

ABSTRACT

Apatheia and Atonement: Grammar of Salvation for Contemporary Christian Theology

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I propose to study the axiomatic significance of *apatheia* (divine impassibility) in contemporary Christian understanding of atonement. The claim that God suffers, an anathema for centuries, is commonplace in many contemporary theologies. In the face of the human suffering witnessed in the bloodiest century, God's *apatheia* as held by the great fathers and doctors of the church seems both immoral and unscriptural to modern Christians. As Western thinkers reject the patristic concept of divine impassibility and immutability as a Hellenistic contamination, East-Asian theologians such as Kazoh Kitamori and Andrew Park also attempt to contextualize the gospel based on divine *pathos* (suffering). Kitamori's "theology of pain" attempts to reconstruct Luther's theology of cross with the Japanese traditional ethos of *tsurasa* (pain). Park's "theology of *han* (deep wound)" makes a radical claim that God's *han* relieves human *han*, as he incorporates the insights of Process Theology through his Korean experience.

Against the widespread contemporary rejection of the classical axiom of divine impassibility, this dissertation contends that the patristic articulation of *apatheia* is

indispensable to express a holistic salvation of Christ's redemptive life and work. At stake is the theological grammar of salvation: to posit that God is a passible God in order to assuage human suffering would not only undermine a true understanding of God, but also distort the mystery and integrity of the Incarnation. Among many patristic theologians who uphold *apatheia* as *apophatic* (negative) qualification of God's perfect affections, Cyril of Alexandria augments it to be the ontological and soteriological certitude for divine *agape*. Cyril's *mia* (one subject) Christology construes the transformative redemption of sinners in the person of the incarnate Word whose "impassible suffering" not only undoes the effects of the fall but also restores humanity to God's original intention of eternal communion. Contrary to simplistic modern misunderstanding of *apatheia*, divine impassibility deepens our understanding of God's unconditioned love and its transformative power with a greater hope that divine healing will lead us to participate in his divine nature.

Apatheia and Atonement:
Grammar of Salvation for Contemporary Christian Theology

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
Dedication	xi
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction	1
Purpose and Significance	3
Methodology	6
Outlines of Chapters	8
CHAPTER TWO	
A Contour of Modern Theology of Divine Passibility	12
Miguel de Unamuno and God of Sorrow	13
Nicholas Berdyaev and God of Freedom	15
Modern British Theology and Doctrine of a Suffering God	17
Jürgen Moltmann and the Crucified God	20
Eberhard Jüngel and the Death of the Living God	24
A Lingering Epicenter for Divine Passibility: Hellenization and Harnack	28
Open Theism and Common Misconception about Patristic Theology	29
Eugene Peterson and Pejorative Use of ‘Hellenization’	30
Alister McGrath and Shadow of Harnack	31
Rudolf Sohm and Legalistic Hellenization	32

Harnack and Concept of Hellenization	33
Positive Hellenization	35
Negative Hellenization	37
Responses to Harnack's Hellenization	39
Biblical-Theological Integrity of Patristic Tradition	40
Nature and functions of dogma in the church	46
Patristic Tradition and Contextual Theology	51
Summary and Transitions	54
CHAPTER THREE	
Kazoh Kitamori's Theology of the Pain of God and Japanese Theology of the Cross	57
The Motifs of Theology of the Pain of God	59
Theology of the Pain of God as an Autobiographical Theology	59
Theology of the Pain of God as a Central Biblical Theology	62
Theology of the Pain of God as a Critique to Two Modern Western Views of God	64
Theology of the Pain of God as a Japanese Contextualization of <i>theologia crucis</i>	68
Theology of the Pain of God as an Ethical Mysticism	73
Problem of Inversion	80
A Split in Godhead	81
Pain as the Eternal Essence of God	86
Problem of the Legitimization and Distribution of Pain	89
Luther's Theology of the Cross Revisited: Hidden God and <i>Apatheia</i>	94
Summary and Transition	106

CHAPTER FOUR

Andrew Sung Park's Theology of Han and Process Theology	109
<i>Han</i> and the Perspective of Victims	112
Sin and <i>Han</i> : Revision of Christian Soteriology	117
Original Sin and Universal <i>Han</i>	120
Guilt of Sin and Shame of <i>Han</i>	121
Forgiveness to Forgivingness	123
Park's Soteriology and Process Theology: "God of Han Needs Salvation!"	129
Critique on the Radical Panentheism and the Dipolar God of Process Theology	136
Summary and Transition	156

CHAPTER FIVE

Cyril of Alexandria's <i>Mia</i> Christology and <i>Apatheia</i> as the Ontological and Moral Constancy of God	162
Theological Meanings of <i>Apatheia</i> for the Early Church Fathers	167
Cyril of Alexandria and <i>Mia</i> Christology: <i>Apathetic</i> Suffering of Christ	172
The Divine Economy and the Biblical Metaphors in Cyril's Christology	176
"Impassible Suffering" and <i>Mia</i> Christology in Cyril's Dogmatic Writings	188
Cyril's <i>Communicatio Idiomatum</i> and the Patristic Tradition of Deification	201
Summary and Transition	219

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: <i>Apatheia</i> and <i>Agape</i> in East Asian Context	223
Co-suffering and Re-creation	224
<i>Anthropopoesis</i> of God and <i>Theosis</i> of Humanity	234
BIBLIOGRAPHY	247

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The Structure of <i>Han</i>	114
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The age-old anathema that God suffers has become a “new orthodoxy” to many contemporary theologians.¹ In the face of the human suffering witnessed in the bloodiest of all centuries, God’s *apatheia* (divine impassibility), the axiomatic belief held by the great fathers and doctors of the church, seems no longer tenable for modern sensibility. An impassible God who is unmoved by human tragedy and so incapable of sympathy and love, not only looks unscriptural but also rightly deserves Albert Camus’ charge of an immoral “eternal bystander.”² The criticism of *apatheia* along with the concern of relating God to the suffering world is not solely possessed by the theologians in the West. A number of theologians in Asia have also added their perspectives and insights to this contemporary theological debate.³ Kazoh Kitamori and Andrew S. Park, prominent East-Asian theologians, share a common emphasis on divine *pathos* (suffering). Kitamori’s “theology of pain” attempts to reconstruct Christian theology by emphasizing the biblical theme of the allegedly *pathetic* God.⁴ Park’s “theology of *han* (deep wound)” makes a

¹ Ronald Goetz, “The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy,” *The Christian Century* 103/13 (April 1986), 385.

² Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (New York: Knopf, 1954). Camus criticized what he regarded as the deceptive doctrines of “absolutist” philosophies—the vertical (eternal) transcendence of Christianity and the horizontal (historical) transcendence of Marxism—that rationalize violence as a legitimate means for forgiveness in the former and political progress in the latter.

³ A list of representatives would be Kazoh Kitamori, Koshuke Koyama, Jung Young Lee, and Andrew S. Park.

⁴ Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (London: SCM, 1966).

radical claim that God's *han* relieves human *han*, as he attempts to incorporate the insights of Process Theology within his Asian American contextual theology.⁵

Although Kitamori and Park attempt to bring correctives to a limited view of God's suffering love in the West, they base their theological innovations on Luther's Theology of the Cross and the principles of Process Theology. As they inadvertently demonstrate that contextual theology is a branch of an ongoing tradition, this dissertation shall argue that their greatest mistake comes from their uncritical acceptance of the modern Western ignorance of patristic theology. This project will seek to develop an example of a faithful and creative way to contextualize East-Asian theology by showing its necessary link with patristic tradition as expressed by Cyril of Alexandria. In order to fully appropriate the East-Asian insights of God's redemptive suffering, one must recover the foundational matrix of *apatheia* which nourishes and gives theological coherence to the uniqueness of Christ's atonement.

Like their colleagues in the West, these East-Asian theologians predicate atonement on a radical divine passibility. God as 'fellow sufferer' will alleviate humanity from the enormous legacy of carnage and atrocity of the bloodiest century by affirming the biblical God of compassion.⁶ According to Kitamori and Park, the discovery of suffering within God's divine nature will bring comfort and solidarity to the afflicted humanity. This study will critique such a simplistic logic of salvation. Contrary

⁵ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

⁶ Eberhard Jüngel and Jürgen Moltmann see the Holocaust as the watershed mark to reconstruct theology. Moltmann says in *History and the Triune God* (London: SCM, 1991), "There can be no theology 'after Auschwitz,' which does not take up the theology *in Auschwitz*." Jüngel in *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) locates God's identity in his *becoming*, which by definition must eschew *apatheia*.

to their good intentions, to posit that God is passible in order to assuage human suffering would not only undermine a proper understanding of God and his redemptive activity in the suffering of Christ, but also exacerbate human despair in the face of evil because any concept of a limited deity entails a denial of the capacity of God to redeem the world.⁷ Conflating God and humanity in the reality of suffering weakens Christian doctrines of creation and eschatology as well as relegating the transformative love of Jesus Christ to a transmuted sentimental love. The doctrine of the suffering Christ is not a psychological prop of commiseration for it signifies the divine mercy which empowers sinners with God's willingness to overcome evil with and for them.

Purpose and Significance

Against the reversal of two-thousand-year-old theological tradition recently proposed in the East-Asian theological reflection, this dissertation will attempt to show that the patristic articulations of *apatheia* are indispensable for the theological grammar of salvation. The fathers of the church had a unique vision of *apatheia* as the ontological and moral foundation of the biblical view of God as Creator who is ontologically distinct from, yet immanent and active in, the creation. During the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the early centuries, *apatheia* was a theological plumb line: how one reconciled the divine impassibility with Christological integrity and with the passion story in the Gospels determined one's orthodoxy or heterodoxy. Contrary to the contemporary assessment, most patristic theologians had a dynamic understanding of divine *apatheia* and they creatively appropriated Greek philosophical concept in order to

⁷ Karl Rahner, in his conversation with Moltmann and others, avers, "To put it crudely, it does not help me to escape from my mess and mix-up and despair if God is in the same predicament," *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965–1982*, ed. P. Imhof and H. Biallowons (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 126.

articulate biblical insights concerning the creation and the incarnation. The doctrine of divine impassibility signifies not that God is a stranger to joy and delight, but rather that his joy is permanent, clouded by no involuntary pain. The meaning of his gracious involvement in the world points to the glorious hope of humanity to participate in the triune life of perfect virtue, *apatheia*.

This dissertation is timely for several reasons. First, no study has examined the doctrine of divine impassibility in connection with the doctrine of the atonement as it is set forth in the East-Asian theology.⁸ Though Kitamori and Park offer fresh critiques of the Western understanding of sin and salvation, their corrections of Christian tradition need to be, in turn, critically evaluated. Kitamori believes that the pain of God is a universal theme and the Japanese context can provide an effective medium. Park asserts that a Korean concept of *han* can balance the perpetrator-oriented theories of atonement with a perspective from victims. While they theologically appropriate their respective cultural experiences, Kitamori and Park dismiss patristic development of *apatheia* without any serious analysis of its actual function in the thoughts of the fathers. They simply utilize it as a convenient contrast to highlight their positions. This project will show that such a neglect of tradition represents a fundamental flaw to any insightful contextual theology.

⁸ A search of dissertation abstracts retrieves only two substantial studies on Kitamori. Asakawa Toru's *Kitamori Kazo: Theologian of the Pain of God* (Ph. D. dissertation, McGill University, 2004) examines Kitamori's theology in the context of his personal life, his interactions with the Non-church movement and leading Japanese novelists such as Shusaku Endo, and his engagement with Japanese Buddhism, philosophy of Nishida and Hegel. The dissertation briefly mentions the critical reception of Kitamori from some contemporary thinkers including Thomas Weinandy at the end. The other and older dissertation by Yoshio Noro, *Impassibilitas Dei* (Th. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1955), raises ontological and Trinitarian problems in Kitamori's theological matrix of pain.

This dissertation will also draw on a timely analysis of a crucial patristic theologian whose Christology needs to be rediscovered for the contemporary grammar of salvation. Cyril of Alexandria is the most important fifth-century Greek theologian who shaped the general dogma of the Incarnation.⁹ His picture of Christ the God-man led him to conceive a unique understanding of Christ's passion as "impassible suffering." He refined *apatheia* with Christological and soteriological qualification. Cyril's exegetical and polemical Christology confirms the redemptive mystery in the person and work of Christ: his exegetical motif of Christ as the Second Adam, New Man, affirms God's transforming grace through the incarnation and atonement.¹⁰ Cyril's single-subject (*mia*) Christology coupled with his stress on God's apathetic suffering crowns the patristic notion of deification. This project will seek to relate Cyrillian Christology to East-Asian conceptions of atonement.

Finally, this dissertation will contribute to the discussion of divine suffering in contemporary theology which was prompted by Thomas G. Weinandy and most recently by Paul L. Gavrilyuk. Weinandy avers that the traditional doctrine of divine immutability and impassibility are the lynchpins of Christian soteriology, thus making the

⁹ Lionel R. Wickham, ed. *Cyril of Alexandria: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), xi. "The patristic understanding of the Incarnation owes more to Cyril of Alexandria than to any other individual theologian. The classic picture of Christ the God-man, as it is delineated in the formulae of the Church from the Council of Chalcedon onwards, and as it has been presented to the heart in liturgies and hymns, is the picture Cyril persuaded Christians was the true, the only credible Christ. All subsequent Christology has proceeded, and must proceed, by way of interpretation or criticism of this picture."

¹⁰ Although Cyril is best known by modern scholars for his contribution to the Christological controversies of the fifth century, seventy percent of his surviving works is commentaries on the Bible. It is misleading to allocate his Christological development chiefly to the polemical period. This project intends to expound on a continuing theme from this exegetical to polemical works.

suffering of Christ humanly meaningful for human redemption and hope in God.¹¹

Gavrilyuk responds to the “Theory of Theology’s Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy” with a dialectical exposition of the patristic idea of *apatheia* in contrast to the docetic, Arian, and Nestorian alternatives.¹² This study will engage with these seminal works at various points to highlight their implications as well as suggesting different readings of the relevant topics.

Methodology

In order to demonstrate the significance of the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility for the contemporary articulation of atonement, I will employ a method similar to that of French Catholic *ressourcement* theologians. These forerunners and architects of Vatican II, who assisted the Catholic Church to successfully meet the challenges of modernity with a renewed tradition, offer two crucial contributions for any plausible theological contextualization.

First, they defined the task of theology as elucidation of divine mystery. Reacting to the neo-Scholasticism which was preoccupied with ahistorical and abstract systematization, Henri De Lubac, Yves Congar, Jean Danielou, M-D Chenu and Louis Bouyer re-emphasized the transcendence and unfathomable mystery of God in the early Christian tradition. While much of modern theology made God an object that occupies a specific place within a closed and complete system, they rediscovered the patristic teaching that God is the Supreme Subject, the Person *par excellence*, whose self-

¹¹ Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change?: The Word’s Becoming in the Incarnation* (Petersham: St. Bede’s Publication, 1985) and *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

¹² Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: the Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

revelation is intelligible but never fully comprehensible.¹³ This focus of the theological task as the elucidation of divine mystery is congruent with the history of atonement theories which attests to the inexhaustible mystery of God's redemptive suffering. The fact that there has been no official dogma of the work of Christ corroborates the ongoing mystery of the person of Christ which always creates an indelible impact in every particular context. The universal efficacy of Christ's atonement is best illustrated by a theological approach which cherishes the irreducible mystery of God's grace in Christ.¹⁴

Second, they recognized the dynamic nature of tradition in its transmission. They believe that to meet the challenges of the modern age (*aggiornamento*), the church needs to 'return to the sources' (*ad fontes*).¹⁵ The first step of constructive theology is to re-appropriate the fountainhead of this dynamic tradition. For these theologians, the theological task involves a distinctive approach to historical theology in which the 'sources' of Christian faith are re-interrogated with new questions.¹⁶ The new context and concerns reveal both the conservative and creative function of tradition. More than a mechanical transmission of a passive deposit, tradition implies a transformative dialogue

¹³ For instance, Origen believes the 'sovereign subjectivity' of the Logos. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Parole et mystere chez Origene* (Paris: Cerf, 1957), 10.

¹⁴ Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 117. "Infinite intelligibility –such is God. The incomprehensible is the opposite of the unintelligible. The deeper we enter into the infinite, the better we understand that we can never hold it in our hands. . . The infinite is not a sum of finite elements, and what we understand of it is not a fragment torn from what remains to be understood. . . it [intelligence] in no way diminishes it [mystery], it does not 'bite' on it; it enters deeper and deeper into it and discovers it more and more as a mystery."

¹⁵ Etienne Gilson, in his review of Henri de Lubac's *Mystery of Supernatural*, says it succinctly: "if theological progress is sometimes necessary, it is never possible unless you go back to the beginning and start over." *Letters of Etienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, trans. by Mary E. Hamilton (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 179.

¹⁶ For instance, using twentieth-century questions, they were able to discover surprisingly many of the modern ideas which the reigning neo-Scholasticism neglected or resisted, such as history, human subjectivity, nature, and human solidarity.

between one living subject and another.¹⁷ In tradition, one finds the “living faith of the dead” which enriches a contemporary mind. Contextual theology can be original in its own time only if it has first drunk deeply at the origins of Christian life and thought. Tradition guides and completes contextual theology by connecting its particular findings to the root.

This dissertation may be seen as an exercise of *ressourcement* hermeneutics as applied to contextual theology, evincing the critical relevance of patristic traditions of *apatheia* to contemporary reflection on salvation by examining the intrinsic link between the person of Christ, his work of atonement, and the relation of both to the impassible God. In order to re-express the mystery of apathetic suffering of the Son as a faithful and appropriate manifestation of God’s saving love in East-Asian context, this project will construe a “tradition-based” contextual theology. Whereas Kitamori and Park build their contextual theology narrowly on cultural relevance, I will demonstrate that tradition provides a broader foundation to accommodate their insights with a better coherence. Tradition-based hermeneutics will not only rescue contextual theology from isolated indigenization but also reveal its proper place in the larger body of Christian discourse.

Outlines of Chapters

The proposed dissertation will include five chapters. Chapter two will survey a widespread modern theology of divine passibility and its disdain toward the patristic notion of *apatheia*. The epicenter of this distortion is located in Adolf von Harnack, whose negative view of the developments of dogmas in the early church still misguides

¹⁷ Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 112. “The very concept [of tradition] implies the delivery of an object from . . . one living being to another. It is *incorporated* into a *subject*, a *living* subject. A living subject necessarily puts something of himself into what he receives.”

many today.¹⁸ The lingering influence of this modern historian of dogma is far greater than Weinandy and Gavrilyuk assessed. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to explain why misreading tradition can create persistent havoc in contemporary theological reflection including East-Asian understanding of atonement.

The third chapter will analyze the theology of pain by Kazoh Kitamori who followed Harnack's call to pursue the "gospel *of* Jesus" over the "gospel *about* Jesus" by adapting Luther's theology of the cross. Written out of Japanese wartime experience, Kitamori claims to recover pain as the heart of the gospel: pain penetrates God's being when God's Son is hanging on the cross, which enables God to overcome wrath. This section will show that Kitamori's contextualization of the *theologia crucis* without the axiom of *apatheia* jeopardizes God's freedom and grace because it inverts the gift of atonement into God's inner conflict. This chapter argues that the *Deus absconditus* does not necessarily oppose the doctrine of impassibility but tacitly presupposes it.

Chapter four will examine the theology of *han* by Andrew S. Park. While Park successfully deepens the meaning of sin and atonement with the use of the traditional Korean concept of *han* (恨—collapsed feeling of victims) and salvation as healing, he puts forward an oversimplified notion of *apatheia* and then substitutes the modern metaphysics of process theology. This section will examine the radical panentheism of process theology which not only demotes God to another Being of *han* but cancels out the soteriological significance of the traditional doctrine of God with its dipolar metaphysics.

¹⁸ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Attractiveness of God: Essay in Christian Doctrine* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 67. "We live today, however, in a post-Harnack age, even though there still appear to be many teachers of church history and of the doctrine of the early Church who do not realize this and who continue to reproduce the old Harnackian shibboleths unaltered and unexamined."

Chapter five will study the patristic appropriations of *apatheia* as the ontological and moral constancy of God. The early church fathers developed a dynamic view of *apatheia*, with which they apophatically (negatively) qualified divine affection and envisioned human perfection. Among various reflections on the idea of *apatheia* in the church fathers, Cyril of Alexandria grasped its most crucial significance of the hypostatic union of Christ.¹⁹ Locating *apatheia* in the incarnation and passion of Christ, Cyril construed his ‘*mia*’ (one-subject) Christology in the mystery of “impassible suffering” of the Son: the co-existence of divine (impassible) and human (passible) natures in the one person of the Son achieves salvation for humanity.²⁰ As Cyril augmented the Christological axiom of *apatheia* as the ontological and soteriological certitude of divine *agape*, he developed a coherent way to articulate the redemptive suffering of Christ without either transmuting divinity or absorbing humanity. Cyril’s *mia* Christology proffers a holistic soteriology of human communion with God and with each other by highlighting the Eucharist as the center of Christ’s transforming union with humanity through the Holy Spirit.

The sixth and final Chapter will attempt to show that Kitamori and Park’s concern to situate God’s presence in human suffering can be more completely incorporated in Cyril’s hypostatic union and apathetic suffering of Christ. The language of God’s

¹⁹ Athanasius, Cyril’s theological champion, located the mediating work of the Logos, not solely in his divinity but in his incarnate state. Cyril not only inherited this insight, but deepened it with a clear understanding of the human soul in Christ. Long before the debate with Nestorius, his *Commentary on John* already recognized the human soul of Christ to be an ontological and soteriological factor that articulates the passion of Christ.

²⁰ Cyril did not use *mia physis* in the sense of one quiddity that Christ is compositionally united, but in the sense of one entity which affirms the continuing presence of the Logos in full humanity: repeatedly quoting the Anathasian expression that “the Word did not come in a man” but “the Word became a man,” he asserts that this ontological union of Christ with humanity explains the ‘great exchange’ between the immutable Word and the impoverished humanity.

embracing human pain and *han* should not simply collapse divine essence into human realm as Kitamori and Park construe. To bring a genuine hope to the afflicted humanity and *han*-ridden victims, God's engagement with humanity in Christ must be paired with human participation in the divine life. Whereas the Asian theologians inevitably relegate divine suffering love to *anthropopoesis* (radical humanization) of God, the holistic vision of deificatory transformation (*theosis*) of humanity evoked by *apatheia* deepens atonement as an indispensable event to realize original divine intention for humanity. This project will conclude with the suggestion of some areas of further reflections that can broaden the significance of doctrine of impassibility to Christian life and human hope.

CHAPTER TWO

A Contour of Modern Theology of Divine Passibility

The unprecedented suffering and evil witnessed in the twentieth century has been eroding one of the Christian foundational beliefs about God, namely his *apatheia*.

Daniel Day Williams called the growing theological consensus to replace the traditional doctrine of divine immutability and impassibility with a suffering God who passionately engages in human history a “structural shift in the [modern] Christian mind.”¹ This chapter will survey the extent of this tectonic shift in modern theology and examine one of its lingering epicenters, the allegation of undue influence of Hellenism in the early Church, which raises a question about the significance of tradition and its relationship to contemporary theological reflection.

The reversal of the ancient *theopaschite* heresy that now thrives for some as a new orthodoxy is widespread in both geographical and theological landscapes. Long before Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s confession in Tegel prison, “Only the suffering God helps,” became an aphorism of modern theology, the theme of divine passibility was embraced by various thinkers of diverse theological and cultural traditions. Not only theologians but also religious philosophers heartily articulated the idea of a suffering God. Particularly Miguel del Unamuno and Nicholas Berdyaev need to be heard for their

¹ Daniel Day Williams, *What Present Day Theologians Are Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 172.

creative attempts to usher the respective Christian traditions of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy toward divine pathos.

Miguel de Unamuno and God of Sorrow

In 1911 a Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) published an influential and controversial work entitled *Del Sentimiento Tragico de la Vida en los Hombres y en los Pueblos*.² “The sage of Salamanca” experienced a “dark night of the soul” during his personal “crisis of 1897” and discovered Spanish passion mysticism of Teresa of Avila and John of Cross. “The tragic sense of life” is a fundamental lived experience which comes from a struggling human reality between inevitable death and desire for immortality. “Life is a tragedy and tragedy is in the perpetual struggle without hope or victory, then it is all a contradiction.”³ The thirst for life ultimately is for immortality, which human beings are not capable of achieving. Unamuno calls this sharpest painful experience of human life *congoja*, which means pain, sorrow, anguish, and anxiety.⁴ In this light of *congoja*, Unamuno depicts his picture of Christ and develops a theology of the infinite sorrow of God. In contrast, the Spanish thinker condemns the traditional idea of divine impassibility as a detrimental natural theology:

This logical God, arrived at by *via negations*, was a God who, strictly speaking, neither loved nor hated, because He neither enjoyed nor suffered, an inhuman

² Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, trans. by Anthony Kerrigan, Bollingen Series LXXXV.4 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). Although the work was translated into English in 1921 and into German in 1925 and made an enduring impression, this book and *The Agony of Christianity* were placed on the *Index of Forbidden Books* until 1957. For a helpful introduction, see Martin Nozick, *Miguel de Unamuno: The Agony of Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

³ Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 222-235.

God without pain or glory, and His justice was a rational or mathematical justice—that is, an injustice.⁵

The rational God of natural theology does nothing to help people deal with the fundamental contradiction of their existence or to understand God's sorrow, and recognize the crucified Christ. The living God or "the God of the heart" is the loving God who draws people through his suffering. Unamuno suggests that a prolonged meditation on the famous crucifixion painting by the seventeenth century Spanish painter Diego Velasquez would evoke the atoning efficacy of God's infinite sorrow: "In the *Christ* of Velasquez, that Christ who is always in the death throes and never stops dying—so that we may be given life."⁶ According to the Spanish philosopher, when one immerses mystically in the dying torments of the crucified Jesus, one will connect one's human *congoja* to divine *congoja*. The agony of Christ on the cross affirms the *congoja* of life, which signifies uncertainty as the ultimate moral spring. Certainty, like natural theology, would make life impossible, and does injustice to the messy human reality with simplistic answers. Faith and life are rather nourished by struggle.⁷ For Unamuno, the *congoja* that gives humanity the meaning of struggle has an eternal significance to God.⁸ In the reality of shared *congoja*, humanity and God seeks mutual liberation.⁹

⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 78. To make his point, Unamuno wrote his meditation on the Crucifix, *The Christ of Velasquez*, trans. by E. L. Turnball (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1951).

⁷ Miguel De Unamuno, *La Agonia del Cristianismo: mi religion y otros ensayos* (Madrid: Editorial Plenitud, 1967), 30. "Christianity must be defined agonically and polemically in terms of struggle. . . A Christian makes another Christ as the Saint Paul knew that to live is to be born, agonize, and die in Christ." [translation is mine]

⁸ Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 226-227. "Suffering tells us the world we live in exists, and suffering tells us that God exists and suffers; and this is the suffering of anguish, the anguish to survive and be eternal. It is anguish which reveals God to us and makes us place our love in Him." Jürgen Moltmann criticizes Unamuno's theology of sorrow that without eschatology, this theology of God's sorrow can be

Nicholas Berdyaev and God of Freedom

Whereas Unamuno discarded the tradition of divine impassibility through his Spanish Catholic mystical existentialism, Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948) rejected it through his Russian Orthodox mystical existentialism. The Russian religious philosopher vigorously denies the doctrine of divine impassibility in favor of a ‘tragedy’ within the Godhead. The reason for the existence of the world and its history of tragedy is freedom, which originates from God who longs for the other in the beginning.¹⁰ History and tragedy exist because man is free and misuses freedom. The human history of freedom, however, is not history of doom because it is not based on ‘insoluble’ fate but is directed by God who participates in the earthly realm with his own “interior movement.”¹¹ Berdyaev explains the mystery of this divine ‘interior movement’ of freedom with the idea of *Ungrund* of Jacob Boehme, “one of the greatest mystics of all time.”¹² *Ungrund* or ‘groundlessness’ is an ‘inexpressible abyss’ and incommensurate with any category

“on the very edge of machochism.” Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 41–42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 227. “It may perhaps appear blasphemous to say that God suffers, for suffering implies limitation. Nevertheless, God, the Conscience and Consciousness of the Universe, is limited by brute matter around Him, by the unconscious, from which He seeks to liberate Himself and to liberate us. And we, in turn, must seek to liberate Him. God suffers in each and all of us, in each and every consciousness imprisoned in ephemeral matter, and we all suffer in Him. Religious anguish is naught but divine suffering, the feeling that God suffers in me and that I suffer in Him.”

¹⁰ Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, trans. by George Reavey (New York: Meridian Books, 1968), 58–60. “This is the hypothesis of my metaphysics of history, that the terrestrial destiny is predetermined by the celestial, in which the tragedy of illumination and Redemption takes place through the divine passion, and that tragedy determines the process of illumining the world history. . . The origin of the world springs from the freedom willed by God in the beginning. Without His will or longing for freedom no world process would be possible.”

¹¹ Nicholas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, trans. by George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles the Centenary Press, 1946), 115. “Christianity does away from fate, with insoluble destiny. But tragedy survived in the Christian world, although its character was transformed. Christian tragedy is a tragedy of freedom as distinct from a tragedy of fate.”

¹² Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, 57. Cf. *Spirit and Reality*, 129.

and goes even “deeper than God.”¹³ As “the primal pre-existential freedom,” *Ungrund* or ‘nothingness’ longs for something and can be understood only in “the spiritual sphere,” not in “the world of causality” or the objective philosophical terms.¹⁴ According to Berdyaev, the recognition of “such a dark and irrational premise” makes the mystery of Trinity and creation meaningful for reciprocal love relationship between God and humanity.¹⁵

With his theology of divine freedom and tragedy, Berdyaev rejects “the widespread Christian doctrine which denies that the principle of movement and of tragic destiny can affect the nature of the Divine Being.”¹⁶ Labeling it “monism,” he believes that traditional doctrine of divine impassibility is nothing but “a purely exoteric and superficial doctrine” making God immobile, inert, and unrelated to the creation.¹⁷ The monistic idea of an immobile God contains the problem of “acosmism” (denial of diverse yet harmonious existence) and dualism. Absolute monism generates ‘acosmism’ because it acknowledges “a unique, absolute, immobile Divinity” only as the real existence and the “mobile plural world with its interior contradiction” as “unreal in the ontological

¹³ Berdyaev, *Ibid.* Cf. *Spirit and Reality*, 130. Paul Fiddes makes a salient theological critique of Berdyaev for locating divine longing and freedom outside God and thus for subordinating God to primordial freedom. Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 72–73. Also, Hans von Balthasar calls Berdyaev’s notion of freedom ‘gnostic’ and ‘absurd’ for its “annihilating abyss of freedom devoid of being and reason.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama IV: The Action*, trans. by G. Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980), 149-150.

¹⁴ Berdyaev contrasts Boehme’s mystical metaphysics to that of Aquinas that the former is dynamic like “musical and symphonic” while the latter is static like “Gothic cathedral.” *Spirit and Reality*, 131.

¹⁵ Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, 52-53. “The whole mystery of Christianity is contained in the principle of the Trinity and in the fulfillment of a passionate tragic destiny within it. . . This inner tragedy of the love felt by God for His other self and its longing for reciprocal love constitutes that very mystery of the divine life which is associated with the creation of the world and of man.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

sense of the word.” As a result, acosmic monism falls a victim to “unresolvable dualism.”¹⁸ In order to overcome the ‘cold conception’ of the absolute God, Berdyaev proposes a ‘twofold process’: to apprehend God as mystery inexpressible in words and concepts in the fashion of negative theology and to acknowledge the ‘divine humanity of God’ in a positive direction.¹⁹ The Russian philosopher offers an inverted Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* that espouses a humanization of God rather than deification of humanity. Berdyaev draws such a vision of God in the conclusion of his last book.

The revelation of a suffering and yearning God is higher than the revelation of a God whose sufficiency and satisfaction are in himself. Thus the loftiest humanity of God is revealed; humanity becomes his unique attribute. God is mystery and freedom. God is love and humanity.²⁰

Modern British Theology and Doctrine of a Suffering God

Perhaps the most surprising fact about modern contour of divine passibility is found in the British theological scene in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.²¹ The notion of Kenoticism freshly appreciated by theologians like Charles Gore (1853-1932) and P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921) raised questions whether or not traditional dogmatic Christology did justice to the humanity of Christ and espoused a realistic estimate of his

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51. “The disciples of abstract monism tend... to fall into an unresolvable dualism of their own. They introduce such a sharp distinction between the unique, immobile, and absolutely perfect Divinity on the one hand, and the world of man, movement, historical destiny, tragic conflicts, plurality, and contradiction, on the other; they introduce such an antithesis and makes it so impossible to bridge the gap between its poles.”

¹⁹ Nicholas Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, trans. by R. M. French (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 52–53.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Moltmann who first developed his theology of suffering God in ignorance of the English tradition, later acknowledged the latter’s pioneering contribution to doctrine of divine passibility. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 30. “In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was English theology which carried on the theological discussion about God’s passibility. Continental theology passed it by unheedingly.”

full earthly humanity.²² From about 1890 onward there was a steady stream of English theologians who advocated a doctrine of divine suffering with more or less emphasis. In 1924 the Archbishops' Doctrine Commission asked J. K. Mozley to "prepare a historical statement on the subject of the doctrine of the Impassibility of God."²³ Since then, a great number of English theologians published their works on the topic of divine suffering.²⁴ Among the early English theologians of divine passibility described by Mozley,²⁵ the Oxford theologian and Gifford lecturer, A. M. Fairbairn, most strongly repudiates the doctrine of God's impassibility.

As was His attitude to man, such was His attitude to sin. He could not love it, nay, He hated it, and it was, as it were, the sorrow in the heart of His happiness.

²² Charles Gore in *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (1891) claimed that Christ's humanity entails his voluntary self-emptying of divine knowledge and results in human ignorance. P. T. Forsyth in *The Person and Place of Christ* (1909) followed a similar kenotic suit that the Incarnation was the self-imposed expression of God's omnipotence rather than its negation. Earlier German Kenotic theologians Gottfried Thomasius (1802-75), F.H. R. von Frank (1827-94), and W. F. Gess (1819-91) embraced God's temporary suspension of his divine attributes during the Incarnation. Thomasius distinguished between the metaphysical and moral attributes and Christ retained the latter. Gess argued further that Christ set aside all divine attributes and thus his humanity completely eclipsed his divinity.

²³ J. K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: a Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), vii. In addition to presenting the theologians of divine passibility in the previous sixty years, Mozley provides a first English historical survey of the doctrine of impassibility from the Apostolic Fathers to the Protestant Reformers.

²⁴ Examples would be following: B. R. Brasnett, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (1928); H. M. Relton, *A Study in Christology* (1929); E. S. Jones, *Christ and Human Suffering* (1933); H. W. Robinson, *Suffering Human and Divine* (1940); T. H. Hughes, *The Atonement* (1949); T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (1955); D. Jenkins, *The Glory of Man* (1967); K. J. Woollcombe, "The Pain of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967); L. J. Kuyper, "The Suffering and the Repentance of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (1969); W. H. Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense* (1977); F. Young, *Can These Dry Bones Live?* (1982).

²⁵ Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, 140-166. A. J. Mason's *The Faith of the Gospel* (1890), D. W. Simon's *The Redemption of Man* (1889), A. M. Fairbarin's *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (1893), Vincent Tymms' *The Christian Idea of Atonement* (1904), G. B. Stevens' *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (1905), C. A. Dinsmore's *Atonement in Literature and Life* (1906), Campbell Morgan's *The Bible and the Cross* (1909), W. N. Clarke's *An Outline of Christian Theology* (1912), S. A. McDowell's *Evolution and the Need of Atonement* (1912), C. E. Rolt's *The World's Redemption* (1913), Douglas White's *Forgiveness and Suffering* (1913) and *The Problem of the Cross* (1919), Studdert-Kennedy's *The Hardest Part* (1918), Canon Streeter's *God and the Struggle for Existence* (1919), W. Temple's *Mens Creatrix* (1917) and *Christus Veritas* (1922), E. L. Strong's *The Incarnation of God* (1920), and M. Hughes' *What is the Atonement? A Study in the Passion of God in Christ* (1924).

Theology has no falser idea than that of the impassibility of God. If He is capable of sorrow, He is capable of suffering; and were He without the capacity for either, He would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that came by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God.²⁶

As the Incarnation was “the externalization of what was innermost in God, the secret of the eternal manifested in time,” it is unjust to confine the idea of sacrifice to the Son.

“There is a sense in which the Patripassian theory is right; the Father did suffer, though it was not as the Son that He suffered, but in modes distinct and different.”²⁷ While the humiliation of the Son was a visible passion, “the surrender by the Father” was “the invisible sacrifice.” According to Fairbairn, the purpose behind the biblical doctrine of atonement lies in “the regal Paternity” who wants to create “an obedient and a happy universe” through the obedient substitutionary sufferings of the Son. The Fatherhood of God brings forth new humanity through the birth pangs of the Son, “the symbols and seals of the invisible passion and sacrifice of the Godhead.”²⁸

Mozley sums up the modern English theological reaction against the doctrine of divine impassibility with three ‘motives.’ First, the traditional doctrine of impassibility has not been faithful to the revelation of God as love. “The thought that if God really loves, if His outgoing love is the expression of His innermost nature, then, confronted as He is with such a world as ours, He must suffer.”²⁹ Second, the modern emphasis on the immanence of God concerns of God who is closely associated with the world process

²⁶ A. M. Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 483.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 485–487.

²⁹ Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, 175–176.

sharing its pain.³⁰ Third, the Cross, the true sign and efficacious sacrament of revelation and redemption, simply must correspond to that which was eternally true of God's nature.³¹ Mozley concluded that since there was truth on both sides of the argument, a constructive theology of the divine passibility and impassibility should continue to examine some basic questions.³²

Jürgen Moltmann and the Crucified God

The most consistent and creative German theologian who also influenced diverse constructions of passibility theology in many non-Western churches in the second half of the twentieth century is undoubtedly Jürgen Moltmann. Through his prolific writings and open dialogue, the former prisoner of World War II has expounded on the multiple significance of theology of the suffering God with respect to theodicy, Trinity, and ethics.³³ First, the acute theodicy question raised by Holocaust cannot be answered by traditional theism with its purely active, impassible God. "A God [of metaphysical theism] who lets the innocent suffer and who permits senseless death" cannot subdue the "metaphysical rebellion" of protest atheism.³⁴ The only sensible way to counter protest

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 176. "A God who is really the ground of the world's being, the world being what it is, must be a suffering God."

³¹ *Ibid.*, 176-177. "What the cross revealed in time—the Father giving the Son to redeem the world by suffering for it, was eternally true of God's nature and was always true in fact, ever since over against God, even though His work, a world existed."

³² His basic questions for future discussion revolves around the nature of God, his relationship to the world, the nature of divine feeling and religious value of divine suffering. *Ibid.*, 177-183.

³³ Moltmann characterizes his theology with the 'key phrases' of "a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, [and] a political responsibility." J. Moltmann, *History and Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. by J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1991), 182.

³⁴ J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: the Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. by R. A. Wilson and J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 221.

atheism is the theology of the cross in which “God and suffering are no longer contradictions, as in theism and atheism.”³⁵ For Moltmann, only theology possible after Holocaust is God in human suffering.

There can be no theology ‘after Auschwitz,’ which does not take up the theology *in Auschwitz*, i.e. the prayers and cries of the victims. God was present where the Shema of Israel and the Lord’s Prayer were prayed. As a companion in suffering God gave comfort where humanly there was nothing to hope for in that hell. The inexpressible sufferings in Auschwitz were also the sufferings of the God himself.³⁶

“A Christian theology after Auschwitz” must hear again Jesus’ cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and be able to reveal God’s presence in every ‘pit’ of unspeakable evil. Redemption does not come to the afflicted people from outside or from above but from God who “himself hangs on the [same] gallows” with victims. Calling protest atheism “the brother of [biblical] theism,” Moltmann renounces traditional God of impassibility as “poorer than any man.”³⁷

Second, the most radical innovation of Moltmann’s theology of a suffering God lies in his axiomatic use of the cross not only as the divine-human relation but also as an inter-Trinitarian event. The cross of Jesus has a Trinitarian significance as well as soteriological relevance that it should be both “the foundation and criticism of Christian theology.”³⁸ A particular importance of the crucified Christ is found in the cry of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

³⁶ Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 29. For a more recent detailed treatment of theodicy, see J. Moltmann, *God For a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 169–190: “The Pit-Where was God? Jewish and Christian Theology after Auschwitz.”

³⁷ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 221-222.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-31. Expanding on Luther’s adage, *Crux probat omnia* [the Cross tests everything], Moltmann presents the crucified Christ as an answer to a double crisis: “the crisis of relevance” and “the crisis of identity.” The suffering God on the cross renders ‘Christian relevance’ to the struggling modern humanity as well as retaining the identity of Christian faith in the biblical God of *pathos* against false Christian identities compromised by other ideologies.

dereliction, during which the Son suffers God-forsakenness, and the Father suffers in grief the death of the Son, and the Holy Spirit unites the Father and the Son in their love at their most painful separation.

For Jesus suffers dying in forsakenness, but no death itself . . . But the Father who abandons him and delivers him up suffers the death of the Son in the infinite grief of love. We cannot therefore say here in patripassian terms that the Father also suffered and died . . . Nor can the death of Jesus be understood in theopaschite terms as the ‘death of God.’ To understand what happened between Jesus and his God and Father on the cross, it is necessary to talk in trinitarian terms. The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son. Unless this were so, the doctrine of the Trinity would still have a monotheistic background.³⁹

For Moltmann, the cross is an unique event not only for human redemption but also for inner-divine relationship because God does not enter into the suffering world merely with empathy but makes its pain his own by allowing a rupture in his Triune life.⁴⁰ The divine suffering on the cross does not just confirm the *pathetic* theology of the Old Testament prophets and the rabbinic idea of *Shekinah* in the sufferings of Israel but discloses its decisive place in the core of Trinity.⁴¹ The differentiated sufferings of the Father and the Son along with their fellowship of the mutual loss in the Holy Spirit qualify and intensify the divine passibility with Trinitarian mystery and grace.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 243. Moltmann first treats his criticism of “Christian monotheism” in contrast to his elucidation on the mystery of the Trinity. J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 129–150.

⁴⁰ Moltmann is criticized by the way he divides the persons of Trinity instead of making its distinction relational. See Gérard Rossé, *Cry of Jesus*, trans. by S. W. Arndt (New York: Paulist Press, 1987): 136–138, and Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*: 138–140, 201–203. Chapter three and five of this dissertation will discuss the issue in depth.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 173. “What happens on Golgotha reaches into the very depths of the Godhead and therefore puts its impress on the trinitarian life of God in eternity. In Christian faith the cross is always at the centre of the Trinity, for the cross reveals the heart of the triune God, which beats for his whole creation.”

Third, the Triune God who embraces the afflicted with his suffering brings about theological ethics of solidarity and compassion for others. The apathetic God of metaphysical theism removes any possibility of reciprocity from the notion of God's love for humanity. While "Aristotle's God" is unmoved, loveless, and uninvolved,⁴² the biblical God of creation and redemption is proactive, open, and concerned toward the other.⁴³ To highlight the reciprocal and vulnerable love of God, Moltmann distinguishes two kinds of divine love. God's love for himself is "love of like for like" and his love for humanity is love of the unlike. The first is a "necessary love" while the second is a "free love." For Moltmann, "like is not enough for like" because God wants to love freely, moving from love of himself to love of the other. Thus, "Creation is a part of the eternal love affair between the Father and the Son."⁴⁴ God of free and outgoing love calls his church not simply to look for the like-minded for its fellowship but to extend an open friendship to those who are quite unlike them.

The friendship of Jesus cannot be lived and its friendliness cannot be disseminated when friendship is limited to people who are like ourselves and when it is narrowed down to private life. The messianic feast which Jesus celebrates with his own and with the despised and unregarded is not merely 'the marriage of soul with God'; it is also 'the festival of the earth.' . . . Open and total friendship that goes out to meet the other is the spirit of the kingdom in which God comes to man and man to man. . . . Love is the friendship of man with

⁴² Deeming the *apatheia* of God essentially as Platonic influence and "an intellectual barrier against the recognition of the suffering of Christ," Moltmann regards the impassible God of the early Church as Greek concept of deity. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 219-234. Moltmann's assessment of patristic theology will be discussed in the chapter four.

⁴³ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 49. "God's love is his 'passion' in the double sense of passionate concern (*Leidenschaft*) and suffering (*Leiden*). Love is not just activity on others but involvement with others in which one is moved and affected. Vulnerability to suffering is essential to it."

⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 58–59.

God and all his creatures. In this inclusive sense friendship really is the most righteous of all. Open friendship prepares the ground for a friendly world.⁴⁵

According to Moltmann, “relational ecclesiology” is the only ‘messianic ethics’ worthy of the open Trinity. Only the crucified and suffering God can establish a foundation for a viable theological ethics for the fragmented and fragile world.

Eberhard Jüngel and the Death of the Living God

Eberhard Jüngel takes the axiom of the suffering God radically into divine identity. In *God's Being Is In Becoming*, he develops the theology of Karl Barth further to articulate “the nature of divine objectivity and the presence and activity of God in the world.”⁴⁶ Expanding Barth's Trinitarian conviction that God's being *pro se* is God's being *pro nobis*, Jüngel explains God's self-correspondence (*Gotts entspricht sich*) between his being and his act in the life of Jesus Christ. This particular divine becoming is not about ‘the God who becomes’ as another being affected in the flux of history, but it means God's self-interpretation of and self-identification with Jesus. Thus, ‘becoming’ does not compromise God's *aseity* or freedom but rather reveals the concrete ‘ontological location of God's being.’⁴⁷ What God freely and eternally chose to be himself in the

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 121.

⁴⁶ Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being Is In Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. by J. Webster (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), ix. Webster correctly recognizes that the book “is not simply a piece of Barth exegesis” nor “on the doctrine of Trinity” but Jüngel's preoccupation with major questions of classical Christian theology. For a succinct treatment of Jüngel's constructive philosophical theology, see Colin Gunton's “The Being and Attributes of God: Eberhard Jüngel's Dispute with the Classical Philosophical Tradition” in *The Possibilities of Theology: Studies in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his Sixtieth year*, ed. By J. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 7–22.

⁴⁷ Jüngel, *God's Being Is In Becoming*, xxv. “The ontological place of God's being is the place which God chooses. However, when God is understood as the one who chooses, his being is already thought of as a being in becoming. This hermeneutical circle is grounded in an ontological circle which will be located by the designation of ‘God's being is in becoming.’ The ontological location of God's being is an attempt to *think* theologically in what way God is *the living one*.

history of Jesus, includes the event of Calvary, making suffering and death a divine reality. Through becoming human, God gave a new meaning to death. Death is no longer a human phenomenon but a part of the living God.

Jüngel wrote extensively about death.⁴⁸ He advocates several theological theses in his theology of “the death of the living God.”⁴⁹ First, the death of God enables him to reject ‘traditional dogmatics’ which is based on ‘the metaphysically conceived notion of God’ and cannot adequately refute the claims of modern atheism.⁵⁰ The self-gift of God in the death of Jesus safeguards ‘the Christian concept of God’ from ‘unchristian theism.’⁵¹ Second, the death of God not only liberates Christian theology from metaphysical theism but also provides a ‘theological language’ about death. For Jüngel, the discourse on death is “a theological inquiry” because God identifies himself with the dead Jesus and theology now has a ‘necessary task’ to answer the question of a death in ‘definitive and contemporary manner.’⁵² Human beings cannot apprehend death on its terms because when death comes to them, death is ‘mute’ and makes them ‘speechless.’

⁴⁸ “Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottess. Ein Plakat,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65 (1968), 93–116; “Das dunkle Wort vom ‘Tode Gottes’,” *Evangelische Kommentare* 2 (1969), 133–138; “Die tödliche Blamage. Lukas 24:1–6” in *Auferstehung heute gesagt. Osterpredigten der Gegenwart*, ed. H. Nitzschke (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970), 69–74; *Tod* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1971); “Der Tod als Verewigung gelebten Lebens - Tod und Zeit – die Hoffnung des Glaubens,” *Reformatio* 21(1972): 154–177; “Recht auf Leben-Recht auf Sterben. Theologische Bemerkungen” (1980).

⁴⁹ Jüngel, “Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottess. Ein Plakat,” 93.

⁵⁰ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. by D. L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 126–152.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 48. “The thought of the death of God forces metaphysics and Christianity to separate from each other in such a way that a Christian theology becomes possible.”

⁵² Eberhard Jüngel, *Death: the Riddle and the Mystery*, trans. by I. and U. Nicol (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 28. “Christian faith as a whole amounts to an answer to the question of death. The church proclaims the *death* of the Lord in the expectation that the Lord will ‘come’ (1 Cor. 11:26). To this proclamation of the death of the Lord there also belongs the cry of victory.”

“If we are to speak about death at all, then a word must come from ‘beyond’ death. The Christian faith makes the claim that it has heard such a word. It has earned the title, ‘Word of God.’”⁵³ Third, Jüngel believes that not ‘death *in* God,’ as Moltmann puts it, but ‘death *of* God’ expresses God as love. Here, he compares his view with Moltmann’s.⁵⁴ Moltmann proposes a Trinitarian concept of ‘death *in* God’ as opposed to the ‘death *of* God’ because both the Father and the Son suffer but in different ways. While the Father suffers death, he does not die and experiences the death of the Son or bereavement. Thus, human forsakenness can be taken up into the experience of God as the death of Jesus is *in* God. While Moltmann maintains a social Trinitarian construal of the crucified God away from the *patripassian* or *theopaschite* misstep,⁵⁵ Jüngel sees the death *of* God in the cross of Jesus as a congruent way to disclose ‘the innermost mystery of divine being’ in the unique event. Since God allows death of Jesus to define his being, death itself is changed, no longer alien to God. The ‘nothingness’ and ‘relationlessness’ of death loses its power to “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:31) for God “involves himself in ‘nothingness’ and as such is love.”⁵⁶ In the “*substantive* moment of his self-definition” God brings the “death of death” as the permanently suffering God.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁵⁴ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 220. He assesses that Moltmann in *The Crucified God* takes the ‘the same’ topic ‘in an entirely different direction’ and might ‘make the following objections’ to his position: “1. That Jesus’ death is to be thought of as ‘death *in* God’ (p. 207); 2. That in Jesus’ death not death but rather *love* becomes a ‘phenomenon of God’ (p. 234); 3. That God may not be thought of ‘*in genere*,’ independently of Jesus’ death on the cross, but rather God is to be thought on the basis of Jesus’ death on the cross, and thus in a Trinitarian fashion (p. 204 and often).”

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 200–207.

⁵⁶ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 221.

The Easter stories ... tell of a *victory*... The description is not of a God who strides through the gates of death as though through a triumphal arch. Death is not vanquished by simply disposing of it and leaving it behind. The pagan myths of the gods which describe how the gods die and return only to die again in the course of the cycle of the years to show that even if death is left behind it will only return again to confront one anew. Death remains. All that happens is the eternal recurrence of the same. By contrast, however, the One who has been raised from the dead *remains* the crucified One. And the marks of his dominions which he will forever bear are the scars on his body.⁵⁷

Love indefinitely places suffering into the being of God as death remains in God. To accentuate the unique efficacy of God's victory over death, Jüngel points out that Paul did not just end with a triumphant proclamation of the resurrection over death but posed a significant aftermath question, "Death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55). Jüngel answers Paul's redemptive inquiry with an illustration of certain animals which "die when they have emitted all their poison." That is how "death left, and had to leave its 'sting' in the life of God."⁵⁸ As a man disarms a wasp by taking the sting into his flesh, so God takes the sting of death into himself.

In *suffering* this sting and by *enduring* the negation directed toward him, God robbed death of its power and so revealed himself as God. This God loves man and it is for this reason that he suffers for man. Man's suffering is finite. God, however, is not the kind of God who does not suffer at all. He is the God who has a capacity for *infinite* suffering, and it is because of his love that he suffers infinitely. *This* is why he is death's conqueror. *This* is why the reign of death is subject to the power of God.⁵⁹

As God swallows death and its powers within his eternal life, death belongs to a 'phenomenon of God' and 'perishability' (*Vergänglichkeit*) finds a new meaning in God.⁶⁰ To speak of this God who "unites love and death" in the event of Christ on the

⁵⁷ Jüngel, *Death*, 111–112. Italic is mine.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 112–113.

⁶⁰ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 184–225.

cross, Jüngel believes that Christian faith must leave the traditional axioms of absoluteness, apathy, and immutability.⁶¹

A Lingering Epicenter for Divine Passibility: Hellenization and Harnack

This survey of modern theology in its contour of divine passibility is not exhaustive by any means but selective in order to bring the focus to the issue of tradition in contemporary theological reflection. While leaving out other sources of the suffering God in the biblical, liberation, feminists, and process theology for the time being, the rest of the discourse will engage with each of them in an appropriate place. Meanwhile, it is necessary to locate a lingering epicenter of modern passibility theology.

From religious philosophers to systematic theologians, it seems clear that the modern thinkers share a spiritual affinity of suffering and therefore find traditional view of God inadequate to relate to the contemporary situation. For them, particularly the notion of impassible God appears to be Greek than Hebrew. The alien influence of the Greek philosophy altered the biblical God of pathos. The rejection of the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility with varying degrees hinges on the notion that the early Church fathers uncritically imported a classical philosophical conceptuality of deity and bequeathed an illegitimate heritage to the subsequent medieval Scholastic tradition.⁶²

The patristic efforts to translate Hebrew thoughts with the Greek categories not only fell short but also produced a detrimental counter-witness to the biblical God of personal

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 373. “God based on the cross of Jesus Christ has destroyed the axiom of absoluteness, the axiom of apathy, and the axiom of immutability, all of which are unsuitable axioms for the Christian concept of God.”

⁶² According to the helpful study of Robert D. Crouse, the history of the problem of Hellenization traces its origin to the Reformers, who used the concept as “a ready weapon in their rebellion against the medieval Church.” Robert D. Crouse, “The Hellenization of Christianity: A Historiographical Study,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 8 (1962), 22–33.

relationship.⁶³ They created a dire situation that requires either the axiom of *apatheia* to be demolished or the Scripture to be re-written.

Open Theism and Common Misconception about Patristic Theology

The call to eliminate the misconception of ‘apathetic God’ recently finds a voice in a movement called “Open Theism.” The controversial North American Evangelical movement represents a popular sentiment and misconception toward the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility and immutability. The proponents of Open Theism posit that a “biblically faithful and intellectually consistent” theology affirms God’s nature as being open to ‘give-and-take,’ ‘risking,’ and being vulnerable in his dynamic interaction with human beings. The claim is that a relational and open God alleviates tensions that many Christians experience in their struggle between “their beliefs about the nature of [a traditional] God and their religious practice.” The target of Open Theism is what they called “classical theists” whose “coupling of biblical ideas about God with notions of the divine nature drawn from Greek thought” created “a certain theological virus that infected the Christian doctrine of God.”⁶⁴

Although Open Theism contends to offer “a needed antibiotic to aid a healthier doctrine of God,” its program is ambiguous and rather rhetorical than “serious

⁶³ T. E. Pollard, “The Impassibility of God,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (1955), 360–361. “If we take seriously the idea that God cannot suffer or experience ‘passions,’ we have either to re-write the Scriptures or treat them as a collection of books embodying primitive anthropomorphic conceptions of God. . . . The transposition of Hebrew thought into the categories of Greek psychology has resulted in the ascription to God of an attribute which runs counter to the witness of the OT (and the NT) that God is a personal God.”

⁶⁴ Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 9. Cf. 60. “The Greek metaphysical system ‘boxed up’ the God described in the Bible and the tremendous impact this has had in shaping the Christian understanding of the nature of God, the Trinity, election, sin, grace, the covenant, the sovereignty of God, prayer, salvation and the incarnation.”

theology.”⁶⁵ As Open Theists try to charter their own course between the two extreme models of God: classical theism of absolutely transcendent God and process theology of radically immanent God,⁶⁶ they simply critique one using the other and vice versa with convenient biblical passages. Their ambivalence can be glimpsed in the treatment of divine impassibility.

God risked suffering when he decided to love and be loved by the creature. A lover’s existence is inescapably affected by the other. . . (Jer. 31:20 RSV). . . Obviously God feels the pain of broken relationship. At the same time, impassibility is a subtle idea with a grain of truth. . . We could say that God is impassible in nature but passible in his experience of the world. Change occurs in the world and affects God when he becomes aware of it. When that change involves innocent suffering (for example), God responds tenderly to it.⁶⁷

While they seek to “correct the tradition without overcorrecting the error,” the proponents of Open Theism do not produce any careful examination or reconstruction of the traditional doctrine of God but over-criticize the patristic theology caricaturing its heritage as “residue of an obsolete metaphysics.”⁶⁸

Eugene Peterson and Pejorative Use of ‘Hellenization’

The popular superficial misconception of the theological appropriation in the early Church causes a misuse of the term, “Hellenization,” which is often applied with wide and wrong implications. For instance, Eugene Peterson, in the 2005 Parchman

⁶⁵ John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 15. “Open Theists have not always been clear in describing what they believe. Many of their expositions are more like motivational talks or political speeches than philosophy or serious theology. They seem to be more interested in persuasion than clarity.”

⁶⁶ Pinnock, “Systematic Theology,” in *The Openness of God*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁸ John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: a Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 165. “Though the tradition, with good intentions, employed immutability and impassibility in order to protect God’s perfection, those traits were at times pushed so far as to leave no room for speaking of divine openness, in which God, in vulnerability, binds himself to others in love.”

Lectures at George Truett Theological Seminary, pejoratively employed the term as an expression of a culturally surrendered Christianity.⁶⁹ He compared the “Hellenization” of the early Church to “Americanization” of the contemporary North American Church. In “Jesus or Josephus,” Peterson, a popular pastoral theologian at Regent College in British Columbia, Canada, urged his audience to resist a modern Hellenization and its luring spirit of cultural pragmatism.

Alister McGrath and Shadow of Harnack

Among the proponents of the Hellenization problem in the early Church, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) is the most influential propagator for modern theologians.⁷⁰ Though much of his historical paradigm is discounted, his thesis is frequently found in the sleeves of some currently working theologians. For instance, Alister McGrath has been utilizing Harnack’s idea of Hellenization in his works. In his celebrated *Iustitia Dei*, the renowned British Evangelical theologian characterizes the early patristic period as “the age of exploration of concepts.” The patristic “exploitation of both Hellenistic culture and pagan philosophy as vehicle for theological advancement” compromised and distorted “the characteristic and distinctive elements of the gospel.”⁷¹ “An excellent example” of such Hellenistic influence upon Christian theology is “the doctrine of the *απαθεια* of God, which clearly demonstrates the subordination of a biblical to a

⁶⁹ <http://www.baylor.edu/pr/news.php?action=story&story=37149>. Accessed on May 25th, 2006.

⁷⁰ Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), ix. “Harnack’s thesis still reigns supreme in the minds of many modern theologians, who in one form or another support the claim that God suffers.”

⁷¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 17–18.

philosophical view of God.”⁷² As he states in his *Christian Theology*, McGrath bases his assessment of patristic theology on Harnack’s view.⁷³ Concurring on Harnack’s thesis that the development of dogma in the early Church “owes nothing” to Jesus or the original primitive Palestinian context but has everything to do with the Hellenistic influence and institutional church, he called the development of tradition in the early church “evolution.” Though McGrath recognizes an oversimplification problem in Harnack’s understanding of Hellenism, he maintains the German historian’s judgment on the patristic notion of “impassible God.”⁷⁴ Most importantly the British theologian reiterates Harnack’s call to demote the patristic writers from “an authoritative status in matters of doctrine” and critically treat them as “any others in the long history of Christian thought.”⁷⁵

Rudolf Sohm and Legalistic Hellenization

The conviction to safeguard the pristine New Testament Christianity from the subsequent deterioration in the early Church was not solely Harnack’s idea. There were several other German scholars who critically studied what they regarded as similar missteps in the early Church.⁷⁶ Rudolf Sohm (1841-1917), a German Lutheran jurist and

⁷² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 248–249, 331, 341–343, 360–361.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 343. “Nevertheless, Harnack’s critique of the patristic period is of importance; we have already seen how the patristic notion of an ‘impassible God’ appears to rest on the uncritical absorption of secular ideas into Christianity.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* “Nevertheless, he [Harnack] warns us of the dangers of regarding the patristic writers as having an authoritative status in matters of doctrine. They are as open to criticism as any others in the long history of Christian thought.”

⁷⁶ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, trans. by N. Buchanan (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), 39. Harnack mentioned the works done by Renan, Overbeck, Aube, Kühn, Hatch, Rothe,

church historian, put forward in *Outlines of Church History* that the Catholic church of the second century came to exist as the result of legalistic Hellenization. He argued that the early apostolic church had no legal constitution and relied on the ‘charismata’ or spiritual authority of “the divinely gifted teacher.”⁷⁷ The ecclesia of the first century was a “spiritual kingdom” as a “pneumatocracy, response to Spirit.” The non-judicial essence of Christianity was jeopardized when the church combated Gnosticism, “the Rationalism of the second century.” In the process of defending “the freedom of the Gospel” against Gnostics’ claim to be the true church, the *catholicized* church replaced its “purity of inner substance” such as the universal priesthood of believers with an external organization of church offices and constitutions.⁷⁸ The development of a legal order within the church was a ‘fall’ from her authenticity substituting the leadership of *persons* imbued with the Spirit with the leadership based on *offices* and organization.⁷⁹

Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization

Whereas Sohm briefly drafted his hypothesis from “a narrow legal view,”⁸⁰ Harnack expounded on his idea of Hellenization with the unprecedented scope and depth

Schwegler, and Sohm as the ample proofs of the influence of Greek ideas and usages in the early history of dogma.

⁷⁷ Rudolf Sohm, *Outlines of Church History*, trans. by M. Sinclair (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 35. “The natural man desires to remain under the law. He strives against the freedom of the Gospel, and he longs with all his strength for a religion of law and statute. . . . *The natural man is a born Catholic.*” James L. Adams in introduction to *Outlines of Church History* correctly assesses that “Sohm’s epic is a Lutheran epic.”

⁷⁹ In *Kirchenrecht* (Canon law), Sohm elaborated on the ‘fall’ of the church into “a monarchical bureaucratic machinery” providing legal tenure of office and ultimately issuing in papal infallibility.

⁸⁰ While other Lutheran scholars, like Karl Holl and Hans von Campenhausen, rejected Sohm’s account of primitive Christianity and his emphasis on charismatic authority, Harnack conceded the overall account of Sohm’s early church with a suspicion for the latter’s conservative tendency. Bultmann and

that distinguish him among the various critics of the early church. His analysis of Hellenization in the early Church deserves a close attention for it is not only a historical study but contains a theological judgment (*Urteil*).⁸¹ In *History of Dogma* (1885) and *What is Christianity* (1900), he consistently argued that if the Christian Gospel was to remain a living force in the modern world, it must be freed from dogma, which he regarded as an illegitimate expression of Christianity.⁸² The best way to liberate the church from dogmatic Christianity was to study the church history as the history of dogmas and to find out where and how the church lost its original pristine state. Harnack believed that historians of dogma have a ‘royal duty’ to “overcome history by history.”⁸³ Dogmatic Christianity fashioned after the early Church’s engagement with Hellenic milieu is an unfortunate development since it is a step out of the faith that one encounters in the primitive Gospel. The essence of the Gospel can be captured in three simple and sublime teachings of Jesus: (1) the kingdom of God and its coming, (2) God the Father

Brunner were supporters of Sohm’s notion of charismatic authority and Karl Barth opposed it calling Brunner ‘a disciple of Sohm.’ Max Weber appropriated and expanded Sohm’s types of authority into traditional, legal, and charismatic. For more details of Sohm’s influence, see James L. Adam’s introduction in *Outlines of Church History*, xiii–xv and Harnack’s footnotes in *History of Dogma* I, 39 and *What is Christianity?*, 107.

⁸¹ E. P. Meijering, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnacks*, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, deel 128 (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1985), 21. Meijering deems Harnack’s judgment (*Urteil*) of Hellenization to be a melancholy combination of the historian’s study of an inevitable development in the early Church and the theologian’s retrospective lament.

⁸² Harnack, *History of Dogma* vol. 1, 17. “Dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel.”

⁸³ Adolf von Harnack, “Über die Sicherheit und die Grenzen geschichtlicher Erkenntnis,” in *Reden und Aufsätze* IV. 7 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1923), 5. “We study history in order to intervene in the course of history and we have a right and duty to do so; for without historical insight we either permit ourselves to be mere objects of the historical process or tend to mislead people in an irresponsible way. . . . With respect to the past, the historian assumes the royal function of a judge, for in order to decide what of the past shall continue to be effective and what must be done away with or transformed, the historian must judge like a king.” Cited in Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 340.

and the infinite value of human soul, and (3) the higher righteousness and the commandment of love.⁸⁴ According to Harnack, church historians need to distinguish the traditional ‘husk’ of dogmas from the peculiar ‘kernel’ in Jesus’ message of the kingdom. Authentic Christianity is not to be found in a religion of creeds and doctrines to which one might give intellectual assent; rather it is a matter of experience, a living relationship, and simple trust. The Gospel is not a “theoretical system of doctrine” about Jesus, nor is Jesus “a mere factor” connected to it. Rather, “*he was its personal realization and its strength, and this he is felt to be still.*”⁸⁵ Such a living faith needs no dogmatic philosophical system to warrant its reality of God.

Positive Hellenization. Harnack viewed Hellenization of the early Church both positively and negatively. The positive form of Hellenization came from the “inner necessity” of the Christian religion, namely the inherent universality of the Gospel, which could not continue in the framework of exclusive, ethno-centric Judaism.⁸⁶ The Christian church needed a more ‘catholic’ means of expression away from its Jewish roots. What motivated the Hellenization of the early Church “was universality—both the religious universality of the Gospel message and the cultural universality that made Hellenism a ‘world.’”⁸⁷ Harnack described the initial active stage of Hellenization by the early Church with a metaphor of body and spirit.

⁸⁴ Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 51. A lengthy exposition is given in 52–77.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸⁶ Harnack, *History of Dogma* I, 46–47. “When the Gospel was rejected by the Jewish nation, and had disengaged itself from all the connection with that nation, it was already settled whence it must take the material to form for itself a new body and be transformed into a Church and a theology. . . The contents of the Gospel were too rich for that [national and particular Judaism]”

It [the Church] hovered bodiless over the earth like a being of the air; bodiless and seeking a body. The spirit, no doubt, makes to itself its own body, but it does so by assimilating what is around it. The influx of Hellenism, of the Greek spirit, and the union of the Gospel with it, form the greatest fact in the history of Church in the second century, and when the fact was once established as a foundation it continued through the following centuries.⁸⁸

“The influx of Hellenism” was the inevitable and active search of the church for her new body. The early Church’s ‘metempsychosis’ (transmigration of one living organism from an old body into a new body) was exemplified by the Logos speculation of Apologists. The second century Christian thinkers creatively appropriated the Greek cosmology with an equation: “the Logos = Jesus Christ.”⁸⁹ The simple identification of the Messiah or the Word with Greek Logos was a ‘mixed’ blessing. Harnack subtly judges the first instance of theological engagement with Greek philosophy as something unavoidable and inherent to the universal nature of the Gospel as well as an ominous beginning of alteration: “*It gave a metaphysical significance to an historical fact; it drew into the domain of cosmology and religious philosophy a person who had appeared in time and space.*”⁹⁰ The early Church’s turn toward Hellenism was more than co-existing with her new body, but eventually exposed its core to a new spirit. The initial metempsychosis of the Church, thus, became a case of a dangerous parasitism.⁹¹ The following outline recapitulates Harnack’s observation on the transmutation of the Hellenized church:

⁸⁷ William V. Rowe, “Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization,” in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by W. E. Helleman (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 74.

⁸⁸ Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 200.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 204. “The identification of the Logos with Christ was the determining factor in the fusion of Greek philosophy with the apostolic inheritance and led the more thoughtful Greeks to adopt the latter.”

⁹¹ Rowe, “Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization,” 77. “The parasite ‘lives’ off its host’s body; and this is closer to Harnack’s concept of Hellenization.”

The first stage of any real influx of definitely Greek thought and Greek life is to be fixed at about the year 130. It was then that the religious philosophy of Greece began to effect an entrance, and it went straight to the centre of the new religion. It sought to get into inner touch with Christianity, and, conversely, Christianity itself held out a hand to his ally. We are speaking of Greek *philosophy*; as yet, there is no trace of mythology, Greek worship, and so on; all that was taken up into the Church, cautiously and under proper guarantees, was the great capital which philosophy had amassed since the days of Socrates. A century or so later, about the year 220 or 230, the second stage begins: Greek mysteries, and Greek civilization in the whole range of its development, exercise their influence on the Church, but not mythology and polytheism; these were still to come. Another century, however, had in its turn to elapse before Hellenism as a whole and in every phase of its development was established in the Church.⁹²

Negative Hellenization “The second stage” of the Hellenization was negative as the early Church expanded her paradigmatic absorption of the Hellenic culture into her practices and self-identification. Whereas the initial interaction took a positive endeavor of the apologetic evangelization, the next phase was driven by the Church’s defense of her identity especially against the threats of Gnosticism. Harnack defines Gnosticism as the “acute Hellenization” of the Gospel, which tried to carry out the intellectual transformation of a biblical religion more consistently in a thorough Greek philosophical-theological fashion.⁹³ The Gnostics used the Greek “allegorical interpretation” in their “spiritualizing of the Old Testament” in order to “give shape to what was still shapeless” and “externally incomplete” Christianity. As a result, they “transferred the new religion [and its ancient wisdom] from the world of feelings, actions, and hopes, into the world of Hellenic conceptions, and transformed it into a metaphysic.”⁹⁴ The early Church’s response at this critical juncture, for Harnack, was both ironic and inconsistent because it

⁹² Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 201.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 205. Harnack also called Gnosticism “Acute Secularizing of Christianity” in *History of Dogma I*.

⁹⁴ Harnack, *History of Dogma I*, 224.

adopted a method of a gradual and more controlling Hellenization in the form of dogma, doctrines, and institution in order to combat the “acute Hellenization.” “*The struggle with Gnosticism compelled the Church to put its teaching, its worship, and its discipline, into fixed forms and ordinances, and to exclude everyone who would not yield them obedience.*”⁹⁵ The Church’s remedy to Gnosticism ironically developed its Hellenizing process further in the direction of intellectualistic Christianity. It elevated dogma into an indispensable status by surrendering the “inner power of the Christian religion” to a tighter control of the ‘Intellectualism.’ The ‘mischief’ of dogmatized Christianity in its struggle against Gnostics won “half a victory” and the early Church paid a heavy price. Harnack thinks that in the process of the Church’s “chronic Hellenization” against the “acute Hellenization” of Gnosticism, the victor actually became a victim:

If by “Catholic” we mean the church of doctrine and of law, then the Catholic church had its origin in the struggle with Gnosticism. It had to pay a heavy price for the victory which kept that tendency at bay; we may almost say that the vanquished imposed their terms upon the victor: *Victi victoribus legem dederunt.* . . . To encounter our enemy’s theses by setting up others one by one, is to change over to his ground. How much of its original freedom the Church sacrificed!⁹⁶

According to Harnack, the battle with Gnosticism gave birth to the historical Catholic Church and brought forth four “essential changes”: “(1) the sacrifice of evangelical freedom to a church bond by dogma and law; (2) the intellectualism of a Dogmatic Christianity or the penetration of the church by Greek philosophy; (3) the church’s becoming an ‘institution,’; and (4) the decline of evangelization.”⁹⁷ The doctrinal

⁹⁵ Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, 207.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 207–208.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 210–215. The summary headings are from Rowe’s “Harnack and the Concept of Hellenization,” 85.

intellectualization and ecclesial institutionalization finally completed the metempsychosis of Hellenization that the Greek spirit overgrew and overtook the primitive form of Christianity. In the light of the negative development of dogma in the Church history, Harnack sees the importance of the Reformation to be located in Luther's rediscovery of the pure Gospel freed from ecclesial authoritarianism.⁹⁸ At the same time he warns the Protestant Christianity of their concern for the subsequent doctrinal systematization as another replication of the early Church's mistake of Hellenization.

Responses to Harnack's Hellenization

As Harnack claims that the Gospel was Hellenized and dogma was a product of "the Greek spirit in the soil of the Gospel," his concept of Hellenization takes on an unmistakably theological character. The German historian's interpretation of Hellenization as a deterioration of the original Christianity poses two questions within this study of tradition-based contextual theology having to do with: (1) the biblical-theological integrity of the patristic tradition and (2) the nature and function of dogma in the Church. The first question raises the issue of faithfulness of the church fathers' engagement with their culture as to whether their theological appropriation of Greek philosophy tainted the claims of the biblical Gospel. The second question points to the relationship between dogma and its authoritative role in the Church as to whether dogma should retain a primacy in the life of the Church. Although these two issues are inter-

⁹⁸ Adolf von Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, trans. by E. K. Mitchell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 542. "Luther's greatness consists in the knowledge of God which he re-discovered in the Gospel. . . He restored the religious view of the Gospel, the sovereign right of religion in religion, the sovereign worth of the historical Person Jesus Christ in Christianity. In doing this he went back beyond the Church of the Middle Ages and the old Catholic times of the New Testament, yes, *to the Gospel itself*."

related and their discussions frequently overlap, each topic deserves a thorough investigation.

The biblical-theological integrity of patristic traditions. Harnack's thesis that the patristic theologians compromised the simple experiential Gospel into an elaborate metaphysical system hinges on the assumption that the early Christian thinkers incorporated Greek philosophy into the theology without much resistance. To assess the charge that the early Church fathers were uncritically susceptible to the Hellenistic influence, it is important to examine the writings of Apologists and other apologetic writings of the second and third centuries to see how they treated Greek tradition and culture. Compared to the harsh judgment on the Gnostics and the later Church fathers, Harnack was sympathetic to the Apologists of the second century who were first to frame an intellectually satisfying explanation of God's revelation and redemption through Christ.⁹⁹ His idea that the Apologists' Hellenization or the Logos speculation was "positive because something Greek is simply *identified* with something Christian," presupposes that the second century theologians maintained an unsuspecting posture toward a supposedly uniform Greek philosophy. In this regard, Harnack preceded many modern theologians who also tend to oversimplify the patristic theology with a "unified account" of Greek philosophy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119. "The apologists were in contrast with the Gnostics conservative . . . Both hellenized the Gospel; but only the speculations of the apologists were at once legitimized, because they directed everything against polytheism and left the Old Testament and the kerygma untouched and emphasized in the clearest manner freedom and responsibility."

¹⁰⁰ In his seminal work, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, Gavriluyuk calls this crucial assumption of the contemporary theologians about Greek philosophy and religion "the Theory of Theology's Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy" and clearly demonstrates that "there is no one unified account of the divine emotions and of the divine involvement advocated by major Hellenistic schools of philosophy, let alone the Hellenistic religions at large." For diverse and dynamic accounts of Greek

The Apologists and the church fathers of the second and third centuries approached Greek philosophy with cautious and critical mindset. Justin Martyr (100-165) defended the Christian faith in the doctrine of Logos as the true and *perfect* philosophy that could lead the pagan philosophy to fulfillment. Although the divine Logos appeared in his fullness only in Christ, “a seed of the Logos” was scattered among humankind. Not only the prophets of the Old Testament but even the pagan philosophers such as Socrates and Heraclitus carried a germinated seed of the Logos (*logos spermatikos*) in their souls: “Those who lived according to the reason (Logos) are Christians.”¹⁰¹ Justin saw no opposition between Christianity and philosophy because the former completes the latter. In *Dialogue with Trypho*, he made a positive remark on Greek philosophy: “Philosophy is the greatest possession and most honorable before God because it leads us to God. Holy men paid attention to philosophy. The knowledge of the true philosophy is one [God].”¹⁰² Yet the affinity between Greek philosophy and biblical truth has a limitation because the Greeks borrowed many true statements from the Jews. For instance, Justin argued that Greek mythology was a poor copy of Moses’ prophecy.¹⁰³ Likewise, Plato articulated the idea of creation that Logos made the whole world out of the substance spoken by Moses in Genesis 1:2.¹⁰⁴ While pagan thinkers have partial and poor elements of truth, Christians alone possess the entire truth in Christ,

philosophical notions of God, see Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21–36. “The Fathers could not possibly agree with the philosophers simply because the philosophers did not agree among themselves.”

¹⁰¹ Justin Martyr, *Apology* I. 46.

¹⁰² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, II.

¹⁰³ Martyr, *Apology* I. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Martyr, *Apology* I. 59–60.

the divine Logos. Justin's treatment of Greek philosophy represents the tradition of *Praeparatio Evangelica* in the early Church that pagan thinkers were prepared for the coming, perfect revelation of God in Christ.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to Harnack's view that patristic theology was a residue of Greek philosophy, Justin asserted that some elements in Greek philosophy were residues of the biblical revelation.

Theophilus of Antioch (c. 122-185) tried to show the superiority of Christianity over the pagan religion and Greek philosophy. In his writing to a pagan friend, he contrasted the teaching of the prophets inspired by the Holy Spirit with the foolishness of the pagan religion and the contradictory sayings of the Greek philosophers. For instance, Plato acknowledged that God is unbegotten but then posited that matter as well as God is unbegotten. Theophilus argued that only the biblical idea of the Creator and creation *ex-nihilo* makes sense: "What great were it if God made the world out of existing matter? If so, God is not greater than human artist!"¹⁰⁶ Like Justin, Theophilus of Antioch not only subscribed to *Praeparatio Evangelica* but also employed the "argument of antiquity," an effective principle of the day. The acid test for an acceptable religion in the Greco-Roman world was its antiquity: "As a general principle, the greater the age that ceremonies and shrines accumulate, the more hallowed these institutions become."¹⁰⁷ In

¹⁰⁵ *Praeparatio Evangelica* has been the most widely used approach in the Christian tradition of engaging with other religious-cultural heritages and closely associated with grace as *donum superadditum*. Since nature is good but imperfect, it needs grace to perfect itself. For a good example of *Praeparatio Evangelica* in the early Church, see Wendy E. Halleman's essay on Basil's *Ad Adolescentes*, which explains why and how Christians are to read the "glorious pagans." Wendy E. Halleman, "Basil's *Ad Adolescentes*: Guidelines for Reading the Classics," in *Christianity and the Classics: The Acceptance of a Heritage* (New York: University Press of America, 1990), 31–51.

¹⁰⁶ Theophilus, *Ad Autolycus*, II. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 6. The quote came from D. H. Williams' "Harnack, Marcion and the Argument of Antiquity," in *Hellenization Revisited*, 230. Williams analyzed the main reasons that Catholics were alarmed by Marcion's denial of the Old Testament: (1) 'apologotic value of the Old Testament,' (2) its socio-political role to legitimize Christianity, and (3) the greater concern for the failure

the same vein, Jewish religion was respected and legitimized as Tacitus remarked in *Annales*, “Jewish worship is vindicated by its antiquity.”¹⁰⁸ As the Apologists and apologetic writings of the early centuries claimed this crucial connection to the Jewish Scriptures, Theophilus asserted that Christian “sacred books” preceded other works of antiquity including Egyptian and Greek and even before the Trojan War¹⁰⁹ and later produced the chronology of the world for evidence.¹¹⁰

This argument of antiquity was the principal *modus operandi* for Tertullian’s *Apology*. Contrary to Niebuhr’s popular characterization (“Christ against Culture”) of Tertullian with his rhetorical quip, “What has Athens do with Jerusalem?,” the Latin theologian (160-225) was aware of the dynamic relationship between reason and faith and he was not an anti-rationalist. His apologetic effort centered on the authority of the Jewish Scriptures in its antiquity.¹¹¹ He offered three points for the argument of antiquity in the Jewish Scriptures: (1) the remarkable translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, (2) the antiquity of the Hebrew Scriptures which predated the Greeks, Egyptians, or other ancients renown for their wisdom, and (3) the amazing fulfillment of Scriptural prophecies.¹¹² Tertullian also connected the argument of Scriptural antiquity with

of non-Christian critics such as Celsus to distinguish Marcionites from Catholics. In his positive view of Marcion as a reformer of tradition, “Harnack underestimates what was at stake in the church’s acceptance of the Old Testament.”

¹⁰⁸ Tacitus, *Annales*, V. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum*, II. 23. Theophilus asserted that the Greek poets and philosophers plagiarized from the Scriptures to make their ideas plausible in I. 14.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III.

¹¹¹ Tertullian, *Apology*, 33.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, XVIII-XX.

Justin's idea of Divine Logos.¹¹³ He rationally presented the legitimacy and supremacy of Christianity as the custodian of the truth attested by its ancient Scriptures and manifested by the Logos.

Another source that exhibits the early Christians' critical interaction with Greek milieu is the pagan polemicists.¹¹⁴ According to Ramsay MacMullen, Harnack's omission of this important aspect of the early Church is "very odd indeed."¹¹⁵ For instance, Celsus brought up what was a standard charge against Christianity in the second and third centuries, namely the novelty of Christian beliefs and writings. The conservative Roman intellectual found Christian teachings of the incarnation and resurrection and the worship of Jesus as God extreme and problematic.¹¹⁶ He thought that such novel ideas would divide the empire and weaken its civilization. The fact that Celsus admonished Christians to exercise moderation in their beliefs with harmonization with the Greek philosophy and civil politics shows that the patristic thinkers in the second and third centuries did not uncritically adapt to the Greek philosophy nor were susceptible to the cultural pressure. Against the charge of Celsus that Christians could

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, XXXIII.

¹¹⁴ Robert L. Wilken in *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) describes the unique picture of Christian faith and practice from the perspective of Greek and Roman thinkers as well as the contention between Christianity and pagan philosophy.

¹¹⁵ Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 206 n.16. It should be clarified that Harnack did in fact quote Pliny, Celsus, and Porphyry in *History of Dogma* but did not pursue any further implications from the fact that the pagan critics found Christian faith incongruent with the prevalent cultural norms.

¹¹⁶ Quoting from Plato's *Timaeus*, "Now to find the Maker and Father of this universe is difficult, and after finding him it is impossible to declare him to all men," Celsus in *True Doctrine* ridiculed Christians for the claims that God was revealed in a historical person. Appealing to the day's philosophical commonsense, he called on Christians to 'shut their eyes to the world of sense' and seek God with 'the eyes of the soul.' Origen, *Against Celsus*, VII:36, 42

not claim to inherit the Jewish Scripture while rejecting the Jewish customs and ignoring the latter's denial of Jesus as the Messiah, Origen (185- ca. 254) responded that the life of Christ, including the resurrection, was foretold by the prophets and the Church was the rightful heir.¹¹⁷

To the fervent patriotism of Celsus, Origen utilized the idea of Plato that the goal of the state was not to increase in power but to spread truth, justice, and learning. The Divine Law is more authoritative than the law and the favor of the rulers of the earth.¹¹⁸ Origen recognized the value of the cultural treasures when they could be used in the service of God. The most creative Alexandrian Christian theologian utilized the Greek philosophy with what Augustine later called "*Spolatio Aegyptiorum*" in the sense of *conversio*.¹¹⁹ The Apologists and the early Church fathers appropriated their Greek philosophical heritage with discernment and converted them into a Christian position. They never allowed a free reign of Greek philosophy in their theological reflections and actually abhorred its dominance. Tertullian, for instance, alerted that unfiltered Greek philosophy was the "mother of all heresies."¹²⁰ Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) traced various beliefs of Gnostic groups to different philosophical schools.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I. 34.

¹¹⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII. 63–65.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II. 60. Augustine defended the Christian use of pagan literature by citing the story of the Israelites who were commanded by God to carry Egyptian gold, silver, and expensive clothing items during the Exodus (Exod. 12:35–36). These materials were later used to construct the tabernacle for the worship of God. As an analogy of the Christian appropriation of Greek intellectual heritage, Augustine used the term *convertere*: "It is proper to accept and to have the goods in order to turn (*convertenda*) them to Christian use."

¹²⁰ Tertullian, *De Prescriptio*. 7.

¹²¹ Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium*. Proem. 3

The allegation of Harnack that the Apologists and early Church fathers abandoned the Jewish ethnic confinement of the Old Testament and hellenized the universal gospel with the prevalent Greek philosophy is untenable when the above mentioned practices of the Apologist and theologians of the second and third centuries are considered. The patristic traditions of *Praeparatio Evangelica*, *Spolatio*, and argument of antiquity point out that “a more apt expression” for the early Church’s engagement with the Greek intellectual milieu would be the “Christianization of Hellenism” instead of “a Hellenization of Christianity.”¹²² The patristic theologians were foremost biblical theologians whose faithfulness to the history of Israel and Jesus achieved a “lasting accomplishment” of “a unified and coherent interpretation of the Bible” for the Church and the Western civilization.¹²³

The nature and function of dogma in the church. Although some say that the time has come to put down Harnack’s concept of Hellenization which outlived its historical analysis, the German historian’s claim, nevertheless, raises a contemporary question of theological reflection particularly on the relationship between tradition and contextualization. Harnack judges the early Church’s development of dogma to be the culprit of the subsequent intellectualization and schematization of a simple evangelical

¹²² Robert L. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), xvi. “The notion that the development of early Christian thought represented a hellenization of Christianity has outlived its usefulness. The time has come to bid a fond farewell to the ideas of Adolf von Harnack, the nineteenth-century historian of dogma whose thinking has influenced the interpretation of early Christian thought for more than a century. . . A more apt expression would be the Christianization of Hellenism, though that phrase does not capture the originality of Christian thought nor the debt owed to Jewish ways of thinking and to the Jewish Bible.”

¹²³ *Ibid.*, xvii. “What impressed me most is the omnipresence of the Bible in the early Christian writings. Early Christian thought is biblical, and one of the lasting accomplishments of the patristic period was to forge a way of thinking, scriptural in language and inspiration, that gave to the church and to Western civilization a unified and coherent interpretation of the Bible as a whole.

gospel. His criticism on the emergence of dogma in the early Church calls into question every theological attempt in the Church to formulate an intellectual understanding of faith in a given context. What E. P. Meijering calls the “formal Hellenization of Christianity,” Harnack’s question about the authenticity of dogma is pertinent not only to the patristic period but also to every generation in the Church, which faces the challenge to make the Gospel clear to “reason.”¹²⁴ As the challenge of intellectual interpretation of the Gospel moved the early Church to the process of Hellenization, there has been analogous “Hellenizations” of different philosophical conceptualizations in the history of the Church. Meijering locates the significance of Harnack’s theological acumen in diagnosing the perennial contemporary nature of Hellenization in the life of the Church and defining the historical role of Reformers (seen in Luther) as catalyzing a ‘reduction’ or ‘simplification’ (*Vereinfachung*) of the historical baggage that encumbers the Gospel.¹²⁵ For Harnack, dogma represents a superfluous temporal wrap over the timeless essence of the Gospel and the history of dogma reveals the various encrusting of the simple spiritual Christianity. Dogma and its tradition of intellectual understanding of the Gospel are to be peeled off like a husk in order for Christians to be nourished with the kernel of the Gospel.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ E. P. Meijering, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnacks*, 142.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 123. “Die Funktion des Evangeliums ist klar nicht die des bereichernden Summierens, sondern des reinigenden Reduzierens.” (The function of the Gospel is obviously not that of an enriching summation, but of a purifying reduction). For a succinct critique on E. P. Meijering’s reading of Harnack’s Hellenization in the formal sense, see Willam Rowe’s “Harnack and Hellenization in the Early Church,” *Philosophia Reformata: Orgaan van de Verenigin voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte* 57 (1992): 78–85.

¹²⁶ From a nutritional perspective, Harnack’s metaphor of nutrient kernel and non-nutritive husk is inaccurate for many vital nutrients are found in the husk; i.e. brown rice is healthier than white rice. The point of this metaphorical rebuttal is that the kernel and husk cannot and should not be separated for its full benefit.

Harnack's negation of the tradition of dogma including the theological contextualization is itself called into question by a careful examination on the several features of tradition practiced by the early Church. First, the development of tradition was not a theoretical exercise separated from the liturgical life of the Church. Dogma and worship were interdependent that *lex credendi* was always received and transmitted within the context of *lex orandi*.¹²⁷ To brand dogma as a purely intellectual afterthought for the purpose of enforcing uniformity is to ignore the long history of the interaction between the confessions of faith and worship in the early Church.¹²⁸ From the kerygmatic tradition (Rom. 6:4, 1 Cor. 15:1), the Eucharist tradition (1 Cor. 11:23), and the ethical tradition (Col. 2:6, 1 Cor. 4:16, Eph. 4:20-21, 2 Thes. 3:6), the New Testament Church had an active understanding of the tradition in receiving (*paralambano*) and delivering (*paradidomi*) the content of their confession and aligned their worship and life accordingly. Tradition was the Church's response to the Gospel, which was given "by a *divine* transmission or tradition."¹²⁹ Unlike the postulation of Harnack (and Sohm) that the primitive Church enjoyed a free, spontaneous, enthusiastic spiritual worship with an unorganized canon of faith, the New Testament Church developed its liturgy and

¹²⁷ Prosper of Aquitaine in the fifth century originally formulated the axiom of patristic liturgy, "the rule of prayer should lay down the rule of faith (*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*)."

¹²⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to the Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 166. "The interaction between prayer and confession of the faith has been a major force throughout the history of creeds and confessions and throughout the history of development of Christian doctrines." For details of the interactions, see 158–185.

¹²⁹ Congar traces the origin of tradition to the divine economy of God: the Father so loved the world that he gave (*paradounai*) his Son (Jo. 3:16, Rom. 8:32); and the Son gave himself up for us (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 5:2); and he bestowed the Spirit on the Church (Jo. 19:30). *The Meaning of Tradition*, 9–10. Cf. *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 25. "The source whence springs the *tradition* of the Church descends . . . like a cascade out of heaven, from God (the Father) who manifests himself in human terms in sending Jesus Christ . . . This manifestation, as knowledge, is revelation and tradition; as a present mystery is the Church."

communion with a concrete content and transmission of the tradition. As the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles illustrated that “those who received his *word* (preaching or *kerygma*) were *baptized* . . . And they remained faithful to the apostles’ *teaching* (*didache* in Greek, *doctrina* in Latin) and *fellowship*, to the *breaking of the bread* and the *prayers*,” the spiritual growth of the early Church was guided by the non-optional tradition through the supervision of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁰ The practice of Baptism and the Eucharist celebration were conducted faithfully with confessions of the entrusted tradition. It was not the ecumenical councils and political enforcement that determined the dogma of the early Church but the local Baptismal creeds and ‘the rule of faith’ (*regula fidei*) in the writings and preaching of the bishops that prepared and protected the ground for the orthodoxy.¹³¹ As the *Theotokos* controversy in the Council of Ephesus revealed (chapter four will discuss in details), no theological innovation could go against the popular piety and local liturgical tradition. What cultivated the development of dogma was not Greek philosophical influence but the tradition embedded in the worship of the early Church.

Second, as the tradition involves a careful *passing on* and an active *receiving* between the living subjects, it provides the Church with a dynamic sense of history as a venue of God’s ongoing revelation. Tradition is a living Gospel because it nourishes the

¹³⁰ D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewal Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 58. “Not only is there not a polarization between life in the Spirit and a concretized tradition, but both the content and transmission of the Jesus tradition was superintended by the Holy Spirit . . . Spiritual growth is indeed accomplished through the inscrutable working of the Spirit in the life of the believer. It is at the same time guided and instructed by the external forms of the faith, forms which give a specific content to the preaching, confession and organization that identified Christians as the unique body of Christ.”

¹³¹ Even after the creeds from Nicaea and Constantinople were formulated, the local creeds were authoritative with their connections to the apostolic faith and were not simply replaced by ecumenical symbols. For “the tenacity of local confessions,” see D. H. Williams, *Ibid.* 164–166.

Church, the historically located body of Christ.¹³² Because of the ongoing vitality of tradition, the Church can journey through the history faithfully and creatively. In contrast to the historically dynamic view of tradition, Harnack saw dogma and the early Church's tradition as a purely historical byproduct whose validity was limited to its own period. The German historian who idealized the confessional experience of individuals in the inner realm, projected atemporal Christianity without any historical dross caused by ever shifting conceptual schemes of time. His call for a return to 'dogma-less' or pre-dogmatized experiential Christianity in fact reveals the prejudice of his own modern liberal Protestant's view of reality and history.¹³³ History as envisaged by the Christian tradition is sacred because of God's progressive revelation with humanity and its culmination in the Christ-event.¹³⁴ The sacred history does not end with Christ and his apostles but continues to deepen the divine mystery to the succeeding generations of Christians with new questions and fresh reflections. In the historical process of tradition, dogma developed by the first five centuries of the Church is foundational in providing the key to interpret the Scripture and elucidate the Apostolic faith.¹³⁵ The historical shape of

¹³² Congar, *The Meaning of the Tradition*, 121. "Tradition is not merely memory; it is actual presence and experience. It is not purely conservative, but, in a certain way, creative. . . It is not inert but living . . . By nourishing the tissues of the body, the blood is rejuvenated in the arteries that carry it. Tradition is the living artery that receives an increase of the very life it communicates, in its act of transmission."

¹³³ Rowan Williams, "Does it make sense to speak of pre-Nicene orthodoxy?," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick* . ed. by Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4–5. "Harnack's *Verfallstheorie* version of church history, which is simply a liberal Protestant reincarnation of the patristic idea of heresy as a *degeneration* from orthodoxy . . . Harnack is still bound up in a philosophical world where 'inner' truthfulness is perennially at odds with and at risk from the deceitfulness of material history, and still disposed to see the heart of Christianity as a supernatural—non-worldly, non-historical—still point, to which the contradictory and compromised phenomena of time (persons, words, institutions) are related in an inexpressible or inscrutable way."

¹³⁴ Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, 258–270.

the Church guided by the essential dogma “continually prevents Christianity lapsing into a syncretism” and “the shape of these dogmas is enduring and cannot be altered without altering the essence of Christianity itself.”¹³⁵ Tradition directs the temporal journey of the Church with the compass of these dogmas so that she does not lose or confuse her identity with various contextual influences.¹³⁷

Patristic Tradition and Contextual Theology

The dynamic development of tradition by the early Church is to be recognized as a primary interpretation of the Gospel that sets both the guidance and an example for a viable theological contextualization for the subsequent generations of Christians.¹³⁸ I contend that the primacy of the patristic tradition cannot be abated as a mere historical study nor their legacy should be misread as a philosophical dilution of the biblical Christianity. Any disregard of this theological center would weaken not only the

¹³⁵ Robert W. Jenson distinguishes dogma from doctrines in its irreversibility that the former represents “a historic choice” for the Gospel and has a binding effect on the Church. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology I: The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17. “A dogmatic choice is one by which the church so decisively determines her own future that if the choice is wrongly made, the community determined by that choice is no longer in fact that the community of the gospel; thus no church thereafter exists to reverse the decision.” Cf. For the canonical role of the early Church, see D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: the Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 47–84.

¹³⁶ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Attractiveness of God: Essays in Christian Doctrine* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 55–56. “What gives these dogmas their shape is ultimately the historical shape of Christianity itself. They are not the product of sheer speculation delighting in its own activity. They are not the result of a popular cult making religious demands motivated by curious pressures in the folk consciousness. They are not the outcome of an Hellenization of Christianity. . . . These dogmas are necessary and inevitable as ‘a basic truth, at the top of the ‘hierarchy of truths’ and it is not Church’s business to multiply them.”

¹³⁷ Robert L. Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 179. “Without memory [of early Christian tradition], our intellectual life is impoverished, barren, ephemeral, subject to the whims of the moments.”

¹³⁸ Hanson, *The Attractiveness of God*, 64–65. “The Fathers danced with the Bible, and that dance has set a pattern to which our feet move too . . . This patristic interpretation of the Bible, and not the Bible alone, is the underlying bond which gives to Christians today that sense of unity which is expressing itself in the Ecumenical movement.”

ecclesiastical unity but also the Church's self-identity and function in the world as the apostolic and patristic community.¹³⁹ The theologians of the early Church were called "Fathers" because of their foundational work that interpreted and defended the original Gospel with "the apostolic canon of Scripture" and "the theological canon of apostolicity."¹⁴⁰ Incidentally, Harnack's metaphor of the kernel and husk is inadequate to capture "the inner logic, an internal necessity, in this transition—from *kerygma* to *dogma*." To illustrate the organic unity between the apostolic proclamation and patristic articulation, Wendy Helleman suggests a better metaphor, that of a seed and its growth.¹⁴¹ The image of a germinated seed gives us a point of departure for answering the question of identity for the early Church addressing the element of fixity and that of flexibility in a changing environment. The creedal formulation must be understood in this light. While the early Church upheld the centrality of Christ's suffering and death and resurrection, the formulation of axiomatic teachings regarding his deity and incarnation took shape in the context of Greco-Roman views of deity. The role of the creeds in this process of self-identity was crucial especially for the continuing identity of a meaningful community of

¹³⁹ George Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), 107. "The Church is 'Apostolic' indeed. But the Church is also 'Patristic.' She is intrinsically 'the Church of the Fathers.' These two 'notes' cannot be separated. Only by being 'Patristic' is the Church truly 'Apostolic.'" The witness of the Fathers is much more than simply a historic features, a voice from the past."

¹⁴⁰ Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition*, 13–15. Williams correctly points out the fallacy of the theological approach independent of patristic tradition (represented by strict Free Church movement) which rely on the inerrancy of Scripture and personal hermeneutic of the Holy Spirit for the insurance of orthodoxy. The tradition-less theology generates two errors to the Church: (1) proliferation of sectarianism and (2) susceptibility to accommodating "pseudo-Christian cultures."

¹⁴¹ Wendy E. Halleman, "Epilogue," in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, 429–511. Halleman preferred his metaphor of Hellenization to Harnack's "imagery of health and disease" and Reformers' *ad fonts*. The latter is rejected because the metaphor of source and outflow, or of pure mountain spring issuing into a muddy stream, like Harnack's, could signify a notion of increasing pollution and impurity.

faith in the face of opposition. As seen in the Arian controversy, the church could not interpret the Bible from the Bible alone but “needed a vocabulary and a conceptual framework that stemmed from the Bible but were also outside the Bible.”¹⁴² The fact that the early theologians had much difficulty agreeing on their articulated tenets of faith does not mean that they doubted their answers, or that political will eventually prevailed over theological integrity. Rather it means that they took the utmost care to protect and flourish the essential aspects of the faith, which had already been given in an “embryonic form.”

Harnack’s theory of Hellenization should be credited for forcing the issue of historical development and contextual aspect of theology to discuss. He had done Christianity a service in providing a need to examine its own dialectical development. Although his own assumption could not overcome the prejudice of his liberal theology and Enlightenment mentality,¹⁴³ he nevertheless gave a historical analysis for the Church to revisit the dynamic faith of the Church fathers. While many concur that Harnack’s polarization of Judaism and Hellenism was simplistic and reductionistic,¹⁴⁴ a theological

¹⁴² D. H. Williams, ““Do you know whom you worship?”: Did the Nicene Creed distort the pure Gospel or did it embody and protect it?” *Christian History & Biography* 85 (Winter 2005), 27. “All Christian thinkers of the time—‘orthodox’ and ‘heretical’—were drawing on contemporary philosophical language in order to frame theological truth. Terms such as *person*, *substance*, *essence*, and many others . . . were borrowed permanently for Christian purposes. Where there was obvious conflict between the Bible and Greek philosophy, the Bible took precedent for even the most erudite Christians.”

¹⁴³ According to Gadamer, human knowing always happens within particular ‘horizons’ of tradition and language: “the prejudice of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.” The mistake of Enlightenment is its self-deceived extrinsicism that it could stand outside of all prejudices as the judge: “the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999), 270.

¹⁴⁴ For a consensual view on the more interactive relationship between Judaism and Hellenism, as well as local traditions and larger Greek culture, see Martin Hengel’s *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); *The Hellenization of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London:

critique, pertinent to this project, must be made. Because of the intrinsic goodness of creation and the *imago dei* in humanity and God's sustaining activity, no culture should be excluded at the outset from experiencing and expressing God's love in a relevant way. As "no culture is so fallen that the Good News cannot be communicated in its terms,"¹⁴⁵ one cannot place one culture above or below the other. Each culture has its own linguistic and conceptual framework to engage with a particularly received tradition. Therefore, an assessment of a contextual theology must be drawn according to the faithful appreciation of the inherited faith accompanied with a congruent appropriation of its cultural experience and speech.

Summary and Transition

A defining characteristic of modern theology is the enthusiastic advocacy of divine passibility in various ways. To many contemporary theologians, the only viable understanding of God for humanity in the most violent century in history seems to be one who suffers with them in solidarity. This call for the recognition of the co-suffering God has an unprecedented scope across the theological spectrum and geographical landscape. The 'new orthodoxy' of the modern *theopaschite* movement believes that as love for other entails suffering, the compassionate God must have suffering within his divine reality.¹⁴⁶ The biblical descriptions of God both in the Old Testament prophetic writings

SCM, 1989); David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1988); E.P. Sanders et al. eds, *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 3 vol. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980-1982); and Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (London: SCM, 1960).

¹⁴⁵ W. A. Dyrness, "Beyond Niebuhr: The Gospel and Culture," *The Reformed Journal* 38 (1988): 12. A persistent criticism on Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* comes from his seemingly monolithic understanding of culture.

¹⁴⁶ Dennis Ngien, "God who suffers: If God does not grieve, then can He love at all? An Argument for God's Emotions," *Christianity Today* 41 (1997), 38–42.

and the passion story of Jesus Christ seem to attest to an unrestricted divine passibility espoused by these theologians. The modern rediscovery of divine passibility finds traditional theology, particularly developed in the early Church, responsible for altering the biblical God into a philosophical deity.

The criticism against the patristic appropriation of the Greek philosophical concepts and language has been steady since the Reformation and found its strong modern voice in Adolf von Harnack. The German historian influenced by the School of History of Religion claimed that the development of dogma in the early Church was the main culprit in transmuting the New Testament Christianity into a dogmatized and institutionalized religion. As a product of an excessive cultural assimilation, “dogma is a work of Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel,” meaning that dogma is entirely foreign to the original Gospel. The intrinsically universal spirit of the Gospel was swallowed by another universal spirit of Hellenism and lost its vitality until Luther came. Harnack’s judgment on the patristic tradition as an amalgamation of doctrinal intellectualization and ecclesial institutionalization brings all constructive theological attempts to a complete halt and redirects them to a simple experiential Christianity. The urge for ‘undogmatic Christianity’ as the original authentic faith misses the actual picture of the primitive Church. Doctrinal norms are inextricably bound up with the most primitive Christian liturgical celebrations. The history of doctrine was in full swing from the beginning of Christian faith expressed in the manifold forms of the liturgy such as hymns, prayers, confessions, and Eucharist rites, etc. The first Christian interlocutors with Greek philosophy like the Apologists and the fathers in the second and third centuries carried on their theological engagement with the principles of *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Spolatio*.

Their confidence in the antiquity of the Jewish Scripture and its fulfillment in Christ and the Church led them to Christianize or de-Hellenize the pagan concepts with biblical understanding. The primacy of the patristic tradition and its dynamic theological developments establish a guidance and model for the subsequent Christian contextualization of the Gospel including the East-Asian reflection of the impassible God for a faithful and creative doctrine of atonement.

Although Harnack's claim is questionable, his historical-theological argument is still a lingering epicenter around which many contemporary theologians build their non-traditional understandings of God's redemptive love. The next two chapters will examine two East-Asian theologians who attempt to contextualize the Gospel apart from the patristic tradition of *apatheia*. Like Harnack, Kazoh Kitamori sees Luther's Reformation as the crucial historical event to recover the biblical gospel from the derivative history of dogma.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 130. "The Reformation is not merely an event in the history of dogma (According to Harnack, the Reformation even marks the end of the history of dogma!) In a deeper sense, the Reformation is an event in gospel history."

CHAPTER THREE

Kazoh Kitamori's Theology of the Pain of God and Japanese Theology of the Cross

Introduction

Several tributes about Kitamori's work must be rendered from the outset. First, his *Theology of the Pain of God* was the earliest systematic theology not only in Japan but also in East Asia. While earlier Japanese and Chinese Christian thinkers such as Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930), Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960), and Watchman Nee (1903-1972), published their influential works, theirs were more of biblical commentaries and essays and not strictly theological in the technical sense of the word. Second, Kitamori's work received extensive international accolades.¹ It was translated into many languages and highly praised with many expectations and interactions.² He became famous 'overnight' both abroad and at home.³ Third, Kitamori was the first one who revived the theology of the cross in the contemporary theological reflections.⁴ Although Bonhoeffer also emphasized the significance of the suffering of God in the world, the

¹ The notable interlocutors were Carl Michalson (1960), Heinrich Ott (1966), Jürgen Moltmann (1972), Dorothe Soelle (1973), Hans Küng (1978), Rudolf Bohren (1980), Hans von Balthasar (1983), and Alistair McGrath (1994). Emil Brunner told Kitamori before he concluded his missionary teaching in Japan: "Your theology is opening up a new line." See Kitamori's preface to the third edition. *Theology of the Pain of God*, 11.

² According to the preface of Anri Morimoto written in 2005, *Theology of the Pain of God* was translated into English (1965), German (1972), Spanish (1975), Italian (1975) and Korean (1987).

³ Kitamori became a symbol and a voice of the postwar Japanese theology and Church that in preparing the Crown Prince's visit to America and England in 1950, the palace officials asked him to brief the future emperor on Christianity.

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Pâque le Mystere*, trans. by R. Givord (Paris: Cerf, 1981), 9. "Depuis quelques années, en effet, la pensée d'un Dieu souffrant est devenu quasi omniprésente Kitamori l'a mise officiellement en circulation . . ."

Japanese theologian articulated the idea of the divine pain earlier and more consistently.⁵ Lastly, Kitamori's book embodied a prophetic witness to his political and social situation. During the heyday of Japanese imperialism, he preached the pain of God. Unlike some Japanese theologians, he eschewed any nationalistic theology or ideology of *theologia gloriae*.⁶ Although Kitamori did not mention any painful reality of people in other Asian countries under Japanese aggression (understandably due to the media tightly controlled by the military regime), his idea of pain reflects the toils of ordinary Japanese people during the wartime and thus is "more than an abstract idea." Like the confessors of Barmen Declaration in Nazi Germany, Kitamori cried out a moral suffering and spiritual anguish as the mighty Japanese imperial army was marching in glory.⁷

This chapter first will describe the principal motifs of Kitamori's theology that articulate the pain of God in a central and dynamic manner. Then it will examine a major inherent problem of Japanese contextual theology that Kitamori attempted to construct apart from the tradition of *apatheia*. Finally, selected tenets of Luther's theology of the

⁵ He introduced the notion first in his graduate paper, "The Knowledge of God in Christ," in 1937 and followed with more publications, *The Lord of the Cross* (1940), *Theology and Creed* (1943), and *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946). He wrote a total of forty-three books on the topic of divine pain. For the exhaustive bibliography of Kitamori, see Asakawa Toru's *Kitamori Kazo: Theologian of the Pain of God* (Ph. D. dissertation, McGill University, 2004), 270–274.

⁶ Sadly there are still some Japanese theologians who unconsciously subscribe to the rationalization of the Japanese imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, Koyama in his survey of a contemporary Asian theological landscape alludes to a partial contribution of the Japanese imperialism, which advanced the modernization and revived the nationalism of those other Asians colonized by Japan. Cf. Kosuke Koyama's *Water Buffalo Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 12.

⁷ According to Yoshio Noro, who wrote the first doctoral study on Kitamori's theology, the Japanese theologian of divine pain became "famous overnight" after the War by directing his devastated countrymen to a consolation and hope. Calling his theology "Kitamorian Theology," many Christians in Japan exclaimed that at last the Japanese Christian Church has produced her own original theology in the theology of the pain of God. Yoshio Noro, *Impassibilitas Dei* (Th. D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1955), 29.

cross will be revisited in the light of Kitamorian interpretation in order to assess the implications of Luther's soteriology with the respect to doctrine of divine impassibility.

The Motifs of Theology of the Pain of God

Kitamori defines the foremost task of theology to be "a precise understanding of the gospel." "The glad tidings" of the gospel show "the God who resolves our human pain by his own."⁸ Thus, pain is axiomatic to comprehend God and his unique gospel. The pain of God is rooted in his love, which overcomes his wrath over the sinners through the mediated work of Christ on the cross. Kitamori articulated his theology of the pain of God according to the following motifs: (1) an autobiographical theology, (2) pain as a central theme of biblical theology, (3) a critique to two modern Western theologies of God, (4) a contextualization of *theologia crucis* with Japanese cultural experience, and (5) an ethical mysticism.

Theology of the Pain of God as an Autobiographical Theology

Kitamori's theology was first rooted in his own personal experience just as Luther's understanding of God could not be separated from his thunderstorm experience.⁹ According to a biographical study of Asakawa Toru, "Kitamori, first, articulated the pain of God as his own word; then he found the words 'pain of God' in Jeremiah [31:20, "My heart is pained"]."¹⁰ The Japanese theologian was a keen analyst and recorder of his own

⁸ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 20.

⁹ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. by R. C. Shultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 8. "There can be no doubt that experience is one of the principles of his theology. It is, of course, not a source of knowledge in and by itself, but it definitely is a medium through which the knowledge is received."

¹⁰ Toru, 7. This section of Kitamori's biographical aspect of theology owes most to Toru's thorough biographical sketch.

spiritual journey that he wrote more than 1300 pages and published two volumes of theological autobiography.¹¹

Kitamori was born and raised in a Buddhist family. He was disenchanted by the friction among the Buddhist monks in the temple where his family worshiped. As a pensive adolescent, he began to read the New Testament. Struggling between the anxiety of life and the sovereignty of God, he looked for the certainty of faith with personal conviction.¹² He read Karl Barth and Uchimura and found comfort in the Psalms and Dostoevsky's works. At the age of eighteen, he discovered Luther's theology in Shigehiko Sato's *The Fundamental Idea of Luther*.¹³ He was drawn to the idea of *simul justus et peccator*. Here the ongoing mediation of Christ on the cross decisively grasped Kitamori and he was baptized. His life-long engagement with Luther's Theology of the cross also coincided with his experience of the reality of death first through a smallpox epidemic in his town. And then on his way to seminary, his train ran over and killed a little girl and he witnessed the anguish of the mother. Later, in his first pastorate, the twenty-two-year-old Kitamori conducted the funeral service of another young girl. The death of the unbaptized girl was later reflected in his book.¹⁴ By then, the Japanese

¹¹ Kazoh Kitamori, *Shingakuteki Jiden I* [Theological Autobiography I] (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1960) and *Shingakuteki Jiden II* [Theological Autobiography II] (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1968).

¹² He later wrote on this topic in *Christianity in Japan* (1966) by contrasting Descartes' notion of certainty with a biblical and theological understanding.

¹³ Shigehiko Sato, *The Fundamental Idea of Luther As Seen in His Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Tokyo: The Society of Luther Research, 1933). Sato, who became a Lutheran through the study of the works of Luther, introduced the German Reformer to the Japanese Church, especially his students in Tokyo Lutheran Seminary. Kitamori entered seminary primarily because of his desire to learn from Sato, who unfortunately died of a stomach cancer before Kitamori began to study. Kitamori, nevertheless, stayed and became a professor of the seminary in 1942 (at the age of 26), which later became Tokyo Union Seminary under the United Church (*Kyodan*) of Christ in Japan.

theologian had a fully developed theology that in the pain of God, even the unbelievers were embraced and transported into solidarity with the believers.

During seminary (at the age of nineteen), Kitamori first began to use the term, “pain of God,” after “his mystical dialogue with the crucified Christ.”¹⁵ Two years later, he found the expression, “the pain (*hâmâh*) of God” in Jeremiah 31:20, which fascinated him for the rest of his life.¹⁶ According to Noru, “hitherto Kitamori uses the term ‘the pain of God’ privately, but now this word was ‘supported and guaranteed by the Bible.’”¹⁷ By the end of 1937 (at the age of twenty-one), Kitamori saw the pain of God “the touchstone, the keystone and the cornerstone of his theology,” which explains the Trinitarian mystery of ‘*sola crux*.’ It is clear that Kitamori’s theology of divine pain was not the product of abstract speculation but was rooted in his personal life. Later as the professor of systematic theology at Tokyo Union Seminary, the Japanese Lutheran theologian prolifically wrote on the theme of God’s pain always sprinkled with his personal reflections.¹⁸

¹⁴ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 90. “When the believer who had felt the pain of God in his heart loves his unbelieving neighbor as intensely as himself, the unbeliever is borne on the body of the believer into God’s pain . . . Through the light of the believer the unbeliever is transferred from darkness into light.”

¹⁵ Noru, 20–21. Cf. Kitamori, *Theological Autobiography* I, 107. “Jesus calls disciples, friends and sons those who are slow to understand Him. He steadily keeps contact with them . . . Why doesn’t He abandon them? It would be opprobrious for Him to touch them. God, on the other hand, dies on the cross for those sinners and rebels. How difficult it is to understand His love and how unfathomable the pain of God is! He does not abandon the desperate. He loves them unto death even if they are hateful. If I am shattered by this tremendous love of Jesus and imitate Him, I can be a true neighbor like Christ.”

¹⁶ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 151. “Ever since this strange word struck me, I have meditated on it night and day. It was literally a strange word for me.”

¹⁷ Noru, 21. Cf. Kitamori, *Theological Autobiography* II, 11–12, “For the moment it seems to be that this is the only place in the Bible that the word ‘pain’ is employed, Luther translated the phrase by employing the word ‘pain’ (*Schmerz*) as well.”

¹⁸ Before his epoch-making *The Theology of the Pain of God* was published in 1946, he wrote *The Lord of the Cross* in 1940 and *Theology and Creeds* in 1943. Afterward, he published *The Character of the*

Theology of the Pain of God as a Central Biblical Theology

Kitamori sees “the heart of the Gospel” in “the pain of God.”¹⁹ He quotes Jeremiah 31:20 most frequently as the quintessential biblical revelation about the divine pain: “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are *pained* for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord” (KJV).²⁰ This verse is the “peak of the Old Testament religion” which announced God’s love and new covenant in the midst of the Babylonian captivity. The national shame which came as a result of God’s wrath over the sin of his people, was about to end because of his undying love for Israel. It was in pain where God’s love overcomes God’s wrath. As the radical turning point within God, the *hamah* or “God’s love rooted in the pain” is the content of the new covenant. What Jeremiah captured about the nuances of the Hebrew word continues in Isaiah (63:15) and through the entire Bible.

In the New Testament, Paul reiterated the pain of God in his theology of the crucified Christ: “‘God on the Cross’ for Paul is ‘God in pain’ for Jeremiah.”²¹ The

Gospel in 1948, *Martin Luther* in 1951, *The Logic of Salvation* in 1953, *God* in 1953, *The Explanation of the Confession of Faith of the Church of Christ in Japan* in 1955, *Theology Today* in 1956, *God and Man* in 1956, and *Happiness* in 1957.

¹⁹ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 19. “The heart of the gospel was revealed to me as the ‘pain of God.’”

²⁰ According to Kitamori, Jeremiah 31:20 and Isaiah 63:15 are the only two verses to use the *hamah* in relation to God. When referring to the human condition, *hamah* signifies agony, anguish, suffering, distress, and pain. Though God’s pain is qualitatively different than human’s pain, the word can still impart an important truth about God that “*hamah* implies pain and love, interchangeably or simultaneously.” Kitamori found his reading of Jeremiah 31:20 consistent with Luther’s (*Schmerz*), Japanese Literary Version’s (*Itamu*), Calvin’s (*dolor*) and others like Keil, Peake, Giesebrecht, and Menge. See the Appendix in *Theology of the Pain of God*, 151–162.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 20. “Jeremiah may be called the Paul of the Old Testament; Paul, the Jeremiah of the New. . . God as revealed to Jeremiah served for a prophecy and a witness to God as revealed to Paul. When ‘God on the cross’ is obscured, the theology of ‘God in pain’ will serve in clearing this obscurity away.”

meaning of the Cross of Christ lies in the revelation of God's pain, which unites the love of God and the wrath of God. For the unitive role of God's pain, Kitamori agrees with the interpretation of Theodosius Harnack who understood Luther's notion of the cross as the *tertium* or third reality about God.²² The theology of the pain of God parallels the *theologia crucis* in the unifying function of Christ's suffering on the cross.

Luther calls the death of Christ "death against death" (*mors contra mortem*); I call the pain of God "pain against pain" (*dolor contra dolorem*). Just as "death against death" is the resurrection, as "pain against pain" is God's love which resolves our pain. For this reason, the message of the pain of God is called *glad tidings* . . . Our reality is such that God ought not to forgive or to enfold it. "I cannot endure . . ." (Isa. 1:13). "I am weary of relenting (Jer.15:6). The living and true God must sentence us sinners to death. This is the manifestation of "his wrath." This wrath of God is absolute and firm . . . The "pain" of God reflects his will to love the object of his wrath. Theodosius Harnack points out that the two elements—the wrath of God and the love of God—produce the "tertiary" (*tertium*). This "tertiary" is the pain of God. Luther sees "God fighting with God" at Golgotha (*da streydet Gott mitt Gott*). God who must sentence sinners to death fought with God who wishes to love them. The fact that this fighting God is not two different gods but the same God causes his pain.²³

The pain of God illuminates the biblical doctrine of atonement. God who heals our wounds is a wounded healer: "with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). God chose pain to embrace the sinners and agony to grant them peace.²⁴

Kitamori further renders *three orders of love* (*ordo amoris*) to summarize his understanding of biblical soteriology.²⁵ The first order is God's *immediate* love for his

²² Theodosius Harnack, *Luther's Theologie* vol.1 (München: Christoph Kaiser, 1927), 338.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22. "The Lord was unable to resolve our death without putting himself to death. God himself was broken, was wounded, and suffered, because he embraced those who should not be embraced. By embracing our reality, God grants us absolute peace. *But the peace has been completely taken away from the Lord who grants us absolute peace.* 'My god, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 117–127.

objects, such as his love for the Son and humankind prior to the fall. The primordial love of God is comparable to ‘parental love’ and is “smooth, flowing, and intense.” Because of sin, humanity lost the unhindered love of God and faced his wrath. The second order is the painful love that originated from God’s forgiveness and embracing of sinners. The pain is double-edged: God forgives those who should not be forgiven and he sends “his only beloved Son”, who has been his object of eternal immediate love, to suffer unto death. The third order is the victory of God’s pain, which “points to Christ’s *resurrection* from the dead.” Here God becomes “not a father in the [first order’s] immediate sense, but Father as ‘Redeemer,’ mediated by and rooted in the pain of God” for humanity. His pain is healed by the resurrection of Christ and his reunion with the Father.²⁶ This victory of God’s pain entails an “ethics of love” for his children as they participate and bear witness to the sacred pain with their own.

Theology of the Pain of God as a Critique to Two Modern Western Views of God

Kitamori, who saw the pain of God as the essence of the gospel, was not pleased with anyone’s complementing the ‘originality’ of his theology.²⁷ For him the significance of the theology lies not in originality but rather in a “new enunciation of the gospel” just as Luther renewed the old truth of the gospel for his time by recovering the theology of the cross.²⁸ The Japanese Lutheran theologian thought that his new articulation in the tradition of *theologia crucis* was urgent particularly because of the two

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 121. “Then, for the first time was God’s pain healed. God the Father, who had sent his only beloved Son far away, made him suffer and die, now received him close to his side. How great the joy of the Father must be!”

²⁷ Kazuo Muto, “Kitamorian Theology,” *Japan Christian Quarterly* 19 (Aug, 1953), 321.

²⁸ Kazoh Kitamori, “The Theology of the Pain of God,” *Japan Christian Quarterly* 19 (Autumn, 1953), 318. “It may well be said that the task of my theology is the new enunciation of the theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*) in the light of the present day situation.”

dominant Western theologies: on one hand liberalism represented by Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann and Harnack, and on the other, Barthianism. Both concealed the depth of the love of God because they did not fully recognize the pain of God. Liberal theology advocates the “all embracing God” without his pain and Barth “rejects the all-embracing God.”²⁹

In his attempt to “win over the theology which advocates a God who has no pain,” Kitamori “was consciously trying to offer tenacious ‘resistance’ to Barth.”³⁰ The main problem with the Swiss theologian was his primary concern about the proper form of preaching the gospel rather than its content. The accent of Barth’s theology was heavy on the exclusive and independent nature of God’s revelation, which stems from “the qualitative distinction between God and man and God and the world.” His overemphasis on the opposition of the special revelation over general revelation makes the first commandment its theological axiom (*Das erste Gebot als theologische Axiom*). According to this theology, the confession of the Church today is that “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” Even though Barth talked about the grace of God, Jesus as the mediator, and the gospel, his overarching claim is about the absolute obedience to the Word of God. For Kitamori, the Swiss theologian overlooks the fundamental reality of human sinfulness that people are not able to perform obedience. Thus, Barth’s theology,

²⁹ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 22. “A task of the ‘theology of the pain of God’ is to win over the theology which advocates a God who has no pain . . . the theology of the pain of God deals with two sides of the truth, and so our present task also must be directed against the two sides: (1) against the position which rejects the all-embracing God, and (2) against the position which excludes the pain of God from his embracing love.”

³⁰ Kano Yamamoto, “Theology in Japan: Main Trends of Our Time,” *Japan Christian Quarterly* 32 (Jan, 1966), 40.

which is dominated by its prolegomena, espouses the law rather than the gospel.³¹ The picture of God in Barth is “a total person without tearing and pain” (*ein Ganzes ohne Risse und Schmerzen*).³² God without pain is God who does not embrace.

Whereas Barth ignores the pain of God with his one-sided insistence on the divine transcendence, Kitamori finds liberal theology problematic in its uncritical support of divine immanence. Liberal theologians recognize the universal love of God without a clear understanding of its mediated nature. They speak frequently of divine love but neglect the centrality of the cross and the pain of God. They sing ‘soprano’ of God’s love without its bass that sounds from the depth of divine pain.³³ They hold “the im-mediate love” of God “without the mediator” and assume “the marriage of the finite and the infinite” in the *natural* unfolding of God’s love.³⁴ Their unilateral confession of God’s all-embracing love discounts any doctrine of atonement that referred to the blood of Christ as ‘magical.’ According to Kitamori, “Church history knows no such instances in which the pain of God was denied on such a large scale as in liberal theology.”³⁵ Since Satan’s last temptation to Jesus through Peter, who said, “This shall never happen to you”

³¹ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 23. “Even though this theology speaks of the ‘gospel’ as its content, we must admit that the form which determines this content is strictly the law, the first commandment . . . Even though this theology speaks of the ‘mediator,’ the theme of the prolegomena as its premise is the opposition of general revelation and special revelation.”

³² *Ibid.* Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 612.

³³ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 24. “The ‘love of God’ of liberal theology since Schleiermacher is nothing but the ‘soprano’ of these happy people. They did not have the ears to hear the bass which is the pain of God sounding out of the depths.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 38. “Liberalism regarded God’s love revealed in Jesus as *immediate* love; this exists without a mediator. Paul said this view makes “Christ [to have] died to no purpose” (Gal. 2:21). This makes God’s love completely *natural*, as for instance in Matthew 5:45; 6:25ff, where God’s love is taught as being revealed in ‘nature.’ Here God’s love can exist *without* Jesus Christ; Jesus had simply grasped this love, and did no more than convey it to men.”

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24

(Mat. 16:22), “he has never been at work so hard as in liberalism.”³⁶ Kitamori concludes that “love-monism” of the liberal theology, particularly that of Schleiermacher which cannot say anything about God’s wrath, is not the gospel at all.³⁷

In contrast to the criticism to modern Western theologies, Kitamori draws some affinity from two modern philosophers: Schelling and Hegel. Although neither of them fully grasped the pain of God which comes only through revelation, their thoughts approximate the biblical motif of divine pain. The later philosophy of Schelling treats the notion of “nature in God” and implies a polarity or a division in God.³⁸ As he pursued this thought to “speculate about the explanation of evil,” he “never discovered the pain of God” and became rather confused in the very explanation. Hegel’s philosophy of history asserts that “God completely embraces our reality,” as he rules the world with reason. Hegel’s God does not suffer pain because he “remains a universal being, undisturbed and invulnerable” by his “cunning of reason” (*List der Vernunft*).³⁹ Although Hegel’s rationalism is sophisticated and refined, it “cannot bring salvation to our reality” nor is superior to the “crudeness of theology” that defies any method of ‘representation’ (*Vorstellung*) and concept (*Begriff*) employed by philosophy.⁴⁰ Kitamori was

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38. “Therefore Harnack’s *The Essence of Christianity* actually shows the essence of what is *not* Christianity. The Catholic theologian Denifle’s criticism of *The Essence of Christianity*—“his Christianity is *no* Christianity”—is more than sarcasm: it contains the truth.” Cf. Kazoh Kitamori, *The Theology of Today*, 51.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26. “Schelling even says, ‘that all of history is virtually an enigma without a concept of an *agonizing God*.’ And again, ‘this is because any essence becomes clearer only in the face of its opposite. Unless there is division in principle, unity cannot witness to its omnipotence. Unless there is discord, love actually cannot exist.’ Kitamori cites Schelling from a Japanese translation of *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1809).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

sympathetic to these philosophical ideas and hoped that his theology of the pain of God would extend itself to them.⁴¹

Theology of the Pain of God as a Japanese Contextualization of theologia crucis

Diagnosing that Western theology in general failed to acknowledge the biblical theme of the pain of God, Kitamori believes that Japanese history and culture has been prepared to receive it and deepen its significance. He sees salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) taking an important page turn in the Japanese contextualization of the gospel. Kitamori bases his “gospel history” on Paul’s sermon on Mars Hills (Acts 17:26-27), which suggests that every nation has its own limitations in time (“allotted periods”) and space (“boundaries of habitation”).⁴² When Jews rejected the truth of God, the gospel went to the Gentiles. When the Greco-Roman world epitomized by the Roman Catholic Church stumbled again, the truth of the gospel went to the Germans. “The Reformation represents ‘Christianity in the understanding of the German spirit.’”⁴³ Both periods missed the pain of God, “the decisive quality revealed in Scripture.” Even Luther

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31. “The ‘crudeness’ of theology is far superior to any human ‘refinement.’”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27. Kitamori saw a particular relevance of Hegel that he called the latter’s philosophy to ‘be vitalized today.’ Cf. According to an American missionary in Japan, Kitamori’s methodology is largely adapted from Hegel’s dialectical movement and some of the impact of the delightful presentation of Kitamori was inevitably lost in translation. See the review of *Theology of the Pain of God* by Norman H. Nuding, *Japan Christian Quarterly* 32 (July, 1966): 223–224.

⁴² Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 130. “The preservation and spread of the gospel cannot be achieved simply by an individual, but only by a unit such as a race or a people. New possibilities of understanding the gospel are necessarily related to the ‘boundaries of habitation.’” Cf. Kitamori, *Theology and Creed*, 28ff.

⁴³ *Ibid.* Kitamori cites from Reinhold Seeberg’s *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* vol. 4 (Leipzig: A. Deichertochte Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1917), 7. “das Christentum in Verstaendnis des Germanischen Geistes.”

who was sensitive toward God's grace, "did not grasp the meaning of grace as God's pain."⁴⁴

The reasons that Japanese culture may understand this key biblical theme of pain far better than others are two-fold. First, as a non-Western culture, Japanese Christianity is oblivious to a limited heritage of the Western theology bequeathed by the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. Although the early Greek fathers formulated the concept of Trinity in "a perfect and clear expression," their view of God was confined by the language of 'person,' 'essence,' and 'substance.' The primary focus of Greek and Roman churches was on a crystal clear apprehension of the "immanent trinity" and did not contribute much to the further understanding of the "economic trinity" which they received from "the primitive church."⁴⁵

The other and more principal reason for the recovery of divine pain in the Japanese culture comes from its indigenous 'sense' of tragedy.⁴⁶ Japanese people, particularly the common people, are familiar with the notion of tragedy through their traditional dramas (*kabuki*). Japanese tragedies are 'strikingly different' from those of other countries. For instance, Greek dramas are based on the tragedies of the incidents or individual human characters which are somehow controlled by fate that human beings cannot resist. There is always a sense of the superhuman power that dominates people

⁴⁴ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 131–133.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 133–134. Kitamori prefers 'sense' to 'spirit' because a 'sense' is more realistic and deeper than a 'spirit.' The latter may "belong to the upper, educated and cultured classes" while the former represents the common people—"the uneducated, the uncultured, and the nonreligious." It is the sense of common people that best represents the mind of a nation. Here one can glimpse another important characteristic of Kitamori's theology that he wants to relate theology to life and experience of ordinary people, not elites and pundits.

and events. But in Japanese dramas, everything is done on the level of human relationship. The Japanese word that defines the quintessential aspect of interpersonal tragedy is *tsurasa* (つらサ), which is deeper than ‘bitterness’ or ‘sadness.’⁴⁷ Common Japanese people can relate to *tsurasa* better than the upper classes because they are not timid about the genuine outward expression of the pain in *tsurasa*. During the play when the *kabuki* actors enact the parents who “make their beloved son suffer and die for the sake of loving and making others [the family or clan] live,” the general audience responds to the in-concealable cries of the characters with their own tears.⁴⁸ For Kitamori, “the Japanese mind, which had seen the deepest heart of his fellow man in pain, will come to see the deepest heart of the Absolute God in pain” because “the true knower of man (*Menschen-kenner*) is the knower of God (*Gottes-kenner*).”⁴⁹ In the “age of death and pain,” he claims that the Japanese mind can “most vividly” discern the pain of God, the universal truth for the suffering world.

While highlighting the Japanese indigenization of the gospel that “this universal truth [of God’s pain] would not have been discerned without Japan as its medium,” Kitamori does not uncritically collapse the biblical pain of God into the Japanese *tsurasa*. He renders three important distinctions of divine pain that Japanese people must

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 135. “This category of *tsurasa*, in my opinion, distinguishes Japanese tragedies from those of other countries . . . Shakespeare’s tragedies are characterized by bitterness and sadness, but they do not have *tsurasa*. *Tsurasa* is the fundamental characteristic of Japanese tragedies.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* “*Tsurasa*, the basic principle in Japanese tragedy, is realized when one suffers and dies, or makes his beloved son suffer and die, for the sake of loving and making others live. Even though he tries hard to conceal and endure his agony, his cries filtering through his efforts are heard. When the Japanese playgoers hear these cries, they shed tears speechlessly. It is correct to say that nothing moves the mind of the Japanese as deeply as these spectacles.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

recognize in order to deepen their *tsurasa* as a viable theological conduit of the gospel. First, God's pain reveals "the heart of God who loves the unlovable" through the sacrifice of his beloved son. Japanese *tsurasa* is directed only at the lovable ones such as one's clan or village: "the one saved is most precious to the one making the sacrifice."⁵⁰ The pain in the Japanese sense does not know "the pain which is experienced by loving the unworthy, the unlovable, and even the enemy."⁵¹

Second, the self-centered character of *tsurasa* can be overcome only by God's pain. While Japanese sensitivity to pain is useful to understand God's pain, it "retains the selfish motive and illusion" in the fallen human nature. Here, Kitamori formulates his own theological concept of analogy in terms of 'pain.' Defining the Catholic idea of "analogy of being" as a method of identifying "similarity in dissimilarity," the Japanese theologian assesses that the traditional *analogia entis* did not go further than expressing a continuity of God's work based on similarity between God and humanity. This use of analogy is "thoroughly positive" and "positive theology," though necessary in some aspect, can confuse human reality as divine reality.⁵² The Catholic analogy of being 'hurriedly' seeks to speak of God in terms of similarity without seriously considering the 'problem of disobedience' in the fallen humanity. As a corrective to the traditional analogy of being, Kitamori thinks that "analogy of pain" can relate God's essence to

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 55–56. "The analogy of being' may be called 'positive theology' . . . When theology is driven by an impulse to dare to say something about God, it is not unreasonable for it to take a positive attitude. The concept of analogy aims to express itself in a 'daring manner' . . . But when do we find the guarantee that the being of man is *allowed* to serve the being of God? . . . Do not willfulness, illusion, and disobedience accompany service based on similarity? When we dare to speak with similarity as our medium, are we not making the mistake of ascribing to God what should not be ascribed to him?"

humanity with an important theological qualification. The soteriological implication of ‘*analogia doloris*’ improves the Catholic *analogia entis* which “goes no further than the order of creation.” It is clear that Kitamori does not take the axiom of pain from his culture but from Scripture, and he wants to transform the limited, ‘disobedient sensitivity’ of his native *tsurasa* with the biblical revelation of divine pain.

Third, the Japanese pathos of *tsurasa* needs to reflect on God’s pain manifested in the historical event of the cross of Christ in order to become ethically “productive and truthful.”⁵³ Kitamori is conscious of a certain aspect of Japanese mentality that can obstruct the Japanese contextualization of the gospel. Influenced by Mahayana Buddhism and its concept of *Mu* (無) and *Ku* (空), ‘nothingness’ and ‘void,’ the Japanese mind takes the transitory nature of human existence as absolute as the belief in God is to Christians. The non-metaphysical view of life that does not consider any permanent concrete reality such as the ideas of ‘self’ and ‘others’, ‘here’ and ‘there,’ cultivates an “aesthetic contemplation” or “the non-involvement attitude” in the Japanese mind.⁵⁴ While the Buddhist notion of detachment can often help Japanese people find comfort in difficult times by negating the permanence of suffering, it prevents them from facing life with “a singleminded engagement.” This Japanese trait has a fatal weakness, particularly in the “attitude toward politics, in the form of opportunism.” Kitamori attributes the lack

⁵³ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 138. “Sensitivity toward pain, separated from God, is in danger of losing its ethical implications. ‘Play’ (*Spiel*) can mean ‘drama’ or ‘game.’ It is fatal when the sensitivity toward pain is used in terms of games. Games do not have ethical connotations.”

⁵⁴ Kazoh Kitamori, “The Japanese Mentality and Christianity,” *Japan Christian Quarterly* 26 (July 1960), 171.

of active Japanese protest during the war to the detachment mentality.⁵⁵ He avers that the pain of God alone can intensify *tsurasa* and convert it into “the basis of ethics.”

Theology of the Pain of God as an Ethical Mysticism

Kitamori’s concern to transform *tsurasa* with the pain of God into an ethical matrix is most clearly displayed in his ‘mysticism of pain.’⁵⁶ One can easily detect from reading his works that the Japanese theologian’s main object is to solve the problem of human pain by relating it to the pain of God. The solution is a mystical union between God and people through and in pain. “*I am dissolved in the pain of God and become one with him in pain.*”⁵⁷ The biblical language of baptism and discipleship posits this transformative mystical union: “We are buried therefore with him by baptism into death?” (Romans 6:4); “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20); “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24); “Share his sufferings, becoming like him in death” (Phil. 3:10); and “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps . . . By his wounds have you been healed” (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Regarding the mystical union of pain, Luther also spoke of *condolore*, “to suffer together” and *mysticam mortem*, “mystical death” as he read Romans 6:5, “For if we have been united with him a death like his.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 174. “We must admit that during the last war many so-called progressive intelligentsia were not true to their convictions but co-operated with the fascist regime. When we read the record of the French Resistance during the last war, we feel ashamed of our lack of parallel activities? . . . Is it any wonder, then, that Christianity has won so few converts in the last hundred years?”

⁵⁶ Muto assesses that the strength and depth of Kitamori’s theology is made of mysticism. “Kitamorian Theology,” 323.

⁵⁷ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Cf. Martin Luther, *Luthers Virkesybg über den Römerbrief* vol.1, ed. by J. Ficker (Leipzig: Dietrich’sche Verlagshandlung, 1925), 54.

According to Kitamori, the mysticism of pain is not an “ordinary mysticism” and differs from other mysticisms in three ways. First, this ‘sound mysticism’ of divine pain negates the ‘immediacy’ of the relation between human and the ultimate reality shared by ‘all other mysticisms.’ While ‘becoming one with’ or ‘to be dissolved in’ is an indispensable characteristic of mysticism, biblical mysticism must deny an immediacy of union because “‘immediacy’ rejects the pain of God and makes the death of Christ in vain.”⁵⁹ The critical error of mysticism comes from its tendency to neglect the mediator and the pain of God in its simple identification of God and human. The sheer immediacy of ‘unsound mysticism’ must be overcome and replaced by an immediacy redeemed and reformulated by God’s pain: “*we become immediately at one with God who denies immediacy.*” Kitamori ultimately finds the basis of Christian mysticism in ‘the doctrine of justification’ rather than an absorptive union. Gal. 2:20 illustrates “the inner relationship between mysticism and justification”: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lived in me,’ immediately follows with the terms of justification, ‘the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.’”⁶⁰ For the Japanese theologian, the mysticism of pain takes place when one internalizes the costly reality of justification.

The second characteristic of mysticism is the enjoyment of God or *fruitio Dei* as expressed by Augustine. Whereas ordinary mysticism emphasizes the enjoyment of God such that the enjoyment is selfishly motivated, the mysticism of pain recognizes a proper

⁵⁹ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 74. “Mysticism boldly expresses immediacy. It is no accident that liberal theology, which denies emphatically the pain of God, is considered mystical (as in Emil Brunner’s *Mysticism and the World*).”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 74–75.

and deeper enjoyment of God. The biblical mysticism recognizes that God's forgiving love is so intense and his pain "envelops us so completely that we cannot even hate ourselves any longer."⁶¹ In the pain of God rooted in his love, "all the sin clinging to our enjoyment" is disposed and we recover God as the true object of our enjoyment. The redemptive pain of God purges our illusion for a self-directed enjoyment of God. Like Luther, Kitamori is critical of the medieval ascetic monasticism. Defining it 'a pious play' (*ein frommes Spiel*) as Karl Holl called it, the Japanese theologian thinks that 'mysticism of suffering' of the Middle Ages was induced by 'inner will power.'⁶² As long as it is inner, it is potentially manipulative and self-deceived. Even if one turns 'from carnal to spiritual pleasure,' it is simply an exchange of the 'hedonistic' tastes as long as such pain is inflicted from *within* rather than '*outside*.' It is not the self-willed wound but the wrath of God that renders a redemptive medium of divine pain for us.⁶³ Authentic mysticism of divine pain in the matrix of conquered wrath alone balances our enjoyment of God with a gratitude sharpened by pain.

The mediated and redefined enjoyment of God leads to the third and the most crucial distinction of the mysticism of pain, which lies in "its *ethical nature*." Kitamori is critical of the insistence of the ordinary mysticism that it is "complete in itself."

"Mysticism is apt to be complacent, assuming it is complete; that is why mysticism

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 83. "What amazing truth it is that the wrath of God, which should have wounded and weakened us, becomes the medium of the pain of God which heals and strengthens us. Certainly the wrath of God is outside of our control, but it is the proof of our conquered and resolved reality when used as a medium."

usually ends in contemplative quietism.”⁶⁴ Such ‘unsound mysticism’ distorts the ongoing grace of God in life, overlooking that sin still presents a problem for Christians. The mysticism of pain is, in contrast, moral and brings about sanctification. The Japanese theologian asserts that Luther’s dictum, “*Semper justus, semper peccator*,” must go one step further from the realm of justification to that of sanctification and claim, “Sanctified but still a sinner.”⁶⁵ The Christians in tune with the divine pain recognize their need for God’s continuing forgiveness of the sin that threatens their union. As the mysticism of pain rescues believers from complacency, passivity, and quietism of unsound mysticism, its ethical nature reveals an intrinsic connection between justification and sanctification. The ethical mysticism of pain alone sustains one’s hope of sanctification by reconnecting one’s frustrated endeavors to the doctrine of justification, which again deepens the redemptive efficacy of God’s pain in one’s heart.⁶⁶ That justification is axiomatic to sanctification, and ethics is inseparable from *sola gratia* of suffering God, makes Christian ethics distinct from all other moral philosophy including Kantian ethics.⁶⁷ For the Japanese theologian, the mysticism of pain which combines

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, “Since even the mysticism of pain is defeated in the face of sin, we have only the pain of God on which to reply. When ethical mysticism shipwrecks, it must be saved by a doctrine of justification . . . *The pain of God, while uniting God and man mystically, continues to forgive and embrace the sin which betrays and breaks this union.*”

⁶⁷ Kitamori claims that his Lutheran ethic of pain improves the eudemonistic ethics of Augustine (ethic controlled by the idea of happiness or self-love) and deontological ethics of Kant (ethic as duty based on *a priori* principles and categorical imperatives). Characterizing Augustinian ethic as ‘willingness’ (*Willigkeit*) and Kantian as ‘obligation’ (good will as resistance against inclinations or *Widerstand* against *Neigung*), Luther’s ethic synthesized the half-discovered truths of both and restored willingness purified by pain. *Ibid.*, 97. “The straight line: Augustine-Kant-Luther, shows the development of ethics passing from *willingness* to *obligation*, then returning to *willingness* again . . . Luther surpassed them both by uniting . . . only half-discovered [truths]. . . The ethical could only be realized when duty (*Gesolltes*) becomes joyous will (*Gewolltes*).”

both evangelical and ethical dimensions of God's redemptive love, can proffer an authentic viable theological ethic for the troubled world.

For Kitamori, the ethical mysticism of pain points sanctification in two inter-related directions: toward oneself and toward others. The mystical union with God in pain guides one's spiritual progress when one's pain becomes an instrument for witnessing to the divine pain. The difficulty of human suffering originates not from its very existence but from the absence of its meaning. It is the 'meaning-less' or unexplainable suffering that wears us away. The solution to this problem of pain is discovered when we lift our eyes from our suffering and behold that of God. Glimpsing the infinite pain of God through our predicament not only transcends our suffering but also transports it into "a service for the pain of God." This is why the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to deny and take up the cross and follow him (Mat. 16:24) so that we can bear witness and "serve the pain of God by suffering pain oneself."⁶⁸ Kitamori presents Abraham and Virgin Mary as two prime biblical examples who served the pain of God with their own. Abraham is to be called "the *father of service to God*" rather than "the father of faith" because the significance of his act on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22) was not just believing in God's provision but bearing witness to the pain of God the Father in the coming death of the Son through his own sacrifice of Isaac. Virgin Mary is the "mother of sorrows" (*Mater Dolorosa*) as Luke 2:35 foretold, "A sword will pierce through your own soul." As she overcame the pain of her son's death by 'uniting' it with the death of God's son, she teaches us that, "God's pain and human pain are joined in the person of

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

Jesus.”⁶⁹ Because of this mediation of Jesus Christ, Kitamori urges Christians to meditate on the cross. Drawing on Luther’s *meditatio crucis*, the Japanese theologian believes that reflection on the crucified Christ transforms human nature, killing the old Adam and expelling the old nature in us.⁷⁰

Being a witness to the pain of God not only builds up our Christian character but also leads us to extend God’s inclusive love to others. The ethic based on God’s pain particularly takes unbelievers or the unlovable as its objects of love.⁷¹ Any love without pain is not a genuine Christian ethic “determined by the love of the cross.” Here, Kitamori places a special importance in the meaning of the existence of unbelievers. Reflecting on Jesus’ last sermons in Matthew 25:31-46, he asserts that “God expects us to love him not as an immediate object, but rather through our neighbors.”⁷² The two great commandments of God (Mat. 22:27-40) are the same targets of Christian ethic. Loving God wholeheartedly is the large target and loving neighbor as myself is the small target. They are aligned side by side and the small target is set up in front of the large one. “To hit the target (our neighbor) in the center means hitting the other target (God) in the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 56. Because Mary’s experience of the unitive pain of God comes through her son Jesus, Kitamori argues that her special significance must be that of the “embodiment of ‘analogy of pain’” rather than “the Roman Catholic sense” of Marian devotion. Cf. Kazoh Kitamori, *Kirisuto ni okeru Kami no Ninshiki* (Knowledge of God in Christ), 35–36, “Mary as a woman experiences the same pain as that of the Father. Mary’s pain clarifies further the fact that the pain of God and that of man are mediated by Jesus.”

⁷⁰ Kazoh Kitamori, *Fujuin no Seikaku* (The Character of the Gospel), 69.

⁷¹ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 93. “We must love the unlovable, and obey the commandment ‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, less those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you’ (Luke 6:27-28, 35). We must be merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful (vs. 36). This ‘mercy’ requires *pain* itself. Just as the mark of the gospel is pain, so the mark of the Christian ethic is pain. When the gospel lacks the pain of God, it changes into a ‘different gospel’ which loves only the lovable.”

⁷² *Ibid.*, 98. “To love historical reality is to love God.”

center at the same time.”⁷³ When a believer takes on an unbeliever’s suffering, he becomes a mediator of God’s pain for the world. The ethical life of those who partake in the pain of God in their hearts and the lives of others, manifests the eschatological reality of God’s reign in the world.

The ethical function of a mysticism of pain is closely related to the eschatology.⁷⁴ For Kitamori, the theology of the pain of God explains the true meaning of the ‘End’ because “the pain of God, as grace conquering sinners, provides a complete solution for the forgiveness of sins.”⁷⁵ Eschatology is not about calculating an apocalyptic calendar but about recognizing the arrival of the ultimate reality (*eschaton*) in the person of Christ, who fulfilled the redemptive pain of God. The Japanese theologian highlights the tension between the “theological axiom” and the “theological reality” in eschatology. The theological axiom is the claim that, “the End has arrived by the coming of Christ.” The theological reality is the incompleteness of redemption and sanctification in the present. The gospel encompasses these two viewpoints of “the resolved and the unresolved.” “The tension arising from the fusion of these two contradictory truths is the eschatological in the deepest sense of the word.”⁷⁶ The faith that lives in this tension is eschatological and ethical at the same time as it upholds the pain of God as an “all-embracing principle.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 143. “Eschatology is not a partial truth occupying the last chapter of dogmatics. The eschatological is of such a nature as to determine the whole structure of the gospel and faith.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

Problem of Inversion

Unquestionably Kitamori achieved an original indigenous theology based on the axiom of pain.⁷⁷ His presentation of the suffering God finds a receptive audience in Asian religiosity particularly fostered by the Buddhist tradition.⁷⁸ While no one doubts about his contributions to the contextual theology and the ecumenical dialogue between the older churches of the West and the younger churches of the East, there has been a large consensus of concerns and criticism for his use of pain as the central matrix to articulate God and his relation to humanity.⁷⁹ Though Kitamori correctly recognizes the suffering of Christ as a unique and major theme of the Bible, his theological exposition of God's redemptive pain is excessively internalized within the divine reality. The pain of God which overcame the Father's wrath over the sinners through the sacrifice of the Son, appears to *invert* the atonement of God for humanity into the atonement of God for himself. God's wrath demands punishment, and God's love wants to forgive. Therefore, God needs a sacrifice for his propitiation. The death of Christ ultimately becomes a logical necessity for God's own conflict-resolution rather than the gracious act of divine salvation for the troubled sinners. Kitamori's logic of atonement can easily dislocate the locus of the problem of sin from humanity to God. To a recurrent question on the efficacy of the atonement of Christ, "Who is changed by the atoning sacrifice on the

⁷⁷ Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God* was praised as "the most self-consciously Japanese of the current theological tendencies in Japan" (Carl Michalson), "the hallmark of the Japanese theology's genuine originality" (Anri Morimoto), "authentic, first-rate Japanese theology to the West" (Terrence N. Tice), "[Kitamori's] theology is opening up a new line" (Emil Brunner), and "Original enough to be called 'Kitamorian Theology'" (Kazuo Mutoh).

⁷⁸ Kitamori succinctly compared the redemptive pain of God to Buddha's 'sympathy,' accentuating the physical reality of the former as a more relevant and superior gospel to humanity than the latter's. *Theology of the Pain of God*, 26–27.

⁷⁹ The representatives of the critiques on Kitamori's theology of pain presented here are Darby Ray, Paul Fiddes, Hans von Balthasar, C.S. Song, and others.

Cross, God or human beings?,” the Japanese theologian would not hesitate to answer, “the redemptive pain affects God far greater and deeper than anyone.” This problem of inversion in Kitamori’s theology of the pain of God entails multiple theological and ethical difficulties, of which the following three inter-woven fallacies need to be examined with respect to the discussion of atonement: (1) a divided Godhead, (2) the elevation of pain as an essential attribute of God, and (3) the ethical problems of the legitimization and distribution of pain.

A Split in the Godhead

The Japanese theologian sees God’s pain primarily due to the struggle between God’s love and God’s wrath. God’s original, immediate relationship of love with humanity is ruptured by the disobedience and sin that deserves God’s punishment. The tension between God’s characteristics of justice and mercy results in the pain of forgiveness. This forgiveness requires accepting the unlovable with the substituted suffering of the Son. The pain of God signifies “his will to love the object of his wrath.” Regarding this theological formulation of Kitamori, Warren McWilliams gives a sympathetic yet unavoidable critique.

To a great extent Kitamori is wrestling with a perennial dilemma in Christian theology. To neglect God’s love would leave us with a harsh, unmerciful deity, but to neglect God’s wrath would leave us with a sentimental, permissive deity. The danger in Kitamori’s formulation is that God seems to have *multiple personalities* (angry and loving) or to be experiencing an *identity crisis* or to have undergone a *character transformation*.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Warren McWilliams, “The Pain of God in the Theology of Kazoh Kitamori,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 8 (Fall, 1981), 197. (*Italics* are mine).

Luther also made a similar statement about the divine tension in the event of the cross that “God fights with God at Golgotha.”⁸¹ But unlike Luther who used it in a metaphorical manner, the Japanese theologian employs Trinitarian language to accentuate the divine reality of pain. His Trinitarian theology of pain is painstakingly charted by Toru’s so-called “trilogical structure”⁸²:

The Love of the Crucified Christ		
I. God’s		III. “Love”
<hr/>		
II. “rooted in the pain of God”		
1) The Father	The Son	The Spirit
2) Creator	Savior	Paraclete
3) Immediate Love	Mediated Love	Victorious Love
4) [Love without pain]	Hamah (pain)	Hamah (love)
5) Creation	Justification	Sanctification
6) Birth/procession	Death	Resurrection
7) <i>Natura, Intellectus</i>	<i>Fides</i>	<i>Actus</i>
8) <i>Analogia Entis</i>	<i>Analogia doloris</i>	<i>Analogia gloriae</i>
9) Theology of universal Fatherhood	Theology of the cross	Theology of glory

A close reading shows that Kitamori’s Trinitarian explanation of the divine pain is primarily focused on the Father and the Son.⁸³ God the Father epitomizes the wrath of God while God the Son embodies the love of God. The resultant Binitarian friction is illustrated by Kitamori’s allegory of a traveler during a thunderstorm.

⁸¹ *D. Martin Luthers Werke Kristische Gesamtausgabe Die Deutsche Bibel* (Weimar, 1906-1961) 45, 415. [Hereafter cited as WA]

⁸² Toru, 2.

⁸³ In spite of his sympathetic reading of Kitamori’s theology, much of Toru’s analysis on Kitamori’s descriptions of the Holy Spirit is not substantiated in *The Theology of the Pain of God*. Takayanagi Shunichi, for instance, concludes that “the Spirit does not occupy any important role” in Kitamori’s theology. Cf. Toru, 195–196.

A traveler is walking across a field in summer, when suddenly a thunderstorm breaks out above him. There is neither tree nor habitation; the traveler must walk on alone, in danger of being struck by lightning at any moment. Around him the lightning is striking here and there; in a minute it may strike him dead. But look! A mysterious hand is stretched over the traveler, covering and protecting him. Guarded by this loving hand, he can safely walk on through the thunderstorm. Because of that wonderful hand the lightning will not touch him. But look further. Like a linen cloth pierced by countless bullets, the hand which protects the traveler is being repeatedly struck by the lightning. This protecting hand is catching and intercepting the thunderstorms, which should fall on the traveler.⁸⁴

According to the Japanese theologian's logic of salvation, the main work of Christ on the cross was to suffer the Father's "absolute and inflexible" wrath and the role of the Father was to release his holy anger and then suspend justice against humanity by punishing the Son. The soteriology of divine pain that describes the tension between God's rejection and acceptance of humanity, converts the salvific event of the cross from God's gracious forgiveness and victory over sin to God's own struggle and tragedy.⁸⁵

Kitamori's grammar of salvation which implies a split in the Godhead, originates from his narrow understanding of divine wrath. His view of wrath is forensic and retributive. The reason for his rigid take on God's wrath comes from his intention to bear witness to the uniqueness of the Christian gospel to the Japanese and Asian Buddhist mentality. Unlike the latter's simple and light notion of divine sympathy, the Japanese theologian wants to highlight the serious and concrete picture of God's painful empathy.⁸⁶ He reads the biblical idea of God's wrath in the legal metaphor to the extent that the Father and the Son become subjected to the causal relationship.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 126.

⁸⁵ Kitamori holds the significance of the Incarnation to be the revelation of the "tragic love of God" through the "tragic word (*tragica verba*). For him, the traditional view of the Incarnation without this divine tragedy is "empty formalism." *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 41–43.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27. "There can be no inflexible wrath of the absolute in Buddhism. . . . An absolute being without wrath can have no *real* pain. The word 'sorrow,' as used in composing the term 'great mercy' in

Kitamori's interpretation of divine wrath misses two important thoughts in Paul's depiction of God's wrath and justice. First, the wrath in Romans 1:18 signifies God's personal consent to the intrinsic outworking of sin in the lives of unrepentant people. Like the Hebrew prophets who saw God 'hiding his face' from his disobedient people or 'letting them go,' the apostle spoke of the divine judgment "in terms of his 'giving up' the people to the natural consequences of their own sin."⁸⁸ The biblical idea of divine wrath cannot be taken as an expression of retributive justice in that Christ died to appease a pent-up anger of God.⁸⁹ Second, Paul employed the language of substitution to emphasize the covenant justice of God. The death of Christ that came as a result of God's covenant faithfulness, is a work of curative justice, not punitive retribution.⁹⁰ Paul's idea of substitutionary aspect of Christ's suffering means 'representing' rather than 'replacing.' The Son died not instead of sinners but on behalf of sinners, as their

Oriental language, simply means 'sympathy,' and cannot be regarded in the same way as our 'pain.' . . . the pain of God is *real* pain, the Lord's wounds are *real* wounds. Buddhism cannot comprehend this real pain, even in the stages of thought of the Jodo and Jodo Shinshu sects about the mercy of Amida Buddha." Cf. Kazoh Kitamori, "Christianity and Other Religions in Japan," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 29 (October 1960), 233–235. "As Amida is not a transcendent existing being, his mercy knows no anger at sin. But in Christianity, the God of mercy forgives sinners in spite of His anger at sin. Because of this divine anger Christianity has the Cross, which is the intersection of his mercy and anger."

⁸⁷ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 47. "The God of the gospel causes his Son to die and suffers pain in the act. The Father causes his beloved Son to die—this is the ultimate act of God."

⁸⁸ Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 92.

⁸⁹ Stephen Travis, "Christ as bearer of divine judgment in Paul's thought about the atonement" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1994), 345. "Paul's understanding of the death of Christ does not include the idea that he bore the retributive punishment for our sins which otherwise would have been inflicted on us. To understand the atonement in those terms is to misunderstand what Paul means by 'the wrath of God.' It is to press too far the implications of his legal metaphor. It is to risk driving a wedge between the action of God and that of Jesus."

⁹⁰ J. D. G. Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of the Death of Christ," in *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. R. Banks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 139.

corporate representative.⁹¹ According to the apostle, when Christ died, the fallen humanity died with and through him (2 Cor. 5:14, Rom. 6:6). As a representative of humanity, his death and resurrection mark an end of old Adamic life and a beginning of new Adamic life. The vicarious death of Christ should not be transported into the divine interior conflict but the efficacy of the Son's atonement must be related to the re-creation of humanity (2 Cor. 5:17).

Kitamori's axiom that "God's pain is productive,"⁹² pays a heavy price to a strict legal perspective of atonement that the death of Christ is seen as "a forensic transaction between God the Father and God the Son, acting virtually as independent subjects, rather than as a healing of relationship between estranged humanity and God."⁹³ Like "many retributive theories of justice that invest punishment with too much efficacy," his soteriology ascribes too much potency to pain and "too little to sin."⁹⁴ Instead of seeing the redemptive death of Christ delivering humanity from the stronghold of sin and death, the Japanese theologian's theory of atonement leans too much on the relief of the Father's wrath. As a result, he implies a dubious conclusion that the world suffers not so much from the sin of humanity as from the wrath of God.

⁹¹ M. D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 20–46.

⁹² Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 167.

⁹³ Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids/Auckland: Eerdmans, Lime Grove House Publishing, 2001), 66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 66–68. Marshall points out a crucial defect of retributive theories of justice to be an insufficient diagnosis of sin, which is "a state of volitional-moral enslavement and relational distortion that requires deliverance and reconciliation." The exact punishment of sin, as proposed by legal atonement theories, does not answer nor "root out the causes and effects of sin in the lives of those it infests."

Pain as the Eternal Essence of God

As Kitamori presents salvation as God's solitary act of struggle within God's own self, he also presents the divine pain as the most essential and greatest attribute of God. He does this by employing his own Trinitarian grammar to accentuate the axiomatic significance of pain in the divine reality and thus elevates the divine pain to an ontological status. According to Kitamori, God is not the God who just has pain but the God who *is* pain because divine pain originated from eternity. In the cross event, God finally experiences pain and incorporates it into his eternal being.

According to Hebrews 2:10, it was *fitting* for God to perfect Christ through suffering. Moreover the God spoken of here is "he for whom and by whom all things exist," God in his essential nature. We conclude from this that God's pain was fitting for him. "To be fitting" means to be necessary to his essence. The pain of God is part of his essence! This is really the wonder. God's essence corresponds to his eternity. The Bible reveals that the pain of God belongs to his *eternal being*. "I am the first and the last, and the living one; I *died*, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:17-18) . . . Revelation 13:8 can be translated, "the Lamb slain from the creation of the world. The cross is no sense an external act of God, but an act within himself."⁹⁵

As Kitamori crowns pain as the eternal essence of God, he attempts to reconstruct the "classical Trinitarianism" by subordinating the immanent Trinity to economic Trinity.⁹⁶ For him, the real significance of Trinity is not the theological expressions of "beget," "proceed," and "essence," but the Trinitarian terms of "father-son" and "begets-begotten" serve the primary word of the gospel, namely "the word of the cross" which revealed the pain of God.

⁹⁵ Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 45.

⁹⁶ The question of a relationship between immanent and economic Trinity will be explored in depth in the next chapter where Process Theology is examined. For the time being, it is pertinent to know Kitamori's claim that classical Trinitarian doctrine 'lost the essence of God' and presents God's essence only as 'essence without essence' due to the influence of Greek thoughts. The Japanese theologian believes that the biblical prophetic testimony such as Jeremiah and Paul helps us to recover 'this lost essence.' *Theology of the Pain of God*, 46.

The essence of God can be comprehended only from the “word of the cross.” The pain of God is his “essence”—theology that is ashamed of this still belongs to the “theology of glory,” . . . The “theology of the cross” is, strictly speaking, the theology which wonders most deeply at “pain as the essence of God.” In the gospel the primary words are “the Father causes his Son to die”; the secondary words are “the Father begets the Son.” The secondary word prepare for the primary. In the gospel the final word is the *pain of God*. In trying to reveal his own pain to us as human beings, God communicates through human pain. To us the bitterest pain imaginable is that of a father allowing his son to suffer and die. Therefore God spoke his ultimate word, “God suffers pain,” by using the father-son relationship. Thus the words “the Father begets the Son” are secondary to the primary words “the Father causes his Son to die.”⁹⁷

Kitamori’s elevation of pain into a divine attribute and the core essence of Trinity is criticized for three theological problems: (1) its clash with the doctrine of creation, (2) its lack of the resurrection-motif, and (3) the self-enclosure of divine pain. Yoshio Noro, a former student of Kitamori, thinks that the latter’s concept of pain as the eternal essence “demolishes the freedom of God in our salvation.” Pain as the essence of God is not congruent with the Christian understanding of creation as creation *ex-nihilo*. “Because, in that case, God is so fastened together with His creation eternally in His essence that He is not the living being without His creation for whose sake the Father has wrath against the Son. This fact inevitably leads to the conclusion that His creation is eternal and necessary for God.”⁹⁸ Kitamori’s axiomatic use of pain as God’s essence weakens not only the biblical doctrine of creation but also that of God’s love as agape. Only when God is independent and does not have any self-gain through his relationship with the creation and only when the creation is absolutely dependent on Him, the gratuity of divine love can be intact. Noro concludes that, “From Professor Kitamori, we do not hear

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹⁸ Noro, 92. Cf. 94–95. Kitamori’s letter to Noro on August 20, 1954 insinuates that the former tends to hold intralapsarianism because supralapsarianism vitiates the realness of God’s pain. “He [Kitamori] seems to feel strongly that the pain of God is deprived of its real painfulness when God foreknows and has power to prevent—if He wills—the sinful act of man.”

the convincing proclamation of the gospel that God is He who solves the problem of sin and suffering. Rather, God is the sufferer eternally.”⁹⁹

Choan-Seng Song asserts that Kitamori’s theology of pain ignored the biblical declaration of God’s victory and the joy of salvation. According to the Taiwanese-American theologian, a great mistake of the Japanese theologian was to overlook the “final station” of God’s redemptive story that concludes not in the pain of the cross but in the resurrection. For Song, Kitamori’s theology is heavily founded on the divine pain so that it does not do justice to God’s joy in redemption (Heb. 12:4?) and its soteriology sounds like “an expression of masochism”:

His theology of the pain of God, his *theologia crucis*, stops at the cross. It does not go beyond it. The cross is the final station of God’s journey. Is it by accident that there is little reference to the resurrection in the *The Theology of the Pain of God*? It cannot in fact accommodate resurrection; it does not have room for it. For resurrection is God’s declaration of the end of pain and suffering. It is the decisive victory over the power of pain. As the seer of the Book of Revelation puts it, God “will wipe every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain” (Rev. 21:4). If pain and wrath are absolute and constitute the essence of God’s being, how can they be overcome? God doing away with pain and wrath would amount to God doing away with God’s own being. . . . But if the pain and suffering of God are not seen in the perspective of resurrection, theology stops at the painful cross and the wrathful God. There will be no anticipations of a life of joy and jubilation; we are not given courage and fortitude to endure pain in joy and in hope.¹⁰⁰

Hans Urs von Balthasar makes a similar critique: “In Kitamori, the Resurrection of Jesus has no part to play; the Christian religion ministers exclusively to the pain of God.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), 78–79.

¹⁰¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. V: the Last Act*, trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 234. Balthasar’s brief evaluation of Kitamori’s theology contains all of the three concerns mentioned in this section. Cf. 231–237.

Paul Fiddes thinks that Kitamori ascribes pain too internally to God as his own conflict resolution and thus portrays the divine pain as self-enclosed: God's pain is based on "an internal transaction which does not involve us."¹⁰² The Japanese theologian's Trinitarian explanation of God's transcendent and eternal pain renders divine pain so unique that "we are shut out from it." To Fiddes, "the transcendent pain in God in himself and his immanent pain in the world are driven too far apart by this theory" of Kitamori. Although he urges us to transform our pain into a testimony of God's pain, Kitamori's idea of Trinitarian absorption of pain into God's essence leaves almost no hope for the termination of pain in the world. The best that humanity can hope for in Kitamori's grammar of salvation is to commiserate with God in his suffering and pain.

Problem of the Legitimization and Distribution of Pain

Perhaps the most serious aspect of Kitamori's problem of inverting atonement into God's internal reality is the ethical implication that his soteriology does not provide any direction for human struggle against suffering and injustice except enduring pain. The soteriology of pain that God redeems sin and suffering by embracing and bringing them into his own being tends to eternalize pain. The danger of Kitamorian atonement lies in that it may sanction the continuing existence of pain and thus undermine human resistance to end unjust suffering. The transposition of Christ's suffering and death—unhinged from the human condition and historical circumstance that brought them on, into the inter-Trinitarian dynamics—can legitimize pain and death as salvific means in and of themselves. Then a theological back door to a passive acceptance of suffering and pain is only one step away. Darby K. Ray questions this ethical fallacy of the theology of

¹⁰² Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 22.

pain: “When Kazoh Kitamori argues that pain is the very essence of God, and that the way to know God, to be reconciled to God, is to transform our pain into a sacrament of God’s pain, the motivation for denouncing unjust suffering, for struggling against it, is lost.”¹⁰³ She expresses further doubt whether “the suffering of God that saves us from solitary suffering” is sufficient while “the conditions that create and perpetuate suffering and injustice are left uncontested.”¹⁰⁴ Kitamori’s atonement of pain does not measure up to the ethical concern of Darby and many adherents of liberation theology that “if salvation is to be a world-transforming affair, then it must include *resistance* to evil, struggle against its causes, concreted efforts to undo it.”¹⁰⁵

The criticism of legitimized pain in Kitamori’s theology is closely related to another ethical concern, namely the problem of the distribution of pain and suffering. While the Japanese theologian encourages Christians to “serve God’s pain with their own pain,” he does not recognize an important distinction in the reality of human suffering. Not everyone suffers equally and the pain of many people is inflicted by other human beings. The fact that the question of perpetrators and victims is never brought up by Kitamori confounds McWilliams:

Kitamori’s silence on the issue of the distribution of suffering is surprising. Given that human misery may be related in some way to sin, one still wonders the amount of suffering for some. Many groups that have experienced massive suffering have raised this issue. Given the suffering of the Japanese in World War II, one might expect Kitamori to treat the distribution issue. After surveying the understanding of suffering in many religions, John Bowker argued: “The problem is not the *fact* of suffering but its *distribution*. Why do the wicked prosper, while those who try to keep faith with God suffer?” Kitamori might

¹⁰³ Darby K. Ray, *Deceiving the Devil: Atonement, Abuse and Ransom* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998), 89.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

argue that the Japanese were all sinners and deserved some suffering, but surely some Japanese Christians would ask about the amounts of suffering at Hiroshima.¹⁰⁶

Kitamori's comprehensive view of pain as God's unifying essence over his wrath and love treats human pain and suffering as undifferentiated. For McWilliams, the Japanese theologian seems to subscribe to the Deuteronomic idea that all suffering is due to sin and his main soteriological drive is that "recognition of God's pain" would bring everyone forgiveness and peace once for all. This simple understanding of sin and salvation is not only inadequate but also detrimental to the contemporary understanding of atonement as pointed out by many feminist theologians.¹⁰⁷ The failure to recognize the complexity of human sufferings particularly in the reality of victims creates an illusion that all human beings are equally responsible as sinners for whom God endured his pain. Kitamori's axiomatic use of pain without discerning the different dimensions and degrees of human sinfulness and suffering in perpetrators and victims, does not alleviate but aggravate the pain of human victims because it hands out divine pardon to the offenders too readily and puts the victims in the same category with their victimizers indiscriminately.

More dangerously, the qualities of Jesus extolled in Kitamori's theology of pain—such as obedience, selflessness, and sacrificial endurance—are those of victims, usually women and children in a traditional patriarchal society. To emulate Christ, thus, means

¹⁰⁶ McWilliams, 198–199.

¹⁰⁷ One of the most significant contributions of feminist theology is the scrutiny that it brought to traditional theology: the patriarchal language and images of traditional soteriology can pervert God's response to evil and serve the socio-political status quo by perpetuating the suffering in the lives of women, children, and the poor with a rationalized sin and salvation. Cf. Mary Daily, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Gyn/Ecology: *The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988); Joanne C. Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: a Feminist Critique* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1989); Christine E. Gudorf, *Victimization: Examining Christian Complicity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992); and Sally B. Purvis, *The Power of the Cross: Foundations for a Christian Feminist Ethics of Community* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

to follow the Divine Victim by mirroring the virtues of his self-sacrifice. Instead of attempting to resist and possibly eliminate unjust and unnecessary suffering, Christians are urged to find meaning in it. A pernicious result of such victim theology is a romanticization of suffering, which domesticates the mystery of Christ's restorative atonement and degenerates the obedience of the Son to the will of the Father into what feminist theologians called "divine child abuse."¹⁰⁸ Ray correctly notices that the impact of the misconstrued traditional atonement on the socially marginalized people "can be devastating indeed."¹⁰⁹

Instead of his wish to resolve people's sin and suffering in the infinite pain of God, Kitamori's theology can compound the victimization of the powerless by envisaging pain as the ultimate reality of God in the cross of Christ, which everyone is supposed to imitate. There is no doubt that Kitamori would be surprised to hear these critiques because he had not imagined whatsoever of pressing his theology of divine pain to such ethical negligence and logical absurdity. However, I think that his theology cannot escape from these criticisms as long as he elevates pain as a theological axiom. When he makes pain as a divine matrix to explain a harmony between the justice and mercy of God, Kitamori inverts the grace of God's redemptive act in Christ for humanity into a necessary act of God's self-resolution. In this regard, his matrix of pain becomes a meta-narrative of an excessive systematization that subordinates God to an overarching

¹⁰⁸ For a variety of feminist critiques of "divine child abuse" scenario, see *Daughters of Sarah* 18, no.3 (summer 1992).

¹⁰⁹ Ray, 63. "Atonement orthodoxy tends to depict Jesus as the Savior child whose obedience to his Father's will, or whose desire to please his Father, knew no limits. Consequently, his voluntary sacrifice of self is held up as the model of true Christian identity and action. To love is to relinquish self, this orthodoxy implies, for that is what Jesus did. The impact of this pedagogy on those lack personal and social power can be devastating indeed."

scheme. Kitamori's grammar of salvation based on the axiom of pain repeats the common mistake of the strict legal or objective atonement theories in which God is also obligated to follow a juridical or external code of conduct.¹¹⁰ This systematic conceptualization can impinge on the transcendence of God, the sovereign Creator, as well as the commensurate grace of the Redeemer. Like many proponents of the so-called objective atonement theories, Kitamori's theology of pain gives "an answer that does too much."¹¹¹

I also contend that the theological and ethical discrepancy of Kitamori's grammar of salvation is seriously flawed due to his lack of understanding of the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility and immutability. Because he misunderstood the patristic traditions to be "Greek theology" of "essence" that "missed the biblical truth," namely, "God in pain,"¹¹² his exposition of God's redemptive suffering has no means to qualify God's pain except resorting to his cultural tradition to identify divine pain with human emotion. Kitamori's importing pain into God's internal reality displaces the unique and necessary efficacy of Christ's redemptive life and work from the human reality into the divine interiority. His soteriology of eternal pain of God transmutes the grace of God's

¹¹⁰ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, 88–96.

¹¹¹ Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 58. "We must avoid an answer that does too much... God must not be subject to necessity or to a good not of his own making. He is sovereign and his own master, and must not be judged by standards external to him. Much of religious apology misunderstands this fundamental point and therefore defeats itself just as it succeeds because it limits God's sovereignty as it proves that he could not have done anything other than what he did or, more usually, that what he did measures up to the highest standards of morality... The apologist does not realize that he has subjected God to judgment by criteria other than his free and sovereign will, that, however much he has justified God's actions, he has infringed his sovereignty and is therefore no longer talking of the biblical God."

¹¹² Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 132.

redemptive act in Christ that is intended for the transformation of humanity by positing the necessity of the atonement in God's self-reconciliation.

Luther's Theology of the Cross Revisited: the Hidden God and Apatheia

An examination of Kitamori's theology of the pain of God is incomplete without considering Luther's theology of the cross.¹¹³ The Japanese theologian attempts to enhance Luther's *theologia crucis* with his concept of the pain of God, which he drew from personal experience, Japanese theatrical tradition, and biblical theology. He thought that his axiomatic understanding of pain could deepen the German reformer's idea of the "hidden God." Kitamori's assessment of Luther's hidden God along with his effort to connect the pain of God with the *Deus absconditus* raises a question about whether Luther's theology of the cross negates the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility and immutability.

Kitamori believes that "a most important concept in the theology of Luther" is the "concept of the hidden God," which the reformer derived from the passages like Isaiah 45:15 ("Truly, you are a God who hides himself") and Psalm 81:7 ("I answered you in the secret place [hiddenness] of thunder").¹¹⁴ God who hides his power under weakness, wisdom under foolishness, his righteousness under sin, and his mercy under wrath, is the God who reveals himself through the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son. Apart from

¹¹³ Kenneth J. Woollcombe, "The Pain of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967), 143–144. "I was disappointed in Kitamori's book because I had hoped for an Oriental view of a subject which has hitherto only exercised the minds of Occidentals. But, in the fact, the book is in the main a study of Luther, and there are only a few pages in which one encounters a point that seems to have a distinctively Oriental origin."

¹¹⁴ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 105–106. Cf. Erich Seeberg, *Luthers Theologie—Motive and Ideen*, Vol. 1: *Die Gottesanschauung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1929), 96. Ferdinand Kattenbusch, *Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher* (Giessen: Alfred Topelmann Verlag, 1934), 151.

the hidden God in the Son and his cross, no revelation is possible. According to Kitamori, the hiddenness of God connects the two fundamental concepts of Luther's theology, *iustitia Dei* and *solo fide*. The objective side of the gospel, namely "the righteousness of God," and its subjective aspect, "faith alone," are joined by the hidden God, who destroys human righteousness and reveals divine righteousness with a gift of faith. "Faith therefore means accepting the hidden God" who "creates self-hatred, destroys self-love and thereby establishes a true ethic."¹¹⁵

Kitamori, however, ascertains that Luther's articulation of the hidden God has "one great *problem*" because it takes the wrath of God as a mere "*means* of revealing his love." For the former, the wrath of God indicates "the reality in conflict with his love" before it becomes the means for his love. The divine wrath cannot be domesticated into a "unitary concept of God" for it is "his actual response to man's rebellion."¹¹⁶ Luther diminishes a biblical emphasis on the divine conflict because he was "confused on the dimension of love rooted in the pain of God." His maxim that the crucified God (*Deus crucifixus*) is the hidden God (*Deus absconditus*), needs another phrase, namely, "God hidden in pain (*Deus absconditus in passionibus*)."¹¹⁷ According to Kitamori, "the concept of the 'hidden God' implies his pain, and, conversely, his pain implies his 'hiddenness.'"¹¹⁸ The Japanese theologian concludes that pain is the content of the

¹¹⁵ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 108.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 109. "The wrath of God which Christ bore in himself was never a means for his love, but rather his actual response to man's rebellion."

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 114. "The God 'revealed' to sinners can only be the God in pain, the God of the cross."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

hidden God as God the Father was the ‘hidden God’ when he sent his beloved son to suffer and die.

Kitamori’s interpretation and reconstruction of Luther’s hidden God beg the question regarding whether the German theologian’s concept of the hidden God in fact negate the traditional doctrine of God and espouses a radical passibility in God’s nature. Against the claims of the Japanese theologian that Luther’s *theologia crucis* does not take the wrath of God seriously as a reality of divine conflict and that his *Deus absconditus* needs divine pain as its essence, I contend that the reformer construed the divine wrath to be an indispensable part of God’s justification based on his biblical theology and his concept of the hidden God does not negate but presupposes the traditional understanding of God including divine impassibility. Luther, though quite paradoxical at times, retained and tried to ameliorate the traditional doctrines of God with his theology of the cross.

An important clue and reminder to understand Luther’s theology is that he was foremost a biblical theologian.¹¹⁹ Luther held the Scripture as the supreme authority over all doctrinal decisions and did not hesitate to resort to a heavy use of paradoxes to accentuate a dialectical nature of the biblical revelation. His theology of the cross is a theology of paradox *par excellence*.¹²⁰ This theology contains many contradictory statements and thus marks the end of all abstract speculations about God on the part of

¹¹⁹ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 3. “‘He is no systematician’ in the scholastic sense and he is no dogmatician. He wrote neither a dogmatics, nor an ethics, nor a *Summa*: he never produced any like Melanchthon’s analyses of individual doctrines (*loci theology*) or Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Luther was a professor of biblical exegesis at the University of Wittenberg. The major part of his literary work consists accordingly of exegetical lectures on the Old and New Testaments.”

¹²⁰ Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being A Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 20–21. Luther called the carefully crafted and ordered theses of the Heidelberg Disputation “theological paradoxes.” “Stating the truth in the form of such paradoxes was a favorite tactic used by the reformers to attack and vex the reigning scholastic theology.”

the reigning scholastic theology and its smooth reason.¹²¹ The cross of Christ which conceals and reveals the true God at the same time, demands that we recognize the utter reality of the human fall and self-deception before receiving the redemptive truth of God's love.¹²² A great paradox of the theology of the cross is that grace comes through humility. The maxim of Augustinian theology that "God gives grace to the humble," is elucidated by Luther's *theologia crucis* and its *Deus absconditus*.

In this light of the hidden God and his humbling work, Luther's use of the divine wrath is to be understood. In the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 where he first expressed the idea of the theology of the cross, Luther presents the wrath of God in the dialectic of the law and the gospel.

But having heard this, fall down and pray for grace and place your hope in Christ in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection. For this reason we are so instructed—for this reason the law makes us aware of sin so that, having recognized our sin, we may seek and receive grace. Thus God "gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5), and "whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). The law humbles, grace exalts. The law effects fear and wrath, grace effects hope and mercy. "Through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20); through knowledge of sin, however, comes humility; and through humility grace is acquired. Thus an action that is *alien to God's nature* results in a deed belonging to his very nature: he makes a person a sinner so that he may make him righteous.¹²³

¹²¹ In contrast to the theology of the cross which confronts humanity with the revelation of the humbled and hidden God, the theology of glory operates on the assumptions that human intellect can see through the invisible things of God in creation and history and human free-will can produce corresponding wisdom, virtue, and justice. Luther identifies the basic principle of scholastic theology based on the philosophy of Aristotle with the *theologia gloriae*. For a succinct description of the theology of glory, see the theses 19, 21, and 22 of the Heidelberg Disputation as well as his *Disputation Against Scholastic* (1517) for his full assessment of the scholastic theology.

¹²² *Luther's Works*. Ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958-72), 31. 52. (Hereafter cited as *LW*.) Thesis 18, "It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ."

¹²³ *LW* 31. 50-51. Italics are mine.

For Luther, humility is not a human work, engineered by an active and pious free will, but a work of God in that we can only *be* humbled. Humility is a prerequisite to faith as a foundation for God's justification.¹²⁴ God cultivates the salvific humility in humanity through the law and wrath. The law which was given as a gift of "the most salutary doctrine of life," cannot advance humans on the path of righteousness, but "rather hinders them" since the fall.¹²⁵ There are two human responses to the law. On one hand, one underestimates the seriousness of the law, thinking that he or she can fulfill it, in which case the person falls into self-righteous conceit. On the other hand, a person recognizes the depth of the law, seeing that he or she is not able to meet its demands, in which case a person plunges into despair and even hatred toward God. Both cases reveal the operation of the wrath of God. The ignorance of the first person shows the most terrible form of God's wrath, in that God remains silent and allows him to go his evil way. In contrast, it is a sign of God's mercy to interrupt a sinner's life with hardship and tribulation, which stir up his conscience. Luther illustrates this truth in his commentary of the Book of Jonah. When the prophet disobeyed God's call and sailed in the opposite direction of Nineveh, he went down in the ship and fell in "a sleep of death." "Jonah would probably continue to sleep to the end of his days," if God did not awaken him with a storm and the

¹²⁴ Walter von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. by Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 129. "For Luther, humility becomes most intimately connected with faith. Faith teaches humility (W. IV, 76, 37ff). For faith is denial of ourselves, total rejection of self and reliance on God's grace. In this negation of all human claims, faith is one with humility (LW 10, 404)... Humility is perfected self-knowledge in the presence of God (LW 10, 239; LW 10, 27; LW 25, 235). In that respect humility must precede faith and belongs to the critical substructure of faith. Only when this substructure has been laid, can justification by faith come into being (LW 10, 290)... Like faith, humility is not one virtue among other virtues, but is, in the first instance, a renunciation of all virtuousness." [W stands for *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883-1980).]

¹²⁵ LW 31. 42-43.

terrified sailors.¹²⁶ Without “the wrath of severity,” the natural man cannot discover his guilty conscience by himself and cry out for God’s mercy.

Luther called the awakening effect of the wrath a divine work “alien to God’s nature.” Wrath is not the final reality of God but his reaction to human evil. Although wrath is not an essential part of God’s being, it is an undeniable reality between God and a sinner. Until one knows God’s proper work of the gospel revealed in the cross of Christ, one cannot but think that God is wrathful. This subjective impression of God is an inevitable result of the sin that separates humanity from God.¹²⁷ Although Luther thinks that it is a sinner’s delusion to think of God as angry and against humanity, he does not say that God’s wrath does not exist. He believes that God allows and uses such an image for a greater purpose. According to the reformer, human subjective reflection of God’s wrath precedes the knowledge of sin and humility, which in turn prepares the human heart to appreciate God’s proper work of grace. The wrath of God as a terrible reality of sin makes sinners realize the futility of human righteousness and receive the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. When one breaks through to God with faith in Christ, the person can finally understand that the wrath of God was “the wrath of

¹²⁶ *LW* 19, 57–58. “Jonah is sleeping down below in the ship, completely insensible to the tempest. That may indeed be termed a sleep of death... That is always the way with sinners. God deals with them as he does here with Jonah... But because God remains silent, carries with His punishment, does not restrain the sin, or does not immediately strike the offender, it is the nature and way of sin to blind and harden man. He becomes secure and loses his fear, lies down, goes to sleep, and fails to see the disaster... Jonah would probably continue to sleep to the end of his days; if God would forget his sins, he would surely never give them a thought himself... He is blinded, obdurate, and submerged in sin, yes, dead, lying in the pit of his unrepentant heart... There he lies and snores in his sin, hears nothing and sees nothing, nor does he feel what God’s wrath contemplates doing with him.”

¹²⁷ *WA* 24.169. “In the Scripture you must often take the rule into account that Scripture speaks of God as we feel him to be. For as we feel him to be, so he is for us. If you think that he is angry and unmerciful then he is unmerciful. Thus when Scripture says that God is wrathful, this means nothing else than that we feel he is wrathful.”

mercy.”¹²⁸ Only the faith in the cross of Christ can see the wrath as “a fatherly discipline” and “recognize God’s loving intention in his wrathful activity.”¹²⁹

The wrath of God, then, is an indispensable part of Luther’s soteriology. He took the wrath seriously within his biblical theology that it reveals God’s justice and mercy to sinners. Using different terms such as “wrath of severity,” “wrath of goodness,” and “a rod of father,” Luther elucidates a dynamic meaning of divine wrath in the Scripture. In his grammar of salvation, wrath describes the human subjective awareness of his situation under the law without Christ and thus discloses the objectively hopeless situation of humanity. The only way to overcome the wrath is a “breakthrough” of faith in Christ.¹³⁰ Whereas Kitamori makes wrath a pre-condition to God’s eternal pain and a part of divine internal reality, Luther construes as it a human condition, which God allows for his alien work. While the Japanese theologian incorporates wrath as a contributing factor to God’s pain, the reformer maintains its primary locus in the conscience where God shows the way to prevail through faith in the justifying atonement of Christ. Luther’s understanding of wrath better evinces the grace of God’s redemptive suffering on the cross than Kitamori’s view not only because the reformer has a more coherent biblical theology but also because he never rejected the traditional doctrine of God, including divine impassibility and immutability. Unlike the Japanese theologian

¹²⁸ WA 56. 196; Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. by Wilhelm Pauck, *Library of Christian Classics*, vol.15 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 44f.; LW 25. 179.

¹²⁹ Althaus, 173. “The fact that God’s wrath stands in the service of his love is not a universal and self-evident truth. The conscience which has been struck by God’s law does not know this truth and does not have it available. It is only in faith in the gospel that the heart can look backward and recognize God’s loving intention in his wrathful activity.”

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 172. “For Luther, faith means ‘... to break through to God through his wrath, through his punishment, and through his disfavor’ [WA 18. 223]. Thus faith always has the character of a battle: Man struggles to drive out from within himself the image of God’s wrath and to grasp the image of his mercy.”

whose version of the theology of the cross posits a radical passibility, namely the axiom of pain in God, the German theologian envisages his *theologia crucis* along with the traditional dogma of God.

Luther's notion of the hidden God, the key concept of his theology of the cross, cannot be separated from the traditional understanding of God. While Kitamori saw the significance of the hidden God only in pain, Luther did not hold a monolithic meaning of *deus absconditus*, exclusively confined in the Christ-event. For him, "the fact that the hidden God has disclosed himself in Christ does not mean, however, that this self-revelation of God is exhaustive."¹³¹ The reformer spoke of the hiddenness of God in two senses: God hidden in the revelation of Christ and God hidden outside the revelation.¹³² Luther's notion of the hidden God expresses a double relation of God to the world: within economy of salvation, made known in Christ, he is the gracious redeemer who has bound himself to the Word and sacraments but never surrenders his freedom, omnipotence, predestination, and incomprehensibility. Brian A. Gerrish called the first notion of God "Hiddenness I" (*der verborgene Gott*) and the latter "Hiddenness II" (*der sich verbergende Gott*).¹³³ Throughout his life, Luther reflected on the dynamic nature of

¹³¹ David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 26. "In his self-revelation, God tells sinners all that they need to know, not all that they would like to know."

¹³² It was Theodosius Harnack who rediscovered the long neglected notion of the hidden God in Luther. *Luthers Theologie mit besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versöhnungs und Erlösungslehre*, I: *Luthers theologische Grundanschauungen* (Erlangen: Verlag von Theodor Blaesing, 1862), 111f. I find it odd that Kitamori, who read Harnack's work on Luther with enthusiasm, missed this important fact.

¹³³ Brian A. Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 134. I agree with David Tracy's evaluation that Gerrish's categories are most accurate and useful. David W. Tracy, "The Hidden God: the Divine Other of Liberation," *Cross Currents* 46 no.1 (Spring, 1996): 5–16. Cf. For a review of various theologians' readings of the revealed and hidden God in Luther's theology, see John Dillenberger's *God Hidden and Revealed: The Interpretation of Luther's Deus Absconditus and Its Significance for Religious Thought* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), chaps. 1–3.

God's hiddenness with a distinction between the incarnate God and the naked God, between the crucified God and the God of majesty, between the God who draws to us and the God who remains withdrawn from us.¹³⁴ The fact that Luther's distinction between the *Deus revelatus* and the *Deus absconditus* is considered his "most important contribution to the tradition of the Christian doctrine of God,"¹³⁵ shows that the reformer's theology of the cross is not a negation but a continuation of the traditional Trinitarian expression of the immanent Trinity and economic Trinity. For Luther, God in himself (*a se*) and God for us (*pro nobis*) are closely connected such that his theology of the cross enhances "God's being God."¹³⁶

The reformer expresses his perspective on the intrinsic relationship between *deus revelatus* and *deus absolutus* in his treatise, *On the Bondage of the Will*, where both forms of hiddenness are found. The main purpose of the treatise is to affirm the sole agency of God for human salvation. Against Erasmus who advocates the legitimacy of human free will in salvation and asks, "If there is no freedom of choice, what room is there for merits?," Luther answers with the reply of the apostle Paul: "There is no such thing as merit, but all who are justified are justified freely (*gratis*), and this is to be ascribed to nothing but the grace of God."¹³⁷ The reformer suspects that any talk for free

¹³⁴ As early as the first *Lectures on the Psalms* (the *Dictata* of 1513-15), Luther's commentary on Psalm 18:11 ("And he made the darkness his hiding-place") reads five meanings of God's 'hiding-place': in the darkness of truth, in light inaccessible, in the mystery of the incarnation, in the church or the Blessed Virgin, and in the Eucharist.

¹³⁵ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. and ed. by R. A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 217.

¹³⁶ Althaus, 34. "The close connection which Luther establishes between the theology of the cross and man's sinfulness does not nullify the fact that this theology is also intimately connected with and expresses Luther's understanding of God's being God."

¹³⁷ *LW* 33. 267.

will would lead to a validation of merit and wants to confirm the truth that salvation is not in the control of human will but in that of God's will.¹³⁸ According to Luther, Erasmus has a problematic notion of free will by which a person can receive or reject eternal salvation,¹³⁹ because he fails to distinguish "God preached [and] God hidden" or "God's will revealed [and] God's will secret."¹⁴⁰ In other words, his interlocutor perceives *der verborgene Gott* and misses *der sich verbergende Gott*. Regarding Erasmus' interpretation of Ezekiel 18:23 ("I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn and live"), that God gave free will for people to make a choice over their salvation, the German theologian counters that the passage speaks only the revealed will of God, not his hidden will about the perdition of some people. The prophet was here speaking of "the preached and offered mercy of God, not of that hidden and awful will of God." The question over God's predestination is hidden in "the most awe-inspiring secret of the Divine Majesty" and is "no business of ours."¹⁴¹

Luther is not silent or shy about speaking of God's hidden will in election even to the extent of a divine determinism. To the question as to whether the problem of God's inscrutable will can be resolved simply by counseling people "not to think about it," Luther has two concrete answers. First, to negate the distinction of hiddenness I and

¹³⁸ LW 33. 277–287.

¹³⁹ LW 33. 68; 102–103. "The definition you give of free choice: 'By free choice . . . we mean a power of human will by which a man can apply himself to the things that lead eternal salvation, or turn away from them.'"

¹⁴⁰ LW 33. 132–138.

¹⁴¹ LW 33.139f.

hiddenness II in God is to make him an idol.¹⁴² As Althaus notes, “if we had only the picture of the ‘preached God’ and of his all-inclusive will to save, human reason could control God. The doctrine of the hidden God [hiddenness II] eliminates this possibility.”¹⁴³ For Luther, the apparent antithesis within his conception of God is not necessarily a contradiction in God himself. “The problem is noetic,” writes Gerrish, “not ontic—in our understanding, not in God’s being. Luther is confident that there is a solution even if it lies beyond history.”¹⁴⁴ The reformer thinks that the divine revelation in the history and life of Christ is not a complete picture of God but a convincing truth enough for Christians to trust him with faith. He is adamant against any attempt to uncover the naked being of God (*deus nudus*) through speculative reason or religious ecstasy. Although God of hiddenness II is both unavailable and terrifying to us, the gospel declares that we do not have to ascend to God through our ascetical efforts but that God descended to us as a baby in a manger of Bethlehem.¹⁴⁵

In the second and rather pastoral answer to the question of the hiddenness of God, Luther urges us to turn our attention to the good news of the gospel. The epistemic impossibility of hiddenness II points out the grace of hiddenness I. While “the secret will of the Divine Majesty” is not a subject for critical investigation, the focus of Christian

¹⁴² LW 33.171. “If God is robbed of the power and wisdom to elect, what will he be but the false idol, chance, at whose nod everything happens at random? And in the end it will come to this, that men are saved and damned without God’s knowledge, since he has not determined by his certain election who are to be saved and who damned, but after offering to all men generally the forbearance that tolerates and hardens, then the mercy that corrects and punishes, he had left it to them to decide whether they want to be save or damned; and in the meantime he has himself, perhaps gone off to the banquet of the Ethiopians, as Homer says.”

¹⁴³ Althaus, 285.

¹⁴⁴ Garrish, 136.

¹⁴⁵ LW 33. 145–146.

theology is to begin and stay with the God revealed in the humanity of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁶ God who does not want us to concern ourselves with him “in his own nature and majesty,” offers us himself “clothed in his Word.” In Christ, *deus nudus* became *deus indutus*. For Luther, hiddenness II functions as “the dark background of the gospel” in that “the light of grace” of Christ removes our anxieties about God’s eternal decrees of election and reprobation. The reformer always sets up the mercy and compassion of God against the background of God’s hiddenness II. “The doctrine of the hiddenness [II] of God thus leads in Luther’s thought inexorably back to the doctrine of justification by faith alone.”¹⁴⁷ The idea of the hidden God both in and outside the revelation of Christ purifies Christians’ faith from all secret claims and all self-security by installing a salutary humility. According to Garrish, Luther believes that the *deus absconditus* qualifies a genuine faith in Christ in that “it is always there as the *terminus a quo* of the movement of the faith, even though he does not have comparable significance to the Word of God, which is the *terminus ad quem*.”¹⁴⁸

Luther’s notion of the hidden God is dynamic in that his theology of the cross does not discard the traditional view of the almighty, inscrutable, immutable, and impassible God. While his main focus is to accentuate the revelation of the crucified God or hiddenness I, he recognizes the transcendent God of eternal decrees. What the reformer condemned as the theology of glory was not the traditional doctrines of God,

¹⁴⁶ WA 28. 101–102. “Begin your search with Christ and stay with Him and cleave to Him, and if your own thoughts and reason, or another man’s, would lead you elsewhere, shut your eyes and say: I should and will know of no other God than Christ, my Lord ... apart from Him is nothing but wrath and condemnation.”

¹⁴⁷ Steinmetz, 31.

¹⁴⁸ Garrish, 138. “Faith returns constantly from the God on the perimeter of human experience to the incarnate God whom it makes its center.”

but the Scholastic theology and its self-confident reason that “claims to see into the invisible things of God.”¹⁴⁹ Whereas Kitamori takes the theology of the cross as a window into God’s comprehensive essence, namely divine pain, Luther does not claim his *theologia crucis* to reveal an exhaustive knowledge of God but only the saving knowledge of God. Unlike the Japanese theologian, the German reformer tries to reconstruct the grammar of salvation based on traditional dogma such as the Chalcedonian Christology.¹⁵⁰ Luther’s theology of the cross is not a radical innovation of divine passibility but a renovation of the biblical and patristic understanding of God’s saving love in Christ. He never uses the theology of the cross as a denial of God’s glory but as its reconfigured demonstration to the humanity blinded by sin.

Summary and Transition

Kitamori attempts to construct a Japanese theology faithful to the Bible, which at the same time corrects what he regards as the imbalances of modern Western theology. On one hand, he argues, Barth’s transcendent theology has no love of God, and on the other Schleiermacher’s immanent theology has no pain of God. Both Barth and Schleiermacher’s theology are deficient in that they fail to articulate the biblical witness of the suffering God: the former misses the divine love and the latter the divine wrath. What they lack, says Kitamori, is the *tertiary* pain of God, which unites God of justice and love together.

¹⁴⁹ LW 31. *Heidelberg Disputation*, thesis 19.

¹⁵⁰ More recent studies of Luther show that the reformer’s soteriology shares a great affinity with Eastern Orthodoxy’s doctrine of deification. Cf. Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther’s View of Justification*, trans. and ed. by Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). Luther’s renowned construal of *communicatio idiomatum* as “wondrous exchange” will be examined later in chapter six.

To his credit, the Japanese theologian's emphasis on pain deepens our understanding of God and his relation to the world. As Song affirms, "it challenges a cheap interpretation of the Gospel as all joy, happiness, and success in the world as well as the assurance of life and glory in the world to come."¹⁵¹ It also renders a salient contrast of the Christian gospel to the Asian spirituality cultivated by the Buddhist tradition. Originated from his personal introspection and combined with biblical meditation, Kitamori's theology embodied a bold prophetic ethics in the zenith of Japanese imperialism and called Christians to attend both to God's pain and the suffering of others in the world. He believed that his theology of pain could correct the self-absorptive mysticism and proffer a viable Christian ethics of embracing and overcoming human pain with the eternal divine pain in the age of violence and affliction.

Kitamori's use of pain as the central axiom to describe God and his relation to the world, however, engenders several theological missteps. When he elevates God's redemptive pain on the cross for humanity to the eternal essence of God, Christ's atonement becomes more meaningful to God than to humanity. His strict forensic interpretation of atonement depicts the cross of Christ as a necessary act to appease the wrath of God rather than denoting God's gracious work for human salvation. Pain as the divine *tertiary* to reconcile God's love and wrath, renders the sacrifice of Christ a divine conflict resolution and thus inverts the location of the problem of sin from humanity to God's internal life. Kitamori's focus on the divine pain as the most important revelation of God also led him to subordinate the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity and results in collapsing the mystery of the transcendent Creator into the historical realm of creatures. The Japanese theologian's notion of divine transcendent pain could

¹⁵¹ Song, 75.

unwittingly legitimate the inequalities of human suffering. Instead of encouraging Christians to “serve God’s pain with their own pain,” the permanence of pain in God’s heart could sanction the ongoing existence of suffering and unnecessary justice in the world. Many find Kitamori’s idea that human pain can be overcome by divine pain too simple. What he offers with his mysticism of pain is a deliverance from solitary suffering and not suffering itself. His eschatology of pain does not clearly speak of the end of pain but just the embracing of pain as the final principle of all reality.¹⁵² His notion of all-inclusive pain of God does not recognize the complexity of human affliction, namely the distinction between perpetrators and victims.

The next chapter will examine an East-Asian theologian who takes the dialectic of sin, as manifested to the offenders and victims, seriously in his grammar of salvation. Like Kitamori, Andrew Park believes that God shares our suffering and brokenness in his heart. Whereas the Japanese theologian focuses on the pain in general, the Korean-American theologian explores a specific pain, namely “the pain of the *victims* of sin.”¹⁵³ Park claims that his concept of *han* can articulate the heart of God wounded by our sin more clearly than Kitamori’s pain of God.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 144. “The pain of God is an all-embracing principle. When fused with this pain, eschatology acquires an all-embracing nature. It is obvious that our eschatology fundamentally differs from that of ‘principle of negation’ or ‘theology of negation.’”

¹⁵³ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

CHAPTER FOUR

Andrew Sung Park's Theology of *Han* and Process Theology

Andrew Sung Park, professor of theology at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, and an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church, is an important interlocutor not only for Asian-American theology but also for the contemporary understanding of Christian grammar of salvation.¹ Park contends that his articulation of the East-Asian concept of *han* (deep wound) corrects and complements the Western Christian perspectives of sin and atonement. Like Kitamori's theology of the pain of God, Park's theology contains an autobiographical contour. At the outset of his book, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and Christian concept of Sin*, the Korean-American theologian shares his life experience of *han*.

My family has experienced the reality of *han*. My parents were born during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and suffered the hardship of exploitation at the hands of the Japanese. My father was drafted into the Japanese Army toward the end of the World War II. The defeat of Japan saved his life. When Korea became independent of Japan in 1945, the North Korean communist government confiscated the land, house, and all the possessions my parents had inherited from the ancestors. By crossing the Imjin River, where they were shot at the border patrol, they barely escaped to South Korea. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, our family once more escaped from the communists by walking from Inchon to Pusan, a distance of more than 300 miles. On the way, we lost our grandfather. As refugees, our life was miserable. After a long struggle, our family finally emigrated to the United States in January 1973. We expected a stable life, but in December of that same year our parents were killed in an automobile accident in Colorado. That was the darkest time of my life.

¹ Two most recognized publications of Park are *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and Christian concept of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993) and *Radical Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996). The latter received the Gustavus Meyers Award in 1997 as an outstanding book on human rights in North America. Park continues to expand the theme of *han* in *The Other Side of Sin* (New York: SUNY Press, 2001) and *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004).

Among our family members, my mother had suffered the most: patriarchal suppression and repression, the wars, and the hardship of a preacher's wife. Her life was a series of tragedies and human anguish. She was born in *han* and died in *han*. She is the reason I write about *han*, so that fewer people might have to suffer as she did.

The deep pain of human agony has been a primary concern for my theological reflection. The issue of *han* has been more significant in my life than the problem of sin. My theological theme has been how to resolve the human suffering which wounds the heart of God.²

Park's concern of *han* was deepened by the hardship that he endured as a manual laborer in the early years of his immigrant life in the U.S. and furthermore by his marginalized experience as an ethnic intern minister in a predominantly white church and its conference.³ Particularly as a "1.5 generation" Korean-American,⁴ he has been keenly aware of many forms of marginalization, oppression, and affliction in different communities, which he tries to recognize and reflect in his writings.

According to Park, the theme of *han* which discloses a neglected reality of life, namely the pain of "the sinned against", also provides a salient theological methodology that enables Christians to ask the right questions to unearth a full significance of God's

² Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 7–8.

³ Andrew S. Park, "Church and Theology: My Theological Journey," in *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*, eds. Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 161–163.

⁴ Woo Moo Hurh, "Korean American Pluralism: The '1.5' Generation," in *Korean American Ministry*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore (Louisville, KY: General Assembly Council, PC [USA], 1993), 215–229. Hurh describes the unique group of Korean-Americans termed as "1.5" generation in the following. "This term was created to refer to Korean immigrants who had accompanied their parents to the United States when they were very young and who are now functionally bilingual. Since these children were born in Korea, they are technically first generation immigrants like their parents. Yet, because of their young age at the time of immigration they can be differentiated both from their parents (first generation) and their own offspring (second generation)—hence they are designated as '1.5' generation. Biologically, the notion of 1.5 generation is absurd. However, the socio-cultural characteristics and psychological experiences of these pre-adult immigrants are so distinct from either their first generation parents or their second generation American-born contemporaries that they are worthy of serious analysis" (215).

redemptive suffering. As “right questions precede right answers,”⁵ a theological methodology must be formulated to identify a theological problem before a “good healing” of Christian truth is provided as an answer. Thus, the Korean-American theologian defines his theological method as “first of all a diagnosis of *han*.”⁶

How well we diagnose the pain of the world determines how well we are going to heal it. In investigating the problems of the world, we can make use of different disciplines. Also, we need sufficient time to diagnose correctly what is wrong with our society and world to avoid proposing premature solutions. In addition to *han*, the main theological problem we face is, of course sin. The dual task of theology is to resolve *han* and to treat sin. The theological methods I employ are designed to perform this dual task. However, I do not limit myself to theological methodologies, but use all available scholarly tools to resolve the *han* of the oppressed and end the sin of oppressors.⁷

For Park, the theme of *han* not only offers a salient theological methodology and a critical content, but also enhances a construction of an inter-disciplinary theopraxis. In the age of the global village, this theology of *han* with a penetrating observation and an ample documentation makes “an important advance in theological reflection.”⁸

This chapter will explain the concept of *han* that expresses the perspective of the victims in a multi-layered dimension. Then, it will describe Park’s revision of the traditional Western soteriology in the light of *han* and its corollaries such as shame. Finally, Park’s connection of *han* with the radical panentheism of the process theology

⁵ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

⁶ Park, “Church and Theology: My Theological Journey,” 167.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, back cover. Robert M. Brown remarks: “In an era when theologians need to think globally, Andrew Sung Park has given us a valuable model. Drawing on both classical Western theology and the contributions of *Minjung* theology, he weaves a powerful tapestry, showing how our understanding of sin can be corrected and enriched by the Asian concept of *han*. Well-conceived and amply documented, this study is an important advance in theological reflection.”

will be examined before evaluating process theology's reconstruction of the traditional doctrine of God, namely the dipolar nature of divine becoming and being.

Han and the Perspective of Victims

Han (한/恨) is a common Korean word that describes “the ineffable pain of the unjustly oppressed.”⁹ The term reveals “a dominant cultural ethos in Korea that addresses the profundity of human brokenness distinctively engraved in its historical narratives.”¹⁰ It is easily found in innumerable expressions of daily Korean language, but it is hard to pin its essence down even in Korean. *Han* is also politically utilized as a struggle of the powerless against the oppressors. For instance, during a recent nuclear stalemate, the North Korean government claimed that their nuclear bomb test was an expression of *han* against the American imperialism.¹¹ *Han* is the key word and the central methodological concept of *minjung* theology, an indigenous Korean liberation theology.¹² *Minjung* constitutes the majority of Koreans who have been the victims of political and socio-economical exploitation by the upper class. *Han* is the primary

⁹ Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing*, 3. Cf. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 180. Other Asian people also used *han* to describe the depth of human suffering. “Han is *ken* (hate) in Chinese, *kon* (to bear a grudge) in Japanese, *horosul* (sorrowfulness) in Mongolian, *korsocuka* (hatred, grief) in Manchurian, and *hân* (frustration) in Vietnamese.”

¹⁰ Sang-Ehil Han, “Journeying into the heart of God: Rediscovering Spirit-Christology and its Soteriological Ramifications in Korean Culture,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* vol. 15 (2006): 107–108.

¹¹ Myungchul, Kim, *Kim Jung Il: Han eui Haek Junryak* [Kim Jung Il's Nuclear Strategy of Han](Seoul: DongBugA Publishing House, 2005). It goes without saying that the concept of *han* can be manipulated by a ruthless oppressor who disguises his survival scheme as a last measure of a victim.

¹² *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary in Korean Minjung Theology*, ed. Jung Young Lee (Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), 9. “Collectively, the Korean people are the people of *han*, for they are the victims of foreign invasions and controls. *Minjung* theology is, then, the theology of *han*. Christian ministry is the ministry of *han*, and Christ came to relieve the *minjung* from their *han*. By releasing the power of *han*, the *minjung* finds liberation.”

characteristic of *minjung*, whom Park called “*han*-ridden” people throughout his works.¹³

Along with a vivid illustration of the “stories of *han*,” the Korean-American theologian renders the multifarious description of *han* in the following:

Han can be defined as the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse reactions as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to revenge.¹⁴

Han takes place when people’s anger and hostility “cannot be steered directly to the source of frustration, because the culprit is unknown or too powerful to strike back.”¹⁵

Park, therefore, calls it “*frustrated hope, the collapsed feeling of pain, letting go, resentful bitterness, and the wounded heart*.”¹⁶

More than any Korean theologian who reflects on *han*, Park gives a thorough analysis regarding “its constituent elements.”¹⁷ He divides *han* into individual and collective dimensions and examines its bipolar nature in the “conscious vs. unconscious, and active vs. passive expressions.” Park’s “structure of *han*” can be summarized by Table 1:¹⁸

¹³ As Kitamori who preferred to use the pain of the common Japanese people, *tsurasa*, Park employs the term, *minjung* (abused common people), rather than other Korean words such as *kukmin* (citizens of a nation) or *baksung* (king’s people or subjects).

¹⁴ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷ Park expands the notion of the individual and collective *han* with his socio-psychological analysis more elaborately than others. Cf. David Kwang-sun Suh, “A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation,” in *Minjung Theology*, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), 27–32.

¹⁸ See *The Wounded Heart of God*, 31–42.

Table 1. Park's structure of *han*

Will	The Han of Individuals		The Han of Group	
	Conscious Han	Unconscious Han	Conscious Han	Unconscious Han
Active	The will to revenge	Bitterness	The corporate will to revolt	Racial resentment
Passive	Resignation: self-denigration, self-hatred	Helplessness	Corporate despair	The ethos of racial lamentation: social melancholy

For instance, the individual *han* shows a conscious manifestation either through an active attempt to kill one's perpetrator or by turning into a passive self-resignation such as low self-esteem, self-withdrawal, and self-hatred. Unconsciously the victims reveal their *han* in bitter resentment (active manifestation) or self-depleted depression (passive). The collective *han* of the individual victims and afflicted community can lead either to a bloody reaction or degenerates into a culture of melancholy reflected by their arts, literature, and music such as "the blues and Negro spirituals of African-Americans."¹⁹ Park also speaks of "the han of nature" in the animals and inanimate creation that "suffer from abusive treatment by humans, yet cannot protest against it."²⁰ The groaning of the creation (Romans 8:19-23) in the ecological crisis of our time mirrors a cosmic reality of *han*. According to Park, *han* is "a common denominator of all world sorrow and grief," which can be accumulated both in the individual and in the collective pathos of the afflicted people.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42

²¹ *Ibid.*, 41–42. "The world *han* is the dark side of the world soul [Plato's account of the demiurge who created the soul and body of the world]. It is the world grief which recollects all the tragic memories

Park illustrates the encompassing nature of *han* with the analogy of an astrophysical phenomenon:

Han may be compared to the black hole phenomenon. When a star that is several times larger than the sun becomes a red giant, it eventually reaches a point beyond which it cannot expand. The inner core of the star implodes, creating a supernova, and the star collapses into its own center, or what scientists call “singularity.” The distortion of time and space at the center created by the resulting gravitational force is called a black hole. Swallowing everything that it touches, the gravity created even absorbs light.

In a similar way, when a victim’s pain expands beyond his or her capacity for perseverance, the soul collapses into a deep, dark abyss. That abysmal core of pain is *han*, and the collapsed, inner core swallows everything, dominating the victim’s life-agenda. The hope that is at the very foundation of our existence is frustrated, turning into psychosomatic writhing. Sadness, despair, resentment, and helplessness dominate. The gravitational pull of the wound that is created takes with it our sense of dignity and self-worth. This complex set of reactions is so typical of those who are mistreated, abused, and abandoned by lovers or husbands. Their dignity and self-respect are trampled and their souls broken. When their patriarchal culture reinforces their victimization, their souls are broken again, deepening the results of *han*, the deep wound of the soul. When this pain is not treated, but left unattended, the pain turns into a still deeper wound.²²

Like a black hole, the vortex of *han* consumes all dimensions of human existence that it overwhelms other emotions and “becomes a domineering spirit.” The important point to note here is that Park’s concept of *han* recognizes an aspect of human suffering which goes beyond rational expression. “The ‘black hole’ experience of darkness that surpasses any attempt to understand or reason and the violent implosion of emotions caused by the sins of oppressors in the oppressed people are the radical experience of suffering that *han*

of the past. No single tragic event is lost forever; all are retained in the world grief that is the *han* of the world. . . . It rolls below all occasions with sullenness.”

²² Andrew Park, “The God who needs our salvation,” in *The Changing Face of God*, ed. Frederick W. Schmidt (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 82–83.

is able to express, encapsulate, and symbolize.”²³ *Han* entrenches in the soul of a victim with “the void of abysmal grief” that refuses to go away. The wounded heart of *han* longs for a vindication of one’s intrinsic goodness, which has been taken away unjustly and violently by perpetrators.

In his portrayal of the broken human reality in the concept of *han*, Park identifies three major structural sins that involve people in the cycle of exploitation and victimization.²⁴ First, capitalist global economy implements the principle of Social Darwinism, evolutionary selection of the financially fittest, at the expense of the dispossessed and the weak. The capitalist spirit works for the rich who demand more and better products while disrupting “the order of the creation in the world of animals and nature, the system of family, and racial relations.” Second, patriarchy which echoes the Freudian dictum that “anatomy is destiny,” mistreats women with masculine domination. It takes advantage of women’s physical vulnerability to the point that the latter becomes socially inferior. Third, racism conjures up an ideology of race or ethnicity as an excuse to rationalize the subjugation and discrimination of another race or ethnic group by a dominant group. It idolizes one’s own race or culture and contradicts the goodness of God who created all peoples after his image and for eternal fellowship. Park calls for the

²³ Kevin Park, “Andrew Sung Park: Theology of *Han* and the Korean American Context” in *Emerging Korean North American Theologies: Toward a Contextual Theology of the Cross* (Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2002), 160. According to Kevin Park who seeks to renovate the theology of the cross within the North-American Korean context, *han* can be seen as “a human emotive correlate or the anthropological corollary of the divine ‘hiddenness II’—the radical experience of God’s abandonment or even the experience of the wrathful ‘naked God.’” The experience of abyss in *han* articulated by Andrew Park is “a significant complement to the theology of the cross.”

²⁴ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 45–67.

exposing and exorcising “the anti-human and anti-Christian spirits of capitalism, sexism, and racism” that “spawn *han* in the[sic] women, ethnic groups, and the downtrodden.”²⁵

Sin and Han: Revision of Christian Soteriology

After describing the *han-ridden* reality of victims in the world, Park proposes a commensurate revision of the Christian doctrine of sin and salvation. The diagnosis of *han*, he asserts, is a pre-requisite to offer an appropriate prescription for sin.

A patient comes to see a doctor. The doctor diagnoses his or her symptom and prescribes medicine. If the diagnosis is wrong, a medicine prescribed according to that diagnosis will not be effective and the patient’s health can be in jeopardy. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of a diagnosis for the healing of a patient. Every Sunday Christians come to church to worship and a minister proclaims the good news of salvation. Before preaching, the minister needs to know the needs of the people who should be saved. If their problems are not diagnosed accurately, the good news of salvation would not be good news; perhaps it would even be wrong news. If the minister understands the problems of people well, a strong and appropriate message can be delivered.²⁶

According to the Korean-American theologian, the traditional Western diagnosis of sin and salvation has ‘unilaterally’ focused on the sinners and left out the sinned-against from the blueprint of salvation. The Christian tradition of salvation developed from the traditional doctrine of sin such as that of total depravity, only addresses the need of perpetrators to repent and receive God’s forgiveness and fails to see the doctrine from the other side of sin, the *han*-ful victims. Emphasis upon repentance is not appropriate to the oppressed: “Imposing the sin-penalty formula upon the victims of sin is grave

²⁵ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 67. “The anti-human and anti-Christian spirits of capitalism, sexism, and racism have strengthened one another and have denigrated both the dominant groups in society and their victims by destroying their true humanity. Such spirit has spawned *han* in women, ethnic groups, and the downtrodden. The sources of *han* in the structure of society, as well as in the dynamic intrapersonal reaction of the mind, must be exposed if *han* is to be resolved.”

²⁶ Andrew Park, “Sin and Han,” *Living Pulpit* 8 (2001), 22.

injustice.”²⁷ After reviewing various twentieth-century theologians’ understanding of sin as “pride, concupiscence, self-centeredness, unbelief, hubris, falsehood, sloth, ingratitude, slavery, death, collaboration and apathy,” Park concludes that they delineated “a complete map for the salvation of sinners, while at the same time devoting little or no theological analysis to the oppressed, the victims of sinners.”²⁸ The Korean-American theologian calls for “a theological *revolution*—a Copernican revolution in the doctrine of sin and salvation” that attends the issue of *han* “at the doctrinal level.”²⁹

According to Park, the only contemporary theology that recognizes the inadequacy of traditional Western hamartiology is the critical insight offered by the feminist theology. Valerie Saiving, for example, questions the viability of the doctrine of sin formulated by male theologians. She claims that men and women suffer from different sins. Whereas the sins of men have an active character such as “pride and will-to power,” the sin of women has a more passive tendency.

It is clear that many of the characteristic emphases of contemporary theology—its definition of the human situation in terms of anxiety, estrangement, and the conflict between necessity and freedom; its definition of sin with pride, will-to-power, exploitation, self-assertiveness, and the treatment of others as objects rather than persons, . . . it is clear that such an analysis of man’s dilemma was profoundly responsive and relevant to the concrete facts of modern man’s existence. . . . However, this theology is not adequate to the universal human situation; its inadequacy is clearer to no one than to certain contemporary women. . . . For the temptations of woman *as woman* are not the same as the temptations of man *as man*, and the specifically feminine forms of sin—“feminine” not because they are confined to women or because women are incapable of sinning in other ways but because they are outgrowths of the basic feminine character structure—have a quality which can never be encompassed by such terms as “pride” and “will-to-power.” They are better suggested by such items as triviality,

²⁷ Andrew S. Park, “The Bible and *Han*,” in *The Other Side of Sin*, eds, Andrew S. Park and Susan L. Nelson (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), 22.

²⁸ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 72–73.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

distractibility, and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one's own self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to respect the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality, gossip sociability, and mistrust of reason—in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self.³⁰

Park deems the feminist critiques of traditional doctrine of sin “revolutionary in the history of Christian thought.” Yet he thinks that feminist theology can articulate the distinction between man's sin and woman's more clearly with the concept of *han*:

Distractibility, diffusiveness, lack of an organizing center, self-sacrifice, and obedience are not sin. For want of a better term, feminist theologians call them sin. But in point of fact, they are expressions of *han*. Sin involves the volitional act of offense against God or others. A character trait which has been developed by the infringement of outside forces cannot be called sin. It is instead *han*, the seat of the wound of victims.³¹

Though feminist and liberation theologians are “aware of something missing in the traditional doctrine of sin” and they “express it in terms of wounds, unhappy consciousness, oppression, historical determinism, the lack of organizing center, and self-sacrifice,” what they really needs, says Park, is the notion of *han*, “the reality of shadow of sin.”³² According to the Korean-American theologian, only the soteriology that considers sin and *han* together can provide the dynamic Christian understanding of sin, repentance, and forgiveness.³³ From the ‘bilateral’ perspective of sin and *han*, Park

³⁰ Valerie Saiving, “The Human Situation: A Feminist View,” in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, eds. By Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 35–37. This seminal essay of feminist theology was published earlier in the *Journal of Religion* 4 (April: 1960): 100–112.

³¹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 76.

³² *Ibid.*, 77.

³³ *Ibid.*, 73. “The doctrine of sin can be complemented by the doctrine of *han*; the doctrine of repentance by the doctrine of victim's forgiveness; the doctrine of justification by faith by the doctrine of justification by love; the doctrine of personal sanctification by the doctrine of social sanctification; the doctrine of static salvation by the doctrine of dynamic salvation.”

elaborates on the revision of traditional soteriology in terms of original *han*, shame, and forgivingness.

Original Sin and Universal Han

Park views the doctrine of original sin both negatively and positively. He rejects the traditional understanding of original sin as “the universal and hereditary sinfulness of man since the fall of Adam.”³⁴ For him, the concept of original and inherited guilt undermines the specific and concrete guilt of oppressors by universalizing it for all humanity. “The universality of sin and guilt weakens responsibility for actual sin by treating sinners and their victims without discriminations before God.”³⁵

Although “the concept of original sin dilutes the distinction between sinners and their victims by regarding both as equally sinful” and renders the gospel only good news for the wrongdoers, the Korean American theologian recognizes its “very important point: the solidarity of the human family in the interwoven strands of human misery.”³⁶ For him, the interconnectedness of sin expressed by the concept of original sin points to the reality of *han*. What transmits from parents to their children is not sin but rather *han* that the latter inherit. Children are not responsible for the sins of their parents but they suffer from the consequences of the ills of their progenitors. According to Park, there is four-fold transmission of *han*: biological, mental and spiritual, social, and racial.³⁷ The diverse effects of sins that ancestors bequeath to the posterity propagate “the structure of

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 77. Cf. Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1964), 221.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–81.

han.” The Korean-American theologian asserts that the principal intent of the doctrine of original sin to describe the “deep and connected dimension of the human predicament” can be saved and preserved by “the concept of original han, which is caused by the unfair transmission of the first parents’ sinful nature.”³⁸

Guilt of Sin and Shame of Han

The interwoven relation of sin and *han* also clarifies a confusion about the difference between guilt and shame. “Shame and guilt are two overlapping responses to *han* and sin, respectively. In general, shame emerges when one is helplessly wronged or hurt by others. Guilt arises when one commits sin or does not do right.”³⁹ According to Park, the Western theologians do not recognize the distinct effects of sin and *han* because they take guilt as the only sinful state of broken human reality.

For Barth, “sin is guilt.” Guilt is an unfailing sign of total depravity. For Tillich, guilt is a sign of our sense of estrangement from God. For Heidegger, guilt is a sign of our “nothingness.” Our sinful state and estrangement from God is *objective guilt*. This universal guilt in which all human beings ontologically participate is problematic . . . Can we be guilty for the sins which we have not committed?⁴⁰

The Korean-American theologian agrees with Reinhold Niebuhr who criticizes both Barth’s absolute judgment and orthodox Catholic moral casuistry. For Park, the latter correctly assesses that traditional Western theology’s exclusive emphasis on the sinfulness of all human beings “threaten to destroy all relative moral judgments.” Niebuhr explains his concern about the gap between the ultimate universal guilt and actual relative guilt in the following:

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁹ Park, *From Hurt To Healing*, 35. Cf. 35–59.

⁴⁰ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 81.

Orthodox Christianity has held fairly consistently to the Biblical proposition that all men are equally sinners in the sight of God . . . Yet it is quite apparent that this assertion [Rom. 3:22, 23] imperils and seems to weaken all moral judgments which deal with the “nicely calculated less and more” of justice and goodness as revealed in the relativities of history. It seems to inhibit preferences between the oppressor and his victim, between the congenital liar and the moderately truthful man, between the debauched sensualist and the self-disciplined worker, and between the egoist who drives egocentricity to the point of sickness and the moderately “unselfish” devotee of general welfare. Though it is quite necessary and proper that these distinctions should disappear at the ultimate religious level of judgment, yet it is obviously important to draw them provisionally in all historic judgments.⁴¹

To overcome the apparent contradiction between the universal and actual guilt, he proposes “the equality of sin and the inequality of guilt” that “the Biblical religion has emphasized this inequality of guilt just as much as the equality of sin.”⁴² While Park views Niebuhr’s notion of unequal guilt as an attestation to the inadequacy of the concept of universal guilt in the Western theology, he thinks that the latter’s idea is still “an oppressor-oriented perspective rather than oppressed-oriented” and must be balanced with the notion of *han* and shame.

The Korean-American theologian takes Niebuhr’s idea of diverse guilt as a springboard to elaborate on shame. He claims that traditional interpretation of guilt as the condition of human brokenness cannot be a complete understanding of sin without discussing its twin effect, namely, the shame of victims. Whereas guilt is related to culpability, shame involves vulnerability. Dividing shame into the salutary “discretionary shame” and the detrimental “disgrace shame,” Park identifies *han* with the

⁴¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), I: 219–220. Cf. Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 82.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 222. Cf. 223–227. For Niebuhr, the prophetic tradition of the Scripture demonstrates God’s concern for the poor and disadvantaged through his judgment against the powerful. Yet, the inequality of guilt does not contradict the equality of sin in all humanity because, upon gaining a social victory over their oppressors, the oppressed also “exhibit the same arrogance and the same will-to-power which they abhorred” in their enemies.

the negative shame that “can paralyze us developmentally, render us socially dysfunctional, and bring forth spiritual enfeeblement.”⁴³ The dynamics of disgrace shame which include “disgust with the self,” “inferior complex,” “feeling of abandonment or desertion,” “defectiveness,” and “the sense of defilement,” portray the experience of the oppressed.

Park regards the traditional treatment of guilt and shame inadequate in that the former is usually resolved with “forgiving words and absolution,” and the latter is relegated to “therapeutic counseling.” Like guilt, shame must receive a theological cure rather than psychological treatment. He believes that the guilt of the oppressor should not be removed through “the unilateral proclamation of forgiveness” by a religious authority without the reconciliation with the victim. Likewise, “*han*-ridden shame cannot be resolved through forgiveness alone.”⁴⁴ The healing of shame calls for the efforts to “transform a *han*-causing social order” and “requires the active involvement of sinners and their victims in the process of mutual transformation.”⁴⁵ The Korean-American theologian calls for a “cooperative venture” of offenders and victims to treat their guilt and shame jointly in “their dynamic distinction and correlation.”

Forgiveness to Forgivingness

Park continues to expand his bilateral soteriology of sin and *han* from the discussion of guilt and shame to the revision of the justification by faith with

⁴³ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 83. Unlike the negative disgrace shame, discretionary shame plays a positive role underscoring the virtues of propriety, modesty, privacy, and prudence.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

“justification by love.” He asserts that divine forgiveness for the offenders needs to be completed by “the forgivingness of the offended.”

The Korean-American theologian points out three shortcomings of the doctrine of the justification by faith. “First, the doctrine views the matter of justification from the perspective of the wrongdoer. Second, it speaks a little if at all to the salvation of the wronged. Third, it focuses solely on our relationship with God, diminishing the significance of our relation with our neighbor.”⁴⁶ Park finds the perpetrator-oriented understanding of justification by faith biblically imbalanced, theologically static, and ethically dangerous. The Scripture addresses not only the repentance of sinners but also the forgivingness of victims as its major theme. For instance, the rebuking commandment in Luke 17:3 and Matthew 18:15-17 delineates the way that the wronged is to seek to bring the wrongdoer to repentance from private confrontation to a small group and a church challenge. Christ, moreover, bestowed the power of binding and loosing, the metaphor of divine judgment and forgivingness, upon the Christian community (Matt. 18:18-20; John 20:23). According to Park, “the traditional doctrine of absolution by priests needs to be reinterpreted in light of this discussion.”⁴⁷ The Protestant doctrine of justification by faith also seems to him to overemphasize the grace of God to the extent of determinism that “there is virtually nothing we can do for our own salvation but depend on God’s mercy” for installing faith in us. This over-reliance on grace in the doctrine of justification by faith construes “a static view of salvation” that “it considers salvation simply an external change of status from so-called ‘sinners’ to

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

‘saints.’”⁴⁸ Thus Park calls the Protestant soteriology of justification by faith “an egocentric view” that has rendered little to change the condition of the victims.⁴⁹

Before explaining the Korean-American theologian’s revision of the doctrine of justification by faith with the justification by love, it is helpful to look at one illustration from literature that reverberates Park’s call for a doctrinal counterbalance in Christian understanding of sin and forgiveness. Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* exposes the inadequacy of traditional doctrine of salvation that warrants an automatic forgiveness for any repentant sinner. Through the mouth of Ivan Karamazov, an epitome of modern protest agnostic, he presents the view that forgiveness of perpetrator is unjust in some cases. Particularly when the victims are innocent children, any rationale of forgiveness including the theological vision of “the higher harmony” or theodicy falls flat. The Russian writer tells several stories that he incorporates from the actual news reports of the day. In one story, a little girl is hated and tortured by her parents without apparent reasons. After beating her, they lock her up in the outhouse all night and make her eat her own excrement. Not comprehending what is being done to her, the “‘small creature’ weeps with her anguished, gentle, meek tears for ‘dear God’ to protect her.”⁵⁰ Another story is about a serf boy in a general’s household, who throws a stone and accidentally hurts the paw of the general’s favorite hound. The enraged general seizes

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, “Constant confession of sin before God and putting our faith in God has been the primary focus of religious life. Within this dogmatic agenda, the justification of the wronged has been pushed aside. The sinners are busy with their own sin, repentance, and justification by God’s mercy; their victims have to find their own way to salvation.”

⁵⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated and annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1991), 242.

the boy and locks him up for the night. Next morning he gathers all house-serfs and strips the boy. Then he orders the naked boy to run and looses the whole pack of wolfhounds on him. The general makes the mother watch the dogs tearing her child to pieces. The following lengthy tirade of Ivan echoes some of Park's earlier critique on the traditional understanding of forgiveness:

I understand solidarity in sin among men; solidarity in retribution I also understand; but what solidarity in sin do little children have? And if it is really true that they, too, are in solidarity with their fathers in all the fathers' evildoing, that truth certainly is not of this world and is incomprehensible to me . . . Therefore I absolutely renounce all higher harmony. It is not worth one little tear of even that one tormented child who beat her chest with her little fist and prayed to 'dear God' in a stinking outhouse with her unredeemed tears! Not worth it, because her tears remained unredeemed. . . I do not, finally, want the mother to embrace the tormentor who let his dogs tear her son to pieces! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she wants to, let her forgive the tormentor her immeasurable maternal suffering; but she has no right to forgive the suffering of her child who was torn to pieces.⁵¹

The protest of Ivan shows that if God's forgiveness and righteousness are to have a final significance, they must include the resolution of the *han* of the victims. Without the restoration of justice, the doctrine of justification by faith is incomplete and debilitating for the wounded.

Park believes that a dynamic understanding of God's justification requires both faith and love. The doctrine of justification by faith without the restitution of justice by love is a cheap grace to him. As "without love, faith is empty," the doctrine of justification by faith "has misled thousands of Christians into a self-centered journey of faith."⁵² In order to prevent the doctrine of justification from being hollow, it is to be "interpenetrated by justification by love." "Only when the justification of sinners

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 244–245.

⁵² Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 98.

coincides with the justice of victims, and justification by love joins justification by faith, does a true feast of salvation transpire in the house of God.”⁵³

Whereas the justification by faith stresses on God’s grace of forgiveness, justification by love accentuates the divine grace that enables humanity to seek the human counter-act of forgiving and rectifying the problem of sin. Park sees the forgiveness of God on the cross of Christ as the foundation of human forgiving that the once-for-all event should be followed with a series of “a time-spent event.”⁵⁴ Whereas the justification by faith privileges the perpetrator with a unilateral divine forgiveness and stops short at a half gospel, forgivingness engendered by the justification by love delivers both the sinner and the victims from the incomplete circle of repentance and reconciliation. The perspective of *han* casts a vision of the wholesome salvation in which the offended and offender are linked with “participatory dialectic.” “In this salvation-scheme, the oppressors dialectically participate in the well-being of the oppressed. Both are interpenetrated in an indivisible dialectical destiny. The oppressors (sinners) cannot be saved unless the oppressed (victims) are saved or made whole, and vice versa. In other words, no one is fully saved until all are saved. Salvation is wholeness, and no one can actualize wholeness by him or herself.”⁵⁵

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 83. “The New Testament teaches the offended to forgive the offender, based on God’s unconditional forgiveness toward him or her (Matt 18:23-35). The noteworthy point is that human forgivingness is closely related to divine forgiveness. While the Hebrew Bible emphasizes divine forgiveness, the New Testament focuses on human forgiveness built on divine forgiveness—the unlimited forgivingness (active offer of internal attitude and external reconciliation) that the offended can offer the offender because of God’s unconditional forgivingness.”

⁵⁵ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 101.

The holistic salvation that the participatory dialectic seeks, redefines the idea of “eternal life.” For Park, the eternal life is foremost “the engagement in divine life,” not something that we just attain as our possession: “*Life including eternal life, is not having but for living.*”⁵⁶ This eternal life is all about “eternal joyful *living*” or “the dynamic and loving relationship one enjoys with others in God.” Expanding the doctrine of justification by faith from a personal individual dimension to the inter-personal social dimension through justification by love, the Korean-American theologian calls for a socio-ethical doctrine of salvation through “compassionate confrontation” of *han*. This soteriological scheme, which treats the victims and perpetrators together in the communal dialectic of eternal living, takes after a common spiritual and religious custom in Korea called “*han-pu-ri kut*,” or the shamanistic ritual for resolution of *han*.⁵⁷ Like other Korean theologians, particularly the Korean Association of Women Theologians (KAWT) who also engage in the theological appropriation of the rites of *han-pu-ri* of the popular shamanism, Park suggests the following steps of healing in the communal reconciliation: listening to the wounded – naming the injury – correcting the injustice – choosing to forgive.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵⁷ Chung Hyun Kyung, “‘*Han-pu-ri*’: Doing Theology from Korean Women’s Perspective, in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 60. “There are three important steps in *han-pu-ri*. The first step is *speaking and hearing*. The shaman gives the *han*-ridden persons or ghosts the chance to break their silence. The shaman enables the persons or ghosts to let their *han* out publicly. The shaman makes the community hear the *han*-ridden stories [by being a medium]. The second step is *naming*. The shaman enables the *han*-ridden persons or ghosts (or their communities) to name the source of their oppression. The third step is *changing* the unjust situation by action so that *han*-ridden persons or ghosts can have a peace.”

⁵⁸ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 81–101. Cf. KAWT shares a similar approach of (1) listening to *han*-ridden stories, (2) collaborating a social analysis with social scientists, (3) articulating theological reflection with the original storytellers and their communities, and (4) taking actions such as organized

For the Korean American theologian, the doctrine of justification by faith is too one-dimensional in that it renders Christian salvation static and unhealthy.⁵⁹ To correct the “mechanical formula” of the justification by faith that “stresses repentance over reconciliation,” it is imperative to recognize the relational and dynamic aspect of salvation based on the justification by love. Only the participatory dialectic of forgivingness and forgiveness in the matrix of *han* and sin presents a wholesome salvation, which evokes “the dialogical, dynamic, and compassionate [eternal] living.”⁶⁰

Park’s Soteriology and Process Theology: “God of Han Needs Salvation!”

At this point it is important to underscore the influence of process theology behind Park’s theology of *han*. His language of dialectically participatory salvation comes from the tradition of process theology. The Korean American theologian’s turn to the metaphysics of process theology is not accidental but is a consequence of his rejecting the traditional axiom of *apatheia*. In the main chapter of the book which repeats the title, “the wounded heart of God,” Park reflects on the hermeneutics of *han* to God’s reality. As he tries to elaborate on the “*han* of God,” he finds the doctrine of divine impassibility fundamentally problematic. “Influenced mostly by Stoicism, patristic and medieval theologians asserted that God is perfect and thus cannot change, for any change for the

demonstrations to empower the victims and raise up preventive social awareness. For more details, see the above essay of Chung Hyun Kyung.

⁵⁹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 104–105. David Roberts in *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man* (New York: Scribner’s, 1950) defines the static view of salvation as “a changeless state of the human being through total dependence on divine mercy.” The philosopher of religion names four corollaries of the static salvation: (1) hypocrisy (since a sinner’s salvation comes from God’s mercy regardless of one’s life), (2) self-righteousness (because one esteems to have achieved the highest human existence), (3) unresolved despair (for the sinner could abandon hope in human temporal efforts to change the world), and (4) extreme self-repudiation (that is resulted from one’s inability to distinguish egocentric self-assertion and a sound form of self-love).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

perfect God means a move to an inferior position.”⁶¹ According to Park, the traditional speculation that originated from the classic pagan philosophy is inconsistent with “the reality of God revealed in the Christ-event.” The image of the perfect, insufferable God is contradictory to the crucified Christ, the ultimate manifestation of God in the Bible. Christians come to know God’s perfection by “what God did on the cross” rather than projecting “their own image of perfection.” “Thus,” Park claims, “we can say that the perfect God can suffer.”⁶²

In the cross of Christ, Park sees three revelations about the “divine *han*.” Foremost, the cross symbolizes God’s radical involvement in the suffering of his creation. The crucified Christ shatters the “speculative image of an almighty, impassible God” and shows “God’s unshakable love for God’s own creation.”⁶³ Second, the cross that came as a result of God’s compassionate and vulnerable love for humanity, exposes the *han* of God. Because of God’s ardent love for humanity, “every sin which is committed against others wounds God”.⁶⁴ “No power in the universe can make God vulnerable, but a victim’s suffering breaks the heart of God.”⁶⁵ It is not the power of sin but the pain of the victims that creates *han* in God. In the light of these two interpretations of the cross, Park claims the third and most provocative idea that God also needs salvation. The cross expresses the culmination of God’s *han* in history. As the

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 123. “Our speculative image of an almighty, impassible God has been shattered by the Incarnation and crucifixion. The all-powerful God was crucified. . . God is wrapped up with a creational love with humanity.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

Scripture is replete with God's suffering partnership with humanity such as his "grieving for the misery of Israel" (Judges 10:16), his crying out like a woman in birth-pangs (Is. 47), his agonizing pain for the infidelity of his people (Hosea and Jer. 3:20), and his long-suffering for the return of the prodigal (Luke 15), "the cry of the wounded heart of God on the cross reverberates throughout the whole of history." The cross of Christ reveals the divine love of creation in which "God's *agape* toward the *han*-ridden and sinners will not be fulfilled without their healing and return." Park elaborates the meaning of the cross for God in the following:

God's *han*, the wounded heart of God, is exposed on the cross . . . It is not only the symbol of God's intention to save humanity (human perspective), but also the symbol of God's need for salvation (divine perspective). The cross of Jesus Christ can be interpreted from a human perspective and a divine perspective. It is not only the symbol of God's intention to save humanity (human perspective), but also the symbol of God's need for salvation (divine perspective). The cross of Jesus is a symbol of God's crying for salvation (*Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?*), because God cannot save Godself. If salvation is relational, then one cannot save oneself. *God needs salvation!* This sounds ridiculous and blasphemous. But if we understand salvation from a holistic perspective, God yearns for salvation because God relates to human beings.⁶⁶

According to Park, "God cannot save Godself apart from the salvation of humanity."⁶⁷ The healing of divine wounds depends upon how human beings disentangle their web of sin and *han*. The Korean-American theologian articulates the divine-human entanglement and its joint destiny in the world in a manner of process theology:

Since sin and *han* estrange humans from humans and humans from God, salvation means uniting the estranged parties. This is not a unilateral act but involves a relational reality. God's *han* cannot be resolved by Godself but by human responses. Enmeshed together in the cosmic drama of salvation, neither God nor we ourselves can enter salvation or Sabbath (true repose) alone. Even God will

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

not and cannot do alone. The cross is the symbol of God's involvement in the messy process of saving both himself and Godself.⁶⁸

Park affirms the basic premise of process theology that reality, including the reality of God, is defined by process. Like everything else, God is also in the process of becoming. He is so enmeshed with the world that God cannot clearly separate himself from it. His destiny, entangled in the process of becoming, is largely dependent on how the world turns out.

The Korean-American theologian elaborates his understanding of radical panentheism with "the principle of interpenetration." For him, the notion of "interconnectedness [of reality] has been strongly espoused by quantum theory, process theology, and the Bible."⁶⁹ Drawing from the scientific philosophy of David Bohm, a theoretical physicist, Park claims that the quantum physics demonstrates the interpenetration of all things and "offers a non-mechanistic worldview."⁷⁰ Against the traditional Newtonian perspective that the world consists of independent particles and they are mechanically connected without affecting their inner natures, the discovery of quantum and its interactive phenomenon, shows that "particles somehow appear to 'know' what other particles are doing and seem to know it at speeds faster than the speed of light."⁷¹ The instantaneous interpenetration of quanta across the universe suggests a "principle of nonlocality" that debunks any notion of a separate "reality in locality." The

⁶⁸ Park, "the God who needs our salvation," 90.

⁶⁹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 148.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Cf. David Bohm, "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern World," in *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals*, ed. David R. Griffin (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988): 57–68. For his philosophical analysis of the concept of wholeness, see David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

⁷¹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 149. Cf. Rushworth M. Kidder, "Living Proof of the Strange Quantum Ways," Third in a Five-Part Monitor Series, *The Christian Science Monitor*, (15 June 1988), B4.

universe, according to quantum theory, is “a dynamic web of interrelated events.” Nothing in the physical universe stands alone but everything is mutually determined as the whole reality is affected.

Park continues to assert his view of radical panentheism by combining the main tenet of process theology with his biblical theology. He finds Alfred North Whitehead’s notion of “*causal efficacy*” to be commensurate with his idea of interconnectedness.⁷² According to the process philosopher, the notion of events coalesces into one the previously separated notions of space, time, and matter, as indicated by Einstein’s physics.⁷³ The Korean-American theologian thinks that Whitehead’s emphasis on the primacy of events not only overcomes the “*substance thinking*” of traditional metaphysics but also elucidates “the core teaching of the Scripture,” namely the “affectionate interconnectedness of all creations.”⁷⁴ For Park, while physicists base the mysterious interpenetration of particles on quantum phenomenon, the Bible ascribes the center of all reality to “*the divine love*, which is the gravity that sustains the interconnectedness of the universe.”⁷⁵ Pauline metaphor of the church as a body and Johannine record of the Christ’s last prayer (Jn. 17:11, 21) signify “the fundamentally

⁷² *Ibid.* A detailed description and a close examination of process philosophy and theology will be offered in the following section.

⁷³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 149–150. “Process theology stresses *event thinking* in contrast to *substance thinking*. The latter regards relations as external to substances. The former understands relations as internal to events. No event occurs without its interconnection with other events. All events are internally connected and signify their interdependence. The concept of interconnectedness is also the core teaching of the Scripture.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

indivisible unity between God and humanity.” Holy Communion is the rite of cosmic significance that reaffirms the oneness of human-divine reality.

According to Park, “the cosmic Eucharist,” the reenactment of salvific interconnectedness, heals “the world of *han*” in three ways. First, “it debunks the bifurcation of dualism.” The interconnected reality, envisioned by the Eucharist, recognizes duality without turning it into dualism and promises a unity that bridges the separation between “we” and “they.”⁷⁶ The negative way of self-identification that defines our belongingness by excluding others, is now replaced by “the new way of interconnected thinking” that finds our belongingness including others. Without depreciating others, we can appreciate our identity as well as other’s uniqueness: “we are windows to each other.” Second, “the interconnectedness of the universe unmask the erroneous structure of hierarchism.”⁷⁷ While dualism not only divides but also degrades others with self-centered values, the vision of “indivisible interconnectedness” can create a cooperation to dissolve the *han* of the oppressed as well as the sin of the oppressor in the realization of “true human nature.” Third, the unitive Eucharist does not accomplish a “mere interconnectedness” but “the unity of mutual respect and love.” Employing a central neo-Confucian term, *Kyung* (경), Park articulates that the divine-human union, as set forth by the holy communion, is commensurate with the vertical-horizontal reverence

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* “It [interconnectedness] does not imply that we are all the same and no distinction exists between us. Duality does exist, for unity presupposes duality. Unity without duality makes no sense; duality without unity is false. Only in the unity of duality do we truly know ourselves and others. In other words, we do not understand who we are until we understand our interpretation with others.”

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

of creative distance signified by *Kyung*.⁷⁸ Through the interpenetration and incorporation of the cosmic Eucharist, “the dynamic dialectic of love and reverence will elicit joy and peace through the qualitative life of dialogical unity.”⁷⁹

For the Korean-American theologian, God’s radical engagement within the world of *han*, as manifested in “the *han*-ful life of Jesus Christ” and evoked in the cosmic Eucharist, calls for a revision of traditional knowledge of divine attributes. He claims that the crux of theological discussion is “the knowledge of God” and “we come to know the reality of God only in the midst of experiencing *han* in the world.”⁸⁰ In light of the divine experience of *han*, Park suggests the following panentheistic understanding of God’s perfection with his twist of process theology.

Christ sheds new light on the attributes of God through his actual divine life (theo-praxis). Jesus Christ has taught us that God is crucified everywhere we are oppressed (omnipresence); God knows our deepest sorrow (omniscience); God’s vulnerable love shown on the cross and in the death of Jesus is more powerful or persuasive than anything known to us (omnipotence). Christ’s teaching and life have revealed to us the wounded heart of God, which feels with the *han* of the oppressed and suffers the sin of the oppressors. This wounded God in Jesus Christ is truly powerful, wise, and salvific. This wounded God shapes and reshapes the course of history in the form of the hungry, the imprisoned and the naked—the *han-ridden*. The salvation of the wounded God and of the oppressed and of the oppressors is the crux of the knowledge of God.⁸¹

According to Park, the traditional understanding of God’s attributes is “abstract” and “meaningless” to us since “they are beyond our comprehension and experience.” He sees the idea of divine impassibility valid only as an isolated history, namely the early

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 152. “It [*Kyung*] elicits the appreciation and adoration of all existences. It is loyal to all forms of beings. . . I would suggest that mutual reverence brings forth the transcendent dimension of life. Love binds up (immanence) while mutual respect builds up (transcendence).”

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

church's condemnation of "patripassianists such as Praxeas, Sabellius, and Noetius."⁸²

For the Korean-American theologian, the usefulness of the traditional axiom of *apatheia* expired as a theology of *via negativa* in the patristic and medieval scholastic period, and it is time to "support the idea of God's passibility."⁸³ As Park wholeheartedly embraces the radical panentheism of process theology as the ontological foundation for his theology of *han*, it goes without question that the critique of his constructive theology must begin by examining the metaphysical claims of process thoughts.

Critique on the Radical Panentheism and the Dipolar God of Process Theology

Influenced by Whitehead's metaphysical philosophy, process theology attempts to offer modern people a plausible cosmology that explains the dynamic relationship between God and the world.⁸⁴ The proponents of process theology take temporality, change, and contingency as fundamental to both God and the universe.⁸⁵ Whitehead bases his "philosophy of organism" on the dipolar nature of God. The first pole of God's nature is "primordial" and the other is "consequent." The primordial nature of God is "free, complete, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious" and the consequent side of divine nature is "determined, incomplete, everlasting, fully actual, and conscious."⁸⁶

⁸² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 141. "Whatever suggests a cosmology, suggests a religion."

⁸⁵ The representatives of process theology include John Cobb, Schubert Ogden, Norman Pittenger, Lewis Ford, David Pailin, Daniel Day Williams, and David Griffin. See *Process Theology*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Newman Press, 1971), *Religious Experience and Process Theology*, ed. H. J. Cargas and B. Lee (New York: Paulist, 1976), and John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976).

⁸⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345. "The consequent nature of God is conscious; and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The

While God is distinct from the world, he does not really transcend the world but changes and grows through his interaction with the created reality. According to the process philosopher, “God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.”⁸⁷ In other words, God is not the sole creator of the world but the “co-creator” within the world.⁸⁸

Whitehead’s dipolar conception of God is further developed into a theological discourse by one of his students, Charles Hartshorne.⁸⁹ He answers a most common question to process theology: how can God be perfect and change? Hartshorne redefines God’s perfection by twisting the axiom of Anselm’s ontological argument with his process thought. The process theologian finds the Anselmian definition of God as “greater than that which can be conceived” incoherent because such deity “hence is incapable of increase, then we face paradox on either hand.”⁹⁰ The phrase, “greater than,” should be read “as that individual being than which no *other individual* being

primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God’s physical feelings upon his primordial concepts.” For details, see 31–36 and 343–351.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁸⁸ The last recorded words of Whitehead before his death on December 30, 1947 confirmed his life-long conviction of God’s being co-creator. Lucien Price, *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1956), 297. “God is *in* the world, or nowhere, creating continually in us and around us. . . This creation is a continuing process, and ‘the process is itself the actuality,’ since no sooner do you arrive than you start on a fresh journey. In so far as man partakes of this creative process does he partake of the divine, of God, and that participation is his immortality, reducing the question of whether his individuality survives death of the body to the estate of an irrelevancy. His true destiny as co-creator of the universe is his dignity and his grandeur.”

⁸⁹ In *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (London: SCM Press, 1967), Schubert Ogden calls Hartshorne “the philosopher of modern theology.” Also, John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin assess his influence as the “decisive role in the emergence of process theology.” John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 167–169.

⁹⁰ Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 20.

could *conceivably* be greater, but which *itself*, in another ‘state,’ could become greater.”⁹¹

For Hartshorne, God is the most excellent because he is “the self-surpassing surpasser of all.”⁹² Unsurpassable by others, God can surpass himself “ever growing (partly through our efforts) in the joy, the richness of his life, and this without end through all the infinite future.”⁹³ What Whitehead coins the *modus operandi* of cosmic process as “prehension,”⁹⁴ Hartshorne calls “enjoying.” God has an infinite capacity for “unfailingly enjoying as its own constituents whatever imperfect things come to exist.”⁹⁵

Among the subjects that “prehend” the previous experiences of other “actual occasions,” God has the unending superior prehension that enables him to “possess in its own unity all the values” which others “severally and separately achieve.” The perfection of God, therefore, means the “divine relativity” or “transcendent excellence” that “depends upon

⁹¹ *Ibid.* For details, see Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm’s Discovery: A Re-examination of the Ontological Proof for God’s existence* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1965).

⁹² *Ibid.* “Let us define perfection as an excellence such that rivalry or superiority on the part of other individuals is impossible, but self-superiority is not impossible. . . . The self-surpassing surpasser of all has the power of unfailingly enjoying as its own constituents whatever imperfect things come to exist.”

⁹³ Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953), 156.

⁹⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18-27, 41-49, 219-239, 345-346. Prehension is a term created by dropping the first syllable from “apprehension.” Whereas apprehension involves cognitive, prehension is uncognitive apprehension by which the lower and higher entities in the world participate in the non-sensory perception of antecedent experience toward the unitive process of the whole reality. Prehension is an act of awareness that underlies the world and no actuality (actual experience) can exist without it. Whitehead describes prehensions as concrete modes of analysis of the world. To prehend something is to have a concrete idea or experience of that thing. However, prehension is not merely a mode of thinking but a process of appropriation of an element of an actual entity as an object that changes the internal constitution of the prehending subject. Prehension is a process by which an actual entity, or prehending subject, becomes itself by appropriating elements from other actual entities. A prehension is an operation in which an actual entity “grasps” some other entity and makes that entity an object of its experience (Whitehead calls it “conrescence”). For process thinkers, prehension overcomes the Cartesian epistemological limitation of subject-object dichotomy and the ideal of independence with its notion of relatedness and interdependence. The very nature of prehension reveals a relational character in that it establishes an ontological matrix of the “givenness” of the world and its “panpsychic” process.

⁹⁵ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 20.

and varies with varying relationships.”⁹⁶ The process theologian claims that his neoclassical metaphysics of “Surrelativism” (Supremely-relative) or “Panentheism” overcomes the static notion of the absolute God set forth by classical theism with logical coherence and ethical significance.⁹⁷

According to Hartshorne, classical theism has the twin problems of logical inconsistency and ethical irrelevance. First, the monopolar concept of classical theism that God is absolutely immutable and impassible, seems to him logically absurd. For instance, if God is an omniscient subject, he cannot remain unaffected by everything that he knows about the world including suffering. Because a thinking subject receives its knowledge from relationship, the subjectivity of God posits a relationship with others and relation implies change.⁹⁸ The process theologian understands the idea of divine omniscience experientially that his notion of perfection is rather quantitative than qualitative.⁹⁹ The more perfect one is or becomes, the more experience one has or needs to acquire. He rejects divine immutability as “the old Platonic argument: the perfect, being complete or maximal in its value, could only change for the worse; but the capacity for such change being a defect, the perfect cannot change at all.”¹⁰⁰ Hartshorne also finds a logical incoherence in the traditional notion of God’s act as necessary and free. If God

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, x. Also in xvii, “God orders the universe, according to panentheism, by taking into his own life all the currents of feeling in existence. He is the most irresistible of influences precisely because he is himself the most open to influence.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ix. Hartshorne coined the term, “surrelative,” by combining supreme and relative. Surrelativism is the doctrine of absolute and relative that conforms to the polar principle of the process.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 “To think is to related. . . Reality is something “relative” or relational.”

⁹⁹ Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 16. “An entity is perfect not, say, in its qualities of love or grace, but rather in that it has more experience of reality than another. . . Hartshorne continues to hold a quantitative view of perfection, but does not believe that the idea of a fixed totality is a possible one.”

¹⁰⁰ Hartshorne, *Anselm’s Discovery*, 29.

is to be God, his existence must be necessary. If he is wholly necessary, then so are his acts of creation. Creation as his necessary act cannot be free or contingent.¹⁰¹ The idea of a necessary creation of a contingent world appears to be a contradiction to the process thinker because “he puts the problem of the relation of the necessary and the contingent in terms of knowledge rather than creation.”¹⁰²

Hartshorne also argues that the internal incoherence of classical theism in the absolute transcendence of God also imparts an ethical discrepancy. “If God is wholly absolute, a term but never a subject of relations, it follows that God does not know or love or will us, his creatures.”¹⁰³ The process theologian asserts that the monopolar concept of God negates any possibility of a mutual relationship. The divine transcendence and self-enclosure in the sense of the traditional theism precludes love.¹⁰⁴ The lack of an interactive reality in the “wholly absolute God” also engenders an illusory hierarchy of “priestcraft.”¹⁰⁵ The notion of a self-sufficient God in classical theism

¹⁰¹ Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 198–199. “In orthodox theology there occurred the colossal equivocation of maintaining: (1) God’s action of willing simply *is* his character (“essence”) and (2) This action is free (he creates the world, but might have created a different one, or none). Since the essence, or self-identity, of a being is the only one *that* being could have, it follows that if the essence is the willing, no different willing was possible for that being. If then, on the assumptions, God willed to create the world, he could not but have so willed. I am persuaded, after considerable discussion of the matter with proponents of orthodox theory, that there is here sheer contradiction, or words with no meaning at all.”

¹⁰² Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 17–18. As it will show later, Hartshorne’s notion of eternal as temporal infinity prevents him from “conceiving of the relation between temporal phenomena and the divine knowledge that is outside time.”

¹⁰³ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 158. “If he is perfect in all ways, and if perfect means complete and incapable of enhancement, then the greatest saint can do no more for God than the worst sinner, for neither could possibly add to, or subtract from, what is always wholly perfect. And such a God could not love in a real sense, for to love is to find joy in the joy of others and sorrows in their sorrows, and thus to gain through their gains and lose (or at least, miss some possible value) through their losses, and the wholly perfect could neither gain nor lose.”

cultivates the ethical ideal of self-sufficiency in human beings and produces “the dangerous individualism of our Western world.”¹⁰⁶ The classical theistic idea of a completely independent God is “not admirable” for it “seems plainly an idealization of the tyrant-subject relationship.”¹⁰⁷ This denial of mutual interaction and shared transformation goes against “the metaphysics of democracy,” which the “supremely sensitive” God “allots us a privilege of participation in governing.”¹⁰⁸ The largely independent, apathetic, nonrelative God is not only morally repugnant but also socio-politically tenuous. Classical theism seems to the process theologian to make a Christian “an imitator of Aristotle’s divine Aristocrat” rather than “a follower of Jesus.”¹⁰⁹

Hartshorne contends that the problem of classical theism is an “oversimplification” and its language of divine absolute perfection must be qualified by process theology.¹¹⁰ Traditional theologians “forgot that the perfection of God is the perfection of *love*” and thought of God “as simply perfect in general.”¹¹¹ He divides concepts of God into three main types: classical theism (as exemplified by Aquinas), neo-classical theism (his own view), and atheism. He believes that the second type offers the

¹⁰⁵ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 26. “To say, on the one hand, God is love, to continue to use popular religious terms like Lord, divine will, obedience to God, and on the other to speak of an absolute, infinite, immutable, simple, impassive deity, is a gigantic hoax of priestcraft.”

¹⁰⁶ Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1962), 121.

¹⁰⁷ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 42–44.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 50–51.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Hartshorne, “The God of Religion and the God of Philosophy,” in *Talk of God*, ed. G. N. A. Vesey, (London: Macmillan, 1969), 161f. “How can anyone believe that being a follower of Jesus is like being an imitator of Aristotle’s divine Aristocrat, who is serenely indifferent to the world’s turmoil?”

¹¹⁰ Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 158. “The old theology was a first approximation; like Newtonian science it was an oversimplification. All its conceptions are true, provided they are qualified as theologians have only recently learned to qualify them.”

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

most plausible view because its God is “both perfect and, in other ways, imperfect.”¹¹²

For him, the mistake of classical theism originates from recognizing only the absolute side of God and process theology improves the imbalanced traditional idea of God’s being with its notion of becoming. It is the divine becoming where God’s being is to be found and articulated, not vice versa. When God’s absolute side is plumbed with God’s relative side, he asserts, the meaning of divine perfection will be explained through his infinitely creative change of imperfection in the fluid reality.

Turning classical theism on its head, Hartshorne conceptualizes the attributes of God in a dipolar manner.¹¹³ He reconstructs the various aspects of divine perfection by pairing absolute/relative, abstract/concrete, necessary/contingent, simple/multiple, and eternal/temporal. While both sides of divine nature are predicated of God who involves in the cosmic process, the first pole is subordinate to the second. As God is supremely related to the world, he absolutely receives knowledge from it and incorporates into his becoming as *a priori*. For instance, God’s immutability means an “eminent” mutability because he responds to every happening in an “all-inclusive and embracing” manner.

The fact that God is able to change cannot change. His being open to whatever happens

¹¹² *Ibid*, 159. “A God both perfect and, in other ways, imperfect can change, whereas a being wholly perfect could change neither for the better nor for the worse. . . . A changeless being can have no purposes, for purposes refer to the future and the future is related to the present by change. A changeless being cannot love, for to love is to sympathize with, and through sympathy to share in, the changes occurring in the persons one loves.”

¹¹³ John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology*, 47–48, “For Charles Hartshorne, the two “poles” or aspects of God are the abstract essence of God, on the one hand, and God’s concrete actuality on the other. The abstract essence is eternal, absolute, independent, unchangeable. It includes those abstract attributes of deity which characterize the divine existence at every moment. . . . The concrete actuality is temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing. In each moment of God’s life there are new, unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable. Hence, God’s concrete knowledge is dependent upon the decisions made by the worldly actualities. God’s knowledge is always relativized by, in the sense of internally related to, the world.”

is not open to change.¹¹⁴ God's omniscience means that God knows everything which is knowable at the moment and relates it to all reality and his own being. With the "universality, unfailingness, or unique adequacy, of the divine social relativity," Hartshorne defines God's impassibility as "omnipassivity."¹¹⁵ For God suffers all act and suffering within the world, nothing can happen that will upset him. His ability to suffer cannot suffer. For him, divine omnipassivity is foundational for divine activity to configure the changes and pains of the world in his "reflexively transcendent" nature.¹¹⁶ According to Colin Gunton's perceptive analysis, Hartshorne articulates the relative perfection of God in the way that he has achieved the conception of "the moved unmover" instead of "the unmoved mover" of the classical theism.¹¹⁷ It begs the question whether the process theologian's re-conceptualization overcomes the allegedly incoherent, indifferent, and ineffective God of classical theism.

A preliminary critique is in order against the process theology's use of the term "classical theism." Hartshorne identifies himself as "neo-classical theist" in order to denote "his relationship of continuity and discontinuity with traditional theism."¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, many process theologians assume and use this general term that blends

¹¹⁴ Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision for God and Logic of Theism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 110.

¹¹⁵ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 156.

¹¹⁶ Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 123–124.

¹¹⁷ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 41. "By turning the classical concept on its head, this philosopher has presented us with a kind of coincidence of opposites. Instead of the unmoved mover, he has achieved the conception of an equally ineffective deity: the moved unmover."

¹¹⁸ John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 7–8. The process theologians "follow Whitehead and Hartshorne" in their usages of terms. The latter employs three different terms to describe the various aspects of his belief in God. "Neo-classical theist" shows his attempt to innovate traditional theism. "Dipolar theist" emphasizes his critique of the one-sidedness of traditional theism. "Panentheist" points to his view of the relation of God and the world.

Greek philosophy with patristic tradition and scholastic theology without much distinction. One of the earliest critics of process theology, Langdon Gilkey, correctly points out such a misuse of the term: “What process philosophers of religion call ‘classic theism’ is a strange, hodgepodge that bears little historical scrutiny.”¹¹⁹ As it will be shown in the following section, process theology shares more affinity with classical philosophy than Christian traditional theology does. Process metaphysics in fact is an inferior version of the classical cosmology.

Process theology claims to proffer a dynamic and meaningful cosmology for God and humanity, but it is in fact a form of “metaphysical monism.”¹²⁰ For process metaphysics, time is absolute. To exist means to be temporal, or to take place in the matrix of sequential “actual occasions.” Time plays an asymmetrical and directional role for the world process as its “logical structure.”¹²¹ As past is concrete and present is developing and future is indeterminate to some degree, the universe and God as a whole move through time. Thus, any discussion on the beginning or end of time is nonsense and metaphysical impossibility in process theology. The foundational eternality of time in reality, moreover, renders God personal for process thinkers because “personal means being an individual with a character expressible freely in acts of knowledge, choice, and

¹¹⁹ Langdon B. Gilkey, “A Theology in Process: Schubert Ogden’s Developing Theology,” *Interpretations* XXI, no 4 (October, 1967), 449. “... and, as philosophers are wont to do, they seem to think that it has been scholastic *philosophy* that dominated the religion and piety of almost all of Western Christendom until finally a new philosophy appeared in Whitehead.”

¹²⁰ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 57–58. “Some kind of monism is axiomatic for Hartshorne, and is revealed in a number of statements that he makes. The axiomatic monism is present in the following remark: ‘. . . if things were simply ‘outside’ God, there would be a greater reality than God, God and the world’ [Hartshorne, *Anselm’s Discovery*, 109]. Again, if one were to try to conceive of God as in some sense independent of the world, ‘then God-and-what-is-other-than-God must be a total reality greater than God’ [Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 505].”

¹²¹ Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision for God and Logic of Theism*, 179. “Such is the logical structure of time, that it gives determinations a unique asymmetrical order of involvement.”

love.”¹²² The free acts of personal beings in social relation are only feasible in reality structured by time.

Process theology’s negation of time as a creation of God generates several conflicts with traditional Christian theology. Foremost, the doctrine of Trinity is completely deflated since its essential relation pertains to the eternal or atemporal realm. As process theology understands “the plurality of divine persons in the life of God” within the dipolar nature of God, any other differentiation than “a real distinction between what is relative and what is absolute in deity” is unnecessary and misleading. The Three-ness of God is limited and could be infinite since “this succession of beings in God is in a sense a succession of persons.”¹²³ Hartshorne thinks that the threeness is valid only as a possible combination of divine becoming to demonstrate God’s absolute and actual reality. He suspects the traditional historical identification of Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be “a matter for fancy more than argument.”¹²⁴ Other process theologians also see the doctrine of Trinity “a source of distortion and an artificial game that has brought theology into justifiable disrepute.”¹²⁵

¹²² Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 202. Hartshorne thinks that Whitehead’s understanding of time “not simply something created but as the order of creating itself” offers “a more personal deity than Augustine or Thomas” because God “does not plot it all out in eternity” but “He genuinely lives in unison with our living.”

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 169. “For if there is divine becoming as well as divine being, then in some real sense God is a new being every moment of his life, and since he is really a knowing and loving being, this succession of beings in God is in a sense a succession of persons. However, the number of such divine persons would presumably be *infinite, not three*” (Italics are mine).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170. “Thus, there would, at a given moment, be the one concrete deity or divine actuality (“substance”) containing three aspects, one of which is the actuality itself in its fullness, while the other two are abstract elements of this actuality. How far these three could be identified with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I suspect, is a matter for fancy more than argument, since historical definitions of the three persons contain too many ambiguities, or are too vague, to make such argument much more than a pastime.”

The rejection of the traditional view of Trinity in process theology leads to a different understanding of Christology, particularly the incarnation. Because God is “absolute, yet related to all,”¹²⁶ the incarnation of Christ does not constitute any radical act of God’s revelation and redemption but it is just “the chief exemplification” of the ongoing divine interaction with the world. For instance, Norman Pittenger’s understanding of the incarnation is typical of process theology’s view: “the Incarnation is not confined only to the historical person of Jesus Christ, but is also the manner and mode of all of God’s work in the world. That is to say, God is ever incarnating himself in his creation.”¹²⁷ Such remark leads to a question, “How then is Jesus of Nazareth special?” For his part, Hartshorne answers: “I have no Christology to offer, beyond the simple suggestion that Jesus appears to be the supreme symbol furnished to us by history of the notion of a God genuinely and literally ‘sympathetic’ (incomparably *more* literally than any man ever is), receiving into his own experience the sufferings as well as the joys of the world.”¹²⁸ God does not work in a different kind of way in Christ but rather in him we find manifested the way God is always working. The incarnation is not a supernatural

¹²⁵ John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 109–110. “The doctrine of Trinity is an artificial game when much ado is made of the number three, and when the ‘mystery’ that God is somehow three in one is portrayed as of special significance in itself, and even as central to Christian faith.” It should be noted that a few recent process theologians engage in depth with traditional doctrine of Trinity from process perspective. For details, see Joseph A. Bracken, *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 1997), *The One in the Many: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the God-World Relationship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

¹²⁶ Hartshorne, *The Divine Reality*, 60.

¹²⁷ Norman Pittenger, *God in Process* (London: SCM press, 1967), 19. “. . . which means that he is ever entering into it—not as if he were absent from it and intervened now and again in it.”

¹²⁸ Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 24. For the details of Hartshorne’s process Christology, see 146–153. For the process theologian, the divinity of Jesus is not “the really important question” but “an awkward disguise.” Jesus was “no more ‘immutable’ or ‘timeless’ than the rest of us.” He sees the idea of the incarnation “no mystery but simple contradiction” because “on the one hand, no one can be man and *in every sense* also God.” Therefore, Jesus is “*an* expression of the divine life, as are all things” (*italic is mine*).

activity of God in history but an exemplary “self-expressive activity of God,” in that “in Jesus the energizing and indwelling activity of God in human creation reaches a climactic stage.”¹²⁹ In other words, the difference between Jesus and us is in degree and not in kind. In a process Christology, Jesus as the Christ does not establish a completely new relationship between God and humanity, but makes it possible for the divine-human co-creativity to become more fully actualized.¹³⁰ For process theologians, Chalcedonian Christology is irrelevant and needs to be de-mythologized as a “clue” or “lure” to God’s sympathetic organic love.¹³¹ Thomas Weinandy correctly characterizes the process theology’s neglect of the ontological uniqueness of Jesus Christ as “essentially Gnostic in character.”¹³² Although process theologians do not see matter as evil, they reduce soteriology and Christology to “eternally established and unchanging cosmological order.” According to Weinandy, in process theology “one is not saved by faith but by knowledge—esoteric and philosophical in nature. Thus, as in classic Gnosticism, Jesus is a mythical or metaphorical Gnostic redeemer and Christianity is Gnosticism—the coming to know the cosmological system.”¹³³ Process theology’s denial of the traditional

¹²⁹ Norman Pittenger, *The Lure of Divine Love: Human Experience and Christian Faith in a Process Perspective* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1979), 112.

¹³⁰ David Griffin, *Process Christology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 180. “The only change in the God-man relation is man’s attitude. Through revelation he comes to know things about God that were already true, and this knowledge affects the subjective form of his experience.”

¹³¹ For instance, Schubert Ogden’s process theology is an attempt to harness the insights of Rudolf Bultmann with process metaphysics of Hartshorne. See S. Ogden, *Christ Without Myth* (London: Harper & Row, 1962) and *The Reality of God* (London: Harper & Row, 1967).

¹³² Thomas G. Weinandy, “Gnosticism and Contemporary Soteriology: Some Reflections,” *New Blackfriars* Vol. 76, No 899 (December, 1995): 550. Cf. Colin Gunton, “The knowledge of God according to Two Process Theologians: A Twentieth-Century Gnosticism,” *Religious Studies* Vol. II, No 1 (March 1975): 87–96.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 551. “Reality is not ontologically changed or made different by the salvation Jesus brings, but only gnoseologically.”

confession on the person of Christ contradicts the biblical witness that the person of Jesus is central to the gospel and there is no message or saving knowledge (*gnosis*) apart from him.¹³⁴

The collapse of the doctrine of Trinity and Christology in process theology indicates its further disagreement with traditional doctrine of creation. “Process theology rejects the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, if that means creation out of *absolute* nothingness.”¹³⁵ Instead it upholds “a doctrine of creation out of chaos,” which affirms evolution as God’s creative “process of complexification.”¹³⁶ The major flaw of the process view of creation comes from the fact that it does not explain why anything, including God, exists at all. While it elaborates how God works and why he is the way he is, it has no account for God’s own existence nor the creation’s existence. As mentioned earlier in the process view of time, it leaves the question unanswered if anything had a beginning. As process theology denies God’s creative power to bring all things in existence and conserve them, it sees divine creativity as his ability to give order and to influence the reality toward its ever improving actualization.

¹³⁴ Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 68-69. Describing the gist of Pauline theology as ‘apocalypse’ centered on Jesus Christ, Harink states that “God has acted critically, decisively, and finally for Israel, all the peoples of the earth, and the entire cosmos, in the life, death, resurrection, and coming again of Jesus, in such a way that God’ purpose for Israel, all humanity, and all creation is critically, decisively, and finally disclosed and effected in the history of Jesus Christ.” He adds that “apocalyptic is indeed language about ‘disclosure’ or ‘revelation,’ but again this must be taken in the sense of the timely and effective disclosure of God’s critical, decisive, and final action and purpose for the cosmos, and not as the unveiling of a previous hidden state of affairs immanent within human nature or the cosmos—God’s *apokalypsis* is not only a showing, but also a doing which effects what is shown.”

¹³⁵ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 65. “That doctrine is part and parcel of the doctrine of God as absolute controller.”

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 66–79. Cobb and Griffin asserts that as “a theology of nature” process theology has a more congruity with natural science and fosters a better “ecological attitude” than the traditional God of *actus purus*.

Process theology's rejection of the creator God in the traditional sense, and its revision of divine creative power as an evolutionary impulse or lure, are internally incoherent. For God to guide the rest of contingent things in his creative direction, writes Gunton, "he must exist in a different way" or "different levels of becoming and being."¹³⁷ In process cosmology, Weinandy adds, God does not exist ontologically distinct from everything else but "he himself is a prisoner to a cosmological order that is self-contained and closed."¹³⁸ Because God is in the same ontological category like everything else, it is impossible for him to interact with the creation in different kinds of ways.¹³⁹ God is not really free in his act and his becoming hinges on the changes of others. Process theology bases the ontological uniqueness of God on that he prehends and persuades *all* actual occasions in contrast to partial prehensions of everything else. Such claim does not necessarily mean that God is unconditioned and gratuitous in his interaction with the world. The question whether God can choose to respond to one occasion over another is unanswered and implicitly negated. By definition, the God of process is not free from the world of process.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 111. "If God is to be understood as in principle superior to the rest of reality, he must exist in a different way from the entities we understand as contingent, whether or not along with Hartshorne and his classical predecessors we conceive reality in terms of different levels of becoming or being." Gunton calls this ontologically indistinct reality of God in process theology "the neoclassical dilemma."

¹³⁸ Weinandy, "Gnosticism and Contemporary Soteriology: Some Reflections," 552.

¹³⁹ David Burrell, *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 57f. "God cannot make a new beginning at Exodus or Resurrection unless God is the creator."

¹⁴⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348. "It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many. . . . It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World. It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God."

Weinandy succinctly assesses the process theology's view of God as a creator to be poor and inferior than classical cosmology:

In the end the God of Process Philosophy is an imitation of Plato's demiurge, God's role is purely functional in that he is to bring order to finite reality. Moreover, he is a *poor* imitation. While Plato's demiurge could use the One or the Good to guide and bring order into finite reality, the demiurge of Process Philosophy can ground no set of values. Likewise, he is unable to do his job properly since he is always one step behind in the process, forever condemned to trying to catch up in his ordering role.¹⁴¹

Lastly, process theology envisions a different soteriology than the traditional biblical understanding of salvation. The irreconcilable difference originates from the "axiomatically optimistic" view of the world in process theology that "reality is getting better all the time because it is building upon the value of the past which accumulates in the divine memory."¹⁴² Process in the infinite temporal succession means a progress toward a more perfect and unified reality. This optimism of neoclassical metaphysics that "process realizes ever greater good" makes some fundamental alterations to traditional soteriology. First of all, it does not recognize the radical nature of sin. Process theology offers a soteriology without a serious hamartiology.¹⁴³ For process thinkers, sin is not a free and direct rebellion against God that destroys the relationship between God and humanity. It is rather a necessary part of the cosmic process, which has not yet become perfect. Whitehead sees evil as the inertia of nature that "the ultimate

¹⁴¹ Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change?: The World's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still Rivers, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1985), 143.

¹⁴² Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 220.

¹⁴³ It is not rare to find the absence of the substantial or often any treatment of sin in the works of many process theologians.

evil” is “the perpetual perishing” of time.¹⁴⁴ The temporal world has a problem in its experience of confronting evil: time eliminates the present moments of joy in which various evils are overcome by continually fading them in the past. “If this perpetual perishing of everything that we value is the whole story, then life is ultimately meaningless.”¹⁴⁵ The nature of evil thus lies in the obstruction of accumulating, necessary, learning experience from the past to the present.¹⁴⁶ According to process metaphysics, God’s responsive love saves these valuable experiences in his “everlasting” memory so that the “evasion” of evil is deterred and “building up a mode of utilization” for ultimate harmony is enabled.¹⁴⁷ In other words, process soteriology resolves the problem of evil as a mere structural impediment.¹⁴⁸ God sympathizes with the struggles of the “conscious rational life” which “refuses to conceive itself as a transient enjoyment, transiently useful” against the evil’s power of oblivion.¹⁴⁹ With serenity and patience of

¹⁴⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340. “The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a ‘perpetual perishing.’”

¹⁴⁵ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 120.

¹⁴⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340. “The nature of evil is that the characters of things are mutually obstructive.”

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 340–341. Cf. Cobb and Griffin, 122. “God’s responsive love is the power to overcome the final evil of our temporal existence.” For process theologians, God is “neither eternal in the sense of timeless, nor temporal in the sense of perpetual perishing.” He is “everlasting” in the sense of absorbing all the past experience in the present.

¹⁴⁸ David Burrell criticizes the theodicy arguments that search for any purposefulness of the evil. He asserts that the biblical message such as that of the Book of Job points out that there is no satisfactory answer to the problem of evil. Whereas Christian tradition sees evil real yet unnecessary and irrational, process theodicy rationalizes the presence of evil as a part of the reality that discloses the necessary work of God in the world. Cf. David Burrell, *Deconstructing Theodicy: Why Job Has Nothing to Say to the Puzzled Suffering* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340.

“the poet of the world,” God leads it to salvation “by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.”¹⁵⁰

The optimistic picture of process soteriology that dissolves sin, evil, and struggle in the cosmic memory of God’s sympathetic love, is problematic to traditional understanding of salvation. Donald Bloesch remarks the process theology’s failure to perceive the radicality of sin in the following:

The principal objection to the process theology of evil is that evil becomes a necessary stepping stone to greater good in the context of the creative advance into novelty. What is lost here is the biblical view that evil stands in diametrical opposition to the good. Evil is regarded as provisional discord, preparing the way for the ultimate harmony of opposites, not the abysmal power of darkness signifying an assault on the good.¹⁵¹

Bloesch argues that process soteriology resembles the modern Enlightenment philosophy rather than the biblical theology. “The biblical picture of a world lost in sin, standing under the judgment of God, has been replaced by one much closer to the Enlightenment vision of a world that needs only to be saved from human weakness and ignorance. Salvation is growth in qualitative meaning, which can be attained through union with the creative process within and around us.”¹⁵²

The failure to grasp the grave condition of sin in process theology is connected to the mistake of overlooking the radicality of God’s redemptive act in Christ. Process

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 346. “He does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.”

¹⁵¹ Donald G. Bloesch, “Process Theology in Reformed Perspective,” *The Reformed Journal* Vol. 29 Issue 10 (October, 1979), 21.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 22. “God can mitigate but not eradicate evil, since new breakthrough into freedom brings with it new possibilities for temptation and sin.” Cf. 23, Bloesch concludes that “process theology and Reformed theology represent two different religions, and it would be a pitiful delusion to anticipate any synthesis between them.”

theology's view of divine agency in salvation adulterates the biblical testimony of God's active role in salvation. The New Testament proclaims that God established an entirely new relationship between himself and humanity through Jesus Christ in the crucifixion and resurrection. Human beings are called to enter into this new life through the repentance of sin with faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and the dynamic presence of God in the believers is realized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture declares a significant difference of human relationship with God before and after the coming of Christ by employing the language of "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). Christ is not just the optimal clue or lure of God but the "new creator" who makes all things new. It is in his name that Christians personally pray to God and communally worship and celebrate the sacraments.

In contrast to traditional soteriology and its biblical confession in the indispensable life and work of Christ, process theology portrays God so immanent within the world that Christ does not constitute the world in any radically innovative way. Since God in process soteriology is "a kind of metaphysical sponge" who infinitely absorbs everything, his divine agency is "totally automatic and involuntary."¹⁵³ The conflation of God and the world in their mutual reality renders process soteriology "necessitarian" in that it "deprives the Christian Gospel of its quality as free grace."¹⁵⁴ Gunton calls the

¹⁵³ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 220–221. "Merely because God is so constituted that everything that happens must make an impact upon him—a kind of metaphysical sponge, infinitely absorbent—are we to say that he *loves* everything? If we are going to use words like 'love' and 'grace' when we speak of God must there not be clear connotations of free, active, personal initiative if the existence of this God is going to make any more difference than serving as a validation of what man already is? The difficulty with the neoclassical suffering, for all its merits as a pointer to the real concern of God for his creatures, is that it is not also a doing. It is totally automatic and involuntary."

¹⁵⁴ Colin Gunton, "Process Theology's Concept of God: An Outline and Assessment," *The Expository Times* Vol. LXXXIV, No 10 (July 1973), 295. "Grace of creation and redemption are replaced

salvific vision of process theology “a sophisticated form of animism” because “it divinizes the world, both as the creator of itself and God and as the body, coeternal and consubstantial, of God who is its soul.”¹⁵⁵

The problem of the passive and co-dependent divine agency in process theology ultimately evinces a great intrinsic weakness, namely the possibility of “contemporary relations” between two personal subjects. In the temporal structure of process metaphysics, it is logically impossible for two subjects to have a contemporaneous interaction, “for the knowing subject is always related to things in the past.”¹⁵⁶ The only possible relation in process philosophy is a sequential prehension of subjects that take the experience of other subjects only as objectified data. Hartshorne recognizes the difficulty of contemporaneous subject-to-subject relation as *the* problem of process metaphysics:

This brings us to the very difficult problem, for me *the* problem, of relations between contemporaries. If the subject is always more particular than the object, then two subjects cannot be objects to each other. . . . Two experiences, two momentary or irreducible “subjects,” could not, according to our principles each know the other. According to physics, contemporary events are mutually independent. The only likely alternative seems to be that they are mutually interdependent. With the past there is no *interaction*, and none with the future; and contemporaries, it seems, must either have no action of either one upon the other, or there must be action both ways. How could this be? . . . Everything known, even a knower of oneself as known, is constitutive of the knower by which it is known. The topic of contemporary relations bristles with difficulties, and I shall only say that *if* I could find a consistent analysis of it, I should be able to die content, so far as philosophical achievements are concerned. At present the topic seems the most vulnerable point in the surrelativist doctrine.¹⁵⁷

by metaphysical optimism, which would hold sway quite independently of anything done through Jesus Christ.”

¹⁵⁵ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 223. Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348. “The World’s nature is a primordial datum for God; and God’s nature is a primordial datum for the World. Creation achieves the reconciliation of permanence and flux when it has reached its final term which is everlastingness—the *Apotheosis of the World*” (italics are mine).

¹⁵⁶ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 98–99.

The temporal monism of process theology and its internal conundrum of contemporary relation clearly show that “the theology that wishes to stand on the intellectual feet of a philosophy is likely to remain a cripple.”¹⁵⁸ What debilitates process theology at the end is its claim of dynamic divine agency, namely the supremely relative God because he has only memory without will.¹⁵⁹ The attempt to overcome the internal coherence and moral shortcomings of the classical theism with the concept of dipolar God is, according to Gunton, unsuccessful and creates its own contradiction and ethical discomfort. Even if God is dipolar and thus “the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands,”¹⁶⁰ doubt remains: “it is of little benefit to overthrow a tyrant if he is replaced by an ineffectual weakling.”¹⁶¹

Before jettisoning the claims of process theology, a last caveat must be heeded that philosophical theology ought not to be treated pejoratively but be respected for the well-meaning attempt to articulate a relationally intimate God to modern humanity. As the next chapter shows, patristic tradition shares a similar intention to describe God’s dynamic and gracious interaction with humanity. In this regard, an important contribution of process theology is the way it forces “traditional theism and Christology to stress and elaborate truths which have lain dormant over the years.”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 222.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 222–223. “God’s memory is perfect. . . but does He *really* have ‘intentions,’ does He really have will, does He really decide anything? . . . Most of the problem arise when he [Hartshorne] tries to elevate universal relatedness, universal passivity, into love, in the hope that the transition from impersonal to personal, from metaphysical to anthropomorphic, will pass unnoticed.”

¹⁶⁰ Whitehead, 351.

¹⁶¹ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 223.

¹⁶² Weinandy, *Does God Change?*, 153.

Summary and Transition

Andrew Park's revision of Christian doctrine of salvation must be noted for its contributions as well as the critical mistakes. His reconstruction of traditional Western soteriology with the concept of *han* should be appreciated in three aspects. First, the Korean-American theologian exhibits a creative contextual theology in which he examines the compound reality of sin and evil from the perspective of the victims. Exploring the affliction of the sinned-against, he contends that the Western Christian understanding of salvation has been one-sided with the forgiveness of sinners and overlooked the wounds of the victims. The unilateral emphasis on repentance in traditional soteriology fails to differentiate the perpetrators of sin and their victims. Although Park's definition of sin as voluntary is narrow and neglects the tragic aspect of sin that transcends the voluntary, his bilateral perspective of sin and *han* depicts the complex and dark reality of evil and suffering with a greater depth than the traditional harmatology such as the doctrine of original sin.¹⁶³ As he renders an account of human sinfulness and suffering balanced and plausible, he makes a salient interpretation of the cross of Christ as the revelation of the wounded heart of God who has experienced the *han* of the victimized people throughout history.

Second, Park contributes to the contemporary discussion of salvation by making the doctrine of atonement relevant with the vivid portrayal of stories of *han*. The Korean American theologian evokes such a powerful image in the readers with "the thick description" of human experience of unjust suffering. He effectively narrates the

¹⁶³ Park, "The God who needs our salvation," 83. "The relationship between *han* and sin is complex and cyclical. Sin causes *han* and *han* can, in turn, produce sin. Overlapping in many tragic areas of life, this unresolved cycle leads to an intractable and darker state of affairs that may be called 'evil.'"

universal reality of *han* showing that the traditional conception of uniform forgiveness is inadequate and unhealthy for those who are on “the other side of sin.” His elaborate expression of *han* as an emotional, psychological, and spiritual implosion in the individual and collective lives of people engenders “the enormous pastoral sensitivity” that enables to recognize the devastated victims of various victimizations and treat them with due respect.¹⁶⁴ In particular, he elevates the problem of shame in victims to a theological examination rather than psychological therapy. His hermeneutics of diagnosis is a valuable tool to pastoral theology.

Third, Park’s theology of *han* improves the weakness of liberation theology with a curative model of salvation. The former emphasizes the socio-economical dimension of salvation and advocates the preferential treatment for the poor without explaining how to stop the cycle of oppressions. The Korean American theologian recognizes the interconnectedness of the perpetrators and the victims. Though he also privileges the victim over the perpetrators,¹⁶⁵ he calls for a mutual healing through repentance and forgivingness. While articulating the importance of distinguishing *han* from sin, he resists the temptation to divide people neatly into oppressors and the oppressed.¹⁶⁶ He is aware of the human wickedness that the oppressed can become another oppressor when power is transferred. Park’s curative view of salvation connects his soteriology to an ecclesiology with a global vision. His vision of healing the wounded world with the cosmic Eucharist and the global church of hospitality challenges to any individualistic

¹⁶⁴ Jason E. Vickers, “On Sin, Suffering (Han), and Salvation: An Engagement with Andrew Sung Park,” *Journal of Theology* Vol. CXI (2007), 38.

¹⁶⁵ Park, *From Hurt To Healing*, 103. “The Bible shows us, however, that God’s grace is not impartial. God is more concerned about the victim than the victimizer.”

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 16. “Many people who are oppressed in one aspect of life are oppressors in another.”

understanding of salvation which is oblivious to one's ongoing salvific participation in the body of Christ.

By developing the idea of God embracing the *han* of the world through the crucified Christ in connection with process metaphysics, however, his insightful contextual theology makes several missteps. First, the Korean American theologian glosses over the valuable resourcefulness of Christian tradition. "The greatest drawback to Park's work is simply that his counter-proposal does not take advantage of the considerable resources embedded in the wider canonical heritage of the church."¹⁶⁷ He devotes less than a few pages to assess the traditional understanding of atonement. For instance, his critique of the patristic axiom of *apatheia* covers only a paragraph based on the short summary of a secondary source.¹⁶⁸ His notion of the cosmic Eucharist could be enriched by the curative motif of patristic soteriology such as that of St. Ignatius of Antioch, who called the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality."¹⁶⁹

Second, the Korean American theologian's rejection of early Christian tradition coupled with his subsequent embrace of modern process philosophy leads his theological insight of *han* to espouse an unorthodox view of God. As he entitles one of his articles, "God Who Needs Our Salvation," he enmeshes God with the world. Like most process

¹⁶⁷ Vickers, 38. Vickers, a colleague of Andrew Park in United Theological Seminary also suggests the contemplation of icons as another source of curative model – i.e., John of Damascus' *On the Divine Images*.

¹⁶⁸ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 111. He disregards *apatheia* simply for being a part of *via negativa* without explaining the reasons why negative theology is not appropriate to theological discourse.

¹⁶⁹ St. Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 66. "... and the sovereign remedy by which we escape death and life in Jesus Christ forever more."

theologians, Park makes the reality of God dependent on the process of becoming.¹⁷⁰ His idea of “participatory dialectic” of God and the world in the mutual resolution of *han* negates the traditional doctrine of divine omnipotence. Since God’s power is nothing but a persuasive influence or a lure of love, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross does not achieve anything objective or radically new. The significance of his atoning death is primarily “God’s protest against the oppressor.”¹⁷¹ In other words, the cross of Christ is a manifestation of divine *han* in solidarity with the *han* of the people. The union of Park’s theology of *han* with radical panentheism of process cosmology is ironic and unfortunate because for someone who makes a penetrating diagnosis of *han* and delves into the dark and deep reality of sin and suffering, he “ends up with an anemic proposal that amounts to not much more than a liberal solution for reconciliation through understanding.”¹⁷² What should have followed after his profound description of sin and *han* is an acknowledgment of the gravity of the fallen human condition that calls for a divine intervention. Park’s turn to process ontology vacates the radicality of God’s act from the atoning death of Christ and reduces the newness of the gospel as another story of *han* in history. His appropriation of radical panentheism in theology of *han* along with its intrinsic optimism vitiates the scandal of the cross which is absolutely realistic about human sin and *han*, and yet does not let the fallen humanity have the final say. Park’s articulation of the co-suffering of God with victims without emphasizing the objective

¹⁷⁰ Park, “God Who Needs Our Salvation,” 86.

¹⁷¹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 112.

¹⁷² Kevin Park, 181. Cf. 182. “For one who has shown the in-depth realism of sin and *han* to suggest such a naïve solution is puzzling.”

and transformative act of Christ's recreation on the cross can easily fall into naïve idealism or sentimentalism.¹⁷³

The last lesson from the Korean American theologian's attempt to revise the traditional doctrine of God with modern philosophical theology is related to the central claim of this dissertation, namely the indispensability of the axiom of *apatheia* in articulating the Christian grammar of salvation. Any theological appropriation that does not discern the dogmatic importance of the person of Christ cannot account for the biblical vision of salvation for humanity. The theological matrix of *han* that does not measure the ontological difference between God and humanity as delineated in the traditional dogma is bound to empty the power of the gospel which signifies a creation of new life. Instead of elevating the *han*-ridden and sin-troubled humanity to the new creation completed by the incarnate God, Park's theology of *han* in process logic conflates God in the creature's realm as another being of the wounded heart and thus lowers the significance of the gospel to commiseration. In order to make the most of the cultural insights such as *han* and *tsurasa* for salvific purpose, it is fundamental to remember the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ in his full divinity and full humanity. Without plumbing the radical identity of the incarnate God for humanity, any appreciation of divine redemptive embodiment of human pain is unbalanced, inadequate and transmutes the transformative gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹⁷³ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 1. "In the absence of clear understanding, the theology of the cross tends to become sentimentalized, especially in an age that is so concerned about victimization. Jesus is spoken of as the one who 'identifies with us in our suffering,' or the one who 'enters into solidarity with us' in our misery. 'The suffering of God,' or the 'vulnerability of God,' and such platitudes become the stock-in-trade of preachers and theologians who want to stroke the psyche of today's religionists. But this results in rather blatant and suffocating sentimentality. . . . A sentimentalized theology gives the impression that God in Christ comes to join us in our battle against some unknown enemy, is victimized, and suffers just like us. . . . A true theology of the cross places radical question marks over against sentimentality of that sort."

The next chapter on Cyril of Alexandria and his Christology will show that *apatheitic* person of the Son renders his work of atonement more coherent and comprehensive than any modern philosophical theology that attempts to articulate God's dynamic relationship with humanity apart from tradition.

CHAPTER FIVE

Cyril of Alexandria's *mia* Christology and *Apatheia* as the Ontological and Moral Constancy of God

This dissertation has shown a characteristic feature in modern theology, namely its misunderstanding and disparagement of the traditional doctrine of God widely held in the early and medieval church. Similarly, Kazoh Kitamori with his Japanese revision of *theologia crucis*, Andrew Park's theology of *han*, and process theology regard the impassible and immutable God of the early church as static and inert. They allege *apatheia* as the mistaken notion of patristic tradition, which presumably spoke its understanding of God with a heavy accent of ancient Greek philosophy. Against the misunderstanding that the doctrine of divine impassibility contradicts or at least diminishes the Christian witness of the passion of Christ on the cross for humanity, this chapter will argue that *apatheia* is a crucial element in patristic articulations of God's transcendent and transforming love. Among various patristic appropriations of divine impassibility and immutability, Cyril of Alexandria's *mia* (one subject) Christology exhibits an axiomatic use of *apatheia* in Christ's redemptive suffering.

Jürgen Moltmann exemplifies such contemporary misgivings about the traditional axiom of *apatheia*.¹ He finds the theological appropriation of *apatheia* in the early church to be "an intellectual barrier" against the biblical revelation about the forsaken Christ on the cross. The German theologian inculcates the patristic axiomatic use of *apatheia* on two inter-related ideas: the prevalent notion of salvation as deification and

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 22. "Right down to the present day the 'apathy' axiom has left a deeper impress on the basic concept of the doctrine of God than has the history of Christ's passion."

the doctrine of two natures of Christ. According to him, the “world-picture of the time” shaped by Platonic philosophy renders divine nature “incorruptible, unchangeable, indivisible, incapable of suffering and immortal” on the one hand, and “human nature, on the other hand, transitory, changeable, divisible, capable of suffering and mortal.”² It is “the longing [of mortals] for salvation” that establishes *theosis*, the participation in divine “intransitoriness and immortality,” as the ideal of human redemption. “The transcendent hope of salvation” leads the early church to articulate the doctrine of two natures of Christ as the venue of deification: “God became man that we men might participate in God (Athanasius).”³ For Moltmann, the doctrine of two natures confines the suffering of “the God-man Christ” to “his human nature” and thus vitiates the biblical claim of God’s embracing of suffering within himself.

In his review of the Christian tradition, the German theologian gives a mixed evaluation to Cyril of Alexandria. Positively, he reckons Cyril to be one who “more than anyone else stressed the personal unity of Christ against those who pressed for the differentiation of the two natures.”⁴ However, Cyril “was not able to remedy the ‘error’ which the whole of early Christian theology demonstrates at this point” because “his Christology of unity” continues the tradition of *apatheia* and thus prevents the cry of the forsaken Christ on the cross from coming from “his own personal and human need.”⁵ For

² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 228.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 228–229.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 229. “Certainly, it is Christ who says that, but it is not his own personal and human need that leads him to it. Anyone who claims that Christ is overcome with fear and weakness here, says Cyril, refuses to confess him God. Christ does not say this in his own nature, but in the name of his total nature, because only this and not he himself fell prey to corruption.”

Moltmann, Cyril's construal of Christ's cry on the cross that "He is calling to the Father for us, and not for himself," signifies "a last retreat before the axiom of *apatheia*."⁶ According to Moltmann, subsequent theological attempts to elucidate the passion of Christ based on the doctrine of two natures "prove to be no more than a weakly Christianized monotheism" and lacks the Trinitarian interpretation.⁷ He proposes his radical Trinitarian matrix to recover the theological significance of the divine redemptive passion on the cross.⁸ The German theologian finds the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* insufficient because it does not allow one to speak directly of God's suffering in his divine nature. It circumvents the unadulterated divine experience of pain by situating the locus of God's pathos in human nature, which is outside himself.⁹ The exchange of attributes, he contends, is still under the rubric of the doctrine of two natures which "understands the event of the cross statically as a reciprocal relationship between two qualitatively different natures."¹⁰ Moltmann argues that the ultimate significance of the cross should be read not "as a divine-human event, but as a [inter] Trinitarian event."¹¹

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 229–235. Moltmann criticizes the continuation of Cyril's Christology in the thoughts of Aquinas and other subsequent theologians such as Zwingli and Melancthon particularly in their views of the Eucharist. He finds Luther's theology to be a corrective to this traditional misunderstanding of God's suffering which safeguards divine nature. For Moltmann, the latter's Christology does not excavate the implications of Trinitarian theology and "remains within the framework of the early church's doctrine of two natures."

⁸ For details of Moltmann's Trinitarian theology of passion, see chapter two of this dissertation. Cf. *The Crucified God*, 235-266.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 232. "One cannot say: Therefore the divine nature can suffer and die; it is only possible to say: Therefore the person of Christ is mortal."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 245–246. "What is in the question in the relationship of Christ to his Father is not his divinity and humanity and their relationship to each other but the total, personal aspect of the Sonship of

Moltmann's reconstruction of the theology of Trinitarian passibility raises two questions regarding Cyril's Christology. First, the German theologian gives the impression that the bishop of Alexandria construes his Christology without adequate Trinitarian theology. He does not recognize Cyril's emphasis on the hypostatic union of two natures as a key development of the biblical Trinitarian theology since Moltmann sees the crucifixion, not the incarnation, to be the central event of Trinitarian revelation. Second, Moltmann contends that the residue of *apatheia* in Cyril's theology does not allow to God a capacity for "active suffering of love."¹² For the German theologian, "Greek philosophy's 'apathy' axiom" leaves the patristic theologians including Cyril "a single alternative: either essential incapacity for suffering, or a fateful subjection to suffering."¹³ They altogether fail to notice "a third form of suffering: active suffering—the voluntary laying oneself open to another and allowing oneself to be intimately affected by him; that is the suffering of passionate love."¹⁴

Over against the allegation of Moltmann and others that patristic appropriation of *apatheia* was a predominantly contextual maneuver of Greek *apophatic* theology to safeguard God from any transient involvement, this chapter will present the dynamic view of divine impassibility among the early church fathers who appropriated it with their biblical theology. For them, the biblical account of creation provides the

Jesus. This starting point is not the same as that to be found in the tradition. It overcomes the dichotomy between immanent and economic Trinity, and that between the nature of God and his inner tri-unity. It makes Trinitarian thought necessary for the complete perception of the cross of Christ. . . . The doctrine of the Trinity is no longer in exorbitant and impractical speculation about God, but is nothing other than a shorter version of the passion narrative of Christ."

¹² *Ibid.*, 230.

¹³ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

fundamental hermeneutical principle to express the conception of God and his relation to the world. The notion of the transcendent yet immanent Creator qualifies divine perfection and affection for the created order. The patristic theologians saw the axiomatic importance of *apatheia* in the transcendent being of God, which engenders a moral foundation for human salvation. Without the ontological understanding of *apatheia* in God, it is not possible to establish any coherent soteriological foundation. Among various reflections on the idea of *apatheia* in the early church fathers, I shall argue that Cyril's hypostatic union of Christ is a crucial advancement toward the doctrine of Christology. This chapter will argue that Cyril's soteriological emphasis on the person of the Son is intrinsically related to the traditional Trinitarian theology based on the biblical economy of salvation. Locating *apatheia* in the incarnation and passion of Christ, Cyril construed his '*mia*' (one subject) Christology in the mystery of "impassible suffering" of the Son: the co-existence of divine (impassible) and human (passible) natures in the one person of the Son achieves salvation for humanity. As Cyril augmented the Christological axiom of *apatheia* as the ontological and soteriological certitude of divine *agape*, he offers a coherent way to articulate the redemptive suffering of Christ without either transmuting divinity or absorbing humanity. For Cyril, *apatheia* is the ontological and moral constancy of the Word of God which enables suffering humanity to be delivered from sin and death to divine incorruption. This chapter will claim that the contemporary theological concern to situate God's active presence in human suffering can be more completely realized by Cyril's oneness Christology and its use of *apatheia*.¹⁵ Before examining Cyril's thoughts, the patristic uses of *apatheia* will be studied briefly.

¹⁵ The hypostatic union of Christ and its corollary doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* can

Theological Meanings of Apatheia for the Early Church Fathers

To assess the theological appropriations of *apatheia* by the early church fathers, one must recognize two preliminary facts. First, the fathers did not think it inappropriate to employ the language and concepts that were prevalent in their Greco-Roman culture.¹⁶ There was ample precedent for the patristic use of Greek language and philosophy, in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible and in the writing of the New Testament.¹⁷ For instance, the last Gospel starts with the logos (John 1:1) and the last book of the New Testament opens with the salutation (Rev. 1:4) based on the adaptation of “metaphysical ‘ho on’ of classical Greek ontology.”¹⁸ The patristic theologians saw themselves as the extension of the “apologetic and evangelistic bridges to the pagan and philosophical world” that were begun by Philo and the apostles, especially Paul.¹⁹

articulate Moltmann’s notion of a “third form of active suffering” far more coherently than the latter’s inter-Trinitarian reconstruction.

¹⁶ Robert M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 11. “These early Christian writers, then, while in every instance maintaining the primacy of faith in response to the self-revelation of God, do not hesitate to make use of the points of contact between God’s revelation and the modes of expression prevalent in Hellenistic Judaism and in Graeco-Roman philosophy generally.”

¹⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3. “It remains one of the most momentous linguistic convergences in the entire history of the human mind and spirit that the New Testament happens to have been written in Greek—not in the Hebrews of Moses and the prophets, nor in the Aramaic of Jesus and his disciples, nor yet in the Latin of the imperium Romanum, but in the Greek of Socrates and Plato, or at any rate in a reasonably accurate facsimile thereof, disguised and even disfigured though this was in the Koine by the intervening centuries of Hellenism.”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3–4. As J. H. Moulton once characterized in *Prolegomena* volume 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908) [9n], the “ho on” (who is) in Revelation 1:4 is identified with the eternal “ego eimi ho on” of the theophany to Moses at the burning bush as well as with “the metaphysical ‘ho on’ of Classical Greek ontology.” “For the word ‘on’ was taken to refer to ‘continuity and eternity and transcendence over all marks of time.’”

¹⁹ Robert L. Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 38. “In restating the Christian doctrine of God within the Graeco-Roman world, Christian thinkers sought out points of contact between biblical language of God’s transcendence and Greek philosophical conceptions of the nature of God.”

Second, the early church fathers used words and ideas taken from philosophy primarily to elaborate the veracity and primacy of the biblical revelation. What steered their intellectual articulation was not their conformity to philosophical tradition but their faithfulness to the Scriptures. More than anything else, “they were theological innovators and their innovation was founded upon the Bible.”²⁰ The biblical theology of the early church fathers guides them to utilize the philosophy for the service of biblical interpretation.²¹

As the early church fathers were theologically motivated and biblically based, they developed the concept of *apatheia* and other divine attributes in different directions than the pagan religious and philosophical thinkers. What distinguishes the patristic notion of God’s impassibility from all else is their biblical view of God as the creator of the universe. The biblical account of creation that God created everything out of nothing stands in stark contrast with other notions of creation such as ordering pre-existent matter in Plato’s *Timaeus* or setting it in motion as described by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*.²² Whereas Greek philosophy shares a cosmology characterized by the permanent co-

²⁰ Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 108. “What the Fathers brought to the philosophical conversation, a conversation that had been in progress for centuries, was precisely the new data of the Christian faith—the revelation of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Whatever they said that was new was not due to their faithfulness to some philosophy, but to their fidelity to the scriptures. They were not philosophical innovators.”

²¹ For more details, see chapter 2: 29–43.

²² Plato’s creator or *demiurge* simply re-orders the extant un-formed matter as the inferior imitation of the invisible world of the ideas. Aristotle’s God is basically self-absorbed as the perfect thought and thus detached and aloof from the outside material world. The latter never directly treated the question of creation and was asking how the unmoved Mover could set in the motion for the pre-existent matter (*Metaphysics*, XII). Plotinus sees the creation a relegated work of the lesser divine entities such as Nous and Soul, which were emanated from the unknowable One. For the more details of the difference between Christian and Greek understandings of creation, see G. Watson, *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God* (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 1994), 18–87, “The Problem of Unchanging in Greek Philosophy,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 27 (1985): 57–70, and C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 14–75.

existence of matter and gods in a hierarchy, the biblical God as the sole creator transcends all things in that he constitutes a distinct ontological order.²³ He does not relatively transcend creation as the apex of a cosmic hierarchy. God's mode of existence is radically unique from that of the creation.²⁴ "Nothing is co-eternal with God" reveals the ontological gap between the absolute Creator and the creatures, which also implies the moral character of God's relationship to the world. "For he that is created is also needy, but he that is uncreated stands in need of nothing."²⁵ That God is eternal and self-sufficient yet created the world out of his gracious will, established the early Christian convictions about God's absolute power and love.²⁶ The biblical notion of God as the creator *ex nihilo* enables the patristic theologians to articulate various theological implications regarding divine attributes including *apatheia*.

²³ A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Helix Books, 1981), 168. "This doctrine of creation, which the sharp dividing line which it implies between the Divine Creator and all other things which are created, not divine by nature, and so different from the Godhead not by a difference of degree but by an infinite dissimilarity in kind, is the most important distinguishing mark which separates genuine Judeo-Christian from genuine Hellenic thought. For the Greeks the universe is co-eternal and co-necessary with God, and there is a hierarchy of beings divine by right of nature reaching down to and including the human reason."

²⁴ Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolys*, II.4 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004), vol. 2, "But Plato and those of his school acknowledge indeed that God is uncreated, and the Father and Maker of all things; but then they maintain that matter as well as God is uncreated, and aver that it is coeval with God. But if God is uncreated and matter uncreated, God is no longer, according to the Platonists, the Creator of all things, nor, so far as their opinions hold, is the monarchy of God established. And further, as God, because He is uncreated, is also unalterable; so if matter, too, were uncreated, it also would be unalterable, and equal to God . . . And what great thing is it if God made the world out of existent materials? For even a human artist, when he gets material from someone, makes of it what he pleases. But the power of God is manifested in this, that out of things that are not He makes whatever He pleases."

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II.10.

²⁶ Athenagoras, *Apology XVI* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004), vol. 2. "You sovereigns, indeed, rear and adorn your palaces for yourselves; but the world was not created because God needed it; for God is Himself everything to Himself—light unapproachable, a perfect world, spirit, power, and reason... As Plato says, the world be a product of divine art, I admire its beauty, and adore the Artificer . . . who is the cause of the motion of the body, and descend 'to the poor and weak elements,' adoring in the impassible air."

For the early church fathers, the divine attributes of the creator, foremost, signify the sovereign freedom and independence of God from a world in a degree unequaled to those of the Greco-Roman pantheon. While both the classical philosophers and patristic theologians adopted the language of negation, *apophasis*, as a proper discourse about God, the latter employed the *apophatic* theology with a wider linguistic usage.²⁷ For instance, Gregory of Nyssa enlists the incomprehensible divine nature such as “harmless, painless, guileless, undisturbed, passionless, sleepless, undiseased, impassible, blameless, and other like these” by using the *apophatic* language that denotes God’s incorruptibleness and invulnerability from “evil qualities.”²⁸ According to Justin Martyr, the reason that Christian converts change their allegiance to God from the Homeric gods is because the former is “unbegotten and impassible” while the latter are full of shameful emotions such as lust, envy, and violence.²⁹ Unlike Apollo, Christian God does not chase after attractive maiden; unlike Persephone and Venus, he is not “maddened with love of Adonis”; unlike Zeus, he is “never goaded by lust of Antiope, or such woman, or of Ganymede[young boy].” When Irenaeus delineates the utter transcendence and superiority of God the creator against Gnostic notion of the hierarchical deity or the chief aeon, he declares that “He who is impassible and not in error should be reckoned with an

²⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, 40. “The change that took place in the transition from classical culture to the dominance of Christian theology is to be found in the history of the Greek language itself, especially of its vocabulary for rational and natural theology. Thus, of the 1,568 pages in the Lampe *Lexicon of Patristic Greek*, 281 pages, or 18 percent, are given over to the letter alpha, while in the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon*, the ratio is significantly lower, 300 of 2,042, or 15 percent. . . One may take it [the so-called alpha privative as a prefix of negation] as an indication of a reliance on the negative prefix in Patristic Greek that was perhaps even greater than it had been in Classical Greek.”

²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius’ Second Book* in *Nicene and Post-Nicenes Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004), vol. 5, 264.

²⁹ Justin Martyr, *The Apology* I.25.

Aeon subject to passion.”³⁰ As the Valentinians construe the Sophia of God to be produced within the Pleroma and to “have fallen under the influence of passion,” the bishop of Lyon counters that it is impossible for the Logos to “fall into every kind of passion.”³¹ Inferring from the biblical notion of the creator, the patristic thinkers called God uncreated and impassible in order to accentuate the moral purity of divine attributes such as mercy, love, and compassion. The apophatic qualifications of divine attributes by the fathers are not a denial of affections in God but a clarification that God the creator does not have any morally objectionable emotions like the pagan deities.

For the early church fathers, *apatheia* along with other divine attributes is the ontological foundation for salvific moral significance.³² The immutability and impassibility of the biblical God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, is never an absolute philosophical concept of a relationally detached deity. Rather it evinces the mutually inclusive character of God’s transcendence and immanence toward his creation. Because God who creates everything out of nothing is the same God who governs the world with unchanging goodness, divine attributes are the source of comfort and hope for the early Christians. As it will be shown in the next section, Cyril appropriated the divine traits, particularly *apatheia*, with the lens of Christological-Trinitarian understanding and made them an expression of the ontological and moral constancy of God for human salvation

³⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresy* 2.12.1. in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004), vol. 1, 371.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.17.8.

³² Gavrielyuk, 62. “It is precisely because God is impassible, i.e., free of uncontrollable vengeance, that repentant sinners may approach him without despair. Far from being a barrier to divine care and loving-kindness, divine impassibility is their very foundation. Unlike that of humans who are unreliable and swayed by passions, God’s love is enduring and devoid of all those weaknesses with which human love is tainted.”

Cyril of Alexandria and Mia Christology: Apathetic Suffering of Christ

Cyril of Alexandria is “the most powerful exponent of Christology the church has known” since Athanasius.³³ Yet, he is one of the most neglected church fathers in modern times: other than his conciliar letters, his works are not included in the “standard late-Victorian English translation of the Fathers, the Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.”³⁴ This mixed legacy traces back to his time. Upon Cyril’s death, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, one of his adversaries, sarcastically confesses his relief and concern:

His departure delights the survivors but possibly disheartens the dead; there is some fear that under the provocation of his company they may send him back again to us . . . Care must therefore be taken to order the guild of undertakers to place a very big and heavy stone on his grave to stop him coming back here . . . I am glad and rejoice to see the fellowship of the Church delivered from such a contagion; but I am saddened and sorry as I reflect that the wretched man never took rest from his misdeeds, but died designing greater and worse.³⁵

Theodoret is correct in his apprehension concerning the posthumous influence of Cyril’s theology. The bishop of Alexandria (ca. 375-444 C.E.) who carved the general dogma of the incarnation at the council of Ephesus (431), eventually shaped the Christological orthodoxy of Chalcedon (451). The Coptic Orthodox Church has given him the title “The Pillar of Faith.” In the West, Cyril was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1882

³³ John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1. “Cyril of Alexandria was not only one of the finest Christian theologians of his day, he also stands out in the ranks of the greatest patristic writers of all generations as perhaps the most powerful exponent of Christology the church has known and, after Athanasius, the writer who has had the greatest historical influence on the articulation of this most central and seminal aspect of Christian doctrine.” In addition, McGuckin thoroughly analyzed and successfully refuted several unjust assessments on Cyril made by Francis Young and Alloys Grillmeier. See 225–226.

³⁴ *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 353. “Part of the reason for this is doubtless his depiction in Charles Kingsley’s famous novel, *Hypatia* (1853), as a sinister figure, cruel and unscrupulous.”

³⁵ Theodoret, *Ep. 180* as quoted by G. L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London: SPCK, 1940), 150.

and was the subject of papal encyclicals in 1931 (*Lux Veritatis*) and 1944 (*Orientalis Ecclesiae*). In the East, he has always been regarded to be one of the greatest of the doctors—‘the seal of the Fathers,’ as Anastasius of Sinai (d. 700) called him.³⁶

All these acclamations indicate Cyril’s contribution to the Christological development of church doctrine. His *Mia* Christology painted the classic picture of Christ the God-man with its indissoluble soteriological inference that “all subsequent Christology has proceeded of this picture.”³⁷ Cyril was a very important fifth century theologian who offered a crucial answer to the preceding debates on the nature of the incarnation of Christ as to how the Son of the impassible God achieved salvation in human flesh through his suffering. Cyril did not affirm *apatheia* in the divine nature of Christ simply as one of his supernatural attributes but recognized its central dynamic functions in the life of the enfleshed Logos for soteriological end. The Christological debate in the fifth century was one of the most decisive theological developments in Christian history.³⁸ By then, everyone including Nestorius, the principal opponent of Cyril, firmly held the Nicene Christology of *homoousia*, the full divinity of the Son—the Son is God as the Father is God. However, Nicene orthodoxy was still unfolding with

³⁶ For the lasting ecumenical significance of the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, see Norman Russell, “‘Apostolic Man’ and ‘Luminary of the Church’: The Enduring Influence of Cyril of Alexandria,” Thomas Weinandy ed., *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 237–256.

³⁷ Lionel R. Wickham’s introduction from Cyril of Alexandria’s *Selected Letters* (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1983), i. “The patristic understanding of the Incarnation owes more to Cyril of Alexandria than to any other individual theologian . . . It is the standard by which interpretations of Christ as God’s eternal Son and Word made man and incarnate are judged, the reference-point for differing pictures.”

³⁸ Justo Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 252–257; Thomas Helm, *The Christian Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991), 75–77; Denise Carmody and John Carmody, *Christianity: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 47.

some unresolved implications.³⁹ Although the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father secured his full divine stature, the problem of impassibility remained vexing.⁴⁰

John O’Keefe asks, “To what extent did the human sufferings of the Son touch the divine nature? If Jesus is God, as Nicaea declared, and if Jesus Christ suffered, as Scripture asserted, does this not imply that God suffered in some way?”⁴¹ Unlike the facile characterization of many text books, says O’Keefe, the fifth-century Christological

³⁹ Recent studies show that the defeat of Arian position at the Council of Nicea and its aftermath was neither swift nor uncomplicated. R. P. C. Hanson states in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) that what took place in the fourth century was not straightforward ‘conflict’ between an ancient, established orthodoxy on the one hand, and an emergent Christological heresy on the other. Thus, Hanson suggests a metaphor of ‘a search’ rather than ‘controversy’: “The story is the story of how orthodoxy was reached, found, not of how it was maintained” (p.870). Arius was not a founder of a radical new school of thought but he was rather “a dedicated theological conservative” who held the biblical literalism regarding the suffering of God. He was not “a particularly significant writer” or “a great heresiarch in the same sense as Marcion or Mani or Pelagius might deserve that term.” The adoption of his name as a convenient theological label by his opponents should not hide the fact that there was an old common theological opinion about the subordination of the Son to the Father and the biblical idea of suffering savior. For the seminal works on Arius and complex picture of Arianism, see also Rowan Williams’ *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2002), Michael Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism After Arius* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), and Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁰ Hanson asserts that the central part of Arian theology is “*God suffered*” and thinks that the Arians had a deeper biblical conviction on the suffering of the redeemer than the pro-Nicene camp. *Ibid.*, 41, “It should be clear that the soteriology and the cosmology are closely linked: the Arians saw that the New Testament demanded a suffering God, as their opponents failed to see. They were convinced that only a God whose divinity was somehow reduced must suffer. Hence the radical Arian doctrine of Christ, but hence also the Arian readiness to speak of God as suffering. We can see here the attraction of the Arian doctrine.” Hanson’s view has been disputed in recent studies. P. R. Foster, “Divine Passibility and the Early Christian Doctrine of God,” in *The Power and Weakness of God* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990), 44. “Despite the obvious and welcome gain in our understanding of Arianism which has been achieved in recent years, the concept of Christ as a reduced divinity whose suffering enables the impassibility of the supreme God to remain intact looks as unsatisfactory as ever. It is not even clear, on Hanson’s account, just why the suffering of the reduced divinity results in our salvation: his final claim, that the suffering of Christ, was ‘in order to redeem man’ hangs in the air, without any supporting explanation.” Paul Gavriluk also disagrees with Hanson’s assessments of the Arian and the pro-Nicene accounts of divine impassibility. For instance, see Gregory of Nyssa’s *Against Eunomius* 3.3, “the distinctive concern of Arianism was not to affirm a God who suffered in Christ, but above all else, to secure the claim that the High God suffered neither in Christ, nor apart from Christ.” Hanson’s claim that the Arians had a deeper insight about the redemptive efficacy of divine passibility is again contrary to what Athanasius stated in *Against Arians*, 3.32, “When the flesh suffered, the Logos was not outside of it, which is why the suffering is said to be his.”

⁴¹ John J. O’Keefe, “Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology,” *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), 40–41.

debates were not just an innovative shift from the relationship of the Son to the Father to the relationship of the Son to humanity, but a fuller theological articulation of divine impassibility.⁴² As the post-Nicene theologians struggled to find a proper Christological language to unlock the true ontological nature of the incarnational ‘becoming’ and the ensuing soteriological union between God and humanity, it was Cyril of Alexandria who articulated the reality of the ‘economy’ (*oikonomia*) of the Word to the full extent of language. Steeped in Scripture and the broad catholic tradition, and possessed of rhetorical prowess, “the seal of the Fathers” enhanced the Nicene conviction about the paradoxical nature of the incarnation by employing *apatheia* as a hinge for the double consubstantiality of Christ with God the Father and with humanity. Underscoring the full participation of God in human destiny through Jesus, Cyril asserted the importance of the single “impassible divine subject” of the Son in God’s appropriation and transformation of sinful humanity.⁴³ Thus, the Egyptian father in the fifth century laid a foundation for the doctrine of the unity of the person of Christ for historical Christianity.

To understand his epoch-making Christology, it is important to examine three inter-weaving threads in his theological tapestry: (1) his consistent exegetical motifs of Christ based on divine economy, (2) his unique expression of the impassible suffering in

⁴² *Ibid.*, 39. “Most textbook accounts of the fifth-century christological debates suggest that the humanity of Jesus was the primary concern of the Antiochene theologians. From this perspective, Alexandrian Christology, represented by Cyril, appears to have fundamentally misunderstood the meaning of the Incarnation . . . The primary theological concern of the debate was the impassibility of God. Thus, the Alexandrians, rather than the Antiochenes, are shown to have defended more faithfully the humanity of the Son of God.”

⁴³ Wickham, xxxii, “God the Son assumes, acquired, or appropriates manhood, or the human condition, or a human body [and a soul]; yet all his acts and experiences rest upon the free agency of a serene and impassible divine subject.”

the matrix of Christological ontology, and (3) his employment of the *communicatio idiomatum* within the patristic tradition of deification.⁴⁴

The Divine Economy and the Biblical Metaphors in Cyril's Christology.

Cyril of Alexandria was first and foremost an interpreter of the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁵ It was only until recently that Cyril's biblical exegesis and the Christology therein began to be studied.⁴⁶ Many modern scholars think that Cyril's theology advanced only after the outbreak of controversy with Nestorius.⁴⁷ They deem that his early Christological thoughts prior to 429-430 were basically a replica of Athanasius' "*Logos-sarx*" Christology where the human soul of Christ did not play an active role.⁴⁸ A close examination of Cyril's early works will evince that the Egyptian father applied the term

⁴⁴ The rationale for this diachronic-synchronic approach to study Cyril's theology is to plumb the depth of his historical yet relevant thoughts. This dissertation first will explore the early days of the Egyptian father as a biblical exegete and its enduring effects on his theology. The second subsection on the impassible suffering will examine the second major stage of Cyril's life when he became an orthodox polemical champion against Nestorius. The final topic is a thematic assessment of Cyril's Christology in respect to his contribution to patristic notion of deification.

⁴⁵ Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), "If it had not been for the Nestorian controversy, it is probably as a biblical commentator that Cyril would have been remembered."

⁴⁶ Most notably, Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Lars Koen, *The Saving Passion: Incarnational and Soteriological Thought in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991).

⁴⁷ Harnack's study of Cyril's theology was limited to the polemical and dogmatic works and completely ignored his exegetical writings. The interpretation of the German historian of dogma set the tone for the later partial scholarship on Cyril. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, tr. Neil Buchanan, v. 6 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), 174–179.

⁴⁸ Alois Grillmeier, *Christin Christian Tradition*, vol.1 trans. J. Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 329–417; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 322–323; and Jacques Liébaert, *La Doctrine Christologique de Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie avant la querelle Nestorienne* (Paris: Lille, 1951). Liébaert later remarked that Cyril's early writings had received not enough attention to assess his Christology before the Nestorian controversy. See Jacques Liébaert, "Christologie: Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)" in *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, eds., M. Schmanus und Alois Grillmeier, v.3. (Freiburg: Heder, 1965), 105.

sarx to a complete human being, body and soul, and allocated a soteriological function to the soul of Christ.

Cyril of Alexandria was a prolific writer and “no other Greek father, save Origen and Chrysostom, has passed [him] on such a body of biblical commentaries.”⁴⁹ Although a great deal of his exegetic work is lost, the remaining writings before 429-430 are large: two commentaries on the Pentateuch (*De adoratione et cultur in spiritu et vertate* and *Glaphyra in Pentateuchum*); a commentary on the minor prophets, a commentary on Isaiah, and a *Commentary on John*. He also wrote two polemical works against Arianism prior to 428: *Thesaurus on the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity* and *Dialogues on the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity*. The *Commentary on John*, the longest of Cyril’s biblical commentaries, is a crucial source for his Christology.⁵⁰ This massive a verse-by-verse commentary was written for his priests that they could teach the Scriptures correctly refuting those neo-Arians who expressed erroneous opinions on the nature of the Second Person of Trinity at that time.⁵¹ Cyril’s interpretation of John’s Gospel demonstrates his advanced understanding on the divine economy of the Son and his awareness of the active principle of the human soul in the incarnation.

⁴⁹ Wilken, 2.

⁵⁰ The extant materials of Cyril’s *Commentary on John* are Books 1-4 (his comments on John 1:10-10:17) and Books 9-11 (comments on John 12:49-21:25). Books 7 and 8 (his comments on John 10:18-12:48) exist only in fragments. The dissertation will make a citation from the following English translations: Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, tr. P.E. Pusey, v.1 (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1874); *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, tr. Thomas Randall, v.2 (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1885). Both translations will be referred as *Commentary on John*.

⁵¹ The first three books of Cyril’s *Commentary on John* are orthodox arguments against Eunomians. For instance, *Commentary on John*, I.4, “Against those who dare to say that the conceived and natural word in God the Father is one, and He that is called Son by the Divine Scriptures another: such is the misconceit of Eunomius’ party.”

The primary biblical metaphor employed by Cyril in his *Commentary on John* as well as in other exegetical works is the Adam-Christ typology. While the familiar Pauline typology from Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 was widely discussed in the fourth century to support the idea of solidarity between Christ and humankind, Cyril developed it “much more fully.”⁵² He applied the Adam typology to a series of related soteriological and Christological issues.⁵³ Most importantly Christ as the second Adam shows his unique person and work. Cyril’s Christology is clearly shown in his first use of the Adam-Christ typology in the exposition of John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh.” Cyril writes several aspects of Christ the second Adam. First, Christ is fully a man like other men. Second, he is a representative human being like Adam. As the first man altered human destiny with his life, Christ likewise affected all people. Finally, the Adam typology reveals the uniqueness of Christ as the new Adam. Whereas Adam impoverished humanity through his fall and subsequent corruption, Christ enriched our common nature and raised the whole humanity to his status. For Cyril, Christ is not only truly a human being, but also a unique man, who restores what Adam lost through sin.⁵⁴

⁵² Wilken, 106–107. Although other fourth century thinkers such as Athanasius and Apollinarius used the Adam typology for the idea of solidarity between Christ and mankind, Cyril took it further as the link for the new creation. According to Wilken, “it is this link between the typology and the new creation which binds Cyril’s discussion to the problem of Christianity and Judaism, or more specifically, the relationship between the two testaments.”

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁴ *Commentary on John* I.9 on John 1:14 (Pusey I:108-109). Hereafter, Pusey (volume I) and Randall (volume II) will be omitted. “With this verse the Evangelist has now entered openly upon the declaration of the Incarnation. . . . He does not say that the Word came into the flesh; he says that he became flesh in order to exclude any idea of a relative indwelling, as in case of the prophets and the other saints. He really did become flesh, that is to say, a human being, as I have just explained. . . . The Theologian therefore very aptly added at once: ‘and dwelt in us,’ so that realizing that he was referring to two things, the subject of the dwelling and that in which the dwelling was taking place, you should not think that the Word was transformed into flesh but rather that he dwelt in flesh, using as his own particular body the temple that is from the holy Virgin. ‘For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,’ as Paul says (Col. 2:9). . . . It also reveals to us a very deep mystery. For we were all in Christ. The common element of humanity is summed up in his person, which is also why he was called the last Adam: he

In his exposition of the baptism of Jesus, Cyril of Alexandria further explains the work of the second Adam that undid the damages transmitted by the first man.⁵⁵ The contrast between Adam and Christ is explored in details.

The first man, being earthy, and of the earthy, and having, placed in his own power, the choice between good and evil, being master of the inclination to each, was caught of bitter guile, and having inclined to disobedience, falls to the earth, the mother from whence he sprang, and over-mastered now at length by corruption and death, transmits the penalty to his whole race. The evil growing and multiplying in us, and our understanding ever descending to the worse, sin reigned, and thus at length the nature of man was shown stripped of the Holy Ghost which indwelt him. *For the Holy Spirit of wisdom will flee deceit*, as it is written, *nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin* [The Wisdom of Solomon 1:4]. Since then the first Adam preserved not the grace given him of God, God the Father was minded to send us from heaven the second Adam. For He sendeth in our likeness his own Son who is by nature without variableness or change, and wholly unknowing of sin, that as by the disobedience of the first, we became subject to Divine wrath, so through the obedience of the Second, we might both escape the curse, and its evils . . . But when the Word of God became man, he received the Spirit from the Father as one of us . . . that he who knew no sin, might, by receiving it as man preserve it to our nature, and might again implant in us the grace that left us.

Christ did not merely recover what Adam lost, but permanently preserved it for human nature. Because the second Adam came not from earth but from God, what he recovered was more than what the first Adam originally lost. That is, Christ inaugurated the new age of the Holy Spirit for humanity in a decisive and irreversible way. Cyril brings up

enriched our common nature with everything conducive to joy and glory just as the first Adam impoverished it with everything bringing corruption and gloom. This is precisely why the Word dwelt in all of us by dwelling in a single human being, so that through that one being who was ‘designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness’ (Rom.1:4) the whole humanity might be raised up to his status so that the verse, ‘I said, you are gods and all of you sons of the Most High’ (Ps.82:6) might through applying to one of us come to apply to us all.”

⁵⁵ Daniel Keating, “The Baptism of Jesus in Cyril of Alexandria: The Recreation of Human Race,” *Pro Ecclesia* 8 No.2 (Spring 1999): 201–222. According to Keating, the baptism of Jesus is “the centerpiece” for Cyril’s soteriology. “It is all the more remarkable that Cyril emphasizes the centrality of the baptism” because “Jesus’ baptism was progressively dropped from the creeds [in the fourth century] in order to eliminate subordinationist readings of the relationship between Jesus and the Father.” Gabriele Winkler, “A Remarkable Shift in the 4th Century Creeds,” *Studia Patristica*, 17 (1982): 1396–1401.

the full implication of the Trinitarian framework in the economy of the Son.⁵⁶ Citing a common Arian argument that the Son must be imperfect or unequal to the Father because he did not have the Holy Spirit until his baptism, Cyril offered a clarification.⁵⁷ When Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, he did not receive the Spirit for himself but on our behalf. “He received the Spirit not to be sanctified, but to sanctify our nature.”⁵⁸ Because “the Holy Spirit is in the Son not by participation, not from without, but essentially and by nature,”⁵⁹ the returning of the Spirit to humanity through the second Adam was an unprecedented event. The Spirit did not merely descend upon Jesus but “has remained” upon him. Using the perfect verb tense, Cyril stressed that the descent of the Spirit has an enduring significance for humanity.

Later in his comment on John 3:34, “he whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure,” Cyril denotes the uniqueness of the Son by comparing him to the prophets and the apostles. The prophets and saints in the Old Testament received the Spirit with measure and they could not give it to another. When the apostles lay their hands on someone to bestow the Spirit, they are not true givers of the Spirit but rather “invokers of the Spirit.”⁶⁰ The Son, however, gives the Spirit without

⁵⁶ For details of Cyril’s Trinitarian theology in the Gospel of John, see Lois M. Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, A New Testament Exegete: His Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 71–101.

⁵⁷ Commentary on John II.1 (I:135), “But perchance the heretic fond of carping will jump up ... say; What again, sirs, say ye to this . . . Lo, he saith that the Spirit descendeth upon the Son; lo, He is anointed by God the Father; That Which He hath not, He receives forsooth, the Psalmist co-witnessing with us and saying, as to Him: Wherefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. How then will the Son any more be Consubstantial with the Perfect Father, not being Himself perfect, and therefore anointed?”

⁵⁸ Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 136.

⁵⁹ *Commentary on John*, II.1 (I:134).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II.3 (I:194).

measure because he has the “properties of God the Father” in him. The risen Jesus could breathe the Spirit on the apostles (John 20:22) for the Son cooperates with the Father in granting the Spirit and “He is the Power of the Father, that has created this whole world, and called man out of nothing into being.”⁶¹ Through Christ the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the faithful more powerfully than when he dwelt in the prophets in the old covenant. The latter was for “illumination” (έλλαμψις) and the former signifies “complete and perfect indwelling” (κατοίησις).⁶² For Cyril, the incarnation of the Son accomplishes more than a recovery of the original gift lost by Adam and it creates “far greater” (πολυ μείζων) advantages for humanity through the permanent re-possession of the Holy Spirit.⁶³

The new and greater work of Christ the second Adam is again disclosed in John 13:36 when he answered to Peter, “Where I go, you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow afterwards.” Cyril comments that Christ’s return to the heavens is “most especially presenting himself to God the Father as the firstfruits of humanity” and it “secure[s] the advantage of all mankind.”⁶⁴ The Egyptian father notices that the tomb of Christ was a “new one” which signifies “Christ’s death is the harbinger and pioneer of

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, XII.1 on John 20:22 (II:674). Cyril states his Trinitarian maxim, “the Spirit could only come down unto us from the Father through the Son.” In another passage on *Commentary on John* (IX. 1), Cyril avers that the reason why Christ breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples physically was “demonstrating that just as breath issues from the human mouth in a physical way, so the Spirit of God pours forth from the divine essence [of the Son] in a manner befitting God.”

⁶² Walter J. Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 115.

⁶³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Homiliae Paschales* 16.6 (*Patrologia Graeca* 77, 786), Cyril states that the Father sent the Son “to transport our condition to a state incomparably better than it was of old.”

⁶⁴ *Commentary on John*, IX.4 on John 13:36 (II:224), “In returning on His way to the heavens above, He was most especially presenting Himself to God the Father as the firstfruits of humanity, and although what was being done was to secure the advantage of all mankind: for He consecrated for us a new way of which the human race knew nothing before.”

our entry into Paradise.”⁶⁵ “When the Second Adam appeared among us,” Cyril exclaims, “the Divine Man from heaven, contending for the salvation of the world, purchased by His death the life of all men, and, destroying the power of corruption, rose again to life, we were transformed (μεταπλάσσω) into His image.”⁶⁶

Cyril of Alexandria utilizes the Adam-Christ typology in his biblical commentaries and dogmatic works throughout his career in order to stress the unique person and the universal achievement of the incarnate Word for human salvation.⁶⁷ His various salvific themes such as recreation, renewal, transformation, and deification, repeatedly resort to the biblical notion of Christ as the second Adam and the heavenly man.⁶⁸ “The chief characteristic” of Cyril’s biblical Christology is “newness” that comes through the second Adam.⁶⁹ Cyril’s emphasis on salvation as restoration will be described in the final section which treats his contribution to patristic tradition of recapitulation and deification.

Before studying further this foundational biblical theology of Cyril vis-à-vis his soteriology of impassible suffering in the next section, a critically relevant question begs

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* XII. 5 on John 19:40,41 (II:647), “The writer of the Gospel says that this sepulcher in the garden was a new one; this fact signifying to us, as it were, by a type and figure, that Christ’s death is the harbinger and pioneer of our entry into Paradise. For He entered as a Forerunner for us . . . By the newness of the sepulcher is meant the untrodden and strange pathway where we return from death unto life, and the renewing of our souls, that Christ has invented for us, whereby we baffle corruption. For henceforth, by the death of Christ, death for us has been transformed into sleep with like power and function. For we are alive unto God, and shall live forevermore.”

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cyril’s final Christological treatise, *Quod Unus sit Christus* (The Unity of Christ), also contains several uses of Adam-Christ typology.

⁶⁸ This dissertation shall return to this central biblical typology later in the section where the Cyril’s contribution to the patristic tradition of deification is examined (and especially compared to Christology of Athanasius).

⁶⁹ Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 115.

for an answer regarding his conception of human nature of Christ, namely the presence of a rational human soul. An important characteristic of Cyril as a biblical commentator is that he never separates his exegetical work from his dogmatic framework and concerns.⁷⁰ The purpose of his biblical Christology is to highlight the new beginning of humanity in the second Adam, and as such it is not only typological but profoundly ontological. As his principal preoccupation in his life was to preserve the unity of Christ in his divinity and humanity, he understood the flesh (σάρξ) of Christ to mean a complete human being (άνθρωπος τέλειος). In Cyril's Christological thinking, the full humanity of Christ has a soteriological importance in that what he assumes, he sanctifies and transforms.

The question of Cyril's understanding of human nature of Christ has been disputed among scholars.⁷¹ The standard patristic scholarship presents the view that pre-Nestorian Cyril did not understand the soteriological significance of a human soul in Christ but repeated the Logos-Sarx Christology of Athanasius, his theological champion.⁷² A close reading of *The Commentary on the Gospel of John*, however, shows

⁷⁰ At the beginning of *The Commentary on John*, Cyril called his exposition a “dogmatic exegesis (δογματικωτέραν . . . ἐξηγήσιν) as he intended to defend the faith against the false opinions (ψευδοδοξίας) of other teachers. He followed the example of Athanasius, “the inventor of what one can call the ‘dogmatic exegesis’ which became one of the principal forms of biblical interpretation through the great controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries.” Charles Kannengiesser, “Athanasius of Alexandria and the foundation of traditional Christology,” in *Arius and Athanasius: Two Alexandrian Theologians* (Great Britain: Variorum, 1991), 110.

⁷¹ For a survey of the various views on the presence of a human soul in Christ, see Steve A. McKinion, *Word and Imagery and the Mystery of Christ: A Reconstruction of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 149–179.

⁷² For instance, Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* Vol. III (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc, 1992), 136. “There is a great difference between the earlier and the later works. The Christology of the former, e.g. the *Thesaurus* and the *Dialogue*, merely repeats that of St. Athanasius. We find the same form of Logos-Sarx Christology without the slightest indication of the theological importance of the soul of Christ. It did not occur to Cyril, any more than to Athanasius, to refute the Arian difficulties about the immutability of the Logos by pointing to the existence of human soul in Christ. Both of them attribute Christ's suffering to his flesh, without adverting to the soul's participation therein.” See the footnotes 66 for other patristic scholars of this viewpoint.

that Cyril was aware of the theological importance of a human soul in the incarnate Word prior to the Nestorian controversy. He not only inherited Athanasius' Christology but also deepened it with his (wider) exposition of a human rational soul in Jesus.

To assess Cyril's use of *sarx* in his Christology, one must first recognize that his anthropology is indebted far more to Scripture than the dominant philosophy of the time. Those who claim that the early thought of the Egyptian father had no room for the human psychology of Christ,⁷³ posit that his theology remained faithful to the common anthropology of his time. The prevalent anthropology of Alexandria in the fourth and fifth centuries was Platonist or neo-Platonist and it conceived the human person not as a composite of body and soul but as a union of spirit and a corporeal nature that comprised of the body and the soul. The human person is understood primarily as an incarnate spirit.⁷⁴ Since Cyril's anthropology was influenced by this traditional anthropology that presumed a human person to be a spirit trapped in flesh rather than a substantial composite of body and soul, he was unable to create a space for the activity of the human soul of Christ.⁷⁵ This assumption that the traditional anthropology did not allow the early

⁷³ Liébaert argues that Cyril attributes fear and agony of Christ to the flesh like his predecessor Athanasius. *La Doctrine Christologique de Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie avant la querelle Nestorienne*, 124, "La solution de Cyrille rest celle d'Athanase: c'est là une des exigences de la condition humaine qu'il a revêtue, comme les pleurs, l'angoisse, la crainte. Dans cette explication, on cherche vainement la trace d'une psychologie humaine du Christ; tout est ramené fois encore aux 'πάθη της σαρκός.'"

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 147–149 and 158. "L'évêque d'Alexandrie demeure fidèle à l'anthropologie courante de son temps. Au fond de sa christologie, Il y a cette idée que l'homme est un esprit incarné et que, par conséquent, c'est unissant, non pas à une âme, mais à une chair qu'un esprit deviant homme. Dans cette perspective, l'âme n'entre pas en ligne de compte dans le processus de l'Incarnation; elle n'a pas non plus de rôle à jouer dans le système christologique construit sur cette base. Le fait que la chair assumée par le Verbe était animée d'une âme spirituelle peut bien être reconnu par Cyrille; il n'entre pas dans sa définition de l'Incarnation et viola pourquoi l'âme du Sauveur apparaît si peu dans la christologie cyrillienne avant 428."

⁷⁵ For a thorough refutation of Liébaert's view, see Herman Diepen, *Aux origines de l'anthropologie de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1957). Diepen points out that

Cyril to excavate the theological riches of a human soul in Christ, collides with the fact that the bishop of Alexandria clearly rejected any dualistic anthropology in his *Commentary on John*.⁷⁶ Based on the biblical story of good creation of God, for example, Cyril repudiates the idea that “the body was given in nature of punishment to the [pre-existing] soul of man.” The resurrection affirms the original and ongoing essential goodness of the body to ultimate human existence. To the Egyptian father, the dualistic disparagement of the body as a temporal prison of a spirit or soul signified a failure to appreciate what the Savior achieved for humanity through his resurrection. Cyril’s biblical anthropology coupled with Christological matrix takes both body and soul to be essential components of a human person.

The bishop of Alexandria therefore believes that the Scripture’s use of the word “flesh” refers to the full and complete human reality. In his exegesis of John 1:14, to cite an example, he understands *sarx* in a holistic and dynamic manner.

The Evangelist has now entered openly upon the declaration of the Incarnation. For he plainly sets forth that the Only-Begotten became and is called son of man. For this and nothing else does his saying that the Word was made flesh signify. It is as though he said more clearly, “The Word was made man.” And in thus speaking he introduces again to us not the strange or unusual, seeing that the divine Scripture often times calls the whole creature by the name of flesh alone, as in the prophet Joel: “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” We do not suppose that the prophet says that the divine Spirit should be bestowed upon

Liébaert overlooked Cyril’s specific repudiation of such Platonist anthropology in the *Commentary on John*.

⁷⁶ *Commentary on John*, I.1 (I:126), “God created all things in incorruption and he made not death, but through envy of the devil came death into the world (Wisdom 1:13, 2:24) But if it be true, that the body was given in nature of punishment to the soul of man, why, sirs, should we accuse the envy of the devil for bringing in to us the termination of wretchedness and destroying the body which is our punishment? And for what in the world do we offer thanks to the Savior for having again bound us to the flesh through the resurrection? Yet we do indeed give thanks, and the envy of the devil has vexed our nature, procuring corruption to our bodies. No mode of punishment then is the body not yet is it the wages of our former sins.”

human flesh *soulless and alone*. Comprehending the whole by the part, he names man from the flesh.⁷⁷

Later in John 9:27, Cyril clearly writes the presence of a human soul in Christ: “For the Son is one and only one, both before his conjunction with the flesh, and when he came with the flesh; and by flesh we denote man in his integrity, I mean consisting of soul and body.”⁷⁸ In his earlier writing, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, Cyril assigns psychological passions to a human soul. In his exposition on the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness, he follows the Apostle Paul’s exegesis in 1 Corinthians 2:10. The crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus foreshadowed baptism in Christ, which delivers the baptized believers from the slavery of the passions in their souls.⁷⁹ Another passage where Cyril regarded the soul as subject to the passions is found in his exposition of John 14:20. Arguing against those who believed that the soul of Adam originated from the divine inbreathing recorded in Genesis 2:7, Cyril answered that the soul which became “susceptible of so great diversity of passions” could not come from the immutable divine nature.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Commentary on John* I.9 on John 1:14 (I:108-109). Italics are mine.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, VI. 1 (II: 200).

⁷⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, III (Patrologia Graeca 68, 273). “The soul of man which comes to escape the slavery of the passions and is converted to a better life, wanting to follow the divine law, still remains delicate and weak. It is easily frightened at the sight of the pains to be borne and of the necessity of the struggle. The former life smiles at it anew. Before the holy baptism, the soul of man is lazy in the face of the struggle and ready to submit to slavery. It is entirely fearful.”

⁸⁰ *Commentary on John* IX.1 (II:485). “If any suppose that the Divine inbreathing became a soul, let him tell us whether it was turned aside from its own nature and has been made into a soul, or has it remained in its own identity? For if they say it has been in any way changed and that it traversed the law of its own nature, they will be convicted of blasphemy; for they will say that the immutable and ever-unchanging nature is altogether mutable; whereas if it was in no wise turned aside, but has ever remained what it always was, after coming forth from God, that is to say, his inbreathing, how did it turn to sin, and become susceptible of so great diversity of passions?”

As the bishop of Alexandria located the active function of a soul in psychological passions, he recognized that Christ underwent the same human internal frailties. Cyril saw John 12:27 speaking of the sufferings proper to the human soul of Christ.

He says, *is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause (came I) unto this hour.* . . . He feels the mental trouble that is caused by suffering, as a human characteristic. . . . For Christ, not having yet been on the Cross actually, suffers the trouble by anticipation For the suffering of the dread is a feeling that we cannot ascribe to the impassible Godhead, nor yet to the flesh; for it is an affection of the cogitations of the soul, and not of the flesh. . . . It is noteworthy that Christ did not say “My flesh *is troubled*,” but “*My soul*,” thereby dispelling the suggestion of the heretics.” . . . Therefore the Word of God made one with Himself human nature in its entirety, that so He might save the entire man.⁸¹

The Egyptian father continued to expound that Christ’s weak human nature was not totally overcome with fear but was transformed with “dauntless courage.”⁸² Cyril’s expositions in John 12: 27-28, Matthew 26:37-39 and Luke 23:46 reveal an important aspect of his Christology in that he detected a real tension between the divine will and the human will of Christ.⁸³ In contrast, although Athanasius might have understood the flesh to mean a complete humanity, body and soul, he did not clearly admit that the human will of Christ really experienced fear. Athanasius’ interpretation of Matthew 26:39 is ambiguous with respect to the human will of the Logos compared to his successor’s acute reading.⁸⁴ The former’s insight to locate the mediating work of the Logos in his incarnate

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, VIII.1 (II:150-151). Here Cyril also refutes the view of Apollinarius, who claimed that the Logos took a temple that was soulless and mindless.

⁸² *Ibid* (II:152), “After speaking of being *troubled*, he does not relapse into silence, but transforms the suffering which had affected him into dauntless courage, almost going so far as to say: ‘Death is in itself is nothing; but on this account I permitted My Flesh to feel dread, that I might infuse it with a new element of courage.’”

⁸³ The tenth Act of the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople (681) cites Book 4 of the *Commentary on John* as part of the patristic witness to the existence of human will in Christ. Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, v. 11 (Florence, 1759-1798), 144.

state, writes Lawrence Welch, was “more profoundly realized in Cyril’s *Commentary on John*”⁸⁵ As he affirms the unwilling and willing aspect of the Son’s passion, Cyril vividly describes the divine healing of human nature in the economy of the Son.⁸⁶

Cyril’s Christology combined both biblical narrative and ontological understanding of the incarnation.⁸⁷ His keen ontological reading of the incarnation directs his Christological articulation, particularly the notion of *mia* Christology. Cyril’s stress on the unity of Christ, with the Son being the primary subject of the incarnation and its ensuing experiences, is clearly expressed in his dispute with Nestorius and his Eastern bishops. In his dogmatic writings, Cyril coined a paradoxical phrase, Christ “suffered impassibly (πάθοι ἀπαθώς),” which explicates his dynamic understanding of the incarnate Word and his redemptive suffering.

“Impassible Suffering” and Mia Christology in Cyril’s Dogmatic Writings.

The tone of Cyril’s writings against Nestorius was unmistakably harsh and more personal than his earlier works against Arians. The bishop of Alexandria considered the Christology of Nestorius a detrimental deviation from the vital core of orthodoxy for

⁸⁴ Lawrence J. Welch, *Christology and Eucharist in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1994), 51–54. After comparing Cyril’s reading of Matthews 26:39 with that of Athanasius in *Contra Arianos* III. 29:57, Welch shows that the latter had difficulty attributing real psychological suffering to Christ.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 56. “Cyril was able to begin to address the problem, left over from the ‘Arian’ crisis, that so vexed Athanasius: how can it be that God who entered human history underwent human suffering. Cyril took the soteriological concern of Athanasius, which taught that God must become flesh in order to give humanity incorruptibility and immortality, and gave it a depth not attained by Athanasius.”

⁸⁶ Thomas Torrance also recognized that Cyril strengthened the Athanasian Christology with his deificatory reading of the human mediatorship of Christ. See Torrance, “The Mind of Christ: The Problem of Apollinarianism and the Liturgy” in *Reconciliation in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 139–214.

⁸⁷ R. L. Wilken, “Exegesis and the History of Theology. Reflections on the Adam-Christ Typology in Cyril of Alexandria” in *Church History* 35 (June 1966): 139–156.

Nestorius the bishop was not an obscure heretic on the margins of the catholic church but the bishop of imperial city with a wide audience. While some see Cyril in his conflict with Nestorius as “an unscrupulous and power-hungry cleric” who was willing to bankrupt the treasury of Alexandrian church for his ecclesiastical eminence, “the fight against the enemy within was to call for all the resources that Cyril could muster.”⁸⁸ Thus, the bishop of Alexandria painted Nestorius as the new Arius by utilizing the anti-Arian legacy of Athanasius in his controversy with Nestorius.⁸⁹

In the spring of 429 when Cyril heard Nestorius’ teaching stirring up some Egyptian monks, he wrote his first anti-Nestorian discourse. He refuted Nestorius’s suggestion to replace Mary the *Theotokos* (Mother of God) with a new term Mary the *Christotokos* (Mother of Christ) citing that there are many Christs in the Scripture.⁹⁰ The name Christ was not just applied to the Emmanuel but the prophets and saints who were anointed by God in the Old Testament (Ps. 104:15, 1 Sam. 24:7, Hab. 3:13).⁹¹ Since “the Emmanuel is the only Christ who is true God,” Nestorius’s novel term is actually ignorant and inadequate to describe “mystery of the [Son’s] economy with flesh.”⁹² For Cyril, his adversary’s functional understanding of Christ disallowed the height of the

⁸⁸ Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 31.

⁸⁹ Cyril was not the first to create a lineage by extending his predecessor’s polemic. Irenaeus similarly construed a continuous apostolic genealogy in his fight against Gnostic Christians whom he portrayed as heretics without the pedigree of orthodoxy. See R. Lyman, “A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism,” in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams, *Arianism After Arius* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 45–62.

⁹⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Cyril’s Letter to the Monks of Egypt (Ad Monachos)* from McGukin’s *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 245–261.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 253.

incarnation just as someone ignores the difference between a musical instrument and a musician.⁹³ The bishop of Alexandria thought that the biblical interpretation of Nestorius rendered Christ “merely a man like us and an instrument of the Godhead” and the bishop of the imperial city was relapsing into Arian errors. Quoting Athanasius’ *Contra Arianos*, Cyril reminded the monks that the Scripture “contains a two-fold declaration concerning the Savior.” He “is eternally God” and “for our sake, he took flesh from the virgin Mary the Mother of God and so became man.”⁹⁴ Cyril argued that to deny the *Theotokos* is logically same as Arianism. Those who negate Mary to be the Mother of God do not confess the fullness of the Son’s participation with humanity just as the Arians discounted the fullness of the Son’s participation in God. Therefore, Cyril concluded that Nestorius’ Christology was not different from Jewish view, which accused Christians of worshipping a mere man.⁹⁵

While Cyril employed an effective polemic against Nestorius and those bishops who followed his teaching, his denigration of the latter as Arius and Jew reveals more than rhetorical prowess.⁹⁶ He noticed a theological resemblance between Nestorian

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 257. “If anyone attributes to him only and solely the function of an instrument, he thereby denies, like it or not, that he is the Son in truth. Let us suppose, for argument’s sake, that we take a man. Let him have a son who is skilled on the lyre and is able to sing most beautifully. Would such a man consider that the lyre and this functional act of singing were on the same level as his son? Would not such a thing be the height of absurdity?”

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 247. *Contra Arianos* 3.29. “Therefore the mark and characteristic of Holy Scripture, as we have often said, is this that it contains a twofold declaration concerning the Savior, that he both always was God and that he is the Son, being the Word and brightness and wisdom of the Father, and that afterwards, for our sake, by taking flesh from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, he became man.”

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 261. When the news of Nestorius’ deposition reached Constantinople, Cyril’s supporters and crowds shouted their joy, “Nestorius the Jew!” Cf. Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: the Making of a Saint and of a Heretic* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), 217.

⁹⁶ Both Cyril and Nestorius employed a rhetorical method called “*reductio ad haeresim*” against each other; the latter also compared the former to Arius, Apollinarius and Eunomius. The bishop of Alexandria exhibited a more successful polemic in a simple and pithy fashion than the bishop of

Christology and Arianism. During the Council of Ephesus in 431, Cyril publicly charged Nestorius of subscribing to Arian theology.⁹⁷ In spite of fundamental differences in theologies of Arius and Nestorius, Cyril argued that, in the words of Gavriilyuk, “there is a peculiar affinity” regarding “their conceptualization of divine transcendence.”⁹⁸ Arius held that the High God remained completely unaffected by the incarnation and his work in creation could not be carried out directly but always through the intermediary God, namely the begotten Son. Nestorius insisted in similar fashion that the relation of divine and human nature in Christ had to be strictly aligned with the ontological division between the creator and creature. The first principle in approaching the question of the incarnation on the part of both was “the division between the natures” which did not allow any attempt to attribute divine involvement and human suffering to a single subject.⁹⁹ For Nestorius, the God who did assuming and the man who was assumed must be clearly distinguished in Christ’s incarnation.¹⁰⁰ Whereas Arius maintained the

Constantinople whose rhetoric tends to be implicit and complex. For the details of their rhetorical styles and comparisons, see Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy*, 183–252.

⁹⁷ When Nestorius told several conciliar bishops that God was not an infant 2 or 3 months old, Cyril immediately accused Nestorius of claiming that Christ was a mere man. The bishop of Alexandria argued that if God was never an infant as his adversary says, then Christ/Jesus was not God. According to Cyril, “You [Nestorius] had the holy clergy of presbyters and deacons [as well as the Nicene fathers] excommunicated for refuting your importunate madness, which is nothing else but thinking like Arius.” *Homilia IV, ACO (Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum)* I.I.2, 104, II. 11-12. Cf. See Wessel, 213–223.

⁹⁸ Gavriilyuk, 141. For details of “the similarity between the function of divine impassibility in Arianism and Nestorianism,” see Gavriilyuk, 141–144.

⁹⁹ Nestorius, *Ad Cyrillum*, II. 6. English Translation from John McGuckin’s *Nestorius’ Reply to Cyril’s Second Letter* in *Saint Cyril*, 366. “I applaud the fact that you [Cyril] make a division between the natures according to Godhead and manhood.”

¹⁰⁰ Although Nestorius was the one who ignited the actual Christological controversy, scholars agree that the theology of Theodore of Mopsuetia was behind the dispute – e.g. A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4.181; George L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1940), 291–2; Francis Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuetia* (Rome: Universitatis Gregorianae, 1956), 288; J. McGuckin, “The Christology of Nestorius of Constantinople,” *The*

absolute transcendence of the High God in the scheme of divine hierarchy (of the High God and the lesser God), Nestorius protected the divine attributes of the Christ in an inviolable division from his humanity.¹⁰¹

The Antiochene theologian expressed the relationship of two natures and their corresponding actions in Christ as conjunction (συνάφεια).¹⁰² He recommended this term to others as a proper concept for it expresses the intimacy between “the Godhead and his flesh.”¹⁰³ Safeguarding the gap of two natures in Christ with the idea of conjunction, Nestorius opened his first serious theological attack on Cyril with the charge of denying *apatheia* in the Godhead of the Son.

In your letter [Cyril’s second letter to Nestorius] you have misunderstood the tradition contained in those holy texts that you have read, and so have fallen into ignorance by thinking that they said the Word of God, coeternal with the Father was *passible*. But look over these words . . . and you will find that this divine chorus of fathers did not say that the consubstantial Godhead was *passible*, or that it underwent a recent birth, or that it was raised to life.¹⁰⁴

Patristic and Byzantine Review 7:2-3 (1988), 97. For a detailed study, see Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28–62.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, *De Symbolo*, 8, trans. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1932-33), 87. “The Godhead was separated from the one who was suffering in the trial of death, because it was impossible for Him to taste the trial of death . . . God himself was not tried with the trial of death but He was near to him [the man assumed] and doing to him the things that were congruous to His nature as the Maker who is the cause of everything. He brought him [the man assumed] to perfection through sufferings.”

¹⁰¹ Gavriluk, 144. “The divine impassibility functioned in Nestorian theology in a way similar to its role in Arianism. For both parties, the divine impassibility precluded God’s direct involvement in everything related to the created order, especially the experiences that indicated human weakness.”

¹⁰² Nestorius, *Ad Cyrillum*, II. 7. “It is entirely right and fitting to the Gospel traditions to confess that the body is the temple of the Godhead of the Son, and a temple that is united in a sublime and divine conjunction.”

¹⁰³ Friedrich Loofs, *Nestoriana* (Halle: 1905), 292, 1–6. “You might learn how intimate was the conjunction between the Godhead and the Lord’s flesh, witnessed in that newborn child. . . We should praise this concept, but do not applaud it without examination for what I have said is that the same one was a newborn child and dwelt within the newborn child.”

¹⁰⁴ Nestorius, *Ad Cyrillum*, II. 2. Italic is mine for emphasis.

For the bishop of Constantinople, Cyril misread the second article of the Nicene Creed when he attributed the human experiences of Christ such as his birth and death directly to the Word of God.¹⁰⁵ As he accused Cyril of *theopatheia* (θεοπάθεια), he found the latter's statement of the impassible suffering of Christ contradictory.¹⁰⁶ Even later in exile, Nestorius firmly held his judgment of Cyrillian Christology as the *theopathic* heresy that conflated the impassible God into a passible being.¹⁰⁷

Although Nestorius questioned Cyril's controversial expression of the Christ's "impassible suffering" (*pathoi apathos*), the bishop of Alexandria consistently employed the paradoxical phrase in his dogmatic writings in order to stress the hypostatic union of two natures in the incarnated Word. Between the outbreak of the *theotokos* controversy in 428 and the Council of Ephesus of 431, he composed a short treatise entitled "On the Right Faith" for the Emperor Theodosius II's wife, Eudocia and his sister, Pulcheria. In this letter, he coined a unique expression of "impassible suffering." By that he meant that

¹⁰⁵ For Nestorius, if God had actually undergone birth, burial, and death, that would have meant that God was changed into a man and was no longer God. *Nestoriana* 262, "What was formed in the womb was not in itself God. What was created by the Spirit was not in itself God. What was buried in the tomb was not in itself God. If that were the case, we should evidently be worshippers of a man and worshippers of the dead."

¹⁰⁶ *Ad Cyrillum*, II. 6. "But as for the rest(of your letter) if it contains some hidden wisdom, incomprehensible to the ears of those who hear it read, then you alone have the wit to know. As far as I am concerned it seems to contradict your earlier statements. For the one you first proclaimed as impassible and not needing a second generation [eternal], you subsequently introduce (how I know not) as passible and newly created."

¹⁰⁷ Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heraclides* I. 2, trans. By G. R. Driver, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 92–93. "They[the Cyril's supporters] take everything which is his nature and attribute unto God the Word: the human fear and the betrayal, the interrogation, the answer, the smiting upon the cheeks, the sentence of the cross, the way thereto, the setting of the cross upon his shoulder, the bearing of his cross . . . And the properties of God the Word they set at nought and make them human . . . Surely it is an awful and dreadful thing to conceive this and to tell men what and what sort of thoughts they have concerning the Son, that he is both made and created and that he has been changed from impassible to passible and from immortal to mortal and from unchangeable to changeable."

Christ experienced suffering but was not changed by the experience. Rather the suffering of Christ in his flesh brought changes to human beings.

It would be consistently fitting also for the Word to fear death, to look upon danger with suspicion, to weep in temptations, and in addition to learn obedience by what he suffered when tempted. Nevertheless, I think it completely foolish either to think or say this, since the Word of God is all powerful, stronger than death, beyond suffering, and completely without a share in fear suitable to man. But though he exists this way by nature, still he suffered for us. Therefore, neither is Christ a mere man nor is the Word without flesh. Rather united with a humanity like ours, he *suffered* human things *impassibly* (πάθοι ἀπαθώς) in his own flesh. Thus these events became an example for us in a human fashion . . . so that we might follow in his steps.¹⁰⁸

Cyril used this “catchy phrase” to denote the paradoxical truth of the incarnation. “The impassible suffering” was his deliberate attempt to uphold “the both sides of the paradox with equal force and absolute seriousness of intent, refusing to minimize either reality.”¹⁰⁹ For Cyril, the heart of the economy of the salvation lies in the unity of a single person of the incarnate Word in whom the divine and human natures inextricably bound together. While Nestorius could not conceptualize any ontological union because of the fear that such a union would jeopardize the integrity of Christ’s divine status, the bishop of Alexandria thought that the union of the two hypostases holds the key to the reality that, as Weinandy puts it, “God *qua* God could not be born but if he became man, he could truly be born, suffer and die.”¹¹⁰

In his later work, *On the Unity of Christ*, Cyril explained the meaning of “impassible suffering” to an international audience after the Council of Ephesus. When

¹⁰⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, *Ad Reginas De Recta Fide Oratio Altera* 6, trans. Rowan A. Greer (unpublished), 33; PG 76, 1393B.

¹⁰⁹ McGukin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 185. “The point he wishes to make is that of the intimacy of the connection between two realities in Christ: one a reality of the glorious power of the godhead, and the other the tragic reality of the suffering human condition . . . The power of the one heals and transforms the fallibility of the other.”

¹¹⁰ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 175.

someone asked, “How can the same one both suffer and not suffer?” Cyril answered with the traditional analogy of iron in fire.¹¹¹ While recognizing the ineffable mystery of the incarnation along with the limitation of analogy, the Alexandrian bishop makes an important clarification. The relationship between the flesh and the Godhead is not commensurate but asymmetrical. As ‘fire’ affects and penetrates the ‘iron’ and *not vice versa*, “the flesh did not become the very flesh of the Word *directly*.”¹¹² Like the fire heats up the cold iron (in its own nature), “the Word who is God can introduce the life-giving power and energy of its own self into his very own flesh.”¹¹³ While the human nature and the divine nature are inseparable and indivisible in the incarnate Word, Cyril’s hypostatic union “does not ignore the difference” nor conflate the two into any kind of consubstantial relationship.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*. Trans. by John A. McGukin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 130–131. “He suffers in his own flesh, and not in the nature of Godhead. The method of these things is altogether ineffable, and there is no mind that can attain to such subtle and transcendent ideas. Yet following these most correct deductions . . . we do not deny that he can be said to suffer, but this does not mean that we say that the things pertaining to the flesh transpired to his divine and transcendent nature. No as I have said, he ought to be conceived of as suffering in his own flesh, although not suffering in any way like this in the God-head. . . It is like iron . . . when it is put in contact with a raging fire. It receives the fire into itself, and when it is in the very heart of the fire, if someone should beat it, then the material itself takes the battering but the nature of the fire is in no way injured by the one who strikes. This is how you should understand the way in which the Son is said both to suffer in the flesh and not to suffer in the Godhead. . . The force of any comparison is feeble.”

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 131. “The flesh that is united to him, ineffably and in a way that transcends thought or speech, did not become the very flesh of the Word, directly.” Italics are mine for emphasis.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 131–2. “If it is true that fire has converse with materials which in their own natures are not hot, and yet renders them hot since it so abundantly introduces to them the inherent energy of its own power, then surely in an even greater degree the Word who is God can introduce the life-giving power and energy of its own self into his very own flesh . . . He is united to it [his own flesh] unconfusedly and unchangeably and in a manner he alone knows.”

¹¹⁴ Cyril, *Five Tomes Against Nestorius* II.6, trans. Russell, 148. “Our discussion of the union does not ignore the difference [between the humanity and divinity] but nevertheless puts the division aside, not because we are confusing the natures or mixing them together, but because the Word of God, having partaken of flesh and blood, is still thought of as a single Son.” Cf. *Commentary on John* 4. 2. (I:361) “For after the incarnation they [the human and divine natures] are not divisible except insofar as one knows that

One of Cyril's clearest explanations about his *mia* Christology and its impassible suffering was found in his post-Ephesian conciliatory letters to an Eastern bishop named Succensus.¹¹⁵ The bishop of Alexandria explicated the hypostatic union with a common patristic analogy based on biblical anthropology.¹¹⁶

Take a normal human being. We perceive in him two natures: one that of the soul, a second that of the body. We divide them, though, merely in thought (ἐν φιλαίς ἐννοίαις), accepting the difference as simply residing in fine-drawn insight (ἐν ἰσχνσίς θεωρίαις) or mental intuition (φαντασίαις); we do not separate the natures out or attribute a capacity for radical severance to them (οὐκ ἀνα μέρος τίθεμεν τὰς ψύσεις οὔτε μὴν διαμπάξ διατομήν δύναμιν ἐφίεμεν αὐτίς), but see that they belong to one man so that the two are two no more and the single living being is constituted complete by the pair of them. So though one attributes the nature of manhood and of Godhead to Emmanuel, the manhood has become the Word's own and together with it is seen one Son (ἡ ἀνθρωπότης γέγονεν ἰδίᾳ τοῦ λόγου καὶ εἰς υἱὸς νοεῖται σὺν αὐτῇ). Inspired Scripture tells us he suffered in flesh and we should do better to use those terms than to talk of his suffering 'in the nature of manhood' . . . It is futile, then, for them to talk of his suffering in the nature of the manhood separating it, as it were, from the Word and isolating it from him so as to think of him as two and not one Word from God the Father yet incarnate and made man.¹¹⁷

Just as a real (not a conceptual) human person is a holistic entity not a divided *quiddity* of the soul and the body, the incarnate Word exists as the unified single subject.

For Cyril, the oneness of the subject in the economy of the Son did not mean a "divine passibility (θεοπάθειαν)" in his Godhead as Nestorians misunderstood his "impassible

the Word that came from the Father and the temple that came from the virgin are not identical in nature. *For the body is not consubstantial with the Word of God.*" Italics are mine for emphasis.

¹¹⁵ Cyril's two letters to Succensus bishop of Diocaesarea near Seleucia in 344 and 348 show his mature theology "at his most succinct and alert." Succensus was an intelligent and conciliatory theologian who played a role of "an important sounding board" for Cyril's Christological clarification in the reconciliation process between Syria and Egypt. McGukin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 352.

¹¹⁶ According to Weinandy, this metaphor of soul-body was widely used and differently read by many church fathers and heretics alike. Cyril's use is to be understood as a simple comparison rather than an exact model to depict the incarnational union of two natures in Christ. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 182–187.

¹¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Ad Succensus* II. 5 in L. R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters*, 92–93.

suffering.”¹¹⁸ The bishop of Alexandria repeatedly qualified that the incarnate Word suffered “not nakedly (γύμνως)” in his divine nature or “outside the limits of the self-emptying.”¹¹⁹ Instead, he found Nestorius’ language of dual persons (*prosopon*) about Christ problematic since the latter did not recognize the salvific significance of the hypostatic union, but continued to express the separation of two natures even after the incarnation as if Jesus and the Emmanuel were two different subjects (*hypostasei*).¹²⁰ To Cyril, such “radical severance” of the two natures of the incarnate Word as implying dual persons, not only diminished the saving work of Christ but also demoted the worship of the Son to “an idolatry of a man (ἀνθρωπολατρία).”¹²¹ Whereas Nestorius eschewed any Christological language of oneness as an import of suffering into divine nature,¹²² Cyril

¹¹⁸ *Ad Succensus* II. 4. “Both points, indeed, must be maintained of the one true Son: the absence of divine suffering and the attribution to him of human suffering because his flesh did suffer. These people [Nestorians], though, imagine that we are hereby introducing what they call ‘divine passibility (θεοπάθειαν)’; they fail to bear in mind God’s plan and make mischievous attempts to shift the suffering to the man on his own, in foolish pursuit of a false piety.”

¹¹⁹ Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 103.

¹²⁰ Nestorius made the distinction between divinity and humanity in Christ so strong that they appeared to be not merely different natures, but different subjects. E.g., Loofs, *Nestoriana* 269.14–27, “In general terms if you study the whole scope of the New Testament you will never find death ever attributed to the Godhead, but rather to Christ, or the Son or the Lord. For throughout scripture the terms ‘Christ,’ and ‘Son,’ and ‘Lord,’ are the specific terms used to connote the two natures of the Only Begotten. *Sometimes they refer to the deity, sometimes to the manhood, and sometimes to both.* For example when Paul in his epistles proclaim: ‘Though we were enemies we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son’ (Rom. 5:10), he is speaking about the manhood of the Son. But when he says, in his Letter to the Hebrews, ‘God has spoken to us in his Son, through whom he made the Ages’ (Heb. 1:2), he is clearly referring to the deity of the Son. For the flesh is not the Maker of the Ages, since it was only made itself after many ages.” Italics are mine.

¹²¹ *Ad Succensus* II. 4. “Their aim is that the Word of God should not be acknowledged as the Savior who gave his own blood for us but instead that Jesus, viewed as a distinct individual man, should be credited with that. Such an idea overthrows the whole principle of God’s plan of incarnation and plainly misinterprets our divine mystery as man-worship (ἀνθρωπολατρία).”

¹²² In his later writing, Nestorius rejected the use of the analogy of the soul-body by comparing it to Arian model. *The Bazaar of Heraclides* I. 1, 8–9. Later he criticized Cyril’s employment of the soul-body union as *theopatheia*. *Ibid.*, II.2, 172. “For such a union as this is passible; as the soul naturally gives perception unto the body, so by means of this perception is given unto it the perception of the sufferings of

believed that the very nerve of the Gospel was the continuing single reality of the Son who now came to exist as a man in his incarnation.

To stress the one ontological entity of the enfleshed Word, the bishop of Alexandria used the expression of *mia physis*.¹²³ By “one incarnate nature of the Word (μία φύσις του λόγου σεσαρκωμένη),” he did not mean that Christ is one nature as if his divine nature and human nature were merged into a third nature (*tertium quid*), but signified that God the Son is ‘unbreakably’ united to the humanity to become a single man (ένα άνθρωπον).¹²⁴ When Cyril described the union “according to nature” (κατά φύσιν) or being ‘natural’ (ένωσις φύσικῇ), his intention was to aver that the subject of the *mia physis* is the person of the Word as the soul and body naturally form a person.¹²⁵ For the lack of the uniform terminology, Cyril might have confused the Nestorians and later the Monophysites with *mia physis* but he employed the *physis*, *prosopon*, and *hypostasis* interchangeably in his writings.¹²⁶ Although the bishop of Alexandria discontinued use

the body, so that the perception of the sufferings of the body is given by the soul and unto the soul; for it is passible.”

¹²³ Cyril’s employment of the term was equivocal in that “sometimes he simultaneously spoke of the soul and body, and the divinity and humanity as each being a *physis* in the sense of nature or *quiddity*.” Although it is understandable to see Nestorius confused by this term, it must be also denoted that Cyril’s other overwhelming intention was to accentuate the one entity of Christ. For detailed analysis, see Weinandy, *Does God suffer?* 192–196.

¹²⁴ Cyril, *Ad Succensus* I. 6,7. “So we unite the Word from God the Father without merger, alteration or change to holy flesh owning mental life in a manner inexpressible and surpassing understanding, and confess one Son, Christ and Lord, the self-same God and man, not a diverse pair but one and the same . . . in unbreakable union . . . After the union we do not divide the natures from each other and do not sever the one and indivisible into two sons but say ‘One Son’ and, as the fathers have put it, ‘one incarnate nature of the Word.’”

¹²⁵ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 192. “He[Cyril] primarily and almost exclusively used the soul-body union, which normally appears immediately before or after the *mia physis* formula.”

¹²⁶ Cyril, *Ad Nestorium* III, 8. “Accordingly all the sayings contained in the Gospels must be referred to a single person (ένί προσώπω), to the one incarnate subject (ύποστάσει) of the Word.” Here *physis* is interchangeable with the terms, *prosopon* and *hypostasis*. For the different nuances of the technical terms, see McGukin *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 138–151.

of the term *physis* in the post-Ephesian reconciliation with the Antiochenes, he took these terms to refer to “concrete individual and real personal subjectivity.”¹²⁷ As the conciliatory *Formula of Reunion* (433) showed, the bishop of Alexandria had no problem of embracing the doctrine of two natures as long as “one Christ, one Son, and One Lord” was confessed.¹²⁸ Cyril’s language of *mia* Christology was clearly reflected on the Definition of Chalcedon which repeatedly affirmed “one and the same (ενα και τον αυτον) Christ, Son, (and) Lord.”¹²⁹

For Cyril, any Christological interpretation “faithful to the Scriptural narrative of the incarnation” must highlight the “unconfused union” in the person of God the Son.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ McGukin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 209. In his *Defence of the Anathema Against the Orientals*, Cyril expressed, “Thus, there is only one nature (*physis*) of the Word, or hypostasis if you like, and that is the Word himself.” *PG* 76. 401.

¹²⁸ The following English translation is from George Kalantz, “Is There Room for Two? Cyril’s Single Subjectivity and the Prosopic Union,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 52 I (2008), 95. “We confess, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, consisting in a rational soul and flesh . . . for there was a union of two natures. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, and one Lord. In accordance with this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be the Mother of God . . . As for the terms used about the Lord in the Gospels, and apostolic writings, we recognize that theologians treat some as shared because they refer to one person, some they refer separately to two natures, traditionally teaching the application of the divine terms to Christ’s Godhead, the lowly to his manhood.”

¹²⁹ The key phrase was repeated at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the Creed. “Επομενοι τοιουν τοις αγιοις πατρασιν **ενα και τον αυτον** ομολογειν υιον τον κυριον ημων Ιησουν Χριστον συμφωνως απαντες εκδιδασκομεν, τελειον τον αυτον εν θεοτητι και τελειον τον αυτον εν ανθρωποτητι, θεον αληθως και ανθρωπον αληθως τον αυτον, εκ ψυχης λογικης και σωματος, ομοουσιον τω πατρι κατα την θεοτητα, και ομοουσιον τον αυτον ημιν κατα την ανθρωποτητα, κατα παντα ομοιον ημιν χωρις αμαρτιας προ αιωνων μεν εκ του πατρος γεννηθεντα κατα την θεοτητα, επ’ εσχατων δε των ημερων τον αυτον δι’ ημας και δια την ημετεραν σωτηριαν εκ Μαριας της παρθενου της θεοτοκου κατα την ανθρωποτητα, **ενα και τον αυτον** Χριστον, υιον, κυριον, μονογενη, [εκ δυο φυσεων *or* εν δυο φυσεσιν], ασυγχυτως, ατρεπτως, αδιαρετως, αχωριστως, γνωριζομενον; ουδαμου της των φυσεων διαφορας ανηρημενης δια την ενωσιν, σωζομενης δε μαλλον της ιδιοτητος εκατερας φυσεως και εις εν προσωπον και μιαν υποστασιν συντρεχουσης, ουχ εις δυο προσωπα μεριζομενον η διαιρουμενον, **αλλ’ ενα και τον αυτον** υιον και μονογενη, θεον λογον, κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον; καθαπερ ανωθεν οι προφηται περι αυτου και αυτος ημας ο κυριος Ιησους Χριστος εξεπαιδευσε και το των πατερων ημιν παραδεδωκε συμβολον.”

¹³⁰ Kalantz, “Is There Room for Two?”, 101. “It seems quite ironic that in this discussion it would be Cyril, coming from the ‘allegorical school’ of Alexandria, that would be more faithful to the Scriptural narrative of the Incarnation than his interlocutors in Antioch, firm supporters of the *historia* of Scripture.”

His historical contribution to the development of Christological orthodoxy came from the fact that, in the words of Weinandy, he “grasped and explicitly stated, for the first time, that the attributes were predicated not of the natures, but of the person, for the incarnation is not the compositional union of natures but the person of the Son taking on a new manner or mode of existence.”¹³¹ He consistently placed the biblical locus of the incarnate Word in his person of Christ to uphold the mystery and grace of the impassible suffering for human salvation rather than delving into an ‘exact’ language to explain the juxtaposition of Christ’s two natures as Nestorius attempted and failed.¹³² Cyril’s *mia* Christology provides a theological discourse to preserve the personal saving grace of the incarnate God rather than trying to explain the mystery of his redemptive suffering away.¹³³

Cyril’s dynamic understanding of the divine suffering in the impassible Son entails another important theological distinction from Nestorius, namely the notion of *commucatio idiomatum* that the incarnated Word communicates the incorruptibility of his divine nature to corruptible human nature. The bishop of Alexandria insisted the oneness

¹³¹ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 200. While Athanasius had the same conviction earlier, “what he failed to achieve was the precise and comprehensive conceptual understanding of the Incarnation.” See also Weinandy, *Does God Change?*, 20–25.

¹³² Wessel, 248–249. “Nestorius insisted upon correct reason (*ratio*) and exactitude in matters of doctrine . . . his dual-nature Christology.” Cf. Richard Bauchkam sees the fundamental difference between Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies as ‘ontic’ and ‘functional’ reading of the Synoptics. Richard Bauchkam, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Peterborough Press, 1998).

¹³³ John Lamont, “The Nature of the Hypostatic Union,” *Heythrop Journal* 47 (2006), 24. “[Cyril’s main emphasis of the hypostatic union] is a statement about the identity of individuals, and . . . not about the natures of Christ at all. It thus preserves what St. Cyril wanted to express about the hypostatic union without having to make any claims about the identity or unity or mingling of the divine and human natures of Christ; it makes no claim about anything happening to either the divine or the human nature of Christ. It does make claims about these natures belonging to a particular individual, but the constitution of the natures themselves are left untouched by this claim.”

of Christ as the concrete and ‘noble’ center of human salvation and transformation. With the expression of “impassible suffering,” he intended to evince the integrative unity of the divine and human in the Son, who enacts “the great exchange between God and humanity.”¹³⁴ The Alexandrian bishop’s biblical Christology of the Second Adam finds a rich expression in the tradition of recapitulation-deification.¹³⁵

Cyril’s Communicatio Idiomatum and the Patristic Tradition of Deification.

The corollary of Cyril’s *mia* Christology is his understanding of human salvation as the participation in God through Christ. Unless the Word becomes a “partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:13)” and restores it through his divine life, it is impossible for humanity to escape death.¹³⁶ While Nestorius clung to his divisive Christology and questioned Cyril’s notion of direct divine appropriation (οἰκεῖωσις) of human flesh,¹³⁷ the

¹³⁴ *Ad Reginas De Recta Fide Oratio Altera* 6, PG 76, 1344A. “[Christ’s condescension effected] a great exchange between God and humanity. For while the Word submitted to the limits of humanity . . . thereafter man’s nature might come to possess the lofty honor of the divine majesty in Christ and put off the shame of poverty.”

¹³⁵ R. L. Wilken, “Exegesis and the History of Theology,” 142. “Adam-Christ typology plays an even more decisive role than in Irenaeus, for it is both a key theological concept and a versatile and plastic exegetical key. Theologically, the Adam-Christ typology is rooted in Cyril’s predilection to see redemption primarily in terms of creation-re-creation categories.” Cyril’s *mia* Christology is not a “static ontology.”

¹³⁶ Cyril, *Commentary on John* 14: 20 (II:485-486). “It was not otherwise possible for man, being of a nature which perishes to escape death, unless he recovered that ancient grace, and partook once more of God who holds all things together in being and preserves them in life through the Son in the Spirit. Therefore his Only-Begotten Word has become a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), that is, he has become man, though being Life by nature, and begotten of the Life that is by nature, that is, of God the Father so that, having united himself with the flesh which perishes according to the law of its nature . . . he might restore it to his own life and render it through himself a partaker of God the Father . . . And he wears our nature, refashioning it to his own life.”

¹³⁷ Nestorius, *Ad Cyrum II*, 7. “But to attribute to the Godhead, in the name of this appropriation, the properties of the flesh that is associated with it (and I mean generation, suffering, and death)—then this is either the error of a pagan mentality, brother, or a spirit sick with the madness of Apollinarius and Arius and the other heresies, or even something far worse. For those who allow themselves to be carried away by this notion of ‘appropriation’ . . . [are] blasphemers.”

latter declared that “the only-begotten Word of God . . . came down for the sake of our salvation and lowered himself in self-emptying, it is he who was incarnate and made man, that is, taking flesh of the holy Virgin, making it his very own (ἰδίαν αὐτήν ποισάμενος).”¹³⁸ For Cyril, *kenosis* (self-emptying) of the Christ meant *theosis* (deification) of human beings through his *idiopoiesis* (making one’s own) and *oikeosis* (appropriation) of human flesh.

While the *ἰδιος* and *οἰκείος* word groups were widely used in classical and patristic Greek as a whole, they were employed in a more specific way in the fourth century in Alexandria.¹³⁹ Athanasius and Cyril used them to signify intimacy and inseparability rather than the general meanings of “claiming as one’s own” or “making another person one’s own relative or friend.”¹⁴⁰ Applying the *ἰδιος* to Christology, both Alexandrian fathers indicated the substantial unity between the Son and the Father and between the Logos and the flesh.¹⁴¹ It was Cyril who heightened the mystery of the incarnate Word’s transformative union with humanity in a more extensive manner. Compared to Athanasius who did not use *οἰκείος* as much as *ἰδιος*, Cyril utilized various forms of the *οἰκείος* group.¹⁴² One particular term, *οἰκείότης* which is prominent in his writings, describes the relationship of Christians to God as “communion.”¹⁴³ In his

¹³⁸ Cyril, *Ad Nestorium*, III.3.

¹³⁹ Andrew Louth, “The Use of the Term *idios* in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril,” *Studia Patristica* 19 (1989): 198–202.

¹⁴⁰ G.W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 664–666.

¹⁴¹ For the details of *ἰδιος* in Athanasius and Cyril, see Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 85–90.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 91. Whereas Athanasius used the *οἰκείος* adjective less than one-tenth as often as *οἰκείος*, the variations of the latter term appeared approximately 1,023 times in Cyril’s early writings.

commentary on Isaiah, Cyril illustrates the meaning of this communion.¹⁴⁴ Commenting on Isaiah 8:18, he says that although God turned his face from Israel, he will return to his people through the Messiah:

He immediately introduces the face of his Emmanuel, who graciously gives communion (χαριζομένου τήν οἰκειότητα) to those who have based their hope on him. For the Son has given us his own Spirit (τό ἴδιον πνεύμα), and we have become his friends (οἰκεῖοι). And *in him we cry out, 'Abba, Father'* (Romans 8:15). Therefore he names us children of the Father, since we have new birth through the Spirit, in order that we might be called brothers of the one who is truly the Son by nature.¹⁴⁵

Here Cyril tied several implications of human communion with God. First, to receive communion (οἰκειότης) from Christ means to possess the Son's own Spirit. Second, we can call God 'Abba Father' through the Spirit. Third, we become friends and brothers of the Son of God by grace. In this dense passage, one can see that Cyril's notion of communion involves more than mere status of sonship; it includes the intimacy of the fellowship with Trinity.

Οἰκειότης as the intimate communion with God was extensively described by Cyril later when he expounded on John 10:15, "I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." In the passage where Jesus discusses his relationship with his sheep, Cyril defines the mutual knowing as "communion" or "friendly relationship."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 227–233. Fairbairn offers a helpful table and an exhaustive list of the word group in Cyril's writings.

¹⁴⁴ According to Fairbairn, this early writing of Cyril (415-427) employs the term *οἰκειότης* for 61 times and his commentary on John for 48 times.

¹⁴⁵ Cyril, *Commentary on Isaiah* 1.5 (PG 70, 236d–40a).

¹⁴⁶ Cyril repeated variations of *οἰκειότης* for 11 times in his exposition of the verse. *Commentary on John* 6.1 (II:231-234).

For I think that in these words He means by “knowledge” not simply “acquaintance,” but rather employs this word to signify “friendly relationship (*οἰκειότητος*),” either by kinship and nature, or as it were in the participation of grace and honor. In this way it is customary for the children of the Greeks to say they “know” not only those who are of more distant family relationship, but also, even their actual brothers. And that the Divine Scriptures too speaks of friendly relationship as knowledge . . . with regard to all-wise Moses . . . God says to him: *I know thee above all and thou has found grace in My sight* (Ex. 33:12); which signifies: “Thou, more than any other men, hast been brought into friendly relationship (*οἰκειότητος*) with Me.”¹⁴⁷

For Cyril, *οἰκειότης* signifies a relational knowledge with an intimate understanding of another person. He also denotes that Christ has the same kind of intimate relationship with disciples as he does with the Father. With the Father he has communion “by kinship and nature,” while believers have it with him “in participation of grace and honor.” In the next sentence, Cyril asserts that the intimacy of communion in both cases is the same: “I shall enter into friendly relationship (*προσοικειωθήσομαι*) with My sheep and My sheep shall be brought into friendly relationship (*οἰκειωθήσεται*) with Me, according to the manner in which the Father is intimate (*οἰκείος*) with Me, and again I also am intimate (*οἰκείος*) with the Father.”¹⁴⁸ Using the verb and adjective forms rather than the noun, Cyril evinces that believers have intimacy with Christ in the same way that he does with the Father. Then, he explains the meaning of being “offspring of God” or “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4):

For the Word of God is a divine nature even when in the flesh, and we are His kindred, notwithstanding that He is by nature God, because of His taking the same flesh as ours. Therefore the manner of the friendly relationship is similar. For as He is closely related to the Father, and through the sameness of their nature the Father is closely related to Him; so also are we to Him and He to us, in so far as He was made man. And through Him as through a mediator are we joined with the Father. For Christ is a sort of link connecting the Supreme Godhead with

¹⁴⁷ *Commentary on John* 6.1 (II:231-2).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, (II:232).

manhood, being both in the same person, and as it were combining in Himself these natures which are so different: and on the one hand, as He is by nature God, He is joined with God the Father; whereas on the other hand, as He is in truth a man, He is joined with men.¹⁴⁹

These comments of Cyril show that by *οἰκειότης* he meant that believers have not merely some sort of communion with God but, by virtue of the Word of God making human nature his own, the same communion that the persons of Trinity share with one another. Cyril's comments on John 1:13 heighten this gift of divine communion for children of God with an acute expression, "natural communion (*οἰκειότης φυσική*)."¹⁵⁰

When he (John) had said that *authority was given to them* from him who is by nature Son to become *sons of God*, and had hereby first introduced that which is of adoption and grace, he can afterwards add without danger that they *were begotten of God*, in order that He might show the greatness of the grace that was conferred on them, gathering as it were into natural communion (*οἰκειότης φυσική*) those who were alien from God the Father, and raising up the slaves to the nobility (*εὐγένειαν*) of their Lord, on account of His warm love towards them.¹⁵¹

When Cyril stressed that believers share the natural communion of Trinity, he never meant that God would share his divine substance with them in the sense that Christians lose their humanity and become *homoousios* with God. Rather he constantly qualified that we possess the divine fellowship by grace, whereas the Son has it by nature. It is always that the Good Shepherd first knew the sheep and not the other way around.¹⁵²

While the bishop of Alexandria was careful to distinguish the sonship of believers from

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Fairbairn, 95–97. Cyril used the expression seven times in *Dialogues on the Trinity* and *Commentary on John* in order to indicate "the substantial and natural communion" within the Persons of Trinity.

¹⁵¹ *Commentary on John* 1.9 (I:135).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.1 (II:233). "For He did not say: 'Mine know Me and I know Mine,' but He introduces in the first place Himself as knowing His own sheep, then afterwards He says that He shall be known by them."

that of Christ, he understood our divine adoption to be characterized by the personal fellowship and intimacy with God rather than a mere legal status like the sons in Roman society. For Cyril, this natural communion originates from the Lord's "warm love" that receives the slaves of sin and raised them to share his nobility.

According the Alexandrian father, the believers' intimate communion with God leads to a spiritual and moral transformation. When he read John 15:9-10, he claimed that the Christ's gracious bestowment of the Father's love upon the believers elevates human nature to divine dignity or nobility.

I have presented you, who are men and who have for this reason received the nature of slaves, as gods and sons of God. Through my grace I have given you dignities surpassing your nature. I have made your sharers in the fellowship of my kingdom (κοινωνούς τῆς ἐμῆς βασιλείας), have presented you conformed to the body of my glory [Phil. 3:31], and have honored you incorruption and life.¹⁵³

The intimate fellowship with God through the Son has transferred divine characteristics such as incorruption and life to human nature. Cyril located this redemptive change on the kenosis of the Christ. Cyril held that *kenosis* does not mean Logos' emptying of his intrinsic nature such as impassibility and transcendent power. Rather it refers to the predicament and limitation of humanity which the Word takes on himself. During the incarnation, Cyril asserted, the divine nature of the Word retained its immutability.

Commenting on Isaiah 7:14-16, Cyril pointed out two saving truths about the Emmanuel.

The first sentence that "He shall eat butter and honey" means that "he was given food suitable for infants" in order to "assure us that he came to be in the flesh in reality."¹⁵⁴

The second description that "before the child knows good and evil, he will reject evil and

¹⁵³ *Commentary on John* 10.2 (II:571).

¹⁵⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah* 1. 4, trans. Norman Russell (London: Routledge, 2000), 79. PG 70, 205A.

choose the good,” reveals his divine nature. This immutability of Christ was shown in his preservation of his impeccable obedience to the Father. The reason that Christ overcame temptation was because he was “irrevocably fixed on the good.”¹⁵⁵ Jesus’ intuitive grasp of the good can be attributed only to his divinity for the divine nature “is ever inaccessible to wickedness.”¹⁵⁶ As “he was holy as God both from the womb and before all ages,” he never lost “his own [divine] prerogatives on account of the human nature.” Neither did he ignore the human nature “on account of the dispensation of the Incarnation.” As the Second Adam, the incarnate Word sanctifies “this created nature of ours.” Using the metaphor of flower and fragrance, Cyril stated that “human nature blossoms again in him, acquiring incorruption, and life, and a new evangelical mode of existence.”¹⁵⁷ Through Christ, his followers have become fragrance of God to the world (2 Cor. 2:14-16) attaining “the life of incorruption and holiness and righteousness.”¹⁵⁸

In his later writing on the unity of Christ, Cyril rephrased the redemptive incarnation of the Word for human sanctification in the following: “He was sanctified insofar as he was man, but sanctifies insofar as he is understood as God, he was both the one and the other in the same person.”¹⁵⁹ When someone questioned about the meaning of the incarnate Word’s receiving glory again after his resurrection and ascension, he replied that he received the glory in order to ennoble humble humanity with divine dignities and honors.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 80 PG 70, 205C.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.4, 82 PG 70, 312C.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.5, 88 PG 70, 857A.

¹⁵⁹ Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 100.

He made our poverty his own, and we see in Christ the strange and rare paradox of Lordship in servant's form and *divine glory in human abasement*. That which was under the yoke in terms of the limitations of manhood was *crowned with royal dignities*, and that which was humble was raised to the most supreme excellence. The Only Begotten did not become man only to remain in the limits of the emptying. The point was that he who was God by nature should, in the act of self-emptying, assume everything that went along with it. This is how he would be revealed as *ennobling* the nature of man *in himself* by making it participate in his own sacred and *divine honors*.¹⁶⁰

The underpinning point for Cyril's notion of the Christ's *kenosis* for the human *theosis* is "ennobling the nature of man *in himself*." As the Apostle Paul employed the phrase, "in Christ," to declare God's plan of salvation (i.e., Ephesians 1), the bishop of Alexandria articulated one of the most concrete and complete Christo-centric redemptive visions with his *mia* Christology and its kenotic soteriology.¹⁶¹ The concreteness of Cyril's Christology is reflected by his emphasis on the Eucharist and the completeness of his soteriology comes from his pneumatic and ecclesial connection.

Cyril's interpretation of Jesus' priestly prayer (John 17:1-26) illustrates the center and scope of the salvific kenosis of the Son. Here it is clear that Cyril advanced orthodox Christological convictions further than his hero, Athanasius.¹⁶² Relying on the historical kenosis of the Christ in Philippians hymn and Hebrew 4:15, he began his exposition on the transformative mediation of the incarnate Word. "Since He is an High Priest

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 101. Italics are mine.

¹⁶¹ Wickham, xxxiv. "Cyril is the only theologian of genius there has ever been of whom it is true to say, almost without metaphor, that his theology was 'Christocentric.' He draws the mind always back to the Jesus Christ who is the point to which all the Bible's proclamation immediately relates. Whereas for Augustine, as for most theologians, Jesus Christ recedes in the end to give place to something else (in Augustine's case, to the inscrutable will of God), for Cyril the incarnation is the form and justification of the faith that the God who is all-powerful and good beyond imagining has repaired the ravages of sin, given men freedom and the holiness which is his outpoured Spirit."

¹⁶² Compared to Athanasius who interpreted some selective verses of Jesus' priestly prayer in *Contra Arianos* primarily against Arian questions, Cyril expounded the entire passage a verse by a verse with a broader kenotic perspective.

insomuch as He is man,” the Son offers himself as a blameless sacrifice to the Father, purifies humanity by his blood and renews them through the Holy Spirit.¹⁶³ The Alexandrian bishop connected the priestly prayer to the Eucharist in his reading of John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Cyril clarified that Christ’s words did not mean a mere intellectual knowledge which brings eternal life, but an intimate spiritual knowledge:

For his knowledge is life, travailing as it were in birth of the whole meaning of the mystery, and vouchsafing unto us participation in the mystery of Eucharist whereby we are joined unto the living and life-giving Word. And for this reason I think, Paul says that the Gentiles are made fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of Christ; inasmuch as they partake in His blessed Body and Blood; and our members may in this sense be conceived of, as being members of Christ. This knowledge, then, which also brings to us the Eucharist by the Spirit, is life.¹⁶⁴

The saving knowledge of God is pregnant with eternal life because it leads to the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, believers including Gentiles are united to the Christ by the Spirit. This eucharistic emphasis was further deepened in Cyril’s interpretation of John 17:13, “And these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” In order for the disciples to continue in their faith and joy after the Christ’s physical departure from the world, the Lord wanted them to understand that “even when he was in the flesh, it was not through the flesh that he was working for their salvation, but in the omnipotent glory and might of His Godhead.”¹⁶⁵ Cyril went on to say that the body of the Lord was not that of a mere man but of the Word that has sanctifying power.

¹⁶³ *Commentary on John* 11.3 (II:484).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.5 (II:489).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.9 (II:523).

We give this explanation, not as making of no account the holy body of Christ, may it not be so, but because it were more fitting that the accomplishment of His Word should be ascribed to the glory of the Godhead. For even the Body itself of Christ was sanctified by the power of the Word made one with it, and it is thus endowed with living force in the blessed Eucharist, so that it is able to implant in us its sanctifying grace. Therefore also our Savior Christ himself, once conversing with the Jews, and speaking many things concerning his own body, calling it the true Bread of Life, said: *The bread which I will give you is My flesh; which I will give for the life of the world* [John 6:51]. And when they were sore amazed and perplexed to know how the nature of earthly flesh could be to them the channel of eternal life, He answered and said: *It is the spirit which give life; the flesh is useless; the words I speak to you are spirit and life*. For there, too, He says that the flesh can profit nothing, that is, to sanctify and quicken those who receive it, so far, that is, as it is mere human flesh; but when it is understood and believed to be the temple of the Word, then surely it will be a channel of sanctification and life, but not altogether of itself, but through God, who has been made one with it, who is holy and life.¹⁶⁶

Cyril's emphasis of Eucharist is inseparable from the unity of Christ. Unless the flesh of Christ is the flesh of the Word, the only-begotten Son, the Eucharist has no power to give life.¹⁶⁷ For the bishop of Alexander, the salvation cannot depend on anything else but upon the Word of God who directly appropriated human flesh of corruption and made it an instrument of his life-giving. Thus to divide this unity of Christ means to divide humanity from life.

From the ensuing prayer of Christ for unity, the Alexander bishop explained the pneumatic and ecclesial implications of the Eucharist. He read the Lord's declaration in John 17:18, "I sanctify myself for them," through the lens of the second Adam. Christ who is holy by nature, received the Spirit to sanctify his flesh in order to render it "a

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.9 (II:523).

¹⁶⁷ Cyril variously repeated John 6:51 at the end of his Christological treatise. *On the Unity of Christ*, 131–132. "If the flesh that is united to him, ineffably and in a way that transcends thought or speech, did not become the very flesh of the Word directly, . . . how could the flesh of anyone else ever give life to the world if it has not become the very flesh of Life, that is of him who is the Word of God the Father? . . . There is no other way for the flesh to become life-giving, even though by its own nature it was subject to the necessity of corruption, except that it became the very flesh of the Word who gives life to all things."

living instrument of his own nature” for humanity.¹⁶⁸ Cyril connected the sacrifice of Christ to the communion in the Spirit. According to Galatians 4:6, we are in God through the communion of Holy Spirit, who comes to us only through the Son and his sacrifice to the Father.¹⁶⁹ Similar to his early exposition on the baptism of Jesus, Cyril united the themes of the Second Adam, the Spirit, and the newness of life in his comments on John 17:17,18 and inserted the Johanne theme that the cross of the Christ is his glory.¹⁷⁰ The glory of the crucified Lord is the re-creation of humanity for which he recovers the ancient honor lost by the first Adam and finally seals us with the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹ Citing Galatians 4:19, “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed

¹⁶⁸ *Commentary on John* 11.10 (II:540-542). “And he having proved himself the second Adam, that is the heavenly man, and being found first of all, and the first fruits of those who are built up into newness of life, in incorruption that is, and in righteousness and the sanctification which is through the Spirit, He might henceforth through himself send good gifts to the whole race. For this cause, though he is life by nature, he became as one dead; that, having destroyed the power of death in us, he might mold us anew into his own life . . . Since, then, the flesh is not of itself holy, it was therefore sanctified, even in the case of Christ—the Word that dwelt sanctifying his own temple through the Holy Spirit, and changing it into a living instrument of his own nature.”

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.10 (II:538). “How, then, should we have had added to us, or how should we have been shown to be partakers in divine nature, if God had not been in us, nor we have joined to him through having been called to communion with the Spirit . . . For only begotten sanctified himself for our sins; that is offered himself up, and brought himself as a holy sacrifice for a sweet smelling savor to God the Father . . . for in him the first fruits of the race, the nature of man was wholly reformed into the newness of life.”

¹⁷⁰ Cyril’s advance beyond Athanasius in this regard is unmistakable. According to Wilken, the passion of Christ as his glory such as John 13:31,32 was not cited by Athanasius. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 185. “Furthermore any link between passion and glory is also missing in Athanasius,” while Cyril sees the text “only mean that Christ is now glorified as a man and this means something different from being glorified as Lord from eternity.”

¹⁷¹ *Commentary on John* 12.1 (II:675). “When it came to pass that through disobedience man fell under the power of death, and lost his ancient honor, God the Father . . . restored him to newness of life, through the Son, as at the beginning. And how did the Son restore him? By the death of his own flesh he slew death and brought the race of man back again into incorruption; for Christ rose again for us. In order that we might learn that it was He who created our nature at the beginning . . . sealed us with the Holy Spirit . . . as the firstfruits of renewed nature.”

in you,” Cyril argued that Paul says that “Christ will not be formed in them save by partaking of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷²

As believers are united and conformed to Christ by the Spirit, the Alexandria bishop claimed that the spiritual unity in the Spirit also refers to the ecclesial unity in Christ. He remarked that Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17:20,21 points toward the eucharistic unity of the church in the Spirit.

For by one Body, that is, His own, blessing through the mystery of the Eucharist those who believe on Him, He makes us of the same Body with Himself and with each other . . . For if we all partake of the one Bread, we are all made one Body; for Christ cannot suffer severance. Therefore also the Church is become Christ’s Body, and we are also individually His members, according to the wisdom of Paul. For we, being all us united to Christ through his holy body, in as much as we have received him who is one and indivisible in our own bodies, owe service of our members to him rather than to ourselves. And that while the Savior is accounted the head, the church is called the rest of the Body, as joined together of Christian members.¹⁷³

According to Cyril, the Eucharist is the cause of the unity between the Christ and the church. Using the head-body imagery of Ephesians 4:14-16, he stated that the Eucharist causes the believers to be “the same body (συσσώμους)” with the Christ and with one another. The Alexander father affirmed that church’s eucharistic union with Christ and with its members is possible by the binding work of the Holy Spirit.

We say once more, that we all, receiving one and the same Spirit, I mean the Holy Spirit, are in some sort blended together with one another and with God. For if, we being many, Christ, who is the Spirit of the Father and His own Spirit, dwells in each one of us severally, still is the Spirit one and indivisible, binding together the dissevered spirits of the individualities of one and all of us, as we have a separate being, in His own natural singleness into unity, causing us all to be shown forth in Him, through Himself and as one. For as the power of His holy

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, “As in the firstfruits of creation, which is made regenerate into incorruption and glory and into the Image of God, Christ establishes anew His own Spirit in His disciples. For it was necessary that we should also perceive this truth that He brings down and grants the Spirit unto us.”

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.11 (II:550).

Flesh makes those in whom It exists to be of the same Body (συσσώμους), so likewise also the indivisible Spirit of God that abides in all, being one, binds all together in unity.¹⁷⁴

For Cyril, the corporeal unity in Christ and the spiritual unity in the Holy Spirit are inseparable.¹⁷⁵ His comments on John 17:22-23 say that the glory which the Christ had received from the Father, he now gives to the believers through the Eucharist and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁶

Cyril's multi-dimensional understanding of the Eucharist evinces that his kenotic Christology has a biblically and ontologically oriented trajectory which centers on the Christ's "economic appropriation" of the flesh. His biblical theology of the Second Adam coupled with his *mia* Christology led him to take the flesh of the incarnate Word as the source and medium of human redemptive transformation. The life-giving power of God is bestowed upon us through the sanctified and sanctifying flesh of the Word of God. The bishop of Alexandria articulated a coherent and comprehensive vision of human *theosis* through Christ's *eucharistic* kenosis. He construed a concrete salvific center in the flesh of the incarnate Word that permanently restores humanity to the Father and the Holy Spirit as well as with each other.

As "a doctor of the incarnation," Cyril of Alexandria envisioned God's saving grace in the incarnate Word in a clear and tangible manner. In Cyril's theology, "Christ

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.11 (II:551).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.11 (II:552). "We are all, therefore, one in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; one, I mean, according to a certain state of mind and body; and also in conformity to the life of righteousness and in the fellowship of the holy flesh of Christ and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which is one."

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.11 (II:554, 555). "We, have therefore, been made perfect in unity with God the Father, through the mediation of Christ. For by receiving in ourselves, both in a corporeal sense and a spiritual sense, as I said just now, him that is the Son by nature, and who has essential union with the Father, we have been glorified and become partakers in the divine nature of the most high."

does not simply give us grace (conceived of as something other than himself); he constitutes the grace that he gives us.”¹⁷⁷ The enfleshed Logos is “both the giver and the gift.” Since Cyril saw grace as God’s gift of himself to humanity, his soteriology evinces that salvation is not simply something that is accomplished for humanity *by* Christ, but something that takes place *in* Christ. No other church father “tied grace to Christology (soteriology) to such a degree and for such an explicitly Christological coloring.”¹⁷⁸ While Nestorius abhorred at any direct appropriation of God for the life of human creature and resorted to a safely distanced Christology of “two-natures” and an ambiguous “God-bearing man (ἄνθρωπος θεόφορος),” Cyril did not hesitate to confess that the Crucified Jesus was the Impassible God. He made no separation between God’s gifts of incorruption and immortality, and the Word of God in flesh.¹⁷⁹ In Cyril’s *mia* Christology, the unity of the person of the incarnate Son is indispensable to his work. He did not just repeat Athanasius’ notion of “two scopes” of the incarnation but further sharpened it with his integration of a human rational soul in Christ. Origen was the first one who recognized a “rational or human soul” in Christ but did not develop it fully.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Fairbairn, 69.

¹⁷⁸ Eduard Weigl, *Die Heilslehre des hl. Cyrill von Alexandrien* (Mainz: Verlag von Kirchheim & Co., 1905), 127.

¹⁷⁹ Cyril, *Commenatary on Luke, fragments* 5.19. “How could humankind on the earth, subjugated by death, return to incorruptibility? It was necessary to give to the dying flesh the participation in the life-giving of God. And the life-giving power of God the Father is the only begotten Logos. Therefore this is the One whom He sent to us as Savior and Liberator, and He became flesh. He did not undergo any modification or change into what He was not; He did not cease being Logos any longer. But born according to the flesh of a woman, he appropriated the body from her in order to establish Himself in us by an indissoluble union and to render us stronger than death and corruption. He put on our flesh in order to resurrect it from death and to thus open up the way of return to incorruptibility for the flesh which had given itself over to death.” The English translation is quoted from Jules Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers*, trans. By Paul A. Onica (Anaheim, CA: A & C Press, 2002), 222.

Although Athanasius understood the flesh of Jesus to be completely human, he did not address the issue of a human soul in Christ.¹⁸¹ Cyril articulated the moral implication of Christ's soul for human deification.¹⁸² Augustine also had the idea of two stages of Christ as illustrated in his Christmas sermon, "two births of Christ."¹⁸³ But the bishop of Hippo did not elaborate how two aspects of Christ are integrated into one person. Cyril rendered the economy of the Son dynamically coherent with the hypostatic union of Christ: the Word gives his own communion with the Father to his own humanity in order to give this intimacy to all humanity through his life-giving flesh. His eucharistic emphasis thickened biblical theme of the Second Adam with ontological and moral implication of human transformation.¹⁸⁴ As one of "the most brilliant representatives of

¹⁸⁰ Origen, *De Principiis* II.6.5. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. IV (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 2004), 283.

¹⁸¹ Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 452. "The Arians (as we have seen again and again) explicitly denied a human mind or soul to Jesus Christ, and yet, violently though Athanasius attacked the Arians, he never accused them of this. . . Athanasius simply glosses over or ignores the prickly problem [presented in John 12:27 'My soul is troubled'] . . . 'It must therefore be frankly acknowledged that his (Athanasius') authority as a theologian of the Incarnation has been exaggerated. As far as the human psychology of Christ is concerned, it evidently does not exist.'"

¹⁸² Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 192. "The relationship of virtue to divine participation is brought out more strongly by Cyril. The due weight which he is able to give to the human soul in Christ has its effects on his anthropology in general. The recipient of salvation is not simply the 'flesh' but a unity of body and soul that images God in his or her will. Athanasius' insights into the transformation of human nature as a result of the Incarnation are thus combined with a conviction that moral progress plays a vital role in restoring our likeness to God."

¹⁸³ Augustine, *The Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*. *Ancient Christian Writer* 15 (New York: Newman Press, 1952), 135–137. "For hold to this as a definitely established truth, if you wish to continue as Catholics, that God the Father begot the Son without time, and made Him of a virgin in time. The first birth transcends time; the second throws a bring lustre upon time. Both births are wonderful: the one without a mother, the other without a father. . . He was born of the Father without a beginning. Of His mother, He was born today with a definite beginning. Born of the Father, He made us; born of His mother, He remade us."

¹⁸⁴ Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria*, 163. "The ontological [holiness] is a prelude to the dynamic. In imagining Christ we are transformed to a new life, a holy life."

the physical conception of divinization,” Cyril of Alexandria brought “the doctrine of deification to full maturity.”¹⁸⁵

This mature and advanced view of *theosis* in Cyril’s Christology casts a dynamic view of the Christ’s impassible suffering in contrast to the judgment of Moltmann.¹⁸⁶ The bishop of Alexandria did not employ *apatheia* as a simple term to protect the divinity of Christ as the German theologian presupposed. Rather the doctrine of divine impassibility in Cyril’s biblical theme of the Second Adam provides a vibrant soteriology where the fallen and sinful humanity is not only forgiven but fully healed through the vicarious suffering of Christ. While Moltmann reads the cry of Christ on the cross as the inter-Trinitarian experience of suffering and thus a clear negation of *apatheia*, Cyril argued that the incarnate Word does not undergo the forsakenness of God but “undo[es] our abandonment.” He read Matthew 27:46 not as “the cry of dereliction” but the shout of victory over sin and death that the Second Adam destroyed with his flesh.

We had become accursed through Adam’s transgression and had fallen into the trap of death, abandoned by God. Yet all things were made new in Christ . . . It was entirely necessary that the Second Adam, who is from heaven and superior to all sin, that is Christ, the pure and immaculate first-fruits of our race, should free that nature of man from judgment, and once again call down upon it the heavenly graciousness of the Father. He would undo our abandonment by his obedience and complete submission: “For he did no sin” but the nature of man was made rich in all blamelessness and innocence in him, so that it could now cry out with boldness: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Understand that in becoming man, the Only Begotten spoke these words as one of us and on behalf of all our nature. It was as if he were saying this: “The first man has transgressed. He slipped into obedience, and neglected the commandment he received, and he was brought to this stage of willfulness by the wiles of the devil; and then it was entirely right that he became subject to corruption and fell under judgment. But you Lord have made me a second beginning for all on the earth, and I am called the Second Adam. In me you see the nature of man made clean, its faults

¹⁸⁵ Russell, *Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 192. Cf. Gross, 224

¹⁸⁶ See page 160–162.

corrected, made holy and pure. Now give me the good things of your kindness, undo the abandonment, rebuke corruption and set a limit on your anger. I have conquered Satan himself who ruled of old, for he found in me absolutely nothing of what was his.” In my opinion this is the sense of the Savior’s words. He did not invoke the Father’s graciousness upon himself, but rather upon us.¹⁸⁷

According to Cyril, Christ’s vicarious suffering on the cross dispenses the two-fold grace to humanity. First, he became “sin” for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and “a curse for us” (Gal.3:13) in order to destroy them once for all.¹⁸⁸ After undoing the penalty of sin caused by the first man, the Second Adam rendered our mortal and corruptible flesh immortal and incorruptible with his life-giving flesh. Cyril’s interpretation of the opening lines of Psalm 22 is remarkably paralleled to the entire Psalm 22 which begins with a lamentation and ends with an exaltation. The Alexandrian father made a distinction between what the incarnate Son destroys and what he perfects.¹⁸⁹ He claimed that the first work of the incarnate Word was doing away with “the suppression of the flesh” while the second work was deifying it with “his own and personal flesh” of incorruption.¹⁹⁰

As Cyril attributed not the Father’s abandonment but the permanent undoing of God-forsaken humanity to Christ, it is clear that he did not use *apatheia* as “a last retreat” to safeguard the Logos from suffering.¹⁹¹ He took the suffering and death of the

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 105–106.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 56. “It is foolishness to think or affirm that the Word became flesh in just the same way as he became curse and sin.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57. “If it is true that the Word became flesh in exactly the same way that he became curse and sin, which is how they understand it, then sure he must have become flesh for the suppression of flesh? But how would this serve to exhibit the incorruptibility and imperishability of flesh which he achieved, first of all in his own body? For he did not allow it to remain mortal and subject to corruption, thus allow the penalty of Adam’s transgression to continue to pass on to us, but since it was his won and personal flesh, that of incorruptible God, he set it beyond death and corruption.”

incarnate Word serious enough to assert the twelfth anathema against Nestorius, “Whoever does not acknowledge God’s Word as having suffered in flesh, been crucified in flesh, tasted death in flesh [Heb. 2:9]” is to be anathema. The bishop of Alexandria could ascribe the suffering directly to the Christ because he believed the transformative power of divine impassibility in the person of the Son. “Just because he is impassible, he destroys death by ‘tasting’ it—destroys death, as it were, on contact. The death of the Logos does not contradict his impassibility.”¹⁹² For Cyril, *apatheia* is the ontological constancy of the Word of God which enables suffering humanity to be delivered from sin and death to divine incorruption. Cyril never saw the divine impassibility of Christ as a psychological concept or ‘apathy’ to denote God’s emotional detachment from the realm of suffering as many contemporary theologians construe it etymologically.¹⁹³ Rather *apatheia* in Cyril’s Christology was a metaphysical and moral source for human transformation.¹⁹⁴ Instead of abstaining from all suffering, the impassible Christ received all of human pains into his own person through the indissoluble union with flesh and rendered them no longer threatening. The impassibility does not mean immobility or inability to relate to suffering, but a dynamic power of God’s pure love that partakes in

¹⁹¹ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 229. “This understanding of Christ’s cry for desolation in Cyril (He is calling to the Father for us, and not for himself) is a last retreat before the axiom of *apatheia* . . . it[suffering] did not relate to the divine nature itself, for this was incapable of suffering.”

¹⁹² Bruce D. Marshall, “The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God,” in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, James K. Keating and T. J. White, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 257–258. “Rather God the Logos can taste death, but not be taken captive by it, or forsaken in it, just because he is impassible. Just because death in no way enters into his constitution as God, into the nature which makes him God, death is abolished by its contact with the impassible Logos.”

¹⁹³ Paul Gavriluk, 47. “Much of contemporary criticism of the divine impassibility suffers precisely from superficial philological overinterpretation.”

¹⁹⁴ The inter-relationship between *apatheia* and *agape*, which was the key theme in later patristic ascetical tradition, will be explored further in the next section.

human predicament and heals it to its complete and permanent restoration. Whereas Moltmann eternalizes suffering in the inter-Trinitarian life and thus erases the crucial distinction of God's freedom and grace between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity,¹⁹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria articulates a concrete and complete grammar of salvation with his *mia* Christology and his impassible suffering that conquers sin and death in his flesh and re-creates "a new humanity" in the communion with Triune God.

Summary and Transition

Apatheia was a common divine attribute in the ancient Greco-Roman philosophies and religions which signified the various ideas such as gods' transcendence, freedom from emotions, self-absorption, and indifference.¹⁹⁶ The early church fathers appropriated this term and other classical divine traits with the biblical notion of the creation *ex nihilo*. While they did not formulate a specific uniform doctrine of divine immutability and impassibility, they utilized *apatheia* to describe the characters of the biblical Creator who is ontologically distinct from, yet immanent and active in, his creation. For patristic theologians, *apatheia* qualifies the affections of God in that his

¹⁹⁵ Marshall, 258. "How, despite Moltmann's assurances, can there be 'eternal salvation' in a forsaken God, even—indeed precisely—a risen one? For Cyril, the resurrection of Jesus is God's total destruction of death. It is the definitive entry of our common flesh, but precisely not of its death, into the life of God. The resurrection of a forsaken Son would, by contrast, only serve to eternalize his God-forsakenness, and so forever to fix the darkness of death at the heart of God, never to be loosed from God's own being. Such a God would bring no help, and the help the economy of the incarnate Word brings us shows that he is no such God." According to David Coffey, Moltmann subordinates the mystery of the Trinity to the metaphorical matrix of penal substitution, which justifies "a real separation of the Father from the Son on the cross." As the German theologian attempts to advance Karl Rahner's dictum that "the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity," he forgets that the identification of the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity does not have to be a collapse of the divine mystery into the human matrix but must be a window into God's infinite welcoming of humanity. David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105–130.

¹⁹⁶ Gavriluk, 21. "There is no one unified account of the divine emotions and of the divine involvement advocated by major Hellenistic schools of philosophy, let alone the Hellenistic religions at large."

transcendent power and immanent love are mutually inclusive. Unlike the Olympian pantheon, God of the Scripture cares for humanity with unconditioned love of *apatheia*. In contrary to the modern theological misunderstanding, the early church fathers did not uncritically hold *apatheia* as a universal philosophical concept of a relationally detached deity. Their faithful theological engagements with divine impassibility were evinced during the Christological controversies when *apatheia* became an acute and axiomatic point of contention.¹⁹⁷

Among the patristic thinkers who attempted to elucidate on the biblical paradox of the redemptive suffering of impassible God, Cyril of Alexandria made an important contribution toward the proper theological discourse and language to unlock the nature of the incarnational ‘becoming’ with his *mia* Christology. Immersed in exegetical practice, the bishop of Alexandria utilized the biblical theme of the Second Adam in his articulation of the economy of the Son and human transformation. The incarnation of God the Son inaugurated the beginning of new humanity as the Second Adam undid the damages of the first Adam and restored the fallen humanity to the greater status than before. When Christ was baptized for humanity, he sanctified human nature and provided a permanent room for the Holy Spirit to dwell in human beings. As Christ was crucified, he crucified the death and sin of humanity once for all and received the glory as the first-fruits of the resurrection. Christ as the Second Adam represents a unique person

¹⁹⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, The Christian Tradition Vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 229. “The early Christian picture of God was controlled by the self-evident axiom, accepted by all, of the absoluteness and the impassibility of the divine nature. Nowhere in all of Christian doctrine was that axiom more influential than in Christology, with the result that the content of the divine as revealed in Christ was itself regulated by the axiomatically given definition of the deity of God. No one wanted to be understood as setting forth a view of Christ in which this definition was in any way compromised or jeopardized.”

and universal work of the incarnate God whose indissoluble yet unconfused union with humanity gave the second birth for the children of God.

Cyril's keen understanding of ontological and soteriological implications of *mia* Christology derived from the biblical typology of the Second Adam enabled him to express the redemptive suffering of Christ as "impassible suffering." While Nestorius proposed a strictly separated Christology based on the juxtaposition of two natures in order to preserve the impassibility of God, Cyril did not hesitate to claim God's direct involvement in human reality. The bishop of Alexandria used this seemingly contradictory expression to denote the biblical paradox of the incarnation. He located the heart of divine economy of salvation in the hypostatic union of two natures in the single person of the incarnate Word. Through the asymmetrical and direct appropriation of human flesh and soul by the Son, the incarnation shows God's most gracious love to embrace the broken humanity in the most intimate and natural way. Unless the incarnate Word was the subject of all human experiences including suffering, the healing of the fallen humanity could not be accomplished. The Word must suffer and die as a human being so that he could save and restore it as God. For Cyril, the impassible suffering of Christ does not mean a passibility in his "naked" divinity or *theopatheia* as accused by Nestorius, but signifies the divine deconstruction of human suffering with his unchanging goodness. When the impassible Son of God suffered on the cross, he did not simply receive God's wrath for sinners but replaced it with the perfection of humanity. While Nestorius understood *apatheia* in a static and isolated manner, Cyril articulated a dynamic picture of the divine impassibility in his *mia* Christology in that hypostatic union shows God's real encounter with and victory over human sin and suffering.

The bishop of Alexandria's *mia* Christology casts a comprehensive vision of the redeemed and new humanity in that his kenotic soteriology is joined with the pneumatic and ecclesial transformation. He articulated a holistic and coherent picture of salvation with his emphasis on the Eucharist. Christ's union with humanity in his flesh paved the way for human deification in the most concrete and complete way. The incarnate Word's appropriation of human flesh rendered the Eucharist the life-giving instrument, which enables believers to participate in the ennobling communion with the triune God as well as uniting them with one another as the members of the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. The "seal of the Fathers" thickened the patristic tradition of *theosis* with his ontological and moral understanding of Christ's hypostatic union.

The next and final chapter will attempt to excavate the contemporary significance of Cyril's *mia* Christology and the mystery of impassible suffering in East Asian and Asian-American context.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: *Apatheia* and *Agape* in East Asian Context

This dissertation has claimed that the retrieval of patristic traditions is indispensable to a salient contextual theology. Without a careful study of the foundational developments on the notion of divine impassibility in the early church, contemporary contextualization of God's redemptive suffering in Christ could not be innovative but distorted. This final chapter will attempt to show that Cyril of Alexandria's *mia* Christology can articulate Kitamori and Park's concerns to situate God's saving presence in human suffering with balance and completeness. The notions of *apatheia* in theology of Cyril and other patristic thinkers render God's unconditioned and gracious love, *agape*, metaphysically coherent and abundant for human redemption.

As the Japanese and Korean-American theologians emphasize God's profound grief and deep wound for suffering humanity, their theological matrixes of pain and *han* tend to conceive of suffering as a permanent reality of divine love. They respectively eternalize divine suffering as an essential quality of God's love. According to Kitamori, "the pain of God is part of his essence! God's essence corresponds to his eternity. The Bible reveals that the pain of God belongs to his eternal being."¹ Park makes the wound of God the absolute divine attribute which redefines other traditional characteristics of God such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.² Relying on the process

¹ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 45.

² Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 126.

cosmology and its “principle of interpenetration,”³ he finds the source and strength of human salvation in the wound of the ‘omnipathetic’ Savior. Both theologians give a similar depiction of God as the perpetual “fellow-sufferer who understands.”⁴ While these East-Asian theologians deepen the relational and emotional aspect of divine love in God’s solidarity with the wounded humanity, their passibilist theology contains several critical flaws.⁵ As I enlist these crucial missteps of Kitamori and Park, I will offer various aspects of Cyril’s *mia* Christology as a remedy and resource to balance East Asian contextual theology regarding God’s redemptive suffering.

Co-suffering and Re-creation.

Kitamori and Park’s theology of eternal divine suffering has a misguided and sentimental understanding of pain and suffering. Despite of their best intentions to alleviate the afflicted and wounded humanity with radical divine empathy, to postulate a perennial existence of pain and suffering within God’s inner life means to eternalize evil. Instead of offering a sensible theodicy, this notion of perpetual divine pain and tears in Kitamori and Park’s theology compounds the problem of evil. As their theology of divine passibility transports and leaves suffering untreated and unhealed in God’s being, it construes pain and *han* as the ultimate reality of God and the world. This inadvertent glorification of evil is far different from what the Scripture speaks of God’s compassion. Revelations 7: 17 states that the time will come when God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of suffering people.

³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

⁵ Although the detailed critiques of Kitamori and Park were already offered in the previous chapters, I will reorganize their blind spots in view of Christological and soteriological implications.

Contrary to Kitamori and Park who allow grief and tears to have the lasting presence, Cyril of Alexandria believes that divine compassion is more than sentimental commiseration. When Jesus came to comfort weeping Martha and Mary at the tomb of Lazarus, he did not continue to weep with them but “put an end to our tears.”⁶ Cyril sees the grief of Christ as God’s genuine embrace of human weakness and at the same time a part of his divine healing movement to “overthrow the powerful influence of death.”⁷ The patristic theologian’s concept of hypostatic union shows that God takes human struggle seriously and personally. Yet his compassion resists any romantic notion of co-suffering. God not only identifies with human predicament but also overcomes it for their permanent deliverance.

Whereas Park and Kitamori seek the importance of the incarnation in its revelation of God’s humble presence and profound pain with suffering humanity on the cross of Christ, Cyril finds the uniqueness of the incarnation in the restoration of humanity. The East-Asian theologians understand the pain and *han* of God in the crucified Christ to be a revelatory remedy to the afflicted humanity. Once we realize that we are not undergoing through suffering alone but with God, it will comfort our hearts and strengthen our spirits. Such view echoes a contemporary spiritual sensibility exemplified by Simone Weil, who believes the affliction to be “a marvel of divine

⁶ Cyril, *Commentary on John* 11: 35-37 (II:123). “And the Lord weeps, seeing the man made in His own image marred by corruption, that He may put an end to our tears. For this cause He also died, even that we may be delivered from death. And He weeps a little, and straightway checks His tears; lest He might seem to be at all cruel and inhuman, and at the same time instructing us not to give way overmuch in grief for the dead. For it is one thing to be influenced by sympathy, and another to be effeminate and unmanly.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, (II:124).

technique” through which a human being can journey back to God.⁸ According to Weil, “The extreme greatness of Christianity lies in the fact that it does not seek a supernatural remedy for suffering but a supernatural use for it.”⁹ The affliction rescues oneself from false securities of life and leads him to discover a hidden pearl of God’s sustaining silence.¹⁰ Although Weil is right to claim that affliction may have some positive outcomes, her spiritualization of pain without a promise of a closure does not help the sufferers. Unending affliction cannot bring hope to those in the crucible of pain. The victims of Nazi concentration camps, Gulags, and North Korean political prisons would cry out against this spiritualization of misery for they have learned experientially that prolonged suffering effaces personhood, if it is not physically and spiritually removed. Cyril’s incarnational Christology reveals more than God’s empathy for human frailty and anguish. It shows a complete picture of God’s compassion that he not only shares his solidarity with the suffering humanity, but also encounters the source of their pain and *han* with a thorough treatment. Although Kitamori and Park speak of God’s salvation as healing, their curative soteriology overemphasizes the psychological aspect of understanding and consolation and lacks the concrete biblical emphasis of salvation as re-

⁸ Simone Weil, *Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wakefield, Rhode Island: Moyer Bell Limited, 1977), 439–468. Distinguishing affliction as spiritual struggle from general suffering of physical pain, Weil argues that it can be a channel to cross over the infinite space between God and humanity. “Affliction is a marvel of divine technique. It is a simple and ingenious device to introduce into the soul of a finite creature that immensity of force, blind, brutal, and cold. The infinite distance which separates God from the creature is concentrated into a point to transfix the centre of a soul. . . In this marvelous dimension, without leaving the time and place to which the body is bound, the soul can traverse the whole of space and time and come into the actual presence of God.” (452).

⁹ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, tran. Arthus Willis (New York: Putnam, 1952), 73.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 132. “The man who has known pure joy, if only for a moment . . . is the only man for whom affliction is something devastating. At the same time he is the only man who has not deserved the punishment. But, after all, for him it is no punishment; it is God holding his hand and pressing rather hard. For, if he remains constant, what he will discover buried deep under the sound of his own lamentations is the pearl of the silence of God.”

creation. For Cyril, the incarnation signifies a restorative and perfecting act to reconstruct the “human nature that had fallen into existential decay as a result of its alienation from God.”¹¹

As the language of “newness” is replete in the New Testament and in the early Christian literature,¹² Cyril expresses Christ’s complete redemption of human beings with the biblical language of re-creation. The incarnate Word unites humanity with his person in order to heal its broken nature and restore the original divine blessing of communion. While Kitamori and Park narrowly locate the redemption of Christ on his cross, Cyril sees the entire life and ministry of Jesus as the arena of salvation where humanity is sanctified and restored to God’s original intent. The patristic theologian presents Jesus to be the Second Adam who inaugurates God’s new creation. The baptism of Jesus has a soteriological significance that Christ prepares a sinless and perfect human dwelling for the Holy Spirit to reside permanently. The Spirit of God who once fled from man because of sin of the first Adam,¹³ now returns through the incarnate Word. Interpreting Genesis 2:7, Cyril says that the loss of the Spirit made humanity “not only subject to corruption but also prone to all sin.”¹⁴ Thus, the remedy of human salvation depends on the recovery of the life-giving Spirit (John 6:63), for which Christ “is anointed . . . and

¹¹ John McGukin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*, 186.

¹² Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 162. “Terms such as ‘new law,’ ‘new covenant,’ ‘new people’ are widespread in early Christian literature. For a succinct overview of various meanings of “newness” among the patristic thinkers, see 162–170.

¹³ *The Commentary on John*, 2:1 (I:142). “*For the Holy Spirit of Wisdom will flee deceit, as it is written, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. Since then the first Adam preserved not the grace given him of God, God the Father was minded to send us from heaven the Second Adam.*”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, on John 5:2 (I:547).

receives the Spirit as man.”¹⁵ Cyril’s soteriology is decidedly Trinitarian and ‘economic’ that he emphasizes the concerted work of re-creation of humanity by Triune God. As the Word economically appropriates human flesh in the incarnation, his crucifixion makes the sin’s “ancient curse” of corruption and death “fulfilled” in himself and thus “renders a perfect accomplishment for all.”¹⁶ And as he rises from the dead, he raises “the whole of [human] nature” in himself and dispenses the Holy Spirit to everyone (John 7:38-39, 20:22-23).

Cyril’s construal of salvation as the re-creation of new humanity in the incarnate Word through the Holy Spirit, takes an integrative approach when it comes to the meaning of Christ’s atonement. The patristic theologian incorporates various biblical motifs to describe the work of the Savior without privileging one aspect at the isolation of others. For instance, Cyril’s comment on John 7:30 (“the time has not yet come”) shows a theology of substitutionary death: “He came to the cross not by the violence of the Jews but of His own will, for us and in our place . . . For He offered Himself as a holy sacrifice to God the Father, earning the salvation for all men by His own blood.”¹⁷ When Christ compares his coming death to “a grain of wheat for many” (John 12:24), Cyril calls his sacrificial death “a seed of life” and reads it with a motif of vivification: “He brings death to naught, He is not made subject to corruption [but] He quickens that which lacks life.”¹⁸ On John 14:5-6 (“I am the way, the truth, and the life”), he calls Jesus to be

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, on John 6:63 (I:437), “For as God He has unceasingly the Spirit who is essentially of His nature and His own. He is anointed for our sakes and receives the Spirit as man, not for Himself, but for the nature of man.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, on John 13:31 (II:210).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, on John 7:30 (I:524).

“the mediator between God and men, through Himself and in Himself uniting humanity to God.”¹⁹ Later, Cyril interprets the crucifixion of the Lord (John 19:16-18) combining the perspectives of legal, penal, and ransom atonement.

For in His own person He bore the sentence righteously pronounced against sinner by the Law. For He became a curse for us, according to Scripture. . . He that knew no sin was accursed for our sakes, so that He could deliver us from the ancient curse. For God above all was all-sufficient all, and by the death of His body, He purchased the redemption of all mankind. . . For us He paid the penalty for our sins. For even though He was one that suffered, yet as God He was far above any creature, and more precious than the life everything originated . . . For we are justified now that Christ has paid the penalty for us. Just as by the cross the sin of our revolt was made perfect, so also by the cross our return to our original state was achieved.²⁰

One can easily find a “soteriological synthesis” in Cyril’s theology where the work of Christ is always presented with polyphonic significances such as sanctification, redemption, and liberation, etc.²¹

The biblical ‘restorative’ soteriology of Cyril renders the meanings of Christ’s atoning death multifaceted and wholesome. It is multifaceted because complete human salvation involves various aspects of divine healing. It is also wholesome because the richness of the divine salvific act is not reduced to one motif or metaphor. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, when we survey the main features of atonement in the New Testament, we need to take account of five aspects in order to avoid any reductive

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, on John 12:24 (II:148).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, on John 14:5,6 (II:243).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, on John 19:16–18 (II:658).

²¹ Lars Koen, *The Saving Passion*, 120. Koen uses the expression, “soteriological synthesis,” to describe the inseparability between the person and the work of Christ in Cyril’s Christology. This topic of soteriological synthesis of Cyril’s hypostatic union will be treated in the next section of *anthropoesis* vs. *theosis*.

systematization yet uphold coherence in the mystery of redemptive suffering.²² First, the Son gives himself up “for us.” Second, the Son gives himself for us up by “exchanging places with us.” Third, the Son “saves us from” something (i.e., slavery of sin). Fourth, the Son “saves us for” something (i.e., drawing us into divine, Trinitarian life). Fifth, the Son accomplishes all this out of loving obedience to the Father, who sets the entire redemptive process in motion because of his gracious and immense love for humanity. I think that Cyril’s holistic soteriology of restoration meets these criteria and maintains the “theo-dramatic tension” of the multidimensional significance of the cross of Christ in the broad biblical theme of the Second Adam.²³

Cyril’s integrative soteriology also offers a way to improve contemporary East-Asian reflections of atonement, particularly their attempt to emphasize the relational aspect of restoration. East-Asian theologians often find traditional Western understanding of salvation to be “mechanical and static.”²⁴ For instance, Park sees the doctrine of justification by faith to be impersonal and “egocentric” for it lacks relational and ethical understanding of the redemptive process.²⁵ The Korean-American theologian defines salvation to be “a relational event” that reveals “a process of healing and freedom which transpires between sinners and their victims, and sinners and God.”²⁶ In order to

²² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama IV, The Action* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 240–243.

²³ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁴ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 102–106.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 103. “In some Protestant traditions justification by faith has become a mechanical formula. Such faith stresses repentance over reconciliation, thus underscoring the fact that we are not justified for our righteous state, but justified by God in spite of our sinful nature. This tendency to be preoccupied with one’s salvation through justification by faith has fostered an egocentric religion. Even the doctrine of salvation underpins this egoism by concentrating on the spiritual growth of sinners without involving the healing and spiritual growth of their victims.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*

bring a genuine transformation of sinners, Park claims that the perpetrators need to recognize their guilt and shame against the people that they harm. This salvific realization takes place when they *see* the crucified Jesus who revealed himself as the divine representative for the afflicted.²⁷ For Park, the redemptive efficacy of the cross is found in the *han* or the deep wound of Christ that cries out for all the victims of sin. The *han*-based soteriology renders the crucified Christ primarily as a victim that reveals God's solidarity to the oppressed and "challenges sinners [the oppressors] to repent."²⁸ Park's notion of salvation is similar to moral influence view of atonement. Whereas Peter Abelard argues in his commentary on the Romans that the cross is the ultimate demonstration of the love of God and as such "enkindles our hearts" to respond in kind,²⁹ Park claims that "Jesus' blood is the strongest protest against evildoers' sins or evil actions, demanding their repentance, recompense, and work for justice."³⁰ To the insight of Abelard that the cross causes the arousal of deeper affections in sinners for God, the Korean-American theologian adds the element of protest and challenge for the perpetrators through the lens of *han*. Although Park's soteriology of Christ's *han* perceives the different needs of salvation for the oppressors and the oppressed, it misses the cross as the victory of the loving God, who accepts all sinners even when they reject him. The general biblical idea seems to be that the cross of Christ functions

²⁷ Andrew S. Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 137. "Christianity is the religion of revelation. *Seeing* is the key to understanding God's revelation. When we *see* divine revelation through the down trodden, the healing of our broken society takes place and the hope of humanity arises."

²⁸ Andrew S. Park, *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 81–85.

²⁹ Peter Abelard, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* in *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. X (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1927), 283.

³⁰ Andrew S. Park, *Triune Atonement*, 82.

sacramentally as a concrete sign of an infinite grace: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The cross of Christ reveals God’s forgiveness and powerful love in Jesus’ nonviolent victory over the powers that estrange, alienate, and oppress.³¹ Park overlooks this foundational victorious aspect of biblical atonement and his theological matrix of *han* renders the redemptive suffering of Christ incomplete and contingent. His conclusion that “the success of Jesus’ atoning work hinges on sinners’ repentance”³² leaves a question mark to Christ’s shout, “it is finished” (John 19:30).

While Park limits the salvific efficacy of the crucified Christ as the victim *par excellence*, Cyril’s polyphonic soteriology of the Second Adam offers a rich resource for divine healing for both perpetrators and victims. According to Marilyn Adams, patristic writings are Christianity’s “richer store of valuables” to explain God’s defeat of evil and the Chalcedonian Christology presents a crucial solution.³³ Defining the evil as the horrendous horrors that not just afflict human life but actually ruin it “by devouring the possibility of positive personal meaning in one swift gulp,”³⁴ Adams adopts the doctrine of hypostatic union in order to explain God’s transformative participations in the human

³¹ J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-Violent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001).

³² Andrew S. Park, *Triune Atonement*, 81.

³³ Marilyn McCord Adams, “Chalcedonian Christology: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil,” Stephen T. Davis ed., *Philosophy and Theological Discourse* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 173-198. Adams argues that Christian theologians must abandon the fruitless and misguided quest for comprehensive reasons why God allows evil to exist, and instead focus attention on the critical question how God defeats the evil.

³⁴ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 27–28. Adams finds the reality of sin and evil to be so chaotic and irrational that the any absolute measuring rationale such as justice or bifurcation of victim and perpetrator cannot be applied universally. Rather the evil engenders the horrendous results in overwhelming and unpredictable disproportion.

horrors.³⁵ The “metaphysically high” and “materially low” Christology of Chalcedon shows that God rescues humanity from above and from inside. The incarnation manifests that no created good but God is sufficient to defeat the horrendous evil, and the actual rescue takes place in the radical cure of human experience of sufferings. Adams describes the atoning work of God-man’s defeat of evil in the following:

In the crucifixion, God identified with all human beings who participate in actual horrors—not only with the victims (of which He was one), but also with the perpetrators. For although Christ never performed any blasphemous acts in His human nature, nevertheless, His death by crucifixion made Him ritually cursed (Deut. 21:23; Gal.3:13), and so symbolically a blasphemer. Thus, God in Christ crucified is God casting His lot with the cursed and blaspheming (and hence the perpetrators of horrors) as well. God in Christ crucified cancels the curse of human vulnerability to horrors. For the very horrors, participation in which threatened to undo the positive value of created personality, now become secure points of identification with the crucified God. To paraphrase St. Paul, neither the very worst humans can suffer, nor the most abominable things we can do can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:31-39).³⁶

The crucified God’s dual identification with the victims and perpetrators confers a positive significance on horrendous experiences by integrating them into the participant’s relationship with God. Adams envisions that “from the vantage point of heavenly beatitude,” human victims of horrors will recognize their suffering experiences as points of identification with the crucified God and not wish them to be forgotten from their life histories. For perpetrators, Christ’s becoming a blasphemy and a curse will enable them to accept and forgive themselves. They will also be reassured by the knowledge that God has healed their victims. At the end, all redeemed “will be amazed and comforted by Divine resourcefulness, not only to engulf and defeat, but to force horrors to make positive contribution to God’s redemptive plan (the prototype for such Divine reversal is

³⁵ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 53–54.

³⁶ Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 166.

the synoptic Passion narratives, in which everything Jesus' enemies do to demonstrate that He cannot be Messiah, including bringing Him into a ritually cursed death, actually plays into His hands and enables Him to fulfill that vocation)."³⁷

Adams' constructive soteriology exhibits the timely resourcefulness of Cyril's *mia* Christology and his soteriology of recreation that the redemptive suffering of Christ provides a cure for both the oppressors and the oppressed. Whereas Park collapses the dynamic redemptive power of the crucified God into the realms of victimhood and fails to uphold the biblical claim of God's re-creation of new humanity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), Cyril depicts that the incarnate Word absorbed the sin and evil on the cross and achieved spiritual rebirth for all humanity. In Cyril's soteriology of the Second Adam, the atoning death of Christ is shown as the irreversible death of old humanity as well as the painful birth for new humanity restored for communion with God.

Anthropopoesis of God and Theosis of Humanity

Cyril's concept of hypostatic union envisions two-fold salvific blessings that the incarnate God not only participates in human reality but he also transforms us with his divine nature. The Egyptian theologian believes the patristic dictum: "the Son of God became the son of man so that the sons of men might become sons of God." He sees the ultimate goal of the Word's incarnation to be the deification of humanity: "For he humbled himself that he might exalt that which was nature lowly to his own high station; and wore the form of a servant, though he was by nature Lord and Son of God, that he might uplift that which was by nature enslaved, to the dignity of sonship, in conformity

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

with his own likeness, and in his image.”³⁸ Cyril’s connection of the *kenosis* of Christ with *theosis* of Christians in his *mia* Christology can augment East-Asian understanding of salvation to a greater theological integrity (metaphysical balance) and a fuller hope of human transformation.³⁹

While Cyril stresses on the deificatory end of the *kenosis* through the hypostatic union of Christ, Kitamori and Park understand the incarnation simply as God’s entrance into human reality and subsequent divine experiences of the struggling creation. In the writings of these East-Asian theologians, the key New Testament passages such as 2 Cor. 8:9, Philippians 2:6-9, and 2 Peter 1:4 which speak of Christ’s enriching love, are entirely absent.⁴⁰ They see the incarnation solely as a revelatory conduit through which God shows his solidarity with the suffering humanity. When they explore Luther’s theology, his notion of “great exchange” is not properly appropriated. For instance, Kitamori takes Luther’s notion of hidden God as a viable way to locate divine pain.⁴¹ Park criticizes Luther’s justification by faith as a mechanical and unethical gain of God’s forgiveness and tries to replace it with “justification by love” offered by soteriology of *han*. Although Kitamori and Park intend to accentuate God’s love through his embrace of human pain and wounds, they render God’s union with humanity limited by making him

³⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* (II: 663).

³⁹ Some spell deification *theopoesis*, literally god-making.

⁴⁰ For instance, Kitamori’s *Theology of the Pain of God* and several works of Park do not mention any one of these verses.

⁴¹ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 105–116. “Faith in the ‘hidden God’ becomes a truth only after it finds its basis in the pain of God” (109).

a part of human reality.⁴² As they fail to recognize the redemptive divinization of humanity through Christ, they inadvertently reduce of the incarnation into a mere humanization (*anthropopoesis*) of God.

This mistake of the East-Asian theologians stems from their misunderstanding of patristic Christological discourses. Kitamori describes the patristic theology as an inadequate contextual theology of Greek and Roman churches which were obsessed with God's "mode of existence" rather than the biblical focus on divine-human relationship.⁴³ He thinks that the Nicene and Athanasian creeds neglect an important essence of God, namely divine pain, in their metaphysical descriptions of God. Park exhibits a cursory treatment of patristic thoughts.⁴⁴ He rejects the notion of *apatheia* as "the influence of Stoicism" based on J. K. Mosley's *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought*. The Korean-American theologian also makes an ambiguous stance on the doctrine of divine impassibility saying that "I support the idea of God's passibility, although I too reject patripassianism."⁴⁵ Without offering any explanation that reconciles his support for divine passibility with his rejection of patripassianism, Park simply hastens to discuss his focus on God's suffering as the protest.⁴⁶ Instead of carefully

⁴² Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 103. "In the frame of the concept of han, the subject and the object are not separated in the reality of salvation. More accurately, salvation emerges from the restoration of an 'I and Thou' relationship. In this view, there is no clear separation between *me* and *you*: I am part of you and you are part of me."

⁴³ Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God*, 131–133. 132. For instance, the Japanese theologian describes Athanasian Creed as the "Greek way of thinking" that concerns only with ontological question or "essence" of God and ignores the biblical relational focus.

⁴⁴ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 111.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 111–112.

examining the metaphysical discourse in the patristic theology, he turns to process philosophy and makes the following *anthropopoetic* statement about God:

The cross is God's unshakable love for God's own creation. Like parents who give birth to and then love their children, *God is wrapped up in a creational love with humanity*. The divine love of creation is much more profound than the parental love of childbearing. God's agape toward both the han-ridden and sinners will not be fulfilled without their healing and return. In other words, God cannot save Godself apart from the salvation of humanity.⁴⁷

Such *anthropopoetic* soteriology preempts the grace of atonement by vitiating the sacrificial love of Christ on the cross into God's self-saving act. This unintentional implication that jeopardizes the gratuitous character of divine love in East-Asian theology shows the critical need to retrieve patristic theology.

In particular, the hypostatic union of Christ which articulates how human and divine natures are attributed to each other without compromising the respective ontological integrity, can ameliorate the coherence of theological language in East-Asian soteriology as well as its desire to highlight the grace of God's saving presence for humanity. According to Stephen Long, the humanity of Jesus is the "*modus significandi* by which we can speak of God in temporal, historical, finite terms."⁴⁸ The reason for that the *modus significandi* could identify "*res signifacata*" (the 'thing' signified, which is God), is because of the hypostatic union that unites the human and divine natures in the person of Christ. Long correctly assesses that without the notion of *apatheia*, any Christological speech becomes not only impossible but also subjected to "Feuerbach's

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123. Italics are mine.

⁴⁸ D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 181. "This 'modus significandi' represents all human speech. It is therefore composite, finite, limited, imperfect, mutable, and passible."

projectionist account of theological language”: “As goes impassibility, so goes the ability for language to name something other than a mere human creature.”⁴⁹

Just as *apatheia* provides the intrinsic link between hypostatic union and coherent theological speech about God and humanity, it also functions as a fulcrum to achieve the deificatory transformation of human beings in *mia* Christology. When Cyril stresses on the *apathetic* suffering of Christ, he employs the impassibility not simply as the mark of his divinity but as the basis of the incarnate Word’s transformative redemption. He asserts that “the Only-Begotten became a perfect man in order to deliver our earthly body from a foreign corruption” and “dyed the soul of man with the stability and unchangeability of his own nature” making it participant in his impassible divinity.⁵⁰ When Cyril reads the exchange formula in 2 Cor. 8:9 (“For for your sake he became poor, though being rich, so that by his poverty you may become rich”) in the light of Philippians 2:5-11, he equates “being rich” (2 Cor 8:9) with “being in the form of God” (Phil 2:6)—and the present tense of the participle in both verses signifies that the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* “For what is at stake in the doctrine of impassibility is nothing less than the possibility that we can speak of God in such a way that this speech is something other than speaking about ourselves. The losses of the doctrine of impassibility, the tradition of the divine names, and a theological language that is other than projectionist, explicitly or implicitly, go hand in hand.”

⁵⁰ The quote on Cyril of Alexandria’s *Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten* (Sources chretiennes, 97:230) comes from Jaroslav Pelikan’s *The Christian Tradition*. vol. I. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100-600* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 233. Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia on the incarnation of the Only-Begotten*, *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church* 47, (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1881), 230. “Surely it is quite obvious and unmistakable that the Only-begotten became like us, became, that is, a complete man, that he might free our earthly body from the alien corruptions which had been brought into it. He descended to become identical with us, in respect of the conditions of life, accommodating himself through the unity of Word and flesh: he made the human soul his own, thus making it victorious over sin, coloring it, as it were, with the dye of his steadfastness and immutability of his own nature. By becoming the flesh of the Word, who gives life to all things, this flesh triumphs over the power of death and destruction. He is, so to speak, the root and the first fruits of those who are restored in the Spirit to newness of life, to immortality of the body, to certainty and security of divinity, so that he may transmit this condition to the whole of humanity by participation, and as an act of grace.”

incarnate Word remained God and retained his riches, even in the act of “becoming poor” and “emptying himself.” The climatic result is the glorification or deification of humanity in the exalted Christ according to the kenotic hymn, which the second Corinthians describes as our enrichment. For the Egyptian father, the *apathetic* suffering of Christ signifies that this deificatory redemption of humanity takes place through the flesh and person of the Son who “ennobles the nature of man in himself by making it participate in his own sacred and divine honors.”⁵¹ Unlike Nestorius who understands the impassibility as a completely separated and unrelated divine attribute, Cyril sees *apatheia* as a dynamic matrix of God’s redemptive love. He construes the impassible suffering with the concept of the hypostatic union in that the incarnate Word embraces and transforms human nature with his divine love and power. The hypostatic union of Christ reveals not only the gracious solidarity of God with suffering humanity but also the glorious destiny of humanity in Christ.⁵² According to Cyril, when the Son entered into the world, he declared, “I have made you sharers in the fellowship of my kingdom, have presented you conformed to the body of My glory and have honored you incorruption and life.”⁵³ The impassible suffering of Christ envisions God’s complete rescue of humanity from the sin and its corruption to the assimilation into the divine nature through the economy of the Son.

Cyril sees the *apatheia* of the incarnate Word as an inference of divine redemption, “hidden behind the fact of human life dedicated to our salvation, hidden

⁵¹ Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 101.

⁵² Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 26–27. “The deification of humanity is the flipside of God’s assuming the humanity of Jesus for God’s own.” Tanner reads the deificatory redemption in patristic tradition of recapitulation.

⁵³ Cyril, *Commentary on John* 10.2 (II:571).

behind the fact of human acts that save.”⁵⁴ According to Colin Gunton, the incommunicable attributes of God form the basis for the communicable attributes.⁵⁵ Among the unfathomable divine attributes, *apatheia* serves as the foundation of God’s indefectible yet transformative love and not the denial of his affection as an “abstract ontological closedness.”⁵⁶ As Cyril locates God’s redemptive basis and efficacy in the impassible suffering of Christ for humanity, the ascetical tradition of the early church also recognize *apatheia* as the key ideal of sanctification.⁵⁷ For instance, Evagrius Ponticus (345-399 C.E.) describes *apatheia* as “the very flower of *ascesis*” because

⁵⁴ Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56. “All one sees is a human life with an unusual capacity to heal and forgive, unimaginable apart from divine powers, powers that one consequently must affirm by faith rather than by sight.”

⁵⁵ Colin E. Gunton, *Act And Being: Toward a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 124. Against the predominance of the negative theology, Gunton argues that a biblical revelation of economic Trinity shows divine acts in the world originated from God’s self-relatedness as Father, Son and the Spirit. “If attributes are revealed in action, the following principle should apply: that the incommunicable attributes . . . are there for the sake of the communicable. God’s orientation, as we have seen, is to the other, both in himself and *ad extra* . . . There are, therefore, no attributes which are strictly and completely incommunicable. . . God does not make [us] omnipotent, but through his Spirit he does communicate power.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 131–132. Gunton claims that as the immanent Trinity functions as the foundation of the economic Trinity, impassibility shows God’s love not its denial. The doctrine of the impassibility of God signifies a positive account of immutability as recorded in Malachi 3:6 (“I the Lord do not change, So you, descendents of Jacob, are not destroyed”) and in James 1:17 (“Who does not change, like shifting shadows”). Rather than “abstract ontological closedness,” the doctrine of impassibility refers to the “indefectibility of God’s actions” in history.

⁵⁷ The fact that Athanasius, the Alexandrian hero of Nicene orthodoxy, depicted the example of *apatheia* in *The Life of Antony*, implies that Cyril must have been aware of the importance of divine impassibility for spiritual formation.

“*agape* is its progeny.”⁵⁸ Both Cyril and Evagrius believe that the divine impassibility is indispensable to articulate God’s unconditioned love and human transformation.⁵⁹

Whereas Evagrius concentrates on the monastic applications of *apatheia*, Cyril envisions it in Christological and soteriological dimension. The deificatory significance of impassible love (*apathetic agape*) of the incarnate Word in Cyril’s *mia* Christology offers another crucial hope of human transformation, that is, the creation of redeemed community in Christ. The hypostatic union of Christ ultimately aims at the unification of all humans with God and each other through the life-giving flesh of the Word. For Cyril, the Word “dwelt in us” means that he not only raises up the whole of humanity to the divine status (Ps. 82:6) but recreates us as “one temple” in him.⁶⁰ The Egyptian father connects the incarnation of the Son to the institution of the church described by Paul in Ephesians 2:16, 18.⁶¹ Cyril’s vision of deified humanity renders soteriology inseparable from ecclesial significance. The intrinsic relationship of soteriology and ecclesiology in Cyril’s *mia* Christology answers a contemporary concern for “old-fashioned atonement theology” that speaks only “for individual spiritual formation” and “does not reconcile

⁵⁸ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos: Chapters on Prayer*, trans. by John Bamberger (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 81. Other significant figures influenced by Evagrius and his teaching of *apatheia* include: John Climacus, Maximus the Confessor, Benedict, and Symeon the New Theologian.

⁵⁹ For a study of the patristic monastic use of *apatheia* for both theological reflection and spiritual contemplation, see A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: the Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 190–231.

⁶⁰ Cyril, *Commentary on John* 1: 14b (I:96). “Therefore ‘in Christ’ that which is enslaved is liberated in a real sense and ascends to a mystical union with him who put on the form of a servant, while ‘in us’ it is liberated by an imitation of the union with the One through our kinship according to the flesh.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, “The Word dwells as if in the one temple taken for us and from us, that containing us all in himself ‘he might reconcile us all in one body to the Father,’ as Paul says (Eph. 2:16, 18).”

humans with humans.”⁶² According to John Milbank, the “main feature of the New Testament’s understanding of our solidarity with Christ” points out to a “new sort of community” in which “specific shape of Christ’s body in his reconciled life and its continued renewal in the Church provides for us the true aesthetic example for our reshaping of our social experience.”⁶³ Cyril’s *mia* Christology thickens the patristic vision of *theosis* in the most concrete and complete manner because the apathetic suffering of Christ achieves “a second beginning for all on the earth” in his life-giving flesh.⁶⁴ The impassibly suffered Christ delivers humanity from all the effects of sin and reconstitutes one new humanity with him in order to become the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:14-22).

Cyril’s *mia* Christology provides a faithful, coherent, and comprehensive account of the biblical salvation for humanity. He employs the Pauline typology of the Second Adam to articulate the economy of the Son in relation to human fall and redemption. Approaching the atoning death of Christ with multiple metaphors of the New Testament, the Egyptian father renders the meaning of atonement polyphonic with a consistent theme of re-creation and retains the mystery of the divine suffering on the cross without any reduction to a single theory. Cyril’s integrative soteriology finds its complete vision of redemption in the hypostatic union of Christ through which he shows *kenosis* of the Son to be *theosis* of humanity. Cyril’s unique expression of “impassible suffering” enhances the unchanging and unconditioned goodness of God toward his creatures as he establishes

⁶² Scott McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 2. “This generation is tire of an old-fashioned atonement theology that does not make a difference, of an old-fashioned atonement theology that is for individual spiritual formation but not for ecclesial re-formation, and of an old-fashioned theology that does not reconcile humans with humans.”

⁶³ John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 94–104.

⁶⁴ Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, 106.

apatheia as the dynamic matrix of *agape*. The apathetic love of the incarnate Word envisions God's perfecting union with humanity that not only cleanses broken human nature in the flesh of the Son but also usher them in new human social reality, namely the church, the body of Christ.

Conclusion

This dissertation contends that the patristic tradition is indispensable to construct a salient and authentic contextual theology. Without drinking deeply from the fountain of the theological riches dug out by the early church, any contemporary contextualization of the Gospel of Christ will be deficient. Kazoh Kitamori and Andrew Park respectively attempt to build an original East-Asian theology based on the cultural ethos of Japanese *tsurasa* (pain) and Korean *han* (deep wound). As they find the traditional Western understanding of salvation inadequate and seek to improve it with theology of divine pain and the perspective of victims, they dismiss the patristic tradition as an archaic and alien Western contextualization heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. Both Japanese and Korean-American theologians fail to engage with the foundational aspects of the Christological and soteriological development in the early church. The absence of any discussion on Chalcedon creed and the hypostatic union of Christ in the writings of Kitamori and Park exhibits their disregard toward the primacy of the patristic Christology. When they overlook the ontological and moral significance of *apatheia*, their insights about God's embracing love of the suffering humanity and solidarity with the victims become unbalanced and problematic. Their rejection of the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility coupled with their subscriptions to theology of radical passibility erases the important distinction between the immanent Trinity and economic

Trinity. As they locate the significance of the incarnation on God's eternal import of pain (Kitamori) and the divine convergence into *han*-ridden reality (Park), this East-Asian soteriology enmeshes God within the creaturely realm as another being of the wounded heart and relegates the biblical declaration of God's victorious salvation on the cross to the commiseration of shared struggles. Contrary to their intention to alleviate the agonized and marginalized humanity through God's perpetual co-suffering and protesting consolation, the simplistic theology of Kitamori and Park not only undermines a proper understanding of God's greatness and goodness but also alters the meaning of Christian gospel.

In contrast to the assessment of Kitamori and Park that patristic theology is concerned with metaphysical shibboleth of God and irrelevant to the modern problem of human suffering, the early church tradition is not only alive but more applicable to contemporary situation because its foundational doctrines ultimately "bear upon the question of human suffering."⁶⁵ In particular, Cyril's *mia* Christology, the main influence of the last Christological orthodoxy at Chalcedon, presents a timely resource for today's church to rediscover and reflect on the enriching implication of *apatheia* of God that great fathers and doctor of the church hold with careful qualifications and utmost convictions. While this dissertation highlights the importance of Cyril of Alexandria's acute Christological understanding of divine impassibility, there are other areas that can further deepen the significance of *apatheia* to Christian life and human

⁶⁵ Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 287. "I wanted to confirm that the authentic Christian tradition not only is alive, but that it could also be applied and actually be employed in an ever-creative and, indeed, ever-new and life-giving manner. It is ultimately the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, of creation, of the Incarnation, of redemption, of the Holy Spirit, and of the church that bear upon the question of human suffering."

hope. For instance, Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662) identifies *apatheia* with divine love which one can know by spiritual fellowship with God.⁶⁶ Since divine knowledge is participatory, knowing God has a transformative effect on one who seeks him. Like Cyril, Maximus loves “paradoxical phrases and oxymorons such as ‘ever-moving repose,’ ‘stationary movement,’ ‘sober inebriation’ . . . and ‘blessed passion of love.’”⁶⁷ For the Confessor, *apatheia* does not make the mind “disdain material things completely” but redirects it to immaterial and spiritual realities with divine sense.⁶⁸ He defines *apatheia* as the inner freedom derived from “the self-mastery” based on the hope, reverence, and faith in the Lord.⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas also incorporates the traditional doctrines of divine immutability and impassibility in his understanding of God’s simplicity (*actus purus*).⁷⁰ According to the medieval theologian, the prelapsarian Adam enjoyed a state of semi-beatitude in the Garden of Eden receiving sanctifying grace and possessing an impassible body.⁷¹ Aquinas’ anthropological belief that humanity has a natural kinship with the supernatural and is predestined for deification, resonates with the patristic tradition of *theosis*. The theological ontology of the medieval doctor such as the

⁶⁶ For a succinct work on the monastic theology of Maximus, see Paul M. Blowers, “Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4:1(1996): 57–85. For a classical treatise, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998).

⁶⁷ Robert L. Wilkin, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 307.

⁶⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love in The Classics of Western Spirituality: Maximus Confessor Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 70.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 36, “Love is begotten of detachment (*apatheia*), detachment of hope in God, hope of patient endurance and long-suffering, these of general self-mastery, self-mastery of fear of God, and fear of faith in the Lord.”

⁷⁰ For a continuing relevance of Cyril’s hypostatic union to Aquinas’ Christology, see Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 120–143.

⁷¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I. Q. 99 a.1, ad.3.

notion of *esse ipsum* is buttressed with “bold citations of Cyril of Alexandria” and the doctrine of hypostatic union.⁷² Whereas Cyril augmented the axiom of *apatheia* as the ontological and soteriological certitude of Christ’s love, Aquinas elaborates on the implications of divine impassibility with a clearer theological language. He uses *convenientia* (fittingness) to describe the super-abundant goodness (*bonitas*) of the divine act in Christ rather than insisting on its necessity. The argument of *convenientia* presupposes *apatheia* as the divine essence of the incarnate Word, who vicariously suffers to engender multiple benefits of redemption. Linking *apatheia* and *convenientia* in the matrix of Christ’s divine person and his assumed humanity, Aquinas elevates the incarnation and atonement as the most gracious divine healing event that enables humanity to return to God. Many patristic and medieval theologians invoke the *felix culpa* at the Easter Vigil because they recognize the deificatory salvation of sinners at the depth of kenotic suffering of Christ. God who creates everything out of nothing, redeems sinners from evil and sufferings, and perfects the finite beings with his eternal communion. The *kenosis* of Christ for human *theosis* reveals the plentitude of God’s love which gives us “a gift exceeding every debt.”⁷³ To misapprehend the divine *apatheia*, therefore, has anathematic significations not just in the past but more in the present, where the memory of the bloodiest century is still fresh and repeating. For the contemporary grammar of salvation, Cyril’s *mia* Christology with impassible suffering is ever critical to fully enunciate the care and love of God for humanity.

⁷² John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), 66.

⁷³ David B. Hart, “A Gift Exceeding Every Gift”: An Eastern Orthodox Appreciation of Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*,” *Pro Ecclesia* Vol. VII, No. 3 (Summer 1998): 333–349.

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