for whom the crowd trades Jesus' life (Mk 15.7 and pars., cf. Lk 23.19).¹¹⁸ And it is his alleged rebellious claim to kingship that is finally inscribed upon the *titulum crucis*—"King of the Jews"—a point preserved in all four gospels. It stands as the political seal upon his degrading death. In short, claims Moltmann, like so many of the Jewish people in his day, Jesus "was a victim of Rome's despotic rule over Israel"¹¹⁹ and he "suffered the fate of many enslaved poor in the Roman empire."¹²⁰

Fourth, and finally, Moltmann emphasizes that Jesus willingly contested his own socio-religious security by virtue of his scandalous actions and message. Not only did he repeatedly render himself ritually impure through his association with the sickly and unclean,¹²¹ but his theological claims also constituted the depth of his social self-emptying of identity, for it is what led to the most repeated charge against him: *blasphemer*. Jesus' revelation of the character and grace of God, the God with whom he implied nonpareil closeness and from whom he claimed to derive his authority, directly provoked not only some of the crowd, who accused him of "making himself equal to God" (Jn 10.33),¹²² but also the religious leaders, who accused him of blasphemy directly (Mk 2.7; 14.64). Moltmann thus finds in Jesus an abandonment of the security of religious tradition, a true vulnerability on the stage of first-century Jewish theology, a self-emptying of rabbinical prestige and religiously construed honor:

The conflict [with the religious leaders] was provoked not by his incomprehensible claim to authority as such, but by the discrepancy between a claim which arrogated to itself the righteousness of God and his unprotected and therefore vulnerable humanity.

¹¹⁸ See further Wright, *Victory of God*, 419-420, 549.

¹¹⁹ WJC, 163. Jn 19.12 highlights the political justification of Jesus' swift execution when Pilate is told that he "is no friend of Caesar" if he does not administer death to Jesus.

¹²⁰ WJC, 100. Moltmann explicitly mentions the Phil. 2 hymn ("form of a slave") in this same context; see also Timothy Gorringer, *Redeeming Time: Atonement Through Education* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1986): "[Php 2.5-11] depicts Jesus again refusing to 'snatch at' or hang on to glory, but opting for the lot of the great majority of the Roman world, the lot of a slave, and dying the death which was reserved for them, crucifixion" (56).

¹²¹ Many examples could be noted, but most notably the interactions with the hemorrhaging woman (Mk 5.25-34 and pars.) and with the lepers (Mk 1.40-42 and pars.; 14.3).

¹²² ὡν ποιεῖς σεαυτὸν θεόν – lit. "are making yourself God." The public attempts to stone Jesus are rooted in an assumed crime of blasphemy, e.g. Jn 8.59, 10.31.

For one ‘without office or dignities’ to abandon the tradition and lay claim to the office and dignity of God himself, and to reveal divine righteousness in a ‘wholly other’ way by the forgiveness of sins, was a provocation of the guardians of the law.¹²³

Not only did Jesus collide with the Torah and its authoritative interpreters, but he also emptied his messianic identity of all its assumed interpretations. Far from fulfilling any militaristic or political role, Jesus went to his death in every sense appearing like a “defeated” messianic pretender.¹²⁴ As N.T. Wright concisely puts it, “It was, after all, failed Messiahs who ended up on crosses.”¹²⁵ In his apparent defeat, Jesus is emptied even of his followers and friends, for nearly all of them flee (Mk 14.50),¹²⁶ abandoning him to ignominious agony. For they had hoped “he would be the one to redeem Israel” (Lk 24.21) and so, as Moltmann states, “Jesus’ helpless death on the cross [was] the end of their hope.”¹²⁷

Each one of these four facets—economic, familial, political, religious—expresses an element of the social kenosis of Jesus Christ. His obedience to the Father’s will and his dependence on the Spirit’s efficacy drive him into a mission of unparalleled uniqueness, which proceeds at the fringes of society and challenges personal and communal categories of security. In this humbling of himself, Jesus travels through what Moltmann calls a “social and religious no-man’s-land.”¹²⁸ In this light, it should come as no surprise when in the gospel accounts Jesus is moved to depart from company and pray alone (e.g. Lk 6.12).¹²⁹ This prayer life, this clear portrayal of a dependent human in need of divine support, typifies the self-emptying which animates the whole course of Jesus’ career. He seeks strength and guidance because in his mission he is emptied of all social safeguards and takes his place alongside the

¹²³ CG, 130; see the whole discussion on these points, 128-134; further WJC, 162-163.

¹²⁴ CG, 132-133.

¹²⁵ Wright, *Victory of God*, 606; also see 658.

¹²⁶ But see John’s recounting, which seems to imply the presence of at least one disciple, as well as some of the women (Jn 19.25b-27).

¹²⁷ SRA, 44.

¹²⁸ WJC, 144.

¹²⁹ See also Mt 14.23; Heb 5.7; Jn 17.1-26.

most misunderstood and rejected: “He himself becomes a victim among other victims.”¹³⁰

These radical extensions of Christ’s lived vulnerability all consist in communal, corporate, and social relationships. Yet the greatest depth of his vulnerability is reserved in Moltmann’s thought for Christ’s self-emptying in relation to the created order itself. Indeed Christ’s flesh is the immediate locus of the bloodiest and most iconic depth of the kenosis: the stark suffering of the cross itself. We turn finally, then, to this aspect of the Christic kenosis in Moltmann’s thought.

§4 Kenotic Embodiment – The Frailty of the Flesh

The human person as a psychosomatic unity, animated by life which is inextricably and irreducibly composed of both material and spiritual aspects, is axiomatic for Moltmann’s understanding of anthropology and cosmology,¹³¹ especially since the “greening” of his theology between 1972 and 1985.¹³² Over and against the most common theological dualities prompted by modernity (mind vs. body, history vs. revelation, etc.¹³³) Moltmann has striven to see—in the light thrown by emerging scientific discourse¹³⁴—humanity as a part of nature whose embodied materiality is taken with resolute seriousness.¹³⁵ The fourth and final dimension of Moltmann’s kenotic christology reflects this, for it is concerned with Jesus’ body itself:

¹³⁰ *SpL*, 130(-131).

¹³¹ See *GC*, 247-270; *SW*, 47-51; *SRA*, Chapters 6 and 7; also *JCTW*, 85-87. For a thoroughly integrated examinations of Moltmann’s wide-ranging anthropology, see Prooijen, *Limping but Blessed*, esp. 330-355.

¹³² 1972 marked the West’s first major oil crisis and catalyzed Moltmann’s ecological theology, which emerged prominently in his paper “Creation as an Open System,” (*FC*, 115-130) but reached its full expression in his Gifford Lectures (published as *GC*). See the discussions in *ABP*, 211-212, 295-301.

¹³³ We have highlighted this aspect of his method earlier. See also Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 139.

¹³⁴ Excellent summary of philosophical and scientific movement away from soul/body dualism and its importance for christology can be found in F. LeRon Shults, *Christology and Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 35-38.

¹³⁵ This accords significantly with TT’s outlook on the burgeoning discoveries of quantum mechanics and neurology: see Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 12-14, 29-30, 43-48. As Moltmann states it: “Personhood is nature structured by the reflection of the mind and spirit, and by history. Every individual person is a hypostasis of nature. There are no human persons without nature, and there is no human nature without personhood. To be a person is more than to be a subject of understanding and will. A person is a living body” (*WJC*, 256).

Modern historical thinking set human history over against a nature without history. Newer thinking integrates human history in the natural conditions in which it is embedded.... [C]hristology therefore directs its attention towards Christ's bodily nature [*die Leiblichkeit Christi*] and its significance for earthly nature [*irdische Natur*], because embodiment is the existential point of intersection between history and nature in human beings.¹³⁶

If Christ's physicality is part-and-parcel of his humanity, and if humanity is intrinsically and irreducibly embedded in the natural world, then it can be argued that the incarnation has cosmic (or earthly or natural) significance; the body of Jesus would then be much more than simply the vehicle (or veil, or cloud, to use the more traditional concealment metaphors) which encapsulates a spiritual or "metaphysical" salvific reality. For Moltmann, what it means to appreciate Christ's ministry, especially those acts concerning the tangible healing of blatantly physical maladies,¹³⁷ is to take note of the "bodily character of salvation" and "the God who loves earthly life,"¹³⁸ and to follow Friedrich Oetinger in recognizing that "embodiment is the end of all God's works."¹³⁹

Moltmann's theme of kenotic identification thus extends beyond the sociological and relational dimensions we detailed in our foregoing section. In becoming a creaturely *human*, i.e. an interrelated element within the biological matrix of the created cosmos, God the Son inhabits the depths of vulnerable materiality and finitude which characterize the cosmic order.¹⁴⁰ Thus Moltmann would agree with numerous contemporary interpreters that the Word became "fallen" flesh upon the incarnation,¹⁴¹ but he sees this fallenness manifested in

¹³⁶ WJC, xvi (German: 14).

¹³⁷ Skin diseases (Mk 1.40-45 and par.; Lk 17.11-19); paralysis (Mk 2.3-12 and pars.; Mt 8.5-13 and pars.); hemorrhage (Mk 5.24-34 and pars.); blindness (Mk 9.27-31; Lk 18.35-43; Jn 9.1-12); fever (Mk 1.29-31 and pars.); deafness (Mk. 7.31-37); death itself (Mk 5.40-42 and pars.; Lk 7.11-16; Jn 11.38-44).

¹³⁸ WJC, 107.

¹³⁹ GC, Chapter 10; *EthH*, 72-73. See also the constructive assessment, with reference to Moltmann, of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2013), 143-148.

¹⁴⁰ In Richard Bauckham's words, "the mortality characteristic of this present reality" (*Theology*, 197).

¹⁴¹ E.g. Karl Barth, *Dogmatik*, I.2, 155-159; Thomas Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); Murray Rae, "The Baptism of Christ," in *The Person of Christ*, eds. S.R. Holmes and M.A. Rae (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2005), esp. 128-137. Cf. Jeff McSwain's commentary on Barth and Bonhoeffer on this score, *Movements of Grace* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 78-79.

the flesh's frailty and its subjection to the ravages of death, pain, and time, without any recourse into speculation about original sin or a causal connection between sin and physical death.¹⁴² For Moltmann, death is a "tragedy in creation," though this enigmatic phrase places death in no clear relation to sin itself, and the question of the origination of death in the midst of God's good creation is left hanging quite prominently in Moltmann's thought.¹⁴³ But we can leave this particular ambiguity aside in order to see Moltmann's christological point.¹⁴⁴ As the incarnate one, God the Son became a creature.¹⁴⁵ As a creature, he was comprised in materiality which was necessarily animated by natural laws relating to energy and matter;¹⁴⁶ like all elements of the physical created order, Christ was constituted in and by a nexus of corporeal relations. Colin Gunton's christology aligns, at least partially, with Moltmann here, for Gunton claims that "no christology is adequate which tries...to evade the material determinateness of Jesus" and that "Jesus was, as we are, a creature in relations of 'horizontal' reciprocal constitution with other people *and the world*."¹⁴⁷

For Moltmann, this deepening of the concept of incarnation delves beyond the assumption of human *nature in abstracto* in order to engage earnestly with the assumption of human *flesh* (and to, in fact, closely conflate the two). Jesus of Nazareth was born innately mortal, and that means that he suffered in the flesh what all flesh suffers—the law of natural death: "Jesus died *the death of all the living*, for he was mortal and would one day have died

¹⁴² See *WJC*, 169-170. Here Moltmann explicitly favors Schleiermacher's view over and against the "Augustinian and Pauline" tradition. He locates the beginning of the "concrete history of human sin" in Cain's fratricide ("Justice for Victims and Perpetrators," *HTG*, 45).

¹⁴³ David Höhne raises some critical points on this score, "Moltmann on Salvation," 160. See also McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 148-150.

¹⁴⁴ The interpreter who has most consistently called attention to Moltmann's underdeveloped doctrine of sin is McDougall (e.g. "Trinitarian Praxis," 201-202; *Pilgrimage*, 148-151). Moltmann's reservations about traditional formulations of hamartiology appear with clarity in *SpL*, 125-128. There he supports the notion that sin should be treated non-abstractly and only insofar as it can produce marked "therapeutic" value in the healing of human brokenness (esp. 127-128). See also his comments in his "Foreword" to *Pilgrimage*, xiv.

¹⁴⁵ Höhne, "Moltmann on Salvation," 160, with parenthetical reference to Col. 1.15-17. See also Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁶ Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, esp. 36-37.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41, 43, emphasis added.

even if he had not been executed. Through his death struggle he participated in the fate of everything that lives—not merely the fate of human beings; for all living things desire to live and have to die.”¹⁴⁸ Here emerges the key to this aspect of the kenotic christology: the kenosis of Christ takes the divine Son all the way to an *embrace of cosmic vulnerability*, of dying material existence, with the broken world; he suffers its kind of suffering, both in life and on the cross.¹⁴⁹ The one who in his divine form became a slave (Php 2.7) was self-emptied to the point of death, death being the fate of all things in the present created order. Jesus was “enslaved,” via his incarnation, to a “body of death” like the one Paul bemoans in Romans 7.24. This enslavement, this self-emptying, fetters Christ’s flesh to the powers of the old and broken creation—namely, the powers of dissolution, entropy, and death.

This forms an important and hitherto unmentioned facet of Moltmann’s theology of surrender, for it answers the question of *what Christ was surrendered to*. Moltmann’s answer is simply *death*; creaturely finitude; the sickness of pain and transitoriness that runs through all flesh. Jesus “was handed over to death” (Rm 4.25),¹⁵⁰ for death is the ruling power with dominion over the Adamic creation (Rm 5.12-21) and it is that dominion that was broken by the resurrection (Rm 6.9); sin and death had to be “condemned in the flesh” by Christ who was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rm 8.4). These passages are often treated as though their major referent is spiritual death, but Moltmann, in line with his focus on enfleshment, cosmology, and embodiment, takes them as referring to the physical death that characterizes all life on this side of the new creation,¹⁵¹ and thus he sees Christ’s subjection to it not only on the cross, but in the incarnation as a whole. God the Son did not only become poor, unclean, outcast, and abandoned; he became flesh itself, and so went the way of all flesh, at

¹⁴⁸ WJC, 169.

¹⁴⁹ WJC, 154-159, 193-197, 253, 255, 258; also Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 138-139; Neal, *Theology as Hope*, 157-159; Bauckham, *Theology*, 210.

¹⁵⁰ Moltmann states: “The Son is given over to the power of death, a power contrary to God” (CPS, 95).

¹⁵¹ JCTW, 84-87.

the nadir of his self-emptying. It is the cross that realizes (or completes) this kenosis.¹⁵²

Christ's kenotic identification with the broken, interrelated material order allows the cross to be the place where he suffers the sufferings of all creation, for all flesh plummets toward death.¹⁵³ This is one of the most sustained points in *The Way of Jesus Christ* and also one of the most prominent developments in Moltmann's staurology since *The Crucified God*.

Jesus died the death of all living things. That is, he did not only die 'the death of the sinner' or merely his own 'natural death'. He died in solidarity with the whole sighing creation, human and non-human—the creation that 'sighs' because it is subject to transience [*Vergänglichkeit unterworfenen*]. He died the death of everything that lives. [...] The sufferings of Christ are therefore also 'the sufferings of this present time' (Romans 8.18), which are endured by everything that lives.¹⁵⁴

This has then brought us to the cosmological—or we might say *sarxological*—extent of the christological kenosis in Moltmann. When the Philippians 2 hymn talks about “being born in human likeness [ὁμοιώματι]” and “being found in human form [σχήματι]” (Php 2.7), these should be seen as standing alongside the consistent New Testament claim of divine enfleshment. We are told that “the Word became flesh [σαρκός]” (Jn 1.14), and that the Son “through whom God created the worlds” also participated in what is referred to as “the days of the flesh [ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκός]” (Heb. 1.2, 5.7).¹⁵⁵ Moltmann takes this flesh to be all-embracing; *sarx* does not simply refer to “sinful” flesh but to flesh itself and the conditions of fleshly existence. N.H. Gregersen has recently lent support to such a view, saying that “*Sarx* can mean simply ‘body and flesh’... [it] can also mean ‘sinful flesh’... But finally [it] refers to the realm of materiality in its most general extension, perhaps with a note of frailty and transitoriness.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² TK, 119. Cf. Kärkkäinen, “The self-surrender to the death on the cross and the cry... was the ultimate point of his self-distinction and self-emptying” (*Christ and Reconciliation*, 165).

¹⁵³ WJC, 154-159, 169-170, 193-197, 253, 255, 258.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 169-170 (German: 191).

¹⁵⁵ See also Hb 2.14, where Christ is said to share in “αἵματος καὶ σαρκός.”

¹⁵⁶ N.H. Gregersen, “The Idea of Deep Incarnation: Biblical and Patristic Resources,” in *To Discern Creation in a Scattering World*, eds. F. Depoortere and J. Haers (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 328, see also 321. So also Moltmann, “Is God Incarnate in All That Is?”, 126-128. This understanding of *sarx* is strongly advocated by J.A.T. Robinson as well: *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (SCM Press, 1982), 17-26.

Gregersen's christological work has recently engendered a school of thought known as "deep incarnation" which further expounds the significance of Christ's flesh by re-formulating Anselm's famous question as *cur Deus caro* (Why the God-flesh?) and asking further: "What in the world has the *body* of Jesus to do with the vast body of *cosmos*?"¹⁵⁷ Those who have advocated for the idea of deep incarnation¹⁵⁸ propose that in Jesus the divine and the creaturely are "conjoin[ed] so intensely together that there can be a future also for a material world characterized by decomposition, frailty, and suffering" and that "incarnation is about a radical divine self-embodiment that reaches into the roots (*radices*) of biological existence."¹⁵⁹ For Gregersen, as in Moltmann, "the flesh assumed in Jesus includes the entire human race (women and men), as well as the nonhuman creatureliness"¹⁶⁰—in short, the Logos' coming-as-flesh has meaning for "the entire matrix of materiality."¹⁶¹

In a recent volume of essays focused on this deep incarnation motif, Moltmann himself has in fact been able to interact with some of the major exponents of the perspective, and has iterated his agreement explicitly: "God assumes the whole vulnerable, mortal nature in his becoming human, in order that it may be healed, reconciled, and glorified."¹⁶² There is thus prevalent accord between the idea of deep incarnation and our explication of Moltmann's view of Christ's kenotic relation to the vulnerable human body. Along these lines, Christopher Southgate has rightly noted that Moltmann's discourse on this co-suffering

¹⁵⁷ Gregersen, "Cur Deus Caro: Jesus and the Cosmos Story," *Theology and Science*, Vol. 11.4 (2013): 375.

¹⁵⁸ Aside from Gregersen, Celia Deane-Drummond and Elizabeth Johnson have made use of the ideas. See also the recent work from J.M. Moritz, "Deep Incarnation and the *Imago Dei*: The Cosmic Scope of the Incarnation in Light of the Messiah as the Renewed Adam," *Theology and Science*, Vol. 11.4 (2013): 436-443; R. Cole-Turner, "Incarnation Deep and Wide: A Response to Niels Gregersen," in *Theology and Science*, 11.4 (2013): 424-435, as well as the recent anthology, edited by Gregersen, *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

¹⁵⁹ Gregersen, "Cur Deus Caro," 375.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 383.

¹⁶¹ Gregersen, "Deep Incarnation and Kenosis: In, With, Under, and As: A Response to Ted Peters," *Dialog*, Vol. 52.3 (Fall 2013): 252.

¹⁶² Moltmann, "Is God Incarnate in All That Is?", 128. See also his comments in *EthH*: "The biblical word 'flesh' (*kol' basar*) means 'all the living', and embraces human life together with all the living on earth. The 'becoming flesh of the Word' (John 1:14) [is] not meant anthropocentrically" (62).

solidarity with the whole created order reflects “Christ’s ultimate act of kenosis.”¹⁶³ An effective summation of this kenotic theme is provided by K. Zathureczky in his own commentary on Moltmann’s christology:

Moltmann’s Christ is not the ontological abstraction of the metaphysics of two natures. He is the Messiah who identifies with the decay of existence and through his kenotic identification, rescues creation from its ultimate decay. The Messiah redeems the incomplete by identifying with it.[...] The connection between the cross of Christ and the materiality of existence is an essential determining factor of Moltmann’s soteriological schema.¹⁶⁴

Eschatology never far from view, Moltmann will declare in later works that, though we are tempted to “flee from the mortality of the body” with its “infirmities and frailties,” it is Jesus who “brings and makes a truly living life [the] harbinger and beginning of the bodily life of the new creation.”¹⁶⁵ This alludes fundamentally to the sort of discourse which will characterize our argumentation in our final chapter: kenosis is not simply depths of suffering and solidarity, but it is, for Moltmann, the literal *manner* of the world’s transformation. The path from old creation to new creation is a kenotic path.

Having thus thoroughly analyzed and described Moltmann’s unique fourfold vision of Christ’s kenosis, we must now turn to the narrational dimension of Moltmann’s christology in order to bind together the varied themes of his christology with his understanding of the christological kenosis. Moltmann sees christology as fundamentally proceeding from the gospel narratives, in particular centered on the dynamic and unfolding drama related to Christ’s messianic status, and so it is on this narrational trajectory that we will focus in order to demonstrate the co-inherence of the various elements of Moltmann’s robust kenotic christology.

¹⁶³ Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 76. Southgate also claims a debt to Gregersen’s work on deep incarnation (76-77).

¹⁶⁴ *Messianic Disruption*, 131.

¹⁶⁵ *EthH*, 54.

§5 The Way of the Kenotic Christ: Messiah-in-Process.

Our foregoing discussions here and in Ch. 5—in which we have examined Moltmann’s varied christological themes and his fourfold vision of Christ’s kenosis—call out at this point for a summative rendering. By posing a series of related christological questions we will be enabled to bind many of these lines of discussion together into a synthesized and narrational portrait of Moltmann’s kenotic christology. The questions are these: What is to be made of Jesus’ self-understanding and his “messianic consciousness”? That is, what did Jesus think of himself? Who and what did he understand himself to be, and how does the progression of his life relate to that understanding? As would be expected, Moltmann does not undertake any answer to such questions via consideration of the two natures *in abstracto* or through some fracturing of the consciousness of Jesus into “divine” and “human” components.¹⁶⁶ Rather, it is the concrete historical accomplishments and progressions of the life of Jesus that help to inform an implicit perspective (rather than an overt philosophical or psychological declaration) on his self-understanding; this is part of what Moltmann means when he claims to be pursuing a “narrative christology.”¹⁶⁷ In this narrative, all the christological thematics and all of the dimensions of the kenosis that we have identified play key roles.

The baptism of Jesus, as the catalyst for Jesus’ public ministry, is a definitive scriptural moment for Moltmann, and one that illustrates a core distinctive of his christological narrative: Jesus experiences stages of his self-understanding and vocational outlook; he “grows” into his messiahship; he has a “*being-in-history*, and [a] ‘learning process’ [*Lernprozeß*] of his life and ministry.”¹⁶⁸ The endowment with the Spirit is key, for in Jesus’ kenosis of efficacy and will, he needs the Spirit’s energies and influence to help him

¹⁶⁶ For examples of both strategies, we can refer again to the philosophical, apologetic modes of christological thought that we analyzed in chapter 2: e.g. Morris, *God Incarnate*, chs. 4, 6; also R. Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 199-209.

¹⁶⁷ WJC, xv. See also McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 11-13(nn45-46), 65.

¹⁶⁸ WJC, 136 (German: 158). The most important section on this is *ibid.*, 136-150. See also *SpL*, 60-65.

know both his mission and who he is before the Father: “It is therefore the Spirit who also ‘leads’ Jesus into the mutual history between himself and God his Father, in which ‘through obedience’ (Heb. 5:8) he will ‘learn’ his role as the messianic Son.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, Moltmann’s pneumatological and developmental christology (as themes) must be understood concurrently with the kenosis of efficacy, which enables and sustains the kenosis of will and forms the basis of Moltmann’s “messianic” and “firstborn” christological thematics.

Moreover, as Jesus embraces his role as Messiah, empowered by the Spirit and submitted to the Father, there emerge discrete stages in his developing self-understanding. While Jesus may have come to understand himself as Messiah around the time of his baptism, the question still remains of *what sort of Messiah* he understood himself to be. It was, after all, a time of messianic fervor in Israel.¹⁷⁰ There were many expectations and hopes that took on particular messianic shapes, and Jesus would no doubt have been exposed to the varied contours of this *Zeitgeist* in the course of his childhood and maturation. The temptations in the desert (Mt 4.1-11 and pars.), no matter how the story is construed in terms of historical event, at the very least illustrate Jesus’ clash with messianic expectations that were defined by displays of power, grandeur, and standard images of rulership.¹⁷¹ In the important christological work *Freedom Made Flesh*, Ignacio Ellacuría discusses the reality of “the key temptation of false messianism” as a persistent and publicly manifested challenge in the life of Jesus.¹⁷² As evidenced by his accomplished victory over such temptation, Jesus is aware that his “way” must be different from a militaristic or political Messiah. This Messiah is a self-emptying one: the kenosis of identity in solidarity with the poor and the kenosis of body

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁷⁰ For a thorough historical survey of messianic formulations, movements, figures, and expectations, see Gerbern Oegema, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba* (Mansion House: Sheffield Press, 1998), esp. 103-147, 294-303.

¹⁷¹ CG, 142; SpL, 61; WJC, 92. Cf. Wright, *Victory of God*, 457-459; Habets (who, again, is heavily reliant on Moltmann), *Anointed Son*, 143; see the helpful summative discussion in Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 102-111.

¹⁷² *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 54-60.

in a vulnerable and humiliating death are key to his inhabitation of this countercultural messianic role. For Moltmann, the kenosis of Christ's vulnerable identity is what funds his messianic christology. And of course, the full knowledge of his kenotic messianic calling dawned upon Jesus over time. In generalized terms, both Luke and Hebrews tell us of the learning of Christ (Lk 2.52; Hb 5.8). In specific terms, Moltmann emphasizes that Jesus is dependent on and grows through his social relations.¹⁷³ The interactions with women especially seem to push Jesus beyond himself to new realizations; the woman with the hemorrhage (Mk 5.25-34) and the Canaanite woman (Mt 15.22-28) both impress Jesus with their faith, and it seems that "Jesus himself grows from the expectation and faith of these women. He surpasses himself as we say—he grows beyond himself [*er wächst über sich hinaus*]. But it would be more exact to say: he grows into the One whom he will be, God's messiah."¹⁷⁴ Said differently, and slightly less drastically, these stories of the women (among others) can be seen as providential encounters which teach Jesus about himself and the role into which the Father beckons him and toward which the Spirit impels him.

Though Moltmann does not make this express point, we might add that, in implicit terms, the prayer life of Jesus seems to demonstrate interpersonal and vocational development, for the act of private prayer on his part (Mt 14.23, 26.36-44) seems strongly to indicate a seeking of personal guidance, instruction, or edification.¹⁷⁵ As Myk Habets rightly notes, this practice of private prayer has often been a "puzzle" and a "mystery" to traditionally rendered Logos christologies.¹⁷⁶ By contrast, Moltmann's unique form of

¹⁷³ WJC, 71. Furthermore, at least twice in the gospel narratives, Jesus is said to be "amazed" (*thaumazō*) by an encounter with others—once by the faith of the centurion (Lk 7.9) and again by the lack of faith in his hometown (Mk 6.6)—an expression that could be seen to convey a new realization or new noetic experience on the part of Jesus.

¹⁷⁴ WJC, 111 (German: 131); also see 146-147.

¹⁷⁵ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 19-20; Anna Wierzbicka, *What Did Jesus Mean? Explaining the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables in Simple and Universal Human Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 147-148.

¹⁷⁶ Habets, *Anointed Son*, 265.

kenotic christology renders it deeply meaningful and coherent rather than baffling.

Not only the prayer life of Jesus, but also his forty-day fast in the wilderness can be taken to illustrate this, for an analysis of fasting, based on the few Old Testament texts concerning the practice, can readily conclude that the two most general and consistently attested purposes of Jewish fasting were either (1) as mourning or expiation relating to death, destruction, or sin (e.g. Neh 9.1; Esth 4.3; Joel 2.12) or (2) as an “auxiliary to prayer” in order to seek divine assistance and revelation (Is 58.4; Dn 9.3).¹⁷⁷ Given a lack of clear contextual rationale for why (1) would apply in Jesus’ case, (2) seems the most obvious justification for his fasting in the wilderness. The fast’s placement between the baptism and the beginning of his ministry makes good sense of this. Jesus could very well be seeking divine illumination as to the true meaning of his recently declared messianic status. My own exploratory thinking on this point echoes Donald MacKinnon’s thought that in the desert narrative we may be reading “a recollection of what Jesus himself may have said concerning his own most strenuous self-interrogation, as if he had first put to himself the question: ‘What think you of Christ?’ before he could put it to others.”¹⁷⁸ This certainly would explain the narrational force of the recounted devilish temptations all involving distinctly messianic pretexts.¹⁷⁹

And if this temptation narrative displays Jesus’ “initial victory” over such false messianic ambitions,¹⁸⁰ then it is the confrontation with Peter at Caesarea Philippi that unveils the matured contours of Jesus’ messianic self-understanding (see Mk 8.27-33 and pars.). Peter rightly identifies Jesus as Messiah, but he does not understand the kind of

¹⁷⁷ See further: Eliezer Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 94-95(n20); H. A. Brongers, “Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times,” in *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 3.

¹⁷⁸ “The Myth of God Incarnate,” in *Themes in Theology*, 143.

¹⁷⁹ See Stein, *Messiah*, 106-110. Michael Welker says that Jesus is not *denying* the grasping of power but rather *demonstrating* the power he already has. There doesn’t seem to be any reason, though, why both readings cannot stand side-by-side, since there is an undeniable difference between the sort of power Christ refuses and the sort of power he demonstrates in so refusing. See Welker, *God the Spirit*, 187.

¹⁸⁰ Wright, *Victory of God*, 457-459; MacDonald, *Pneumatology in Christology*, 149-151.

Messiah that Jesus is called to be, and he is rebuked for it, as well as pejoratively identified with that initial source of messianic misconstrual, the “satan” (Mk 8.33).¹⁸¹ This climactic moment in Jesus’ history, for Moltmann, is what points to the true “messianic secret,” which is the secret of a *suffering* Messiah, whose way is a way of humiliation, limit, and apparent loss; a hidden victory if ever there was one. (It is here that we perceive how the kenosis is fundamental to Moltmann’s theme of “solidarity” christology and his emphasis on Christ’s *Leidenschaft*.) Moreover, it is only *after* this revealing moment at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus begins to speak of his impending death (e.g. Mk 8.31, 9.31, 10.33-34, 14.27). But even after this there remains his dark struggle with this messianic calling-unto-death in Gethsemane, and here Ellacuría again provides reasoning that is consonant with Moltmann’s paradigm: “[Jesus’] messianism must be interpreted in terms of apparent failure and ruin, and it is this realization that leads to his bloody sweat and agony in the garden.... It costs him a great deal to see this.”¹⁸² For Moltmann, this means that Jesus speaks and acts in a dawning or gradual assurance of his fully kenotic calling:

If Jesus holds fast to his endowment with the Spirit, dispensing with the economic, political and religious methods of forcible rule, then all he can do is to suffer the forces that oppose him, and then he must die in weakness. But this is the way along which the Spirit ‘leads’ him, so this is also the way in which he is assured of his messiahship [*seiner Messianität gewiß wird*]. It is as he follows the path that he comes to understand the messianic role that God’s Spirit has assigned him.¹⁸³

Thus, it emerges with more clarity how every thematic dimension of Moltmann’s christology not only requires but presupposes the varied dimensions of Christ’s kenosis. The Christic ministry is developmental, and it is informed and constituted by an array of kenotic

¹⁸¹ The link between “Satan” and false messianism may also be represented in the character of Judas. There are grounds for suspecting Judas Iscariot to be a Zealot, and ahead of his betrayal of Jesus it is said that “Satan entered into him” (Jn 13.27; Lk 22.3). See CG, 139. Also, Wright links all three of these events—the desert, Caesarea Philippi, and the betrayal—within the matrix of satanic temptation and false messianic thinking (*Victory of God*, 463).

¹⁸² *Freedom Made Flesh*, 60.

¹⁸³ *SpL*, 62 [German: 75]; also Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, 133-134; Wright, *Victory of God*, 527-538.

relationships (with the Father, Spirit, society, the created order, etc.). And this is what

Moltmann refers to summatively as the “whole self-emptying”, the whole kenosis:

[Jesus] neither affirms nor denies the title of the Christ with which Peter acknowledges him [at Caesarea-Philippi). He suspends this answer, giving himself and the disciples an answer of his own: the announcement of his suffering. Who he truly is, is to be manifested in his death and resurrection. [...] The sequence is: suffering—great suffering—rejection—death at the hands of others; and this sequence shows step by step the total loss of self, the whole self-emptying [*die totalen Selbstverlust, die gänzliche Selbstentleerung*], the loss of strength, the loss of dignity, the loss of human relationships, the loss of life. It is the road into a no-man’s-land where there is no longer any sustaining tradition or human community—nothing but the God whom Jesus trusts.¹⁸⁴

This is the sum of Moltmann’s kenotic christology. In trinitarian relation and in genuine humanity, the eternal Son casts himself into an existence completely defined by others, by limitation, and by suffering, and he must grow into this missional existence as the “Messiah in becoming.” Gunton offers an analysis that accords strongly with some aspects of this, saying that “Jesus’ particular humanity is perfected by the Spirit, who respects his freedom by enabling him to be what he was called through his baptism to be. That sacrificial offering can be understood in its fullness if it is seen to consist not only in the life laid down, but in the whole pattern of a life leading to passion and death.”¹⁸⁵ Moltmann claims that, throughout every stage of his self-emptying, Christ participates in a “co-instrumentality” with the Father and Spirit—“his life history is at heart a ‘trinitarian history of God’”¹⁸⁶ and also, as we’ve seen, the Father and Spirit each experience their own forms of co-kenosis alongside Jesus.¹⁸⁷

So how did Jesus understand himself? No less an eminent and creedally committed scholar than N.T. Wright has suggested that Jesus, in his truly human and dependent

¹⁸⁴ *WJC*, 138 (German: 159).

¹⁸⁵ Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, 57.

¹⁸⁶ *WJC*, 74.

¹⁸⁷ The christological self-emptying of the Father: *WJC*, 176, cf. *TK*, 82-83; the christological kenosis of the Spirit: *SpL*, 62-63. Cf. Myk Habets discussion of the co-kenosis of the Spirit with the Son (*Anointed Son*, 143-144, 165-167) and his suggestive commentary on the co-kenosis of the Father, at least during the death of Christ (168n193).

existence, would have had to consider “the serious possibility that he might be totally deluded” about his own identity.¹⁸⁸ But, in surprising contrast to this sort of assessment, Moltmann’s thickly trinitarian and narrational view of Christ’s kenosis allows Jesus *a deep assurance of mission once that mission is learned*, even in the agony of the crucifixion.¹⁸⁹ But this does not lessen the kenosis or the depths of Christ’s limitation and suffering. The Son of God on a rebel’s cross is never anything other than a kenotic reality for Moltmann, and it is this kenosis which “reveals” the “divinity of God”.¹⁹⁰

Israel’s messiah king goes his way to the Roman cross. The Son of God empties himself of his divinity and takes the way of a poor slave to the point of death on the cross. If we look at the divine power and sovereignty, this is a path of self-emptying [*ein Weg der Entäußerung*]. If we look at the solidarity with the helpless and poor which it manifests, it is the path of the divine love in its essential nature.¹⁹¹

This is solidarity christology: Christ with us, the God-forsaken. The Gospels describe Jesus’ passion as the story of his path into an ever-deeper self-emptying. This path ends with his execution on the Roman cross.¹⁹²

§6 Conclusion: Kenosis Toward Transformation

This chapter has engaged a key series of topics in its intended contribution to Moltmann scholarship. Through a synchronic and synthesized reading of Moltmann’s major christological statements, a comprehensive presentation of his christology has been offered, culminating in this chapter via an integrated statement of that christology’s interwoven kenotic emphases. Though it has often been treated in a piecemeal fashion in secondary scholarship, the Moltmann’s doctrine of Christ demonstrates both robustness and singularity when its diverse thematics and kenotic motifs are brought holistically together.

T.R. Thompson, in an excellent essay focused on the development of kenotic christology, interestingly comments that while Moltmann is keen on expressing a generally

¹⁸⁸ Wright, *Victory of God*, 606.

¹⁸⁹ See esp. *SpL*, 65.

¹⁹⁰ *IEB*, 70-71.

¹⁹¹ *WJC*, 178 (German: 200).

¹⁹² *IEB*, 69.

kenotic *theism*, he

does not expressly entertain this same fruitful move [i.e. kenosis] in the Incarnation of the Son. My point here is this: the classic kenotic approach in principle seems to me not only eminently compatible with Moltmann's Christology, but his Christology actually appears to presuppose it. [So why does Moltmann] shy away from the issue?¹⁹³

The contribution of this present chapter (as well as Ch. 5) reveals both what is right and what is wrong with such an assessment of Moltmann's christology. Thompson is right insofar as a certain form of kenosis is presupposed by Moltmann's christology, and we have spent the bulk of our last two chapters unveiling the unique contours of it. But, as has been demonstrated, it would be wrong to suggest as Thompson does that Moltmann's KC is remotely equivalent to "the classic approach" (i.e. nineteenth century radical German models). Moltmann is critical of classic kenoticism. However, he retains and employs certain strengths of it in his own rendering of a relational, biblically-driven, non-speculative form of kenotic christology. Moreover, Moltmann is hardly shy about his views of Christic kenosis; his work is replete with explicit discussion and implicit utilization of such a framework in his doctrine of Christ, as we have made evident.

These past four chapters endeavored to thoroughly demonstrate and systematically explicate the distinct shape of Moltmann's doctrine of Christ. It can be seen that in every dimension of his christology's manifold textures, kenosis is an operative category. This study has also claimed—though not yet fully shown—that Moltmann's unique form of KC, with its focus on relational, interpersonal, and narrational elements, provides a model of KC which hurdles the myriad issues we pinpointed in third-wave KC in Ch. 1 of this thesis. The task of showing this is what will occupy the next, and final, chapter of this thesis, as Moltmann's kenotic christology is examined and applied via our three heuristic questions which we developed with the aid of Transformation Theology in Ch. 2. The next chapter thus brings

¹⁹³ Thompson, "Nineteenth Century," 109.

this study full circle: using insightful language and conceptuality from TT to help frame the specific contributions of Moltmann's KC, and highlighting its contrast with third-wave KC, and showing it to be a rehabilitative resource for contemporary reflection on the kenosis of Christ. So, our final chapter will be asking: does the christological attentiveness of Moltmann's KC allow for a true focus on Christ's *historical accomplishment*, his *presence in the world today*, and his *significance for churchly praxis*?

HOW THE WORLD IS CHANGED:

CHRIST, CHURCH, AND KENOTIC-TRANSFORMATIONS

This chapter brings the thesis to a close by focusing our strategically systematized account of Moltmann's KC through the heuristic christological questions that we developed in our earlier examination of TT, with the goal of showing Moltmann's doctrine of Christ to be a rehabilitative resource for ongoing kenotic christological thinking. We must at this stage briefly recall the progression of our discussions in Chapters 1 and 2. Kenotic forms of christology, since their inception in the work of Thomasius, have tended toward an overtly *concept-focused* mode of christology. They have been characterized by a christological attentiveness toward abstract ideas, and this has facilitated a lack of emphasis on Christ's historical accomplishment, his current presence in the world, and the living praxis of Christ's church. These problematic lacunae have become even more pitched in third-wave KC, since major proponents of that movement have explicitly annunciated a desire to defend and explicate Christ's *full humanity* and apply the significance of it to *the life of the church*. These goals are admirable, but the speculative, abstract focus of the enterprise has hampered its christological contributions along these lines.

In contrast to this, the recent venture of Transformation Theology advocates for a world-focused christological attentiveness where history, presence, and praxis are highly directive. The focus advocated by TT is thus well suited for helping to overcome the insufficiencies of third-wave KC. To that end we have utilized TT's insights and arguments to formulate three heuristic questions that can helpfully frame the christological attentiveness

encapsulated within any doctrinal discourse on Jesus Christ. Thereafter, we began our investigation and explication of Moltmann's christology, and have over the past several chapters demonstrated that it is a robust and unique form of kenotic christology.

The remaining and necessary step of this thesis is thus: utilizing our TT-inspired heuristic questions to strategically interrogate the *christological attentiveness* of Moltmann's KC. This chapter's main goal is thus to show how Moltmann's unique fourfold relational kenosis relates to the questions of Christ's historical achievement, his current presence, and his ongoing significance for Christian praxis, thereby generating specifically rehabilitative points for relevant kenotic christological thinking.

§1 Transformation of World – Insights from TT and Moltmann

Because it is in the world of space and time, and nowhere else, that God made “the pioneer of [our] salvation perfect through suffering” (Hb 2.10), TT argues that christological attentiveness must look to the world (in history and in current life) in its discussions of Jesus and in its applications of christological doctrine. This is why transformational questioning deliberately summons more concrete emphases which point toward the world rather than away from it. According to TT this sort of attentiveness promotes the resistance of

any easy circumvention of the difficult demands of space and time by the infinitely varied and sophisticated strategies of the human mind, which—for all their richness—have often become oriented almost entirely to structures of meaning and conception to the exclusion of what must remain the more primary *reception* of causally embodied reality[....] [Transformational thinking] remains properly responsive and attentive to the sensible embodiment within which human reason has its origin and ground.¹

When we allow such an orientation to drive us back into the gospel accounts, we are empowered to do so with focus that inquires after the manner in which the actual world was changed by the life—the *enacted decisions*—of Christ. Phrased as a question, we could put it

¹ “Prologue,” in *Transformation Theology*, 5.

thusly: *What new realities were inaugurated in the enacted decisions of Jesus of Nazareth?*

When we employ questions like this one “[we] are searching for an explanatory account of a real embodied event in which God himself enters into human history and fundamentally transforms this history through the historical redemption of it.”²

In responding to this question via Moltmann’s KC, it is our contention that Moltmann’s fourfold christological kenosis directly corresponds to a fourfold “fundamental transformation of history,” in which new (or changed) realities in space and time are produced. In short, Moltmann’s christology suggests that the manner in which Christ historically enacts his redemptive achievements (“changes the world”) is kenotic; kenosis is the way of transformation. Said another way, kenosis stands as the primary means of redemptive transformation throughout the past and continuing human career of Jesus Christ. Moving forward in this chapter, we will utilize the joint term *kenotic-transformation*, and by this is meant a change in reality that is facilitated directly by one of the four dimensions of Christ’s self-emptying as they have been identified by us in Moltmann’s KC.³ But before going on to a fuller argumentation for and illustration of this, more definitional content must be given to the weighted terms “transformation” and “world.”

Of our major transformational interlocutors, the notion of “world” has received its most forceful and detailed explication at the hands of Oliver Davies. Historically and theologically, Davies emphasizes that we are today living in the midst of a “second scientific revolution”⁴ wherein neuroscience and quantum theory (among other fields) are disturbing the entrenched fortresses of modernity. No longer is anthropology forced to view the “mind”

² Janz, *Command*, 139.

³ One of the major points at issue in such a principle is *the key nature of both kenosis and transformation and their intrinsic christological relation*. By way of contrast, see the piece by Jeremy Treat, “Exaltation In and Through Humiliation: Rethinking the States of Christ,” in *Christology: Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Crisp & Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 96-114, where a conceptually similar thematic is presented but lacks in terms of historical ground or resulting praxis, owing to its focus on the (abstraction of) the two natures rather than on the lived, kenotic career of Christ and the transformations of world wrought by it.

⁴ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 43-44.

as something that stands “above” or “outside” the causal nexus of materiality, or something that operates apart from our embodiment in a disconnected way: “In the self of the ‘second scientific revolution’... the opposition between materiality and mind has substantially broken down.”⁵ Our human mind and our human matter are now known to form a fundamental, and irreducible, unity.⁶ Our human identity cannot be understood dualistically as located in an abstract “mind” or immaterial “soul,” for we are matter; but neither can we be understood as “mere matter”—this is a non-reductive materialism. So this unity goes beyond mere psychosomatic unity, for the revolution has also prompted the realization that our materiality shares in the materiality of all the physical world; our embodiment cannot be divorced from “the world” (nature, cosmos, universe, etc.) at large, for our “embodiment is continuous with world.”⁷ Of particular significance for our discussion of “transformation,” Davies claims that this “new self-understanding prompts us to think of ourselves as being not only *in* the world, as subject, but simultaneously to think of ourselves being also *of* the world and indeed, more correctly still, as ourselves *being* world.”⁸ If this conclusion holds and the language is allowed to stand, then this means that a change in a person—in their feelings, thoughts, and actions, no less than in their appearance and health—constitutes a *change of world*. That is, when we are changed (transformed), it can be said, quite literally, that the world has changed (transformed).⁹

This equips us for our discussion of “transformation.” On a straightforward rendering of “change/transformation” Davies’ extension of “world” to human materiality, thought, and

⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁶ Ibid., 46-48. “Mind is still a free domain that is other than materiality but this freedom is now one that is exercised within materiality and not from a point beyond it” (ibid., 47-48).

⁷ Ibid. And further: “For contemporary science, we are indistinguishable from the universe in which we find ourselves in the basic constitution of our material[...]. Where we are distinct is in the richness and depth of the subjectivity which that materiality of unparalleled complexity supports” (ibid., 48). Moltmann aligns with this when he says that a human being “is nature and has a nature” (*EthH*, 72).

⁸ *Theology of Transformation*, 48.

⁹ Significantly for our project, this blending of world and self via a cosmic anthropology has also been iterated by Moltmann: “We human beings are aligned toward the cosmos and dependent on it.[...] The elements of the cosmos are present in our physical constitution. We are a part of the cosmos” (*EthH*, 69).

feeling would seem to imply that any time a human being undertakes any change in action or thought, it could legitimately be said that the world “has changed.” Transformational thinking embraces this conclusion to an extent, but leaves room for a more radical understanding of transformation as well, mainly in its understanding of transformation as a change of worldly *possibility*. In short, the most fundamental transformations are the wholly “new”; they are those happenings which make possible that which was not possible before the transformational newness. In short, we are talking here about divine initiative that, when it enters into our historical space-time, can alter the dimensions of what is possible within that space-time. The Trinity is the agent of the world’s change, and the incarnate (and ongoing) life of Christ is the centermost pivot of worldly change.

Paul Janz is instructive in his discussion of “the new.” Since true transformation does not come about under human initiative (since humans in their own strength can only do what is *already* possible), it must simply be “‘the new’ of the new creation, as the *wholly* new of the coming righteousness, or as the *wholly* new of the coming kingdom of God[.]”¹⁰ Janz maintains that the new, as a divine initiative, is not an apprehendable alternative to the *status quo* of the world nor is it disjunctive with the world, but that “it is rather *wholly generative ex nihilo* from *within* all life and present real existence[.]”¹¹ This “divine causality in creation *ex nihilo*” echoes almost exactly Moltmann’s famous category of *novum*.¹² For Moltmann, this is the “eschatologically new” which can only be brought to the present by God, and thus cannot be described as any natural development out of what had gone before.¹³ The *novum* is nowhere more clearly revealed than in Christ’s resurrection from the dead:

¹⁰ Janz, “The Coming Righteousness,” 99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹² The category is key for Moltmann’s presence-focused eschatological reasoning. For an early statement, see Moltmann, “Die Kategorie Novum in Der Christlichen Theologie,” in *Ernst Bloch Zu Ehren* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 243–63.

¹³ Moltmann: “The absolute is not, *via eminentiae* or *via negationis*, extrapolated from the presently available reality, but is thought in the category of the coming totality of new being” (“Theology as Eschatology,” 11; see further 14–15).

For the raising of Christ involves not the category of the accidentally new, but the expectational category of the eschatologically new. The eschatologically new event of the resurrection of Christ, however, proves to be a *novum ultimum* both as against the similarity in ever-recurring reality and also as against the comparative dissimilarity of new possibilities emerging in history.¹⁴

Foundational transformations of the kind with which we are concerned here are thus transformations wrought in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and it is these transformations which make possible new acting/being/thinking for the church in the world, or, to adopt a deliberately more radical phrasing, *the church as world* (in the sense of being a part of the world, an anticipation of the new creation in the midst of the old). Drawing on some similarly concerned work from Rowan Williams,¹⁵ Janz states that the messianic events enacted by Jesus are “authenticated most fundamentally in the way that, *as foundational events, they are still generative as a present reality within the embodied life of particular persons and communities in space and time today.*”¹⁶

When we speak, then, of transformation, what we mean is *the Christic inauguration of novum which are generative in the continued living and being of those who follow in the way of Christ Jesus*. It is these generative possibilities which constitute the Christian’s living freedom and contrast it from the old order of sin and death; as Moltmann says, “We shall now be free from the damning power of our past, because the generative power for a new future will be embedded in our present.”¹⁷ Our earlier stated nomenclature of “kenotic-transformation” thus emerges with more clarity. What we aim to delineate in response to our three heuristic questions is a constructive development of Moltmann’s KC as it emphasizes and applies the ongoing generative force of Christ’s kenotically facilitated transformations.

¹⁴ *TH*, 179; see also 180; *WJC*, 214.

¹⁵ See Williams, “The Finality of Christ,” and “Trinity and Revelation” in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 93-106 and 131-147, respectively.

¹⁶ “Coming Righteousness,” 104.

¹⁷ “Justification and New Creation,” in *FC*, 164. Also: “God [is] the ground of the freedom from past and transiency and of the possibilities of the new, and, through both, the ground of the transformation of the world” (“Theology as Eschatology,” 11).

Such a task forces kenotic christology to demonstrate its significance for the world of space and time, where the church lives and moves, rather than the discursive realm of dogmatic conceptualities. The accomplishment of such a corrective necessitates that we treat each of our heuristic questions in turn, answering them via a dual-reading of Moltmann's KC and pertinent argumentation from TT thinkers.

§2 Christ's Kenotic-Transformations of Worldly Realities

Each of the following sub-sections returns to a respective kenotic relationship in the Christic life (Christ's relation to the Father, to the Spirit, to human sociality, and to cosmic materiality), recapitulating some of the structure of Chapter 6. But whereas that chapter focused on explicating the content of Moltmann's kenotic christology, these sub-sections are focused on illustrating how, in each of those distinct kenotic relations, Christ sacrificially enabled a true transformation of worldly realities. We are here then specifically concerned with enumerating the accomplishments of the kenotic Christ, which will serve to rehabilitate KC's attentiveness, demonstrating what the kenosis means for how Christ specifically altered the world itself.

7.2.1 Christ's Kenotic Submission of Human Will

Following the ordering laid down in Chapter 6, we first examine Moltmann's notion of Christ's kenotic obedience to the Father's will. I want to briefly but clearly delineate what sort of kenotic-transformation is effected by this kenotic relation on the part of Christ. In this kenotic obedience to the Father, Jesus is, in the words of Paul Janz, "the one man, the only man—the one to whom alone 'God gives the Spirit without limit'—who lives his entire life in the *perfect unity* and obedience of a *fully human will* with the *perfect will of God*."¹⁸ This

¹⁸ Janz, *Command*, 148.

is a transformation of world, because humans and their human will are continuous with world; if human will is changed, is conformed, then “world” has therefore been transformed. This “better righteousness” of Christ which is “accomplished”¹⁹ as he overcomes temptation and walks the hard road of obedience, had never been instantiated in the world (that is, in human willing) before.²⁰ As Moltmann emphasizes the claim that Jesus possessed a “fallen” human nature,²¹ Janz says that Christ was “inhabiting even the law of covetous desire and covetous freedom, or the law of sin and death, yet without sin.”²² Christ was thus really tempted and truly susceptible to temptation, and yet conquered them through his unwavering obedience.²³ His own desires, as human desires, are transformed, perfected, by this willed kenotic obeying.

There is no gospel event more illustrative of the transformational force of Christ’s kenotic obedience than the dark scene in Gethsemane, where Christ distinguishes his human will from that of the Father while simultaneously submitting that will to the Father’s. As Oliver Davies emphasizes, it is in the willing embrace of his own self-contradiction that we find the final perfecting (transforming) of Christ’s human freedom:

In choosing freely to undergo crucifixion, in conformity with the divine law of a total, self-giving love, Jesus thus also chose freely to lose this defining human freedom of the power of acting[...] The renunciation of that capacity allowed him to offer himself in the fullness of his embodied life, to the divine imperative to love, in what was nevertheless a free and deliberate act. The stretching of his human freedom upon the Cross, was paradoxically the most total, free conforming of Jesus’ humanity to the divine sovereignty in him.[...] His passion was the fundamental transformation of his embodied intentionality as a human being[.]²⁴

This true progression into the “better righteousness” of God through the dramatic journey of the loving obedience of the human Son, resonates deeply with passages such as Hebrews 5.8-

¹⁹ Ibid., 150-151.

²⁰ Janz, “Coming Righteousness,” 92.

²¹ E.g. *WJC*, 51-52.

²² *Command*, 144-145.

²³ So also Habets, *Anointed Son*, 265-267.

²⁴ *Theology of Transformation*, 115.

9: “Although he was a Son, he *learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect*, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”²⁵ On these words, we find hearty agreement with the exegesis of Stephen Long (himself a kenotic thinker in regards to christology): “[Christ’s] obedience, learned through suffering, makes him perfect. In other words, he brings his perfection as the ‘exact imprint’ of God into creation, into its space and time, and achieves it there.”²⁶

So when we read that “[Jesus] threw himself on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want’” (Mt 26.39), we stumble onto the threshold of the chief kenotic moment of the gospel accounts. Moltmann renders the point starkly: “It is only in the ‘nevertheless’ which is in such total contradiction to what he desires that Christ holds fast to the fellowship with the God who as Father withdraws from him: ‘Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’”²⁷ The completion of the transformation of human will, which Christ took on as something broken and unconformed to God’s will, emerges in the pain of Golgotha, in Christ’s freely chosen renunciation of freedom and life. By Christ’s kenotic obedience, human willing and freedom is transformed in his very self.

7.2.2 – Christ’s Kenotic Healing of Human Brokenness

We now explore what aspect of kenotic-transformation Moltmann articulates in regard to Christ’s dependence on the Spirit. According to Moltmann’s christology, as we saw in our previous chapter, Christ’s human acting, his carrying out of his (obedient) will by acting upon his environment through embodied intention, is animated by the Spirit. As the obedient Son

²⁵ The passage has a vexed exegetical history, owing to the confusion it presents for traditional christological paradigms. Allen’s commentary speaks approvingly, with Cullman, of a “functional perfecting” of Jesus’ through suffering obedience, see *Hebrews*, 214-215, also 326, 329.

²⁶ D. Stephen Long, *Hebrews* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 100.

²⁷ Moltmann, *EG*, 45.

who has been given the Spirit “without measure” (ἐκ μέτρου, Jn 3.34; cf. Lk 4.1) Jesus is “impelled” by the Spirit (ἐκβάλλει, Mk 1.12) and undertakes his ministry “in the Spirit’s power” (Lk 4.14) for the “Spirit is upon him” (Lk 4.18). This suggests that Jesus does not manifest his own divine power when he performs his acts. As truly man, he is wholly dependent upon God’s Spirit.²⁸ In this kenotic dependence, he facilitates the Spirit’s efficacy in the world in an unprecedented way—the coming of the Spirit through the ministry of Jesus is thus another transformation of world that is enabled by the kenosis. Moltmann well emphasizes the strange near-passivity (kenotic dependence) of Jesus at the key point of many of the miraculous healings in the gospels:

[In] nine stories about individual healings the faith of the people concerned is said to have been responsible. Jesus either sees the faith which comes to meet him, as in the healing of ‘the man sick of the palsy’ (Mark 2:5), or actually says: ‘your faith has made you well’, as in the case of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:34). In these stories Jesus always talks about faith in this way, absolutely and without any object. *Where there is faith, the power which goes out of Jesus ‘works wonders’.* Where faith is lacking—as in his home town, Nazareth—he cannot do anything. ‘He marvelled because of their unbelief’ (Mark 6:6).²⁹

As implied by Moltmann here and elsewhere,³⁰ the Spirit’s mending of worldly afflictions is given passage via the humble ministry of Jesus; it could be said that the Spirit goes through or across Jesus or that he serves as a kenotic bridge or doorway for the Spirit—for the “power goes out from him;” it does not say that “*he* put forth *his* own power.”³¹ This power is often synonymous with the Spirit in the gospel accounts, for the power (*dynamis*) is to be understood as τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος (“the power of the Spirit”), as Gerald Hawthorne,

²⁸ Stephen Davis and C. Stephen Evans make this point as well in their kenotic reflections (see “Conclusion: The Promise of Kenosis,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 320), as do many third-wave KC advocates. The issue with their points, and their difference from Moltmann, consists in their handling of the divine attributes and their lack of transformational import, as discussed in Ch. 2.

²⁹ *WJC*, 111. Emphasis added.

³⁰ See *SpL*, 190-191.

³¹ A point made in many contemporary Spirit Christologies—e.g. Hawthorne, *Presence and Power*, 155; Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 85-88.

Gordon Fee, and others have compellingly argued.³²

Having emptied himself of his own efficacy, Jesus ministers in the manner of a vessel who is “filled” with the Spirit and from whom the Spirit is then “poured out” to the point where “all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power was coming out from him and healing all of them” (Lk 6.19). This moment from Luke’s gospel is radical on two fronts: the mass, contagious, spontaneous healing which seems to be taking place and Jesus’ kenotic passivity at the center of it (see also Mt 14.36). The world is transformed (in the healings) but these transformations only come through Christ’s kenotic reliance upon and openness to the Spirit. As the obedient Son, Jesus is granted the Spirit at his baptism in untold abundance of presence and power. The obedience and the dependence are thus mutually constitutive. The Spirit’s transforming efficacy is brought into the world via Christ’s kenosis. We see then that Moltmann’s KC provides another answer to the heuristic question concerning Christ’s historical accomplishments: Christ not only accomplished the conforming of human will to the Father’s through his obedience, but he also accomplished the healing of worldly affliction by the Spirit’s power through his reliance on that Spirit.

7.2.3 – Christ’s Kenotic Solidarity in Social Affliction

We now turn to the next level of the Christic kenosis in Moltmann’s thought: the solidarity of Christ, the kenotic identification with oppressive social and relational affliction in the human situation. As the transformational healings are an extension of Christ’s transformational obedience, so does his transformational healing extend into his transformational solidarity with the oppressed and his transformational participation with them in the midst of life. “Jesus takes as his family ‘the damned of the earth,’”³³ claims Moltmann, for “he is the

³² Hawthorne, *Presence and Power*, 154-155; Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 35-36, 120, 643-644; Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 25; See also Moltmann, *SoL*, 68-69.

³³ *WJC*, 149.

brother of the poor, the comrade of the people, the friend of the forsaken, the sympathizer with the sick. He heals through solidarity, and *communicates his liberty and his healing power through his fellowship*.³⁴ This societal and interpersonal action of Jesus, his kenosis of stature and identity which aligns him with the *ochlos*, is another route of kenotic transformation. Because of his obedience to the Father and dependence on the Spirit, Christ is no mere sympathizer. His solidarity is transformative; he enters into the situatedness of the poor and alters their self-understanding and their public perception through his enacted decisions.³⁵ It could be said that Jesus creates “new world” for the poor, the “sinners,” and the outcasts.³⁶

The social kenosis should not be underestimated. Christ constantly endures social humiliation, despisement, religious umbrage, and suspicion. As a mighty prophet of God, he still willingly “pollutes” himself by eating with “sinners and tax collectors” (Mk 2.15-16; Lk 15.2). Even while seeking his own prayer and respite, the hunger of the poor compels him to “have compassion” (σπλαγχνίζομαι) and to feed them (Mk 6.30-44; Mt 14.13-21). When a “sinful woman,” likely a prostitute, intimately washes his feet with her hair in a public place and in the midst of religious leaders (Lk 7.36-50),³⁷ he accepts and cherishes her. Christ is derided because of these extreme examples of solidarity (see Lk 7.34 // Mt 11.19; Lk 7.39) and his disciples are questioned scornfully on his account (Mt 9.11). But such derision does not override Christ’s kenotic call, and he transformatively confers hope, dignity, and wisdom in each of his interactions with the poor and outcast. Moltmann refers to this collectively as

³⁴ Ibid, emphasis added.

³⁵ IEB, 68; SpL, 125.

³⁶ PL, 55-56.

³⁷ Identifying the woman as a prostitute is acceptable among exegetes, though it is not definite, since the text only identifies her as a *hamartolos*, a sinner. I.H. Marshall says that the woman is “probably” a prostitute (*The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC [Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1978], 304); Darrell Bock suggests the same (*The NIV Application Commentary: Luke* [Zondervan, 1996], 218). John T. Carroll does not speculate (*Luke: A Commentary* [Westminster John Knox Press, 2012], 177), and Robert Stein emphasizes simply that the nature of her sin must have involved “moral not ceremonial matters” (*Luke*, The New American Commentary Series, Vol. 24 [B&H Publishing, 1992], 236).

“the life” brought to the afflicted through the solidarity of Jesus:

Where the sick are healed, lepers are accepted, and sins are not punished but forgiven, there *life* is present. Freed life, redeemed life, divine life is there, in this world, in our times, in the midst of us. Where Jesus is, there is life. The basic characteristic of the life of Jesus is not the consolation of the beyond, not even the hope in the future, but his becoming human, becoming flesh, his healing of life, accepting of the oppressed, and making alive the frozen relationships between human beings. For that reason we find in the company of Jesus all the woe of humanity—the demon possessed, the incurably diseased, the lame, the blind, the dumb, the dead[....] [Jesus’] passion yearns for life and hates death; it desires freedom and hates slavery; it is love and knows no apathy.³⁸

Clemens Sedmak, a proponent of TT and an ethicist, comments also on this compassion of Jesus, saying that “Compassion is a dynamic where the boundaries of the self are continually renegotiated.”³⁹ This aligns with Moltmann’s understanding of the “friendship” or “compassion” or “solidarity” of Jesus: it is identification that challenges the self and requires emptying into the world, a sympathetic co-affliction in order to bring about healing.⁴⁰

Instructively, Sedmak draws a clear connection between kenosis of identity and the possibility of transformation: “Jesus teaches us that love is disruptive... striving for *extending the boundaries of the self in a kenotic move*, since divine causality can enter the individual person in a situation of self-emptying.”⁴¹ In short, Christ’s kenotic posture of self is what facilitates the inbreaking of divine presence and divine power and thereby constitutes radical transformations in other selves (and thus the world), within the nexus of often oppressive and distortionary human relations. Again Moltmann: “By forgiving their sins he restores to them their respect as men and women; by accepting lepers he makes them well.... [Jesus] reveals God’s friendship to the unlikely, to those who have been treated in such unfriendly fashion.

³⁸ *PL*, 24.

³⁹ “The Wound of Knowledge: Epistemic Mercy and World Hunger,” in *Transformation Theology*, 152.

⁴⁰ “These ‘sufferings of Christ’ are also the sufferings of the poor and vulnerable, the people (*ochlos*) and all the weaker creatures. People who suffer violence discover what happens to them in what happened to Jesus.[...] He himself becomes a victim among other victims. In this sense ‘the sufferings of Christ’ are not just Jesus’ sufferings; they are the sufferings of the poor and weak, which Jesus shares in his own body and his own soul, in solidarity with them (Heb. 2:16–18; 11:26; 13:13)” (*SpL*, 130–131).

⁴¹ Sedmak, “Wound of Knowledge,” 153, emphasis added.

As the Son of man, he sets their oppressed humanity free.”⁴²

In his recent work on a theology of vulnerable hospitality, which draws substantially on Moltmann’s thought, Thomas Reynolds effectively sums this kenotic-transformational trajectory:

[Jesus] directs his ministry toward human vulnerability, embracing it completely in the life-giving shape of welcoming persons who are in a variety of ways especially vulnerable and without welcome. The marginalized and oppressed thus find liberation through Jesus’s presence.[...] They find liberation not by sheer power and might, which Jesus intentionally avoids, but by love’s vulnerable solidarity.⁴³

This vulnerability on the part of Jesus reaches its deepest point on the cross, where he dies the death of a rebellious Jew and a slave,⁴⁴ and the transformation is therefore itself radicalized when he is raised into the new life promised to all with whom he is identified and who identify with him. On this front, Moltmann is especially compelled by Jesus’ comparison of his impending death to the “fruitful dying” of a grain of wheat (Jn 12.24): “But if it falls into the earth, it becomes alive, even if it then dies. It does not remain as it was, but *brings forth fruit through its transformation*. [...] Herein I find the secret of the passionate dying of Jesus, and the secret of passion in our own life.”⁴⁵ By kenotic identification, the ashamed self-perception of the oppressed and broken structures of human relating are transformed. This is thus a third answer, corresponding to the third dimensions of Christ’s kenosis in Moltmann’s thought, to the question of Christ’s historical accomplishment.

7.2.4 – Christ’s Kenotic Transfiguring of Cosmic Materiality

The obedience, dependence, and identification of Jesus have all been discussed in the foregoing paragraphs primarily in terms of enacted decisions on the part of Jesus. In his

⁴² PL, 56.

⁴³ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Brazos/Baker Academic, 2008), 229.

⁴⁴ WJC, 167-169; SpL, 130-131.

⁴⁵ PL, 25. Emphasis added.

human freedom, he embraces the rigors of his kenotic call—it is in freedom that he binds himself to his messianic role even as it gradually dawns upon him. But what we have yet to emphasize adequately is his embodiment itself, and this organically leads us back to the fourth and final dimension of the Christic kenosis in Moltmann’s thought: Christ’s kenotic embrace of the travails of vulnerable, material flesh. What is the kenotic-transformation that is brought about by this embrace?

Every obedient act, every dependent decision, every feeling of identification, is instantiated most fundamentally in the *body* of Jesus, his actual flesh and bone, space-time existence. We must reemphasize, with Oliver Davies, that the body is the seat of our most truly human expressions of freedom and limit.⁴⁶ Our bodies are the extension of our human willing into the world; they are the means by which humans do anything at all, and they are what limit us in myriad ways. A transformational outlook on christology cannot neglect focused discussion on the body of Jesus, and the gospel accounts reward this scrutiny. Such attentiveness pervades Moltmann’s discourse on Christ’s kenotic, fleshly vulnerability, as we will see below.

We noted the transformational focus on the body in the work of Oliver Davies⁴⁷ in Chapter 2, and it is to these reflections we return here, but now also with Moltmann’s KC front and center. We recall that Davies sees a “cosmic drama” at work in the embodiment of Jesus, whereby the divinity is gradually less and less concealed over the course of Jesus’ life.⁴⁸ These progressive and revelatory life stages are identified by Davies as the “mortal,” “Easter,” and “exalted” life of Jesus, corresponding to birth-ministry-death, then the

⁴⁶ See Oliver Davies: “[We must recognize] that our freedom must be within materiality, if it is to be a real freedom. A freedom that is ‘outside’ materiality can only be the idea of freedom. The theological reorientation which we are calling for here must be one which takes as its ground not so much our freedom of thought, but rather the freedom of our intelligence and will to come to judgment about ourselves which is only really operative in and through the freedom of our acts” (*Theology of Transformation*, 52).

⁴⁷ The bulk of which is to be found in “Lost Heaven” and “Interrupted Body,” in *Transformation Theology*, 11-59 and *Theology of Transformation*, throughout but esp. 103-118.

⁴⁸ “Interrupted Body,” 46-48.

resurrection appearances, and then post-ascension.⁴⁹ Helpful as it is, in the discussion below, we will only partially follow these categorizations, for reasons to be given.

Davies is surely right to emphasize the remarkable alterations in Jesus' embodiment following the resurrection and ascension, as well as their progressive and gradual revelation of Jesus' divine status.⁵⁰ However, Moltmann's thought allows us to expand these stages to some degree, and also to place even more emphasis on *Jesus as world* (as embodied human in continuity with nature). This is due majorly to Moltmann's explicit kenosis of body, whereby he sees Christ as deeply and intimately identified with the whole created order, its transitoriness, and its travail. Moltmann does not emphasize the incarnational kenosis as a divestiture of divine attributes but rather as a radical identification with the creation: Christ becomes a creature.⁵¹ As creature, then, Christ is part of the "old creation," he is born with mortal human flesh under the dominion of death (Rm 6.17; 8.3). What this kenotically "deep" reading of the incarnation allows us to see is how, in the transformations of his own real embodiment, Christ is a true microcosm—a *micro kosmos*—of the changed materiality of the new creation.⁵² To illustrate this, we will in each of the following sub-sections discuss different "stages" in the embodiment of Jesus, drawing on Moltmann's thought to show how in each of these stages, Christ's embodiment—his very flesh—is undergoing a transformative process.

7.2.4.1 - The Anointed Body of Jesus. Notoriously, the gospels tell us little about Jesus before his baptism. But in the accounts we do have, laying aside for the moment the vexed historical and hermeneutical questions, everything concerning his embodiment is seemingly

⁴⁹ *Theology of Transformation*, 112-118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60, 111.

⁵¹ There is strong parallel here with Gunton's thinking in *Christ and Creation*, esp. Lecture 2: "Christ the Creature."

⁵² See Bauckham: "[Jesus is] the one human being whose story will finally prove to be identical with the story of the whole world" ("The Future of Jesus Christ," 101).

typical. He is born as humans are born⁵³ and grows up as children typically do, maturing in both body and mind, although possessed of a perhaps preternatural wisdom or precociousness, as we see in the single childhood story of Luke 2.41-52. Though, even in this passage it should be emphasized that the reaction of his parents seems to indicate that this was not a usual sort of occurrence in the life of the young Jesus.⁵⁴

But things change at his baptism and anointing; the Spirit and its power are thereafter abundantly and immediately present in Jesus's physical form, extending even to his clothing (e.g. Mk 5.27-30). Moltmann notes that at the baptism "Jesus is uniquely endowed with the Spirit, his anointing is 'without measure' (Jn 3:34), and the Spirit 'rested' on him....This energy is...the worker of all his works."⁵⁵ Jesus' physical self, we could say, becomes *enspirited*, not in any vague internalized or inspirational sense, but in a tangible and proximate sense. Key moments in the gospel narratives convey the uniqueness of his anointed embodiment—e.g. the account of Jesus walking on the water (Mk 6.48-50) and the accounts of Jesus mysteriously eluding capture by a large crowd (Lk 4.30; Jn 8.59). Certainly these things are taking place by the power of the Spirit, but that does not change the fact that they are occurrences in space and time, and involve a real body, a body whose material existence, in these moments, exhibits remarkable qualities due to its pervasive and unprecedented endowment with that Spirit. As Moltmann puts it: "The indwelling of the Spirit brings the divine energies of life in Jesus to rapturous and overflowing fullness."⁵⁶ Davies expresses a similar outlook in his account of the "mortal life" of Jesus, saying that his body "seems to be the site of a natural and immediate healing power" and that it can "manifest unique physical

⁵³ WJC, 85.

⁵⁴ Moreover the boy Jesus is *learning from the teachers* while in the temple: ἀκούοντα αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπερωτῶντα αὐτούς ("listening to them and asking questions of them", Lk 2.46).

⁵⁵ WJC, 90, 91; see also TK: "[Jesus] preaches and acts in the power of the Spirit" (122). See also Welker, *God the Revealed: Christology*, trans. by Douglas Scott (Cambridge/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 284.

⁵⁶ SpL, 61.

properties.”⁵⁷ (But Davies’ articulation of the stages does not mention the fact that these unique facets of Jesus’ embodiment only seem to emerge after his baptismal anointing.⁵⁸) We now turn to a stage of the embodiment that is not recognized as a distinct stage by Davies, but that is suggestively handled in Moltmann’s writing: the passion of Christ and his dying body within it.

7.2.4.2 - *The Dying Body of Jesus*. Christ’s torture, crucifixion, and death is not treated as a stage within the developing Christic embodiment by Davies, but some of Moltmann’s commentary allows us to suggest tentatively that it could be seen as such. In Davies’ estimation, the major drama at Gethsemane and Golgotha involves the alignment and perfection of Jesus’ human will,⁵⁹ and we have seen that Moltmann both supports and furthers such a conclusion via his articulation of Christ’s kenotic obedience. But does Jesus’ *embodiment* change? Of course Christ’s body undergoes the trials of the crucifixion, but this would seemingly not constitute a changed embodiment, only an affliction of the already-established anointed embodiment. (After all, if we are going to speak of a genuine change in embodiment it would seem to require some clear alteration in the bodily properties of Jesus, akin to the shift which occurred at his anointing.)

But here we will recall that Moltmann’s kenosis of body means that, in his identification with the world, Christ suffers the sufferings of the whole created order in his crucifixion: “In ‘the sufferings of Christ’ the end-time sufferings of the whole world are anticipated and vicariously experienced.”⁶⁰ Admittedly, Moltmann can be a bit unclear on this, sometimes seeming to say only that Christ dies as all living things in a transient created

⁵⁷ “Interrupted Body,” 46; *Theology of Transformation*, 112-113.

⁵⁸ Davies does vaguely refer to some continuity between the pre- and post-baptismal life, saying that Jesus exhibits “unusual authority” even as a boy (*Theology of Transformation*, 112). The citation given by Davies here, however, is to Luke 3.16, which does not support the point. It seems that Davies must be intending to refer to the story of the boy Jesus at the temple at the end of Luke 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 114-115; also “Interrupted Body,” 46-47.

⁶⁰ *WJC*, 155.

order must die.⁶¹ But especially when he brings more cosmological themes to bear,

Moltmann makes it sound like something more radical is taking place in the body of Jesus:

Jesus... dies the death of everything that lives in solidarity with the whole sighing creation. The sufferings of Christ are therefore also ‘the sufferings of this present time’ (Rom. 8:18), which are endured by everything that lives. But we can also say, conversely, that created beings in their yearning for life suffer ‘the sufferings of Christ’. The Wisdom of the whole creation, which is here subject to transience, suffers in Christ the death of everything that lives (1 Cor. 1:24).⁶²

In short, Moltmann could be seen to be saying that Jesus, in his Passion, mysteriously takes on a co-suffering solidarity with all living things: “He himself bears the world’s suffering.”⁶³

This would seemingly be an alteration of physical properties in a significant way, and would definitively constitute a transformation of Christ’s embodiment facilitated by the kenosis of body. If we pair this with Moltmann’s staurological denunciation of divine impassibility, then he appears to suggest that, at the cross, via the mediating embodiment of Jesus, all of creation’s sufferings enter into the divine experience. This point is further supported by Ryan Neal’s interpretation of Moltmann: “[While] *CG* [*Crucified God*] relied heavily upon the cross as the site of divine suffering and its meaning for God, in *WJC* [*Way of Jesus Christ*] divine suffering is more capacious, knowing no spatial or temporal limit.”⁶⁴

Such an implied position on Moltmann’s part, though undeniably speculative in some regards, may find scattered support in the strong cosmic christological passages of Colossians, where Christ is said to have “reconciled by his blood *all things*” whether “in heaven or on earth or under the earth” (Col 1.18-19) and where “the gospel” is said to have been “proclaimed to *every creature under heaven*” (Col 1.23).⁶⁵ We add to these

⁶¹ Ibid., 169.

⁶² *WJC*, 170.

⁶³ *SpL*, 130. See also H.P. Santmire, “So That He Might Fill All Things: Comprehending the Cosmic Love of Christ,” *Dialog* 42.3 (Fall 2003): 264. Santmire interprets this as a continuing identification of creation’s sufferings with Christ even post-exaltation, which some of Moltmann’s passages, especially in *GC*, could be seen to support.

⁶⁴ See Neal, *Theology as Hope*, 158, see further 158-159. See also Moltmann, *SpL*, 130-131.

⁶⁵ Note the agreement of Gregersen on the implication of these passages, “Deep Incarnation and Kenosis,” 260.

considerations the radical cosmic effects that immediately surround Christ's death in the Matthean narrative (the sky darkened, the ground shaken, the dead raised—see Mt 27.45, 51-53), as well as the suggestive passages that discuss the church's "sharing" (κοινωνία) in the "sufferings" (πάθημα) of Christ, implying that the sufferings of the church, which certainly extend temporally and materially beyond the crucifixion, are somehow possessed by Christ himself, grounding the church's sharing of them (Phil 3.10; 1 Pet 4.13). If these points are taken, then Christ's extended staurological sufferings would seem to indicate some change in his embodiment during the height of his Passion, though any strict description of this certainly remains elusive.⁶⁶ The next stage of the embodiment, however, inspires much clear thinking and agreement, and forms the most protracted discussions in both TT and Moltmann: the resurrected body.

7.2.4.3 - *The Easter Body of Jesus*. There has been lively and wide-ranging debate over the nature of Christ's post-resurrection body, much of it catalyzed in recent times by the welter of scholarship leveled by N.T. Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.⁶⁷ Over and against interpretations of Jesus' risen existence as an intangible "presence with God"⁶⁸ or an internalized visionary experience on the part of early Christians,⁶⁹ Wright vigorously contends that Christ was "alive again," fully "physical," though with altered physical attributes,⁷⁰ grounding his position in Paul's longest discourse on the resurrected body (1 Cor 15.20-56).⁷¹ Such an understanding of the resurrected body is also championed by Anthony

⁶⁶ Graham Ward makes several points about the body of Christ and its extended, displaced existence in its suffering which are consonant with our Moltmannian points here: "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ," in *Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, & G. Ward (New York/London: Routledge, 1999), 168-173.

⁶⁷ Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003).

⁶⁸ A recent example can be found in Brian Schmisek, "The Body of His Glory: Resurrection Imagery in Philippians 3:20-21," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 43.1 (2013): 23-28.

⁶⁹ Rarely defended outright, but Pieter F. Craffert comes close: "'Seeing' a Body into Being: Reflections on Scholarly Interpretations of the Nature and Reality of Jesus' Resurrected Body," *Religion & Theology*, 9.1-2 (2002): 89-107, esp 98-101.

⁷⁰ See *Resurrection*, 8, 477-478.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 348-361. For some incisive and nuanced interaction with Wright's points, see Welker, *God the Revealed*, 127-135.

Thiselton's important work on 1st Corinthians.⁷² Oliver Davies is in agreement with the general lines of both these thinkers, saying that "the resurrection body is not a 'new' body: it is the same body of his birth, but now with radically new physical properties."⁷³ These new properties—unbound by walls, covering vast distances instantaneously; initially not identifiable as Jesus⁷⁴—when appreciated in tandem with the distinctly corporeal properties (consumes food, can be touched, etc.),⁷⁵ are rightly said by Davies to exhibit an "outrightly ambiguous ontology."⁷⁶

Moltmann has also long emphasized the bodily nature of the resurrected Jesus, over and against other interpretive schemas: "Christ's resurrection is bodily resurrection or it is not a resurrection at all...It is not merely spirit which continues to be efficacious or his cause which goes on."⁷⁷ He has also been adamant that in the resurrection of Jesus the new creation of all things has begun.⁷⁸ If Jesus dies as an extension of the old creation in his staurological embodiment, then he is raised as the inaugurator of the new creation in his Easter embodiment. The kenotic incarnational basis of the former is manifestly key to the realization of the latter.⁷⁹ Moltmann well understands the "interstice" nature of the risen embodiment, seeing it as a key stage in the life of Jesus:

What is the relation between the transfigured Easter body of the risen Christ and the pre-Easter mortal body of Jesus?[....] What did Mary see when she saw Jesus? Was it

⁷² *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Paternoster/Eerdmans: 2000), 1276-1281.

⁷³ "Interrupted Body," 47.

⁷⁴ Spatially unbound: see Jn 20.19, 20.26; Lk 24.31, 24.36; not immediately recognizable: Jn 20.14, 21.4; Lk 24.16-17.

⁷⁵ See Lk 24.37-43; Jn 20.27; 21.12-13.

⁷⁶ *Theology of Transformation*, 116. This does more justice to the strangeness of the body than Wright's bland descriptors of "unusual" and "somewhat different" (*Resurrection*, 605, 611).

⁷⁷ *WJC*, 256-257.

⁷⁸ In his earlier work, Moltmann predictably emphasizes the eschatological and temporal nature of the resurrection, thus downplaying its corporeal nature somewhat (though never denying it), e.g. *TH*, 204-205, 223; *CG*, 170-171; *TK*, 84-85 (more ambiguous here). Following his ecological turn, the emphasis become much more cosmological and thus bodily: *GC*, 8, 225; *WJC*, Chapter 5; *JCTW*, 81-85; *SoL*, 122; *SRA*, Chapter 5—this last work represents Moltmann's most traditional and detailed articulation of a bodily resurrection.

⁷⁹ Stephen Williams, though more aware than most commentators about the importance of kenosis for some aspects of Moltmann's christology ("Moltmann on Jesus Christ," 109-111), wholly neglects this "binding" of the created order to Jesus via his kenotic embodiment; this oversight may be at the root of Williams' frustration with Moltmann's thinking on these more cosmological issues (117-119).

his pre-Easter body or his transfigured body? Did she see her Rabboni or her Lord? Evidently both, for she encountered Jesus while he was on the way and in transition from his earthly flesh and blood to his transfigured body. He is *no longer* a dead body, but he has *not yet* ascended to the Father. He is no longer part of mortality but he is not yet in glory either.⁸⁰

Moltmann is firm about the continuous identity of Jesus' changing embodiment—this is a true body that is truly transformed: “It must be the same pre-Easter, crucified, dead and buried body of Jesus which has been raised, has ascended to God and is transfigured in the glory of God. Without the identity with Jesus' bodily existence, his resurrection cannot be conceived.”⁸¹

The world is changed by this as well, for Jesus as creature is part of the world, and he has been remade. Thus, in him, the world's cosmic remaking is initiated. Moltmann combines the themes of raising, resurrection, transfiguration, and transformation under the heading of “*Christ's transition to the new creation*.”⁸² In a compelling statement, Moltmann avers: “[With] the raising of Christ, the vulnerable and mortal human nature we experience here is raised and transformed into the eternally living, immortal human nature of the new creation; and with vulnerable human nature the non-human nature of the earth is transformed as well.”⁸³ The resurrection embodiment is thus the true *novum*, a transformation brought about by divine causality (Rom 8.11; Eph 1.20; Acts 2.24) which has fundamentally reshaped the world *in the body of Jesus*; it is a radically new possibility emerging in history; it is the wellspring of Christian hope, “the beginning of the new creation of all things,”⁸⁴ and “a new

⁸⁰ SRA, 49. Cf. Davies: “Both mortal and post-resurrection life have a forward momentum and appear in the scriptural record as transitional forms of embodiment in the progression from mortal to exalted Lord” (*Theology of Transformation*, 117).

⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

⁸² WJC, 257. Cf. the comments in Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 148-149.

⁸³ WJC, 258. Likewise, “[Christ] has been raised inclusively, as the head of the new humanity and as the first-born of the whole creation” (*IEB*, 75).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 55. Cf. Devin Singh's summation: “Christ embodies the promise of what will be, not only for humankind but for all of creation” (“Resurrection as Surplus and Possibility: Moltmann and Ricoeur,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 61.3 [2008], 254).

reality, a new arrangement in which the dead are raised and all creation is transformed.”⁸⁵

This is thus the maximal expression of kenotic-transformation. Christ’s deepest moment of kenosis is the death upon the cross, and this is the necessary step which carries his embodiment into its glorious transformation. We turn now to a brief summary of the four dimensions of kenotic-transformation that attend Moltmann’s christology.

7.2.5 – The Path of Kenotic-Transformations

In our foregoing sub-sections, I sought to demonstrate that all four dimensions which Moltmann perceives within Christ’s kenosis (Father, Spirit, sociality, materiality) result in tangible transformations of world. Thereby, we have used our first transformational heuristic question to examine and apply Moltmann’s christology: each dimension of Christ’s kenosis provides a different aspect of our findings. Utilizing the heuristic question allowed us to draw key themes out of Moltmann’s christology that had as yet been little explored in commentary on his thought.

This brings us to recapitulate our notion of kenotic transformation: kenosis is the “way” of transformation; it is the “foolishness of God” that Paul extols as the “power and wisdom of God” (1st Cor 1.18-25). Christ’s emptying unto death—in obedience, reliance, identification, and suffering—is that *skandalon*, that “stumbling block,” which changes the world, and anticipates the change of world which results in those who are “in Christ.”

We recall that Moltmann’s christology emphasizes concrete and continuous development in Jesus. Amidst all of our discussed kenotic transformations, the world is changed in its encounters with Jesus and in his own self. His obedient will brings into being new righteousness and new relation with God; his dependence on the Spirit brings about

⁸⁵ This statement emerges in Singh’s explication of Moltmann’s views in “Resurrection as Surplus and Possibility,” 257.

radical healing and untold power; his abjecting of self for the sake of oppressed others shatters societal, interpersonal, and relational barriers; and his identification with the transient created order allowed it to be borne into his death and raised (proleptically) to life with his resurrection. Along the way, Christ is not only the subject of these kenotic transformations, but also the object—Moltmann describes this as “Christ-in-his-becoming, the Christ on the way, the Christ in the movement of God’s eschatological history.”⁸⁶ Having become incarnate as a creature of the old creation (in a “body of death”), he instantiates that creation’s transformation in his own body, career, relations, will, and actions. Jesus Christ is not simply new-creation-in-person, but *old-creation-made-new-creation in person*. God the Son becomes Jesus of Nazareth by incarnation; he is transformed into the Lord of God’s oncoming kingdom by his kenotic transformations.

These kenotically inaugurated, Christic transformations of world have great implications for the praxis of the church, and this will be dealt with when we engage with our third heuristic question below. But ahead of that, we must turn to the question of the exalted, current, ascended life of Christ. What does Moltmann do with the ascension? We saw clearly that this was a vexed issue in third-wave KC in Chapter 1. So we now must explore what understanding of the ascension is present in Moltmann and inquire whether he is able to hurdle the lack of clarity which attended the other kenotic models. And even if his understanding does turn out to be more clear, we will also have to inquire after whether he is able to present any meaningful way of linking the *kenosis* of Christ to his *exalted state*—that is, does the kenosis continue even post-ascension, or is it merely an exceptional episode in the eternal life of the Son (as it is consistently treated in third-wave frameworks)? These questions all drive our following section.

⁸⁶ WJC, 33.

§3 The Pneumatic and Enacted Mediations of Christ

This heuristic question is perhaps the most simple: Where is Jesus Christ? And yet it is one of the most effective queries for the focusing of christological attentiveness, for the question concerns not only the location of Christ and his presence, but it concerns those things in the present tense, in the here and now. It is well-recognized that the course of Christ's transformed embodiment reached a threshold of sorts at his ascension. Due to the clear scriptural portrayal of Christ's withdrawn visible presence (Lk 24.51; Acts 1.9, 1.22, 1 Tm 3.16) and yet equally clear conviction of his continuing and efficacious presence,⁸⁷ the state of the ascended Jesus summons critical reflection about its relationship to his mortal life. This scriptural difficulty, compounded by the cosmological and historical theses of the Enlightenment,⁸⁸ has given rise to a situation in which, according to Kärkäinen, "by and large contemporary theology...has ignored the topic of the ascension."⁸⁹ In contrast to this trend, TT has founded itself upon a strong articulation of the presence of Christ in the world today, calling for a fresh expression of ascension theology in light of the scientific revolutions of the late-modern world.⁹⁰ The foundational importance of the ascension is well summed by Christoph Schönborn: "[The exaltation] is in a sense the christological article that has the most ecclesiological relevance. [...] That is not surprising, since it has to do precisely with the *present* relationship of Christ to his Church."⁹¹ In short, an underdeveloped

⁸⁷ See Davies, "Interrupted Body," 50. This is especially evident scripturally in statements of Christ being "with" individuals and the church (e.g. Matt 18.20; 28.20; Acts 18.10) and statements of Christ being "in" individuals and the church (e.g. Col 1.27) or individuals or the church described as "in" Christ (e.g. Eph 2.10).

⁸⁸ In addition to Davies' description of these factors (e.g. *Theology of Transformation*, 35-43), see Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia*, esp. 165-171; *Ascension Theology*, esp. 25-31. Farrow's emphasis is more philosophical and anthropological while Davies' is more cosmological, but both assessments are largely consonant.

⁸⁹ Kärkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 357; Kärkäinen makes the statement more radical further on, claiming that "Western theology has ignored the ascension with its focus on the cross" (363). Kelly Kapic and W.V. Lugt are more measured, saying that the ascension is "given relatively little attention in comparison with the cross and resurrection," ("The Ascension of Jesus," 23).

⁹⁰ See especially Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, Chapter 1.

⁹¹ *God Sent His Son: A Contemporary Christology*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 344.

christology (by way of neglecting the exaltation) results in an impoverished ecclesiology and thus a vitiated perspective on Christian life and acting in the world.⁹²

The ancient church, compelled by the scriptural witness, answered this question by saying that “Christ is in heaven” or “he is seated at the right hand of God.”⁹³ TT pushes us to discover if new language cannot be used to articulate this theological point for us in our current context. Davies makes the case that “[in] the early Christian world, to say that Jesus Christ was in heaven, was to affirm his universal Lordship and so was to say that he could also be present on earth. [...] [it was also] to affirm that he is still in this same world but now in a radically different form.”⁹⁴ This belief in Christ’s hidden but very real presence within the mundane is what has “shaped human life as Christian life”⁹⁵ in the ecclesial reality of the past and should still do so today.

We have already seen, in Chapter 2, the basic outline of a transformational theology of the exalted Christ. Just as his human body took on new properties in his Easter life, so too, for Davies, does the body of the exalted Christ possess a new kind of materiality; Jesus is fundamentally and permanently in relation to space and time but is now related to them in new ways.⁹⁶ For TT, this is where the Spirit’s relation to the exalted Christ is most highlighted, for it is the Spirit that “[makes] real to us the body of Christ” and “makes the power of God actual in the world.”⁹⁷ According to this line of thinking, the Spirit *does not substitute* for the historically incarnate Christ, for the incarnation never ends; rather, the Spirit *mediates* the exalted embodiment of the incarnate (and now glorified) Christ to the world.⁹⁸ Similarly expressed by Farrow, the Holy Spirit “does not in fact present himself but the

⁹² This point is perhaps best made in Farrow, *Ascension & Ecclesia*, esp Chs. 5-6; also *Ascension Theology*, esp. Chs. 4-5.

⁹³ E.g. Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha* 104; Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* 3.16.9; Leo the Great, *Tractatus* 73.4; John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, 4.2.

⁹⁴ *Theology of Transformation*, 5 [...] 119.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁶ Davies, “Interrupted Body,” 50.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50, 51.

⁹⁸ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 89-90; “Interrupted Body,” 39.

absent Jesus.”⁹⁹ We will recall from our discussion in Chapter 2 that Davies has helpfully argued that this pneumatic mediation serves as the facilitation of Christ’s glorified self into our own not-yet-glorified reality. What is brought to us is Christ; the Spirit is what brings him to us and enables our interaction and union with him.

At this juncture, the task is to bring this line of discussion to bear on Moltmann and his christological views. Secondary engagement with Moltmann’s perspective on the ascension/exaltation of Christ is quite sparse in current literature. Stephen Williams has commented critically, saying that “the exaltation of Jesus Christ is something which Moltmann is wary of, to put it mildly.”¹⁰⁰ In support of this assessment, Williams cites two passages in Moltmann, one from *Theology of Hope* and the other from *The Crucified God*. However, an examination of those two passages reveals that it is not the exaltation *per se* that Moltmann is being wary of, but rather the manner in which the doctrine has been applied in defense of certain ideas in doctrinal history. Specifically, Moltmann expresses concern that the established church can lose its focus on the cross and on the future-oriented movement of the kingdom once the exaltation becomes ensconced as a static and abstract reality only accessible via formalized, institutional ritual:

With this change from the apocalyptic of the promised and still outstanding lordship of Christ to the cultic presence of his eternal, heavenly lordship there goes at the same time also a waning of theological interest in the cross.¹⁰¹

[Christ’s] humiliation on the cross faded into the background behind the present experience of his exaltation to be Kyrios, to be the Lord who ushers in the end-time. [...] There was no longer any need to think of the earthly way of this Lord to the cross.¹⁰²

Moltmann’s concern on these scores in fact thematically dovetails with his censure of the

⁹⁹ *Ascension & Ecclesia*, 257.

¹⁰⁰ “Moltmann on Jesus Christ,” 114.

¹⁰¹ *TH*, 158.

¹⁰² *CG*, 179

non-prophetic, compromised, and imperialistic church,¹⁰³ as opposed to his vision for a distinctly kenotic *Kirche unter dem Kreuz*, a point we shall visit in more detail shortly.¹⁰⁴

Thus Williams' point somewhat misconstrues what Moltmann finds bothersome about the exaltation (in a manner similar to Ryan Neal's interpretation of Moltmann's discomfort with two natures christology). However, Williams' point is effective insofar as it highlights the fact that Moltmann does not provide any major positive statement on the exalted Christ in either *Theology of Hope* or *The Crucified God*.

A related issue has attended recent engagement with Moltmann's understanding of the present Christ (*Christus Praesens*). Idar Kjøsvik's work has engaged the theme at length in Moltmann, but has mainly focused on its eschatological dimension and its articulation in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.¹⁰⁵ Because Kjøsvik takes that particular work as his "wichtigste materielle Gegenstand,"¹⁰⁶ and since that work precedes Moltmann's "cosmological" turn in the mid-1980s, Kjøsvik's analysis misses out on the more presential and world-focused dimensions that the doctrine accrues in Moltmann's later work. Kjøsvik remains focused on the "temporal" aspect of Christ's current state (Christ is raised "into the future" and comes to us from the future in his Parousia) but not on the "spatial" or "cosmological" aspect of Christ's current state.¹⁰⁷ Functionally, this means that Kjøsvik's examination of Moltmann comes quite close to detecting a program of substitution of Christ by the Spirit: "[The] future is emphasized, in the present it is anticipated by the Spirit; this

¹⁰³ His most trenchant critique of these tendencies comes in his historical analysis of eschatology in *CoG*, 159-184.

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann first refers to "the church under the cross" in *CG* (202), but develops the notion at greatest length in *CPS* (e.g. 65, 85-97, 357-361).

¹⁰⁵ Idar Kjøsvik, *Christus Praesens: Jürgen Moltmanns Geschichtverständnis und die Lehre vom gegenwärtigen Christus* (Neukirchener Verlag, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. "Here is where Moltmann's answer to the question 'Where is Christ present?' can be found. His first answer is 'Jesus is raised into the coming kingdom of God.' Moltmann's question is spatial, but his answer is temporal" (*ibid.*, 277, my translation).

would better be called the doctrine of ‘the present Spirit’ and ‘the future Christ.’”¹⁰⁸ This is one of the reasons why Kjølsvik ultimately argues that Moltmann does not do enough justice to the *current* presence of Christ in his church.

To this, again, we would note that the temporal and eschatological language for Christ’s presence is more prominent in Moltmann before the publication of *God and Creation*, to the neglect of cosmology and a real sense of Christ’s current presence in the world (as Kjølsvik notes). But, as with many aspects of Moltmann’s theology, subsequent developments and writings bring formerly neglected themes into broader and deeper expression. Once these developments are viewed holistically (again, acknowledging that we are rendering Moltmann’s perspective more systematically than he himself sometimes does), it emerges that Moltmann’s view on the exalted Christ is fairly directive for his theological outlook on the themes of ecclesial participation in new creation, *Christus praesens*, the nature of Christian hoping, and transformed Christian acts. We now briefly analyze each of these.

7.3.1 – The Power of the New Creation

The first theme is specifically aligned toward new creation, as embodied in Christ. Though Moltmann does not always use the same strong “embodiment” language as TT in discussing the exalted Christ, he makes it clear that the exaltation has eschatological significance for the church and for human becoming in fellowship with Christ.¹⁰⁹ “His followers will be drawn into his humiliation here and his exaltation there.”¹¹⁰ The drawing of believers into the new creation develops in Moltmann not only as a result of Christ’s sending of the Spirit,¹¹¹ but

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 277, my translation. Original: “[Die] Zukunft betont, gegenwärtig werden sie im Geist antizipiert und sie gehören wohl eher zu Lehre vom ‘Spiritus Praesens’ und ‘Christus Futurus.’”

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Habets, *Anointed Son*: “So as *arche* (or *protokos* of Col. 1:15), original human, and now as *telos*, ultimate human, Jesus Christ is our model, our exemplar, even our template. And what we shall become is already inherently related to what we are becoming. [...] This is achieved or actualized through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that believers participate in the one incarnation (but they do not replicate the incarnation)” (271).

¹¹⁰ *SpL*, 145, emphasis added.

¹¹¹ E.g. *TK*, 122-124.

also the Spirit's mediation of Christ: "regeneration or rebirth as new creation is christologically based, pneumatologically accomplished and eschatologically orientated."¹¹² Davies pursues a largely consonant line of thinking in his transformational discourse: "The Spirit, which is 'poured out on all flesh', facilitates the conforming of creation to the transformation effected in the body of Christ, who is 'raised up' above all things."¹¹³ Furthermore, Moltmann suggestively argues that a "transfiguring efficacy emanates from" the exalted body of Jesus,¹¹⁴ recalling quite directly the powers of the Spirit which emanated from him during his earthly life:

The raised body of Christ therefore acts as an embodied promise [*verkörperte Verheißung*] for the whole creation. It is the prototype of the glorified body. [...] It is the perfected body, so it provides the hope for 'the resurrection of the body'. It partakes of God's omnipresence, so its bodily presence is therefore spatially unbound [*ist darum räumlich ergrenzt*]. It partakes of God's eternity, so its presence is no longer temporally restricted [*nicht mehr zeitlich bedingt*]. It lives in the heaven of God's creative potencies and reigns with them, and is no longer tied to the limited potentialities of earthly reality. So in this body and through it the powers of the new creation act upon and penetrate the world.¹¹⁵

Here Moltmann verges on two key affirmations: the transformed body of Christ as the source of the world's continual transformation and the Spirit ("power of the new creation") being identified as that transfiguring efficacy that proceeds from the body of Christ. Just as Christ's humanity was transfigured by the Spirit in his raising (Rm 8.11), so does Christ give the Spirit, which is his "gift" for the "building up [*οικοδομῆν*]" of his body (Eph 4.7,11). Importantly, this means that Moltmann strongly implies that Christ's kenotic reliance on the Spirit *continues, even now, in his exaltation*, and it continues to effectuate transformation of the world insofar as the Spirit's energies are thereby enabled to break into the created order. The Spirit mediates the extension of the kenotic, transformational, Christic body. We see this

¹¹² Ibid., 147. Moltmann consistently highlights this dual-mediation (the Spirit comes through Christ, Christ is made present by the Spirit). See also Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 69-70.

¹¹³ *Theology of Transformation*, 141.

¹¹⁴ WJC, 258; see also Cosden, *Theology of Work*, 148.

¹¹⁵ WJC, 258 (German: 281). I have slightly altered Kohl's English translation here.

unfolded further as we turn our attention to Moltmann's notion of the pneumatological mediation of the exalted Christ.

7.3.2 – The Mediation(s) of the Present Christ

Substitution of Jesus by the Spirit, rightly bemoaned by Davies, is impossible for Moltmann due to his view of the perichoretic relations and roles in the course of trinitarian history.¹¹⁶

We can see this explicitly illustrated in his references to the exalted Christ and the outpoured Spirit: "The experience of the Spirit makes Christ—the *risen* Christ—present, and with him makes the eschatological future present too."¹¹⁷ As does TT, Moltmann finds Christ's presence to be pneumatologically mediated, and, though boundless (that is, unbound by spatial limitation), Christ is also uniquely present in certain dimensions of ecclesial and worldly array. So where is Christ's presence to be found in this unique sense? As answered by Oliver Davies, the exalted Christ is "with us on earth, in the poor and vulnerable, the sacraments, the Church, and in the Bible."¹¹⁸ The TT emphasis here is toward Christ and toward the world simultaneously; so, again, none of these things "substitute" for Christ but rather they mediate "his presence in the world in power, in and through the Spirit of Pentecost."¹¹⁹

Moltmann's most protracted, and ecclesialogically specific, discourse on the presence of Christ comes in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.¹²⁰ Drawing on his revelation-as-promise paradigm, as well as his promissory-messianic hermeneutic, Moltmann is able to articulate the presence of Christ in multiple dimensions, basing each one on the promises of

¹¹⁶ Most programmatically in *TK*.

¹¹⁷ *SpL*, 147; see also *WJC*, 238-239.

¹¹⁸ *Theology of Transformation*, 58, emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89; see 88-93 for the discourse against trinitarian, eucharistic, or biblical "substitution" for the exalted Christ.

¹²⁰ This discourse commences, in fact, with Moltmann's own version of our second transformational heuristic question: "[If] the church finds the place of its truth and its true constitution in the presence of Christ, the difficult question arises: where, then, is Christ present?" (122). See also Kjølsvik, *Christus Praesens*, 259-260.

the Messiah himself:

Christ is... present where he has expressly given the assurance of his presence. And here we must distinguish between the promises of his presence in something other than himself, and the promise of his presence through himself [...]. If we enquire about the promises of his presence in this way, we find three different groups of assurances in the New Testament: (a) By virtue of his identifying assurance, Christ is present in the apostolate, in the sacraments, and in the fellowship of the brethren. (b) By virtue of his identifying assurance, Christ is present in 'the least of the brethren'. (c) By virtue of his assurance, Christ is present as his own self in his parousia.¹²¹

Owing to the limitations of our study, we cannot examine Moltmann's thinking on the Parousia in any depth.¹²² However, from the other elements in the above listing, it becomes clear that Moltmann envisions a program of mediation, wherein Christ is made present "by virtue of" the church, the sacraments, and the poor.¹²³ This leads to a thickly circumscribed ecclesiology where Christ, via the Spirit, is truly present: "This is a Real Presence in the Spirit through identification [*Realpräsenz im Geist kraft Identifikation*]... [W]here the apostolate, baptism, the Lord's supper and brotherly fellowship occur in Christ's name [*Christi Namen geschehen*], there is the church."¹²⁴

Later in the same work, Moltmann produces a sweeping understanding of the Eucharist, combining the emphases of Zwinglian memorial, Lutheran real presence, and Moltmann's own eschatological outlook into a missional and empowering understanding of the sacrament which brings Christ as crucified, risen, exalted, and still-to-come Lord into a real encounter with the community of faith.¹²⁵ This is mediated, once again, by the Spirit's power: "It is the Spirit who allows Christ to be truly present in the meal and gives us fellowship with him[...] It is the Spirit who, as the power of the kingdom, gives a foretaste

¹²¹ CPS, 122–123.

¹²² Moltmann's most important discourse on Christ's Parousia is found in *WJC*, Ch. 7. See further the discussion by Bauckham, "The Future of Jesus Christ," 97–110.

¹²³ For an impassioned accounting of Christ's presence in "the hungry, the thirsty, the alien, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned," see Moltmann, *PL*, 103–104.

¹²⁴ CPS, 125 (German: 144); I have altered Kohl's translation slightly (her English edition reads "presence" for *Namen*).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 252–258.

[*Vorgeschmack*] of the new creation in the feast.”¹²⁶ Moltmann orients the entire existence of the church toward the future which God will bring, but in his mature understanding of the Spirit he declares that this “can only be understood pneumatologically” because the church “is the eschatological creation of Spirit.”¹²⁷

There is definitely an eschatological dimension to this, which scholars like Kjølsvik are right to emphasize. But this emphasis in Moltmann should not be presented as though Christ’s real presence in the here-and-now is disallowed or unexpressed by Moltmann.¹²⁸ But this is perhaps to beg the question: so how exactly can the eschatological reading and presential reading be held together in Moltmann’s understanding of the *Christus Praesens*? It hinges on Christ’s simultaneous identity as the one who is with us (presentially, by his Spirit) and the one who is “ahead” of us—that is, further along the eschatological path that God has charted for all of creation. The missing links which must be supplied, in short, are Moltmann’s firstborn christology (which we identified and described at length in Ch. 4) and the simultaneous application of his promissory and messianic hermeneutics.¹²⁹ Kjølsvik’s analysis overlooks these elements, and so finds Moltmann’s understanding of Christ’s presence deficient for the current church (moreover, he overestimates the influence of Ernst Bloch on Moltmann’s thinking for this doctrinal issue).¹³⁰ On the contrary, Moltmann holds tightly together the present Christ and that presence’s pneumatological mediation, over and against Kjølsvik’s critique: “What Kjølsvik calls ‘real-presence’ cannot in my opinion be against ‘spiritual-presence’, [which is] the present Christ in the power of the Holy

¹²⁶ Ibid., 257 (German: 283).

¹²⁷ Ibid., 33; see further *ibid.*, 197-199.

¹²⁸ Cf. Moltmann, “Nachwort,” in Kjølsvik, *Christus Praesens*: “Die alte Unterscheidung zwischen a ‘präsentischen Eschatologie’ und einer ‘futurischen Eschatologie’ ist hinfällig” (331).

¹²⁹ Again, Kjølsvik, while to be commended for a sustained engagement with this topic in Moltmann’s thought, is too one-sided in his focus on the temporal-future-eschatological side aspect of Christ’s presence in Moltmann’s thinking. E.g. “The past-perspective on Moltmann’s historical outlook provides an answer for who the *coming Christ* is, but not for who the *present Christ* is. Through the identification of the person of Jesus Christ with the coming Christ, we can [only] indirectly answer who the present Christ is” (300, my translation).

¹³⁰ Moltmann, “Nachwort,” in Kjølsvik, *Christus Praesens*: “Der Verfasser [Kjølsvik] überschätzt den Einfluss von Blochs Zukunftsphilosophie auf die Entwicklung meiner Theologie” (331).

Spirit...because what could be more real than the creative and life-quickenings powers of God's spirit?"¹³¹

7.3.3 – The Animation of Christian Hope

Moltmann asserts that the actual conversion to a living Christian hope, though based on the resurrection of Jesus, is only made effective in the world by Christ's continuing life as exalted Lord. It is Christ's current and future Lordship alongside belief in his resurrection that dialectically serve to sustain Christian hoping and acting in the world:

[F]aith in the resurrection is only alive in acknowledgment [*Bekenntnis*] of the present lordship of Christ (Rom. 10:9f.). Without new life, without the ability to love and the courage of hope in the lordship of Christ, faith in the resurrection would decay into belief in particular facts, without any consequences. Without faith in the resurrection, new life in the lordship of Christ would cease to be a radical alternative to human forms of sovereignty and—adapting itself religiously, morally or politically—would lose its power to overcome the world [*seine weltüberwindende Kraft einbüßen*].¹³²

For Moltmann, life under Christ's continuing lordship is what prevents the resurrection from becoming a mere matter of mental assent to the occurrence of a past event. His christological pneumatology emerges here with surprising force as he emphasizes that the exalted Christ "pours out" the Spirit and that this outpouring is the source of believer's "regeneration" (Titus 3.5-7) into a transformative partaking of the resurrected existence of Christ. The "Spirit is mediated through Christ," says Moltmann, " [and] it must at this point be called 'the Spirit of Christ'. ... [It] has to be understood as the quickening power of the resurrection (Rm 8:11)."¹³³ The Spirit is the mediator of *regeneration*, which stands not as an internalized, pietistic conversion experience for the believer (Moltmann explicitly wants to go beyond this understanding¹³⁴) but as an assuredly transformative category; it is the inauguration of

¹³¹ Ibid., 331; my translation, emphasis added.

¹³² *CPS*, 98 (German: 117).

¹³³ *SpL*, 146.

¹³⁴ "Neither the Reformation nor the Pietistic and revivalist theologians took this cosmic, apocalyptic character of 'rebirth' into account, however. They always viewed regeneration from the very outset as

Christian life, love, and hope as newly enacted realities in the world. Regeneration is nothing other than the mediation of Christ's own current and continuing life to the Christian. Thus, the resurrection, as the beginning of the new creation which now bursts into the world by the movement of the Spirit, remains generative as a real source of transformative power: "In the activity of the Spirit, consequently, the renewal of life, the new obedience and the new fellowship of men and women is experienced. The marks of the eschatological experience of the Spirit [*eschatologische Geisterfahrung*] are boundless freedom, exuberant joy and inexhaustible love."¹³⁵ The source of these new realities is fundamentally *the body of Jesus*, which Moltmann argues now "lives in the heaven of God's creative potencies" and "is no longer tied to the limited possibilities of earthly reality"¹³⁶—the new creation is thus contained in the possibilities which Christ offers to his church through his Spirit to actualize—enact, "make real"—in the world. Christ's own body, his glorified human self, is brought into the world, made available in the midst of our space and time, by the Spirit. What is most unique about Moltmann's articulation of these points is what separates him from other theologies of the ascension, including TT: the Christic life which is mediated by the Spirit is, and remains, a *kenotic* life. Christ's kenotic relations endure as the necessary way in which the kingdom comes, and so participation in Christ is also participation in this kenotic way, these kenotic transformations of world.

7.3.4 – Exaltation Embodied in Christic Praxis

Moltmann redoubles the transformational emphasis in his later work by declaring that the risen, exalted Jesus *continues to act through the Spirit even now*. Moltmann writes: "Jesus goes on acting in the Spirit," and this includes the healing "of those who are sick"; "Jesus

something that happens in human beings themselves. They saw rebirth only as an inward personal experience in the soul, not as an expectation for the whole suffering and dying world" (*SpL*, 145).

¹³⁵ *TK*, 124 (German: 139-140).

¹³⁶ *WJC*, 258.

continues to minister in the Spirit,” and this includes “forgiv[ing] sins and lift[ing] the oppressive burden of guilt”; “Jesus continues to act in the Spirit” and this includes “gather[ing] the ‘foolish’, ‘weak,’ ‘low and despised’ and those who are of no account.”¹³⁷ Healing, forgiving, and gathering-in-solidarity, as ministries of the Christian church, are thus revealed to be further mediations “in act”—or we could say *enacted mediations*—of the pneumatic presence of the glorified Jesus in the world. His newness of life is communicated through the lived decisions and actions of his church, mirroring (and extending) Jesus’ own continuing kenotic reliance on the Spirit’s efficacy.¹³⁸ This framework, wherein the ascended Christ’s own life is mediated to the church through the Paraclete, we can refer to heuristically as the “Christic” dimension of ecclesiology. In this sense, the kenotic dependence of Jesus on the Spirit is perpetuated even in his exalted life. Jesus depends on the Spirit’s power in the extension of his Christic life into the world, and the church depends on the Spirit’s mediation of that Christic life.

However, as mentioned, Moltmann’s thought implies that Christ’s kenotic relations have *all* continued in the midst of his exalted life, not solely his kenotic reliance on the Spirit. Moltmann routinely emphasizes that Christ is obedient to the Father still and ultimately, as clearly annunciated by the eschatological moment in which Christ “returns the kingdom” to the Father (1st Cor 15.24,28).¹³⁹ Christ also continues his identification with the lowly, for the Spirit mediates his presence in their midst, and Christ explicitly identifies himself with their hunger, thirst, nakedness, sickness, and imprisonment (see Mt 25.35-36).¹⁴⁰ And finally,

¹³⁷ *ET*, 147.

¹³⁸ See the points made by Liston, *Anointed Church*, 128-129; see also Graham Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke’s View of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), esp. 31-34.

¹³⁹ “Then comes the end, when *he hands over the kingdom* to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.... then *the Son himself will also be subjected* to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all” (emphasis added). See Moltmann, *CG*, 255-256; *CoG*, 104-105; *SpL*, 102; *WJC*, 101, 104.

¹⁴⁰ “*I was hungry* and you gave me food, *I was thirsty* and you gave me something to drink, *I was a stranger* and you welcomed me, *I was naked* and you gave me clothing, *I was sick* and you took care of me, *I was in prison* and you visited me” (emphases added). See Moltmann, *CPS*, 126-130; *IEB*, 70-71, 85; *PL*, 103-104.

Christ continues to suffer with his church, present in their suffering and persecution (Acts 9.4),¹⁴¹ and by co-suffering with them, he co-suffers with the world, continuing his kenotic relationship with fleshly transience. This is a necessarily radical extension of the Christic kenosis; as Moltmann says, quoting Pascal, “Christ will be in agony until the world’s end.”¹⁴² The world’s transformation was begun in Christ’s mortal life, radicalized at the cross,¹⁴³ and is now perpetuated via his resurrected-exalted self’s pneumatic and enacted mediations in the world. Paul himself eagerly writes of the process of Christ “being formed” in the Christian (μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, Gal 4.19)—a striking biblical statement that conveys the church’s effective and transforming relation to the ascended Jesus. Just as in Christ’s earthly sojourn the glory of God became gradually more revealed in him, so to is the glory of God to be gradually more revealed in the world, for the “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (Rm 8.19).

At this point our discourse has organically shifted to the threshold of our final heuristic question, which concerns the specific praxiological possibilities that are actualized by Christ for his church. We turn next to that discussion. But before leaving our present topic, we should recapitulate a few points. Moltmann, though he lacked a firm, positive articulation of the exaltation in his earliest work, clearly does not remain “wary” of it as far as ecclesiology, pneumatology, and christology are concerned in his mature outlook. His work largely anticipates many of the emphases found in the ascension theology of TT and in fact radicalizes them by retaining a strong understanding of a kenotically obedient, reliant, identified, suffering Christ. This clearly goes beyond many manifestations of third-wave KC, which typically lack any sustained or specific attention for Christ’s current presence and very

¹⁴¹ Now as [Saul] was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you *persecute me*?” (emphasis added).

¹⁴² WJC, 157, see also 211.

¹⁴³ Gal 6.14: “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

little connection of that presence to Christ's historical kenotic life. We saw in Chapter 1 how this lack in third-wave KC impoverishes its stated commitment to the "practical life of Christians and the Church."¹⁴⁴ Moltmann's KC stands in stark contrast to this. His views on Christ's mediated, ecclesial presence open up trajectories that specifically point toward praxis.

§4 Acts of Kenotic-Transformation

What is the praxiological horizon engendered by such a view of the exalted, kenotic Christ? In seeking to answer this question our notion of kenotic-transformation reaches its farthest constructive extension. To anticipate the perspective to be argued for in this section—and building fundamentally on our immediately preceding sections—*the kenotic-transformational life of the incarnate, exalted Christ is pneumatologically mediated to the church, thereby effecting through it further kenotic-transformations of the world.* We will argue that Moltmann's KC, when helpfully framed and clarified by TT, presents just such a perspective.

Such a formulation is deeply consonant with the fundamental concerns of TT, as seen when Davies states that

it is the Spirit who communicates the new order of life which floods from the transformed body of Jesus.[...] It is the Pentecostal giving of the Spirit which extends the irreversible transformation of the body of Jesus into the world and so makes it present too for us in the 'crowded spaces' of our own situational reality. We receive the Spirit in Christ, and Christ in the Spirit. And the reception of this life is that we become at the moment of acting in the name of Christ the mode of his presence in hiddenness in the world, and so also the mode of his power and display.¹⁴⁵

We are most interested in the notion of Christian acts instantiating the "mode of Christ's

¹⁴⁴ Evans, "Introduction," 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Theology of Transformation*, 70; and further, "Christ is not just an exemplar with whose life we are familiar: we feel that he is present to us and *in* us through the Holy Spirit.... Through the Spirit then, we already know implicitly what it is to be transformed *in him*.... The Christian experience is that the meaning of our life as a unity of Christian beliefs, practices, and acts becomes ever more expressive of, and participatory in, the meaning of Christ's own life, as made present to us through the Spirit, at the centre of our own historical living" (ibid., 98).

presence” in the world, and thus being the Christic transformations-in-act of the world. The key addition that Moltmann has brought to this paradigm is, of course, the manifold and relational christological *kenosis*, arguing that Christ’s life, whether in his first-century ministry or presently in his mediated, exalted state, is kenotic (in, at least, the four relational dimensions we have detailed). The kenosis of Christ *has not ended*; in fact, we argue to the contrary that Moltmann perceives the Christic kenosis to be extended now into Christ’s body, the church, and that it is only via specifically kenotic, Christic acts that the world is transformed, that old creation is made new. Some of Moltmann’s most suggestive material to this end comes in his ecclesiological discourse, when he discusses the church as a cruciform community. Our first sub-section below will explore this theme in Moltmann. Thereafter, however, a key critical issue must be confronted: the *risks* of emphasizing kenotically-themed praxis, which have been highlighted very ably by feminist thinkers in particular. After addressing some of those concerns as they pertain to Moltmann’s outlook, we will explore his views on a distinctly kenotic view of the Christian self and finally on the presence of all four of the Christic kenotic dimensions in the life of the faithful believer.

7.4.1 – The Kenotic Church “Under the Cross”

Christ’s kenotic, constitutive relations with the Father, the Spirit, the poor, and the world do not end at his exaltation; they are transformed. They remain a part of the Christic life, and as such are contained in that life that is mediated by the Spirit to the body of Christ, the church. For Moltmann, this means that *Christ’s kenosis is gifted to the church as its true power and way in the world*; the church is to be a kenotic community: “Because of [Christ’s sacrificial life] their life is also destined for self-giving [*Hingabe*].”¹⁴⁶ Grounding his thought in Mark

¹⁴⁶ CPS, 96 (German: 115). Strong support for an understanding of the church as radically kenotic can be found in the thought of both Donald MacKinnon and Michael Gorman. For MacKinnon, see Luke Hopkins, *The Exposed Life: The Kenotic Ecclesiology of Donald MacKinnon*, B.Th. Thesis (University of Newcastle, 2011), esp. 39-52 and Timothy G. Connor, *The Kenotic Trajectory of the Church in the Theology of Donald*

10.42-44¹⁴⁷ Moltmann describes the self-giving church in the following way: “True dominion does not consist of enslaving others but in becoming a servant of others; not in the exercise of power, but in the exercise of love; not in being served but in freely serving; not in sacrificing the subjugated but in self-sacrifice [*Selbsthingabe*].”¹⁴⁸ Since Moltmann finds the most profound realization of Christ’s kenosis to be manifested in his death on the cross,¹⁴⁹ a position that Php 2.6-11 enforces and that our four-dimensioned framing of Moltmann’s kenosis heavily supports,¹⁵⁰ he can refer to the church’s kenotic shape and mode as the “church under the cross.”¹⁵¹ “Wherever men take up their cross and in their self-giving *are made like the one who was crucified*,” says Moltmann, “there is the church.”¹⁵² Echoing this emphasis is the strong current of scholarship supporting an ethical, imitative dimension to the kenotic passage of Philippians 2.¹⁵³ The kenotic church is such because it is called to follow the way of its kenotic Lord. As David Horrell puts it, “[Christians] are to conform their character and practice [to] cultivate the virtues embodied in [Jesus]—humility, other-regard, confidence and joy in suffering.”¹⁵⁴

If Jesus Christ’s willing kenosis of will, efficacy, status, and even body constitute the

MacKinnon (London: Continuum, 2011). Gorman’s most illustrative works on this score are his *Cruciformity and Inhabiting*.

¹⁴⁷ “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all,” (NRSV).

¹⁴⁸ *CPS*, 103 (German: 122).

¹⁴⁹ *TK*, 119; *GC*, 89-90.

¹⁵⁰ Philippians 2 presents the kenosis and humility of Christ as culminating with his death, “even death on a cross.” Each of the four dimensions designated within Moltmann’s christological kenosis reaches its climactic expression at Golgotha: Christ’s obedience to the Father’s will is most deeply expressed in his willingness to suffer the cross; Christ’s reliance on the Spirit is what sustains him on the cross and is through which he offers himself (Hb 9.14); Christ’s identification with the poor carries all the way through to the very mode of his execution on the cross; Christ’s unity with the transient created order is most fully expressed in the agony of his bodily dying.

¹⁵¹ *CPS*, see 65, 85-97, 357-361.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 65; Moltmann will also state that Christians “live from [Christ’s] self-giving” (*ibid.* 89).

¹⁵³ We have noted several exegetes who support such a reading, though with differing nuances (R. Martin, M. Gorman, and N.T. Wright). Another supporting voice is found in David Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul’s Ethics* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2015 [2nd ed.]), 225-236. Horrell rightly claims that the kenosis hymn in Phil. 2 is a “*crux interpretum*” for seeing a pervasive *imitatio Christi* in Paul’s ethics and ecclesiology (225).

¹⁵⁴ *Solidarity and Difference*, 235.

“way” in which he enacted his ministry, death, and resurrection,¹⁵⁵ then this kenotic trajectory can be brought into tight constructive unity with TT’s insistence that, as church, Christians enact the transformative life of Christ in the world by becoming, in the power of the Spirit, “human material cause for the sake of the other.”¹⁵⁶ From this dual emphasis arising at the juncture of Moltmann and TT, we see light thrown upon the idea that, if the way of Jesus Christ is kenotic and transformational, Christ’s church now serves as the *material cause of kenotic-transformations in the world*. And this can only mean kenotic (self-sacrificial) forms of praxis which transform the “world” (understood in the expanded sense afforded by TT).

Under the strong aegis of both Luther and Bonhoeffer, Moltmann’s vision of Christian calling allows for “no fundamental division between the general priesthood of all believers and the particular priestly ministry.”¹⁵⁷ This focus on the “priesthood of all believers” clearly aligns Moltmann with the radical wing of the Reformation in terms of polity,¹⁵⁸ but it is also significant for his understanding of a kenotic church. In Moltmann, the church under the cross is kenotic, and thus must be made up of Christians whose individual lives and enacted decisions are kenotic in both foundation and expression. As T.D. Herbert writes, “[Moltmann] wishes to describe priesthood by reference to *theologia crucis* as the identifying mark of the Christian. Priesthood is a sacrificial event of kenotic identification.”¹⁵⁹

But such a view of the church’s kenotic priesthood in the world needs to be duly aware of the “risks” that have been identified when a self-sacrificial ethical mode has been

¹⁵⁵ It may seem strange to say that Christ “enacts” his resurrection, since both logically and biblically the Father and the Spirit appear to be the necessary agents of that event. However, on the basis of Moltmann’s firmly established notion of “active kenosis” (*passio activa*), Christ can be truly said to enact (“bring about”) his resurrection insofar as he enacts his kenotic roles, which are the necessary presuppositions of that resurrection.

¹⁵⁶ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 238.

¹⁵⁷ CPS, 97, cf. also 301.

¹⁵⁸ See McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 140. For Moltmann’s most programmatic statements, see his ecclesiological commentary in CPS, 301-314; his social and historical commentary in PL, 113-126; and his political and more polemical commentary in TK, 200-202. His most balanced discussion, summing and ameliorating some of these foregoing statements, appears in SRA, 22-28.

¹⁵⁹ *Kenosis and Priesthood* (Paternoster, 2009), 123.

adopted. Feminist theologies in particular have highlighted these dangers and must be engaged. It will serve us well to now address these concerns and examine Moltmann's proposals in light of them.

7.4.2. – The Risks of Kenotic Praxis

What form should the kenotic acting of the church take? How should it be understood, portrayed, and taught? These are important questions, for kenotic praxis framed as self-denial or self-effacement alone runs the risk of implying a docile passivity or resigned victimhood.

Feminist theologians have led the charge in denouncing the ways in which a merely “self-abnegating” model of enacted kenosis can lead (and has led) to the acceptance of denigrating treatment and status by those who have been oppressed throughout church history.¹⁶⁰

Aristotle Papanikolaou, summarizing many of these concerns, writes that the “oppressed state” of women and others in the history of Western theology has caused them to view “notions of self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, and service to others” as something which undermines the “struggle for full humanity and further justif[ies] oppressive structures.”¹⁶¹

Daphne Hampson famously denounced kenosis as often underwriting a masculinist power relation, wherein “sheer vulnerability...is likely to lead to the exploitation of others.”¹⁶² In her view “self-emptying and self-abnegation are far from helpful” in protecting and furthering the concerns of women.¹⁶³ In the course of detailing Moltmann's advocacy for a form of kenotic christology, a kenotic view of the church, and a kenotic understanding of Christian praxis, as we are doing here, such reservations should be addressed.

¹⁶⁰ As Sarah Coakley puts it, “[The] rhetoric of kenosis [can constitute] the all-too-familiar exhortation to women to submit to lives of self-destructive subordination” (“*Kenosis and Subversion*,” 4).

¹⁶¹ “Person, *Kenosis*, and Abuse,” 43. See also Mercedes, *Power For*: “The long legacy of female subjugation that has relied on women's sacrifice as the fundamental currency of patriarchal economies implicates self-emptying doctrine as a tool of hierarchical enforcement” (2).

¹⁶² Hampson, “Response,” in *Swallowing a Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity*, ed. D. Hampson (London: SPCK, 1996), 124.

¹⁶³ Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 155.

Though some critics search vigorously for “an abusive theology” in Moltmann’s work (especially in *The Crucified God*¹⁶⁴), Moltmann himself has always demonstrated a keen awareness that the church “has much abused the theology of the cross and the mysticism of the passion in the interest of those who cause the suffering.”¹⁶⁵ Given his career-long attention to the issues of oppression and subjugation (not least as they concern the history of women), it is not surprising that Moltmann’s Christ is not presented as a self-deprecating person or a simple passive victim. We find Moltmann favoring no kenotic self-annihilation or self-denigration, such as that found in the radical kenotic devotion of Simone Weil, for example.¹⁶⁶ In Moltmann’s rendering, Christ is secure in his identity as the Son, out of which he calls God *Abba* with unprecedented intimacy. We recall further that it is a distinctive element of Moltmann’s pneumatological christology that the Spirit aids and preserves Jesus in this relational assurance even through the travails of death.¹⁶⁷ Christ is thus not presented by Moltmann as any victim of his kenotic relations, although *through* his kenotic acting he allows himself to be afflicted by sinful powers in his humiliating execution. The suffering—the weakness, the vulnerability, the giving up of one’s securities—is the way in which transformation takes place; it is never suffering for suffering’s sake alone. Moltmann makes this distinction clear:

It is obvious that ‘the first’—the powerful people of this world—were bound to react to [Jesus’] radical revaluation of their values with persecution, humiliation and execution.... But in taking his way to the cross, *Jesus was also making his own decision: his active love for sufferers becomes his suffering love with sufferers*. We understand his suffering obedience to God... as his unreserved self-giving to the uttermost for the God-forsaken.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Millicent Feske, “Christ and Suffering in Moltmann’s Thought,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55.1 (Spring 2000), 92-101.

¹⁶⁵ CG, 49, also 48; see also Cynthia Crysdale, *Embracing Travail, Retrieving the Cross Today* (New York/London: Continuum, 2000), 105-108.

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g., Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1952), esp. 88-89. For a critical evaluation of Weil’s extreme form of self-abnegation from a feminist thinker who favors kenotic language, see Ruth Groenhout, “Kenosis and Feminist Theory,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 301-302. See also Katrina Duttonhaver’s discussion of Weil’s “self-annihilation” in *Love’s Labor: The Relational Self in Simone Weil’s Mystical-Political Theology*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Notre Dame, 2010), 161-164.

¹⁶⁷ SpL, 64.

¹⁶⁸ IEB, 69.

It is only in the exercise of deep human freedom, founded in his identity as God's Son, that Christ willingly gives up his freedom to the suffering of the cross.¹⁶⁹ We have seen Davies emphasize this from a TT perspective,¹⁷⁰ but it is Moltmann who, in his earliest work on these issues, openly framed the free self-surrender of Jesus in terms of an *active passion*: "It is no unwilling, fortuitous suffering [*unfreiwilliges, zufälliges Leiden*]; it is a *passio activa*."¹⁷¹

Hampson is right; pure vulnerability or silent passivity can make nothing but victims. But feminist thinker Ruth Groehout offers a resonant counter-balance in her own writing on kenosis: "Self-sacrifice is something we [Christians] are called to.[...] Self-sacrifice should not be understood as a matter of spineless submission to whatever anyone else requests or demands.... [When] oriented toward service in the Kingdom rather than purposeless self-abnegation, self-sacrifice is important for those who call themselves followers of Christ."¹⁷² Sarah Coakley and Anna Mercedes further stand as strong examples of feminist thought that re-expresses, rather than abandons, the motif of kenosis.¹⁷³ Coakley has supported Rosemary Radford Ruether's famous reading of Jesus' kenosis as an "emptying of patriarchal values" evidenced in his historical actions and sayings,¹⁷⁴ an assessment that accords in many respects with Moltmann's view of Christ's kenosis of social and cultural securities and norms.¹⁷⁵ Moreover Coakley suggests an understanding of kenosis as "choosing *never to have* 'worldly' forms of power" as the most effective application of Phillipians 2.6 to the

¹⁶⁹ This reading of Christ's assured and willing self-sacrifice is echoed strongly in Crysdale, *Embracing Travail*, 53-55, esp. 54.

¹⁷⁰ *Theology of Transformation*, 114-115.

¹⁷¹ *TK*, 75 (German: 91); see also 81; *CG* 229-230. The fullest expression of his christology links this theme clearly with the self-surrender, the kenosis: "In the event of the surrender, Jesus is not merely the object; he is the subject too. His suffering and dying was a *passio activa*, a path of suffering deliberately chosen" (*WJC*, 173).

¹⁷² "Kenosis and Feminist Theory," 310-311.

¹⁷³ See Coakley, "Kenosis and Subversion,"; Mercedes, *Power For*, esp. 132-153; Groenhout, "Kenosis and Feminist Theory," esp. 305-312.

¹⁷⁴ See Coakley, "Kenosis and Subversion," 25.

¹⁷⁵ Moltmann specifically describes Jesus' overthrowing cultural patriarchal norms in *WJC*, 142-145.

person of Christ.¹⁷⁶ Alongside Coakley's focus on a constructive doctrinal statement for christology as such,¹⁷⁷ she is also concerned with kenotic devotion in the Christian's present life, which, to her thinking, is best exemplified in the practice of contemplative prayer, a "regular and willed practice of ceding and responding to the divine."¹⁷⁸

The recent work of Anna Mercedes articulates a more active sense of kenotic praxis, emphasizing that kenosis should be seen as "power for"—power *for* goals, *for* others, *for* self. As kenotic power, it consists in expressions of vulnerability in the name of changing negative situations or empowering others, involving the willing sacrifices that such activity may entail. Though she does not use the precise language, Mercedes' themes resonate with Moltmann's keen sense of a *passio activa*:

Power for leans toward another or others; its focus and its desire remain for the thriving of this particular other or others. In this sense it is very much a self-giving, a self-emptying. ... Though self-giving may appear as the *loss* of power, kenotic outpouring may also...bear a mighty current, opening a revelation of oneself, beckoning the becoming of another, resisting oppression, and redefining subjection.¹⁷⁹

In the kenotic embrace of goals beyond oneself, one's self is reduced in the amount of focus it receives; selfish perpetuation of personal goals and self-absorbed construction of private idols is confuted by this active kind of kenosis. As Mercedes puts it, "Our self-emptying, when christic, is neither self-righteousness nor diffuse charity but rather always necessarily for another."¹⁸⁰

Though Groenhout, Coakley, and Mercedes do not parrot one another—in fact,

¹⁷⁶ "Kenosis and Subversion," 31. Coakley wishes to limit this solely to the human nature. For Coakley, kenosis mainly applies to the humble bearing of Jesus in his earthly life.

¹⁷⁷ More fully explored in her essay, "Does Kenosis Rest on a Mistake? Three Kenotic Models in Patristic Exegesis," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 246-264.

¹⁷⁸ "Kenosis and Subversion," 34.

¹⁷⁹ Mercedes, *Power For*, 135. See also the similar lines of thinking taken up by Ruth Groenhout, "Kenosis and Feminist Theory," 291-312. Groenhout claims that "self-sacrifice is something we [as Christians] are called to" (306), and claims further that "feminism has always accepted the presence of values that require the sacrifice of self-interest for the sake of justice" (308). Her valuation of self-sacrifice is thus not in terms of its oppressive history but instead its liberative potential; it is not the sacrifice of power or freedom for its own sake but the sacrifice of safety or security when challenging the "status quo" through being a "prophetic voice" (312). Kenosis is goal-oriented in this case, a power for change and transformation.

¹⁸⁰ Mercedes, *Power For*, 150.

Mercedes stages much of her own interaction with Coakley as a dialogical critique¹⁸¹—we can still render their basic stances on kenotic praxis in a complementary statement: *the kenotic Christian life refuses to take up worldly forms of power and instead submits radically to God in its practices* (Coakley), *sustaining self-sacrifice in the service of justice, resistance, and solidarity on behalf of others* (Groenhout and Mercedes). These points strongly align with the themes we have unearthed in Moltmann’s thought, and thus they provide a safeguard against Moltmann’s discourse on “the church under the cross” being read as a masochistic valorization of suffering for its own sake.

Taken together, Moltmann’s kenotic church and the sort of kenotic praxis etched by these feminist theologians seems fundamentally to illustrate the New Testament emphasis on willingly, freely, even joyfully, ceding oneself to others in love and humility: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but *through love become slaves to one another*” (Gal 5.13; cf. also 1 Cor 5.14; 1 Jn 4.9-11). These biblical passages are reflective of the active-passion that both TT and Moltmann champion; Christians are freed to love, and in that love ought to willingly bind themselves to others and to God.¹⁸² Such is the shape of kenotic action that does not lend itself readily to exploitation and self-denigration.¹⁸³

Moltmann, when discussing the ethical responsibility of Christian praxis, takes pains to emphasize that limitations should be recognized and that “no one is required to abrogate himself completely.[...] The person who despises himself will not be able to love his neighbor either.”¹⁸⁴ Illustrative of these points are the words of Catherine Keller, who in her own

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 30-38.

¹⁸² Thus, self-sacrifice need not be self-*abnegation*, but can rather serve as self-*realization* within one’s Christic identity as part of the kenotic Lord’s kenotic church.

¹⁸³ But given the doctrine’s potentiality for oppressive use, we strongly concur with Mercedes’ observation that “Theological care around questions of *kenosis* continues to be necessary because abuse continues.[...] Thus, *kenosis* merits theological reconsideration, *through and with* honesty about the hazards of kenotic doctrine” (*Power For*, 152...153).

¹⁸⁴ *EthH*, 74.

writing on kenosis has advocated for a vision of selfhood and agency that “strengthens both the sense of attachment and the sense of self, seeking not to overcome self but to experience and to articulate an extensively relational self.”¹⁸⁵ This hits very closely to Moltmann’s specific and capacious understanding of transformational-kenotic praxis rooted in christology.

In the next two sections before the thesis’ conclusion, I proceed to posit some basic groundwork for what these Christic dimensions of Christian acting look like in lived practice. Moltmann provides key hints in this direction in his discourses on Christian vulnerability-in-relationship and his discussion of how “self-giving” in the church clearly echoes and reflects that of Christ. It is to these points that we now turn.

7.4.3 – The Open Self: Embracing “Entrance” and “Limitation”

The emphasis on self-giving relationship as the proper way to understand kenosis is deeply seated in Moltmann’s thought, often articulated in the language of “openness.” Openness to others is what facilitates relationship; it is the initial and vulnerable step of kenosis. Kenotic praxis is thus fundamentally originated in relational openness, and both serve as facilitation of Christic transformation. Moltmann’s first major work on ecclesiology was given the telling English title *The Open Church*.¹⁸⁶ In his introduction to that book, Douglas Meeks emphasized Moltmann’s clear connection between the kenotic themes of relationship, passion, and suffering:

The words “passion” and “suffering” will be found in this book.... [But they do] not mean passivity.[...] “Passion” and “suffering” mean not simply to be acted upon but also to be affected, changed, transformed, and matured by the lives of others. To be open, accessible, vulnerable is not the sign of passive impotence but the precondition of active historical life. Suffering also means the power to go outside of oneself and affect the other.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Keller, “Scoop Up the Water and the Moon is in Your Hands: Feminist Theology and Dynamic Self-Emptying,” in *The Emptying God*, 107. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁶ Later re-printed as *PL*.

¹⁸⁷ M. Douglas Meeks, “Introduction,” in *PL*, 16.

This characteristic Moltmannian emphasis on alterity (“otherness”) enunciates the fact that there is no relationship without difference, thus differences—even challenging differences—must be borne—even suffered—for the sake of true relationship. In Papanikolaou’s words: “‘Otherness’ is constituted in and through ‘distance,’ which is the precondition for real communion.”¹⁸⁸ Within an irreducibly relational understanding of kenosis, we agree with Graham Ward’s declaration that “there cannot be true *kenosis*... without true difference.”¹⁸⁹

Moltmann’s theological epistemology itself comes to hinge on a phenomenology of difference, which is also a phenomenology of relational suffering, or passion. On Moltmann’s reading, the “other” calls us to suffer not out of malice, but simply out of its difference, calling for change and acknowledgment from us in the thick of the encountering moment:

If [we] encounter something strange, something different or new, we feel pain. We sense the resistance of what is alien, the contradiction of the other, the claim of the new. The pain shows us that we must change ourselves if we want to understand the alien, perceive the other, and comprehend the new. *The pain shows that we must open ourselves if we want to take in the other*, the alien or the new, and that we cannot adapt it to ourselves or make it like ourselves without destroying it.¹⁹⁰

If we draw our attention to the notion of “opening” here, we find Moltmann making an explicit and progressive connection between the themes of otherness, suffering, relationship, and *self-opening*. Self-opening often stands as a Moltmannian gloss for his active, relational sense of kenosis;¹⁹¹ rather than self-emptying in the sense of self-abnegation, we have self-

¹⁸⁸ Papanikolaou, “Person, *Kenosis*, and Abuse,” 51. He is drawing here on Balthasar’s articulation of *diastasis*, or the necessary “distance/difference” between the Trinitarian persons in order for them to truly commune with one another (rather than simply being modes of one single divine monad, without any *diastasis*).

¹⁸⁹ Ward, “Kenosis: Death, Discourse, and Resurrection,” 44. See the analytic points about the nature of individuated identity in Peter Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1977), 99-102.

¹⁹⁰ *ET*, 170, emphasis added; see also *GSS*, 143-149. This phenomenological, epistemic stance was initially situated thickly within Moltmann’s dialectical method (during his most anti-analogical phase) and is drawn principally from Ernst Bloch and the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras, see also *CG*, 25-28; “Antwort auf die kritik an ‘Der gekreuzigte Gott,’” in *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch ‘Der gekreuzigte Gott’*, ed. M. Welker, (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1979), 188-189. There is, of course, also a detectable alignment here with the thought of someone like Emmanuel Levinas, e.g. *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 35-48 (see further, Janz, *Command*, 61-63). Moltmann, however, does not reference Levinas often (though he is aware of him: *GSS*, 19, 135n1) and exhibits no clear dependence on his thought.

¹⁹¹ This applies in both anthropological and theological contexts for Moltmann. He often speaks of God “opening himself” for the world’s history, thus enabling relationship with the world and the possibility of

emptying in the sense of self-extension and ceding of self-concern. This is, in fact, the Phillippians 2.6-8 picture once again; the Son's extension into human life (rather than a cessation of his divine life) carries along with it the whole warp and weft of relational differences encountered via his incarnate human self.¹⁹² Kenosis is thus *com-passionate* by definition, and, in the words of Oliver Davies, forms "the site of intensified or enriched existence" rather than any negation of existence.¹⁹³ For Moltmann, this is key not only for the practice of the Christian life, but also for the understanding of Christian identity: "Our knowledge of ourselves develops in our understanding *emptying of ourselves* in confrontation with the other."¹⁹⁴

Moltmann utilizes both "entering" and "openness" language to very similar discursive ends in his kenotic discussions, e.g.: "In my perception of others I subject myself to the pains and joys of my own alteration, not in order to adapt myself to the other, but in order to *enter into* it. There is no true understanding of the other without this empathy. Together with the other I *enter into* a process of reciprocal change."¹⁹⁵ If kenosis is, at its most basal level, understood as self-emptying and self-limitation, then Moltmann's articulation of the open self, the entering self, which relates to world and God and is thereby limited and suffers, is also his articulation of the kenotic self.¹⁹⁶ We can also call this the vulnerable self or even the "exposed self,"¹⁹⁷ and it is in this mode of exposure, of kenosis, that the self is rendered

suffering for God. See, *CPS*, 59-64. Moltmann's discourse on what he calls "the open Trinity" or "self-opening Trinity" should, then, be read as an expression of his outlook on kenosis as relationship, vulnerability, and pathos (see *TK*, 89-95; *SpL*, 291, 294-295; *GC*, 242; *ET*, 323; *SRA*, 156-157; "The Trinitarian History of God," in *FC*, esp. 82-86).

¹⁹² Gorman makes a similar point; see *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015), 39-40.

¹⁹³ Davies, *Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2003), xix.

¹⁹⁴ *WJC*, 244, emphasis added.

¹⁹⁵ Moltmann, *GSS*, 145. Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁶ See *PL*, 30-31, which explicitly ties our "suffering of others" to Christ's "suffering for us."

¹⁹⁷ "If we expose ourselves... we discover the new in the reality we encounter" (Moltmann, *SW*, 145). Moltmann considers "apathy" to be the result of the "closed-off," that is, non-kenotic, person (see *PL*, 21-22; *EthH*, 62). MacKinnon's articulation of the "exposed life" of a Christian who foregoes the easy security of dogma and institutional history is *apropos* on this front as well (see "Kenosis and Establishment," in *The Stripping of the Altars* [London: The Fontana Library], 33-34).

vulnerable, transformable, and truly capable of love; as Moltmann says, “Only a loving life *exposes itself* to the wounds of disappointment, contradiction, sickness and death.”¹⁹⁸ This opening-entering movement, moreover, is always depicted by Moltmann as both a Christic and transformational occurrence: “The suffering of [Christ’s] love has changed everything,” he writes, “and the more we go outside of ourselves, the more we will discover and experience this change ourselves. If God wants so much to suffer us that he so deeply suffers for us, because of us, and with us, then *we also become free to be transformed*.”¹⁹⁹ The initial movement of kenosis is opening-entering; it is a call to act, a call to a particular posture; a manifesto for aligning oneself with Christic transformation by turning to Christ and to the world simultaneously. Once this “turning” has taken place, the kenotic relations of Christ can be extended through the Christian’s own obedience to the Father, empowerment by the Spirit, identification with the lowly, and willingness to suffer bodily. The varied kenosis of Christ’s life becomes that of the church.

7.4.4 – The Fourfold Christic Kenosis in the Christian Life

The dimensions of these kenotic exposures in the Christian’s life thus reflect and extend those of Jesus Christ. In the power of the Spirit, the Christian both anticipates the new creation and participates in transformational realities in the here and now.²⁰⁰ This is the furthest praxiological extension which emerges from our multi-layered analysis of Moltmann’s kenotic christology. Mediation by the Spirit serves as the connection between Christ’s humanity and ours; as Liston writes: “[The] Spirit is sent through the incarnate Christ specifically to unite the church with Christ’s humanity. Our humanity is joined with Christ’s

¹⁹⁸ *GC*, 268, emphasis added.

¹⁹⁹ *PL*, 32, emphasis added.

²⁰⁰ See also Gorman, *Becoming*, 16-20.

humanity by the Spirit.”²⁰¹

As Christ obeys, the church obeys, in kenotic submission. This is not servile obedience to a divine, imperial taskmaster,²⁰² but the kenotic extension of self in openness to one’s heavenly Father. Christian obedience, for Moltmann, does not take the form of subservience, but co-working on the *missio Dei*, partaking of the same status of “sonship” that Jesus possesses—hence the church’s cry of *Abba*, mirroring the immediate and filial consciousness of the kenotic Son (see Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6). As Moltmann puts it, Jesus “recognizes a new community among the people who do the will ‘of my Father in heaven’ (Mt 12:50).”²⁰³ Moreover, the will of the Father and kenotic obedience to that will are strongly emphasized by Paul Janz as the expressed form of the “perfect obedience” and “embodied will” of Jesus’ incarnate life.²⁰⁴ Admittedly, Moltmann’s aversion to hierarchy occasionally renders his discussions of human obedience to God somewhat unclear, but this is less of an issue in the passages where he explicitly grounds his discourse in the obedience of Jesus and in Jesus’ depiction (and embodiment) of God’s rule.²⁰⁵

But, just as in the past and ongoing ministry of Jesus, the Christian’s kenosis of will (obedience) must be paralleled and sustained by the kenosis of efficacy, for it is the Spirit that *enables* obedience and the transformation of personal life and conduct, while also distributing the “powers of the age to come” (healings, prophecy, etc.—see I Cor 12.1-11). When Christians expose themselves in open vulnerability, even weakness, they must rely upon the Holy Spirit: “In praying for the coming of the Spirit, men and women *open themselves* for his coming.”²⁰⁶ In their lack, the Spirit gives: “The Spirit of God makes the impossible possible

²⁰¹ Liston, *Anointed Church*, 127. And further: “The church then, should be understood precisely as the pneumatologically enabled relational union between believers’ humanity and that of the incarnate Son” (128).

²⁰² Moltmann sees the image of God as “ruler” and the Aristotelian divine attributes as mutually formative in the tradition; see *SRA*, 87-89; also *CG*, 249-251; “New Paradigm of Transcendence,” in *FC*, 3.

²⁰³ *WJC*, 144.

²⁰⁴ Janz, *Command*, 148-151.

²⁰⁵ See esp. Moltmann, “God the Father,” in *HTG*, 11-16; also *SpL*, 115-116.

²⁰⁶ *SpL*, 74, emphasis added.

[*macht Unmögliches möglich*]; he creates faith where there is nothing else to believe in; he creates love where there is nothing lovable; he creates hope where there is nothing to hope for.”²⁰⁷ The church cannot be the church in its own (human) powers; the only church is “the church in the power of the Spirit.”²⁰⁸ Moltmann talks about the power of the Spirit in an expansive sense, highlighting pneumatological sustenance for the whole of the Christian life. For in the Spirit “the hitherto unexplored creative powers of God are thrown open”²⁰⁹ and “new chances and possibilities for the gospel” are manifested.²¹⁰ The power of the Spirit is not only present in filial identity, obedience, and new possibilities for Christian acting, but also in the strength to sustain Christians acts when they are difficult or painful.²¹¹

It is these kenotic relationships with the Father and the Spirit which provide the transformational resources which compel the embrace of the other two kenotic relations: with the lowly and with bodily transience itself. Often this means suffering. Indeed as Hiebert emphasizes, Moltmann sees a consistently borne *theologia crucis* (which is the pinnacle of the kenosis) to be the “mark of the Christian.”²¹² Moltmann explicitly links his self-sacrificial vision for the “community of the crucified” (the church) with Christ’s kenosis, saying that Christians should become like “the one who became man, the God who humbled himself [*sich erniedrigenden... Gottes*] and whose love reached to the point of suffering death,”²¹³ clearly echoing the kenosis hymn.

As regards the poor—that is, victims and perpetrators who are either poor materially or poor in righteousness—Moltmann advocates a program of solidarity and co-suffering love, which would entail both identification and acts of charity. Michael Welker has articulated a

²⁰⁷ *CPS*, 191 (German: 216).

²⁰⁸ *CPS*, throughout, but esp. 33-37.

²⁰⁹ *SpL*, 115; see also 111, 190.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹³ *CPS*, 85 (German: 103-104).

similar stance for this aspect of the church's kenotic life, calling it an *ethos of free, creative self-withdrawal*.²¹⁴ Such a thickly relational understanding allows us to see how, in the words of Herbert, kenosis should not be understood as "surrender of self and loss of identity, but rather [as] the very opposite,"²¹⁵ for the priestly role of the Christian emerges as an expressed and enacted testimony to "Christ's self-giving [*Hingabe*] and in self-giving for the reconciliation of the world."²¹⁶

Moltmann follows the Christian's lived kenosis all the way into the fourth Christic dimension as well: the kenosis of body. In relation to the transience and decay of the world, Moltmann highlights the fact that Christians are often called to suffer in their mortal flesh, most clearly in the case of martyrs.²¹⁷ There is a stark specificity here that is often lacking in academic theology. Moltmann is speaking of physical pain and the clear suffering and humiliation that this visits upon the sufferer. There is no ecclesial example of this more striking than martyrdom. "The martyr," says Moltmann, "is united to Christ in a special way. [The] martyrs *anticipate in their own bodies the sufferings...* which come upon the whole creation; and dying, they witness to the creation that is new."²¹⁸ Michael Gorman too speaks of the suffering, weakness, and even death of the Christian's material body as an extension of apostolic cruciformity, or kenosis: "The metaphor of dying with Christ is not merely meant to refer to self-giving love or the termination of selfish desires. It includes...a variety of concrete, physical pains suffered for the sake of the gospel of the crucified Christ."²¹⁹ Indeed,

²¹⁴ See Welker, *God the Revealed*, 223-234. He stages this as a radicalizing of the "ethos of free self-limitation" promoted by W. Huber (see his *Konflikt und Konsens: Studien zur Ethik der Verantwortung* (München: Kaiser, 1990), 205-206.

²¹⁵ Herbert, *Kenosis and Priesthood*, 123, drawing on Moltmann, *CG*, 214.

²¹⁶ Moltmann, *CPS*, 97.

²¹⁷ For Moltmann's reflections on martyrdom, see *WJC*, 153-154; 196-204; *CG*, 55-60; "The Cross as Military Symbol of Sacrifice," in *Cross Examinations*, ed. by Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 259-261.

²¹⁸ *WJC*, 203-204.

²¹⁹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 288, see further, 283-289. See also Kar Yong Lim, *The Sufferings of Christ Are Abundant in Us: A Narrative Dynamics Investigation of Paul's Sufferings in 2 Corinthians* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 160-192.

in Paul's discourse to the Galatians he can speak of his own wounds thusly, in radical Christic identification: "I carry *the scars of Jesus* on my own body."²²⁰

This sort of physical "martyrdom" need not be understood as only the dramatic torture or execution of the Christian in the name of their faith (though this is certainly included), but should be radically extended into all aspects of worldly life, mirroring what Rowan Williams has referred to as the "quotidian" character of Christian martyrdom.²²¹ In all enacted decisions, Christians bodies are "laid on the line"—they are always willing, as embodied beings, to undergo even the most quotidian sufferings, no matter how undramatic their form.²²² Again as Paul writes, the death of Jesus is to be always "carried" (*peripherō*) in the very body of the Christian, as something to which they are being "given up" (*paradidōmi*) (2 Cor 4.10-11).²²³

As we can see, the foundation for specific kenotic-transformations of the world is the fourfold kenotic relationality of Christ's continuing life as mediated through his church (his "body") in living acts. This kenotic life is no curse on the church, but its very gift and life, a graced participation in the radical extension of Christic humanity into the world by the Spirit; in Moltmann's words: "[The Spirit] leads us into the 'fellowship of the sufferings of Christ', into conformity to his death, into the love which exposes itself to death because it is upheld by hope."²²⁴ These kenotic dimensions of Christian life constitute the church's identity fundamentally.²²⁵ Moltmann's capacious kenotic vision for ecclesiology and praxis is powerfully summed by Richard Bauckham:

The Church which finds its identity in identification with the crucified Christ can be

²²⁰ My translation. Gal 6.17 - ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω.

²²¹ See Mark Medley, "'Always Carrying in the Body the Death of Jesus': Baptism, Martyrdom, and Quotidian Existence in Rowan Williams' Theology," *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol. 94.3: 475-493.

²²² Richard Beck renders a similar point, saying that "martyrdom is a discipline of daily living" consisting in "routine acts of daily self-expenditure" (*The Slavery of Death* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014], 79).

²²³ Recall that this is the same technical verb employed by Paul to speak of the "giving up" of Christ to the bodily suffering of the cross (see Rom 8.32; Gal 2.20; Eph 5.2).

²²⁴ *TH*, 212.

²²⁵ Further recent argumentation for an intensely kenotic view of ecclesiology can be found in Gorman's trilogy: *Cruciformity* (2001); *Inhabiting* (2009); *Becoming* (2015).

involved in the world only be identification with those with whom Christ identified. The principle of its life cannot be the love of like for like, but openness to those who are different[.] The Church's critical openness to the world in hope gains new dimensions when combined with the openness of suffering love.²²⁶

In a turn of phrase from Donald MacKinnon, Christian kenotic identity consists in both the “peril and the promise of the Incarnation.”²²⁷ The Word, that is, the Word-made-flesh, makes his authority known in the proclamation of his kingdom, and that kingdom is proclaimed in the specific activity of his church, his body, which enacts “new possibilities in reality” which have been “authored” by the Word.²²⁸

We have constructively examined the topic of praxis by illustrating Moltmann's fundamental orientation to a kenotic ecclesiology and Christian acting under the cross, while simultaneously emphasizing that this ecclesiology, being Christically constituted by the mediation of the Spirit, is not passively kenotic, and further that its active kenosis is seen as the Christic medium of transformational realities in the world wrought through actions performed in space and time.

This brings to crescendo the program of this thesis. We have intended, through the employment of the critical lens offered by TT and our strategic systematization of Moltmann's doctrine of Christ to offer a “rehabilitative” course for future kenotic christological reflection. In the three areas of christological discourse where we saw third-wave KC struggle most characteristically—history, presence, and praxis—we have seen Moltmann's KC proffer manifold insights and correctives. We turn now to a summative statement of this study's findings, arguments, and contributions.

§5 Conclusion – The Kenotic Body of Christ and the Transformed World

This thesis' progression toward its intended contributions have been illustrated across our

²²⁶ Bauckham, *Messianic*, 115-116.

²²⁷ MacKinnon, “Kenosis and Establishment,” 33.

²²⁸ Moltmann, “Dialogue,” 158.

interaction with Jürgen Moltmann, along with two accompanying groups of interlocutors. In Chapter 1, I described third-wave KC and found its commitments to Christ's humanity and its churchly significance to be commendable on many fronts. However, certain deficiencies of theological attentiveness were found within third-wave KC, largely relating to its conceptual focus over and against a focus on the world as the locus of Christ's first-century ministry and continuing (ascended) life and work. We then engaged TT in Chapter 2 and distilled from it many critical observations and christological insights in the form of three heuristic questions for christology. As third-wave KC was found deficient, TT then provided the framing for testing other christological expressions for those same specific deficiencies.

We then turned to the christological thought of Moltmann, developing synthesized portraits of Moltmann's methodology, his stance on the Chalcedonian definition, his multifaceted christological thematics, and his treatment of Philippians 2, before finally—and most importantly—describing his thoroughgoing and unique outlook on the fourfold relational kenosis in the life of Jesus Christ. All of these presentations worked together to advance a strategically arrayed systematization of Moltmann's kenotic doctrine of Christ, helping to fill a longstanding lacuna in scholarship on his thought.

Once Moltmann's unique form of KC was systematized, it remained the task of this final chapter to bring together the foregoing portions of the thesis, mainly by applying our TT-inspired heuristic questions to Moltmann's christology. In so doing, it has been argued that, while Moltmann occasionally suffers from a lack of clarity and rigor in his theological pronouncements, his overall vision of worldly transformation, the mediation of the ascended (and still kenotic) Christ, and the Christic role of the church in the continued enactment of kenotic-transformations, provides a broadly rehabilitative resource for ongoing work in kenotic christology. Perhaps most importantly, we saw how Moltmann's kenosis links together the bodily ministry of Jesus, the ongoing kenotic life of the ascended Christ, and the

continuing enactment of kenotic relations via churchly praxis, in a way that informs, expands, and radicalizes elements of even TT's christological reflections. Thus, Moltmann's KC was found to address constructively some of the key deficits which plague other forms of KC and to fulfill and further many key christological insights of TT, pointing a way toward a world-focused, relational, trinitarian, narrational, and "kenotic-transformational" form of christology.

The following quotations from Oliver Davies and Moltmann have been reserved for this concluding section of the thesis, because in tandem they serve to exemplify the rehabilitative vision for churchly life and action that can empower further reflection on the (ongoing) transformational kenosis of Jesus Christ. Davies distills the themes thusly:

In his exaltation then, the true life of Christ becomes also participatively the true en-Spirited and so also embodied life of the Church. This is not a new reality that is imposed upon us, but it comes rather through the perfecting of our human freedom, which is at the core of our own intentionality, through Christ's own freedom in act as communicated through the Holy Spirit. If we come to live by the power of his intentionality, we live also according to our own free distinctiveness and integrity, or what makes us truly ourselves.²²⁹

In this study we have seen, through textual evidence and logical connection, Moltmann's agreement with these ideas. But what Moltmann's christology adds to them is of monumental importance: *their inalienably kenotic character*, in both a christological and Christic sense, understood in a robust fourfold relationally, and calling the human self to open, transformative vulnerability as the extension of Christ's will and life. As Moltmann says:

It is true that in a world of high consumption, where anything and everything is possible, nothing is so humanizing as love, and a conscious interest in the life of others, particularly in the life of the oppressed. *For love leaves us open to wounding and disappointment. It makes us ready to suffer.* It leads us out of isolation into a fellowship with others, with people different from ourselves, and this fellowship is always associated with suffering. *It changes the world*, in so far as it puts life into a static situation and overcomes the death urge which turns everything into a possession or an instrument of power.²³⁰

Such a quotation is striking in its resonance with the findings of this study, even more so

²²⁹ Davies, *Theology of Transformation*, 134.

²³⁰ CG, 62-63, emphasis added. See also Bingaman, *All Things New*, 88-89.

because it occurs in Moltmann's earliest major christological work: *The Crucified God*. It affirms, in a foundational way, the trajectory and contributions of this thesis, not only to Moltmann scholarship as such, but to the ongoing study of Christ's person and work in their abiding significance for churchly realities enacted in the world by those who are "clothed with Christ" (Gal 3.27) and who follow him on his kenotic way.

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