[Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (1989). *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*. Pilgrim. Ch. 1, pp. 1 - 30.]

For God So Loved the World?

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Women are acculturated to accept abuse. We come to believe that it is our place to suffer. Breaking silence about the victimization of women and the ways in which we have become anesthetized to our violation is a central theme in women's literature, theology, art, social action, and politics. With every new revelation we confront again the deep and painful secret that sustains us in oppression: We have been convinced that our suffering is justified.

THEOLOGY AND ABUSE: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

Our acculturation to abuse is manifested in our blindness to the near−constant repression of our power, our rights, and our lives that occurs in most cultures. In North America many women agree with the men who say that women are not oppressed. They do not see the brutal murders of thirty−six young women in Seattle as a sign of the culture nor understand that the federal government's cutting $7 billion from food stamp programs is evidence that women are not valued since 85 percent of the recipients of food stamps in the United States are women and children. In many parts of the world, cultural tradition dictates that women are second−class citizens: men eat first, are educated first, and make decisions for women. Kumari Jayawardene, a Sri Lankan political scientist and feminist, has commented, "Actually, you know, women really don't understand that they are exploited. When I talk with women's groups I realize this. One day an old woman spoke up and said that she agreed with everything I had said about the situation of women, but that women 'must still have fear and shame, for such are their qualities.'"[1] While we may recognize and reject situations in which there are layers of oppression—as there are for ethnic minority women in North America and poor women in Third World countries—we may still find ourselves so accepting of our own place as helpmate that we cannot see that we are denied our full humanity because we are women. Our acculturation to abuse leads us to keep silent for years about experiences of sexual abuse, to not report rape, to stay in marriages in which we are battered, to give up creative efforts, to expend all our energy in the support of other lives and never in support of our own, to accept it when a man interrupts us, to punish ourselves if we are successful, to deny so habitually our right to self−determination that we do not feel we have an identity unless it is given to us by someone else.

Christianity has been a primary—in many women's lives the primary—force in shaping our acceptance of abuse. The central image of Christ on the cross as the savior of the world communi-

cates the message that suffering is redemptive. If the best person who ever lived gave his life for others, then, to be of value we should likewise sacrifice ourselves. Any sense that we have a right to care for our own needs is in conflict with being a faithful follower of Jesus. Our suffering for others will save the world. The message is complicated further by the theology that says Christ suffered in obedience to his Father's will. Divine child abuse is paraded as salvific and the child who suffers "without even raising a voice" is lauded as the hope of the world. Those whose lives have been deeply shaped by the Christian tradition feel that self-sacrifice and obedience are not only virtues but the definition of a faithful identity. The promise of resurrection persuades us to endure pain, humiliation, and violation of our sacred rights to self-determination, wholeness, and freedom. Throughout the Scriptures is the idea that Jesus died for our sins. Did he? Is there not another way for sins to be forgiven? Why an idea of original sin? Christianity has functioned to perpetuate the Fall, for without it there is no need for a savior. Mary Daly argues that imitation of this savior is exactly what is desired:

> The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc. Since these are the qualities idealized in Jesus "who died for our sins," his functioning as a model reinforces the scapegoat syndrome for women.[2]

That victimization is precisely what is perpetuated by this theology can be seen particularly in women's experiences in both the church and society, where women have been assigned the suffering-servant role. Our full personhood as well as our rights have been denied us. We have been labeled the sinful ones, the other, and even when we are let in, so to speak, we are constantly reminded of our inferior status through language, theological concepts *of* original sin, and perpetual virginity—all of which relate to sex, for which, of course, women are responsible.

In order for us to become whole we must reject the culture that shapes our abuse and disassociate ourselves from the institutions that glorify our suffering. This leads to the conclusion that in order to be liberated we must leave the church, make our exodus from the halls of the oppressor.

Many women, however, even when conscious of the church's contribution to our suffering, do not leave. We stay in the institution. Feminist theologians who attempt to rework the tradition by finding feminist undercurrents and countercultures, doing new quests for the historical feminist Jesus, and writing women back unto the Bible and the tradition (the *Inclusive Language Lectionary* is a good example) are trying valiantly to "fix" the institution so that they can remain in it. They enter the ordained ministry in order to "redeem" the church, but they pay so high a personal, emotional, and psychological price that they begin to resemble the very people they want to redeem. All the while, they call to their crucified lord to understand their suffering and support them in their times of trial and martyrdom.

The women who stay are as surely victimized and abused as any battered woman. The reasons given by women who stay in the church are the same as those coming from women who remain in battering situations: they don't mean it; they said they were sorry and would be better; they

need me/us; we can fix it if we just try harder and are better; I'd leave but how can I survive outside; we have nowhere else to go. Despite all the correctives taught by liberation theology on how to interpret suffering, this Christian theology with atonement at the center still encourages martyrdom and victimization It pervades our society. Our internalization of this theology traps us in an almost unbreakable cycle of abuse. Out continuing presence in the church is a sign of the depth of our oppression.

The only legitimate reason for women to remain in the church will be if the church were to condemn as anathema the glorification of suffering. if the church is the place where cycles of abuse are named, condemned, and broken can it be a haven of blessing and a place of peace for women. That the church is such a place is not clearly evident. Whether Christianity in essence frees or imprisons is the issue that must be considered.

This essay will explore the question, Can the case be made that it is contrary to the gospel to maintain that suffering is redemptive; Our approach is theological, not biblical, and focuses on the issue of the atonement. Classical views of the atonement have, in diverse ways, asserted that Jesus' suffering and death is fundamental to our salvation. Critical traditions have formulated the issue of redemption in different terms but still have not challenged the central problem of the atonement—Jesus' suffering and death, and God's responsibility for that suffering and death. Why we suffer is not a fundamentally different question from why Jesus suffered. It may be that this fundamental tenet of Christianity—Christ's suffering and dying for us—upholds actions and attitudes that accept, glorify, and even encourage suffering. Perhaps until we challenge and reject this idea we will never be liberated. And if this glorification of suffering is so central to Christianity itself, perhaps our redemption and liberation, particularly as oppressed people, will be obtained only by leaving.

THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin. This is what the penal theory of the atonement affirms. In classical orthodox theology, the death of Jesus is required by God to make God's plan of salvation effective. Doctrinal standards assert that there was no way more effective, perhaps even no alternative to Jesus' death. Without the death of Jesus we would not be saved. Though there are many different interpretations of how we are saved by the death of Jesus, there is no classical theory of the atonement that questions the necessity of Jesus' suffering. And, though the way in which suffering gives birth to redemption is diversely understood, every theory of the atonement commends suffering to the disciple. The Christian is to "be like Jesus"—and imitation of Christ is first and foremost obedient willingness to endure pain.

Three strands of tradition are usually identified as being at the core of the classical views of the atonement. The "Christus Victor" tradition sees the death of Jesus as a mortal confrontation with the powers of evil that oppress human life. Jesus' death represents the apparent triumph of evil, but his resurrection from the dead reveals that God is the greater power whose purpose will finally prevail. Redemption is liberation from evil forces that is brought about by the force of God.

The "satisfaction" theory of the atonement says that Jesus died to "pay the price" or "bear the punishment" for human sin. He dies in our place to satisfy God's sense of justice. By his death, a satisfactory payment or sacrifice is offered to God and the barrier of God's wrath is removed. Redemption is accomplished when God is freed from the requirements of "his" honor and is able to relate to human beings with mercy without, so to speak, compromising "his" principles that the sinner should suffer. The "moral influence" theory of the atonement places the barrier to our redemption not in God's nature but in human nature. People's hearts are hardened against mercy; they are unable to see or accept it. Jesus' death on the cross is a divine demonstration of the magnitude of God's mercy. God loves us so much "he" is even willing to die for us. We are to behold the cross and be moved to faith and trust in God, persuaded to accept mercy and dedicate ourselves to obedience to God's will. Each of these theories of the atonement needs to be examined for what it says about suffering, what it counsels the believer to do with regard to his or her own exposures to suffering, and what it says about the nature of God.

The Christus Victor Tradition

The Christus Victor theory of the atonement says that suffering is a prelude to triumph and is in itself an illusion. In some early forms of this view of the atonement, Jesus is imagined as bait for Satan, who seeks to devour human beings. When death swallows up Jesus he gains entrance into the underworld. Confronted with God in hell, Satan is overwhelmed, and the divine light casts darkness from its throne. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, explains,

> Since the hostile power was not going to enter into relations with a God present unveiled or endure his appearance in heavenly glory therefore God . . . concealed himself under the veil of our nature, in order that, as happens with greedy fishes, together with the bait of the flesh the hook of the Godhead might also be swallowed and so through life passing over into death and the light arising in the darkness that which is opposed to life and light might be brought to nought . . . .[3]

As a mythic drama this atonement story is a tale of hope, with antecedents in Greek stories about Persephone's escape from the evil lord of the underworld bringing Spring with her, and of Orpheus's journey to the underworld to rescue Eurydice. But its charm ends here. By incorporating the actual death of Jesus into a mythic framework, his suffering and death are retold as divine trickery, part of a larger plot to deceive the deceiver. The death of Jesus is merely a ploy, a sleight of hand, an illusion.

More sophisticated theologies that have their roots in this dramatic framework spiritualize the struggle. The journey to the underworld becomes the believer's journey into the dark night of the soul, where God is eclipsed. But this soul journey is part of what is necessary for salvation: all the evil, unfaith, and barrenness in the self must be encountered with the trust that the light of God's presence will finally triumph. Jesus' death becomes a paradigm for a stage in a psychological process that is to be patiently endured. Matthew Fox, discussing the spiritual journey

through darkness, writes, "Salvation, we learn from the Via Negativa, is not a salvation *from pain* but *through pain*."[4] He continues,

> All sinking usually has a note of panic about it, and the Via Negativa, which calls us to the deepest sinkings of all, is no exception. Here the refusal to trust, to trust the buoyancy of the water, of the darkness, of the pain, of the nothingness . . . all this is sinful because it stifles our spiritual growth.[5]

When whatever psychological value exists in facing one's inner darkness on the path to greater wholeness and healing is equated with the real death of Jesus, the meaning of suffering is obscured. Fox gives Jesus' actual death as an example to inspire spiritual "letting go" and goes on to blur the distinction between psychological struggle and the sufferings of the poor "who must face their darkness more directly than the comfortable."[6] In a theological effort to show evil and darkness as not ultimately true, the death of Jesus becomes not ultimately real.

The believer whose thoughts and feelings have been shaped by a tradition that teaches or ritualizes in liturgy the Christus Victor view may interpret her or his suffering in this light. In response to suffering it will be said, Be patient, something good will come of this. The believer is persuaded to endure suffering as a prelude to new life. God is pictured as working through suffering, pain, and even death to fulfill "his" divine purpose. When suffering comes it may be looked upon as a gift, and the believer will ask, Where is God leading me? What does God have in store for me? In this tradition, God is the all−powerful determiner of every event in life, and every event is part of a bigger picture—a plan that will end with triumph. When people say things such as, God had a purpose in the death of the six million Jews, the travesty of this theology is revealed.

Such a theology has devastating effects on human life. The reality is that victimization never leads to triumph. It can lead to extended pain if it is not refused or fought. It can lead to destruction of the human spirit through the death of a person's sense of power, worth, dignity. or creativity. It can lead to actual death. By denying the reality of suffering and death, the Christus Victor theory of the atonement defames all those who suffer and trivializes tragedy.

The Satisfaction Tradition

The satisfaction theory of the atonement as formulated by Anselm says that "the Father desired the death of the Son, because he was not willing that the world should be saved in any other way."[7] Because of sin, humanity owed a debt to God which it could not pay. Only by the death of God's own Son could God receive satisfaction. In Anselm's view, God's desire for justice and God's desire to love are in conflict. While there is value in Anselm's claim that love and justice cannot be separated, his view of justice is not that wrong should be righted but that wrongs should be punished.

> Let us . . . consider whether it were proper for God to put away sins by compassion alone, without any payment of the honor taken from him. To remit sin in this manner is nothing

> else than not to punish, and since it is not right to cancel sin without compensation or punishment, if it be not punished, then it is passed by undischarged. It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undischarged. It is therefore not proper for God thus to pass over sin unpunished.[8] . . . So then, everyone who sins ought to pay back the honor of which he has robbed God and this is the satisfaction which every sinner owes to God.[9]

God's demand that sin be punished is fulfilled by the suffering of the innocent Jesus, whose holiness is crowned by his willingness to be perfectly obedient to his father's will. God is portrayed as the one who cannot reconcile to the world because "he" has been royally offended by sin, so offended that no human being can do anything to overcome "his" sense of offense. Like Lear, God remains estranged from the children God loves because God's honor must be preserved. God's position is tragic, and it is to free God that the Son submits to death, sacrificing himself, it is imagined, out of overwhelming love for the two alienated parties: God and the human family.

The idea that justice is established through adequate punishment has been questioned by theologians from Anselm's time to the present, though the satisfaction theory has remained the dominant theory of the atonement. The primary criticism is that this theory presents God as a tyrant. Walter Rauschenbusch comments, "The worst form of leaving the naked unclothed, the hungry unfed, and the prisoners uncomforted is to leave people under a despotic conception of God and the universe; and what will the Son of Man do to us theologians when we gather at the day of doom?"[10] As Rauschenbusch asserts, "Our universe is not a despotic monarchy with God above the starry canopy and ourselves down here; it is a spiritual commonwealth with God in the midst of us." [11]

Anselm uses medieval forensic categories in his construction of a theology that reflects the existing social order—one that operated through coercion and terror. As Rauschenbusch rightly critiqued, "A conception of God which describes him as sanctioning the present order and utilizing it in order to sanctify its victims through their suffering, without striving for its overthrow, is repugnant to our moral sense."[12] But it is precisely this sanctioning of suffering which is the legacy of the satisfaction theory of atonement.

Suffering is sanctioned as an experience that frees others, perhaps even God. The imitator of Christ, which every faithful person is exhorted to be, can find herself choosing to endure suffering because she has become convinced that through her pain another whom she loves will escape pain. The disciple's role is to suffer in the place of others, as Jesus suffered for us all. But this glorification of suffering as salvific, held before us daily in the image of Jesus hanging from the cross, encourages women who are being abused to be more concerned about their victimizer than about themselves. Children who are abused are forced most keenly to face the conflict between the claims of a parent who professes love and the inner self which protests violation

When a theology identifies love with suffering, what resources will its culture offer to such a child? And when parents have an image of a God righteously demanding the total obedience of

"his" son—even obedience to death—what will prevent the parent from engaging in divinely sanctioned child abuse? The image of God the father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son has sustained a culture of abuse and led to the abandonment of victims of abuse and oppression. Until this image is shattered it will be almost impossible to create a just society.

Yet another dimension of the satisfaction theory of the atonement needs to be addressed. Though Anselm's formulation of the satisfaction theory is influenced by medieval legal concepts, the theory has deep roots in biblical images of sacrifice. In the liturgy, hymnody, and practical piety of the church, these images are continually evoked. While the biblical view of the power of blood sacrifice is complex, four major themes may be identified:[13]

Blood protects. Blood circumcision and the blood of the passover lamb are seen as having power to ward off the destroyer (see Exod. 4:24–26; 12:27).

Blood intercedes. In the Book of Genesis, Abel's blood is said to "cry out to God" (Gen. 4:10); and this idea that spilled blood has a power greater than language to attract God's attention is taken up in Heb. 12:24: "But you have come . . . to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (see also Isa. 56:7, in which sacrifice is associated with prayer).

Blood establishes covenant. The covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), the Covenant at Sinai (Exod. 24:3–11), and the "new Covenant" (Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:25; Heb. 9:16–18) are all sealed or established with the letting of blood. Further, membership in the house of Israel is established for men by the letting of blood that occurs in the circumcision ritual.

Blood makes atonement. The ritual sacrifice of whole and unblemished animals at the altar serves to make peace between God and the sinful community. The prophets emphasized that true or effective sacrifice has to do with the right attitude on the part of the one who offers. Sacrifice as magic was rejected, and "spiritual" sacrifice began to replace ritual sacrifice. Through the prophetic critique of false sacrifice it became dear to the religious imagination of Israel that righteousness was the only true sacrifice. But who is righteous enough to offer completely effective sacrifice? The significance of Jesus as the one true sacrifice must be understood in this light. Jesus' death was, in the biblical tradition, God's gracious offering of the perfect sacrifice, which none of us was capable of presenting.

Through all these varied images of the "power of let blood," the question must be asked, Why does blood have the power to protect life, establish relationship, restore life, speak with silent eloquence? The answer to such a question lies in the history of ritual practices and in the grounding of symbolic elements in life experience. The holy power of blood comes from the understanding of blood as essential to life. Its power is the power of life. Beyond this, however, the power of *let* blood—flowing, released, spilled blood—has an additional source in human experience. The slaughter of animals means food that will nurture human life; this is one form in which

let blood is a sign that life will be sustained. But there is another form of flowing blood that encompasses all the imagistic power of blood in the Old Testament; blood that is a sign of sustenance, intimate/communal relationship, and new life. That form is woman's blood, both menstrual blood and birth blood.

Ironically, in the biblical tradition menstrual blood is a sign of ritual uncleanness. Here, the student of religious symbolism must pause. Studies have revealed that various forms of ritual bloodletting are imitations, by members of a male cult, of women's bodily experience. Circumcision, for example, occurs in many cultures, not only the ancient Hebrew, and is often spoken of as "men's menstruation."[14] This would indicate that the notion of "flowing blood" has its roots in cultural efforts by men to take unto themselves power that belongs to women. The imitation by men of women's bodily power has almost universally been accompanied by the subjugation of women.[15] Ritual exclusion of menstruating women and women who have given birth is a sign that sacred imagery has been stolen. This analysis suggests that the religious imagery of the atonement is founded upon the robbery and subsequent defamation/degradation of women's experience.[16] The religious imagery of Jesus' blood carries an implied, silent devaluation of women. Jesus becomes the true mother who gives us new birth through his body and feeds us with his flesh. In medieval mysticism, this symbolism becomes blatant. Jesus is imaged as a mother: "His outspread arms will invite you to embrace him, his naked breasts will feed you with the milk of sweetness to console you."[17] And his wounded body becomes a womb to which the believer can crawl back:

> Those unsearchable riches of your glory, Lord, were hidden in your secret place in heaven until the soldier's spear opened the side of your Son, our Lord and Savior on the cross, and from it flowed the mysteries of our redemption. Now we may not only thrust our fingers or our hand into his side, like Thomas, but through that open door may enter whole, O Jesus, even into your heart.[18]

While many may argue that the primitive origins of blood sacrifice are not relevant, they do continue to hold power over us. Their subtle influence is pervasive in women's experience. Having an understanding of Jesus as our new mother, who gives life through death, serves to devalue our natural mothers, who give life through life, and communicates to every woman that she is inferior to man. Can an image offer redemption while perpetuating devaluation? Or can it speak of justice when its symbolic origins involved subjugation? The symbol itself is a form of abuse.

The Moral Influence Tradition

The moral influence theory of the atonement began with Abelard questioning the satisfaction theory:

> If [the] sin of Adam was so great that it could be expiated only by the death of Christ, what expiation will avail for the act of murder committed against Christ, and for the

> many great crimes committed against him or his followers? How did the death of his innocent Son so please God the Father that through it he should be reconciled to us?[19]

In answering this question Abelard rejected the satisfaction theory of the atonement in favor of saying that the barrier preventing reconciliation between God and human beings is not in God but in human beings. The problem is that we need to be persuaded faithfully to believe in God's overwhelming mercy. The evidence that should persuade us is that Jesus was willing to die for us. He has shown that he holds our souls in such high esteem that we should recognize our forgiven and loved condition and in gratitude commit ourselves to obedience like his.

The moral influence theory is founded on the belief that an innocent, suffering victim and only an innocent, suffering victim for whose suffering we are in some way responsible has the power to confront us with our guilt and move us to a new decision. This belief has subtle and terrifying connections as to how victims of violence can be viewed. Theoretically, the victimization of Jesus should suffice for our moral edification, but, in fact, in human history, races, classes, and women have been victimized while at the same time their victimization has been heralded as a persuasive reason for inherently sinful men to become more righteous. The suffering of ethnic minorities and the poor has been graphically described, along with the suffering of Jesus, in sermonic efforts to move the powerful to repentance and responsibility. Sometimes this amounts to using the victims for someone else's edification. But, most perniciously, it is the victimization of women that is tied to a psychology of redemption.

Christian ethicist Helmut Thielicke provides a particularly clear example of how theories of atonement find expression in sexual politics. His view is that woman's sexuality is by nature holistic and vulnerable. He images women as holy and sees women as intrinsically good in their sexual nature, in which sexual desire is completely integrated with the heart and with a desire for faithfulness. He also sees woman as intrinsically vulnerable because her integrated sexual nature is such that if she is sexually intimate with a man she becomes bonded for life with that man He sees men, on the other hand, as intrinsically destructive in their sexuality—originally sinful, you might say. Men's sexual energy is energy to violate and destroy. It is unfaithful, also, because the man's sexual feeling is an alienated, unintegrated part of himself, making him tend toward polygamy. In Thielicke's view, men are saved from their inherent destructiveness when they are moved by the suffering of victimized women. When a man sees the holiness and fragility of woman, he may be persuaded to repent of his destructive behavior, discipline himself to be obedient to love's demand, and thereby become a saved, holy, good human being himself.[20]

In this twentieth−century formulation of Christian ethics, woman is cast as a Christ figure; she is imagined to be a victim who does not deserve the suffering that comes to her. Thielicke writes of a woman, "She can exist and be herself only as long as the other person who has become the one and only for her preserves the bond in which she has invested her being."[21] Man's faithfulness is required or she will cease to exist. In this pattern of relationship, communion is maintained through the threat of death. The actual deaths or violations of women are part of the system just as necessarily as the death of Jesus is part of the system that asks for us to be "morally per-

suaded" to be faithful to God The burden is on the believer to redeem Jesus' death from tragedy, but the believer cannot be redeemed without the example of the tragedy. This is the kind of double bind in which women find themselves in Christian culture. We must be viewed as vulnerable to victimization and loved not because of who we are but to save another from the guilt of being himself with us. If a man is himself, he destroys us. If he saves us, he must contradict his own nature. The hostility that pervades such a view of women is intense and hidden. But it is similar to the hostility that this form of Christian theology creates in the relationship between human beings and God. We can protect God from our violent rejection by disciplining ourselves, but it is the vulnerable holy One who is to blame for our having to construct rigid systems of self−control. God must be hated—just as women are hated. The moral influence theories of the atonement sanctify love/hate relationships. Redemption is not to be found in intimate relationships; only vicious cycles of violence may be found. Holding over people's heads the threat that if they do not behave someone will die requires occasional fulfillment of the threat. The threat of death, however, should not be called moral persuasion but should be identified as the most pernicious and evil form of coercion and terror.

How can we explain the condition of women, and others who are the chosen victims in a society, who live in constant fear of rape, murder, attack, verbal assault, insult, and the denial of rights and opportunities except as a condition of terrorization? To glorify victims of terrorization by attributing to them a vulnerability that warrants protection by the stronger is to cloak the violation. Those who seek to protect are guilty. Justice occurs when terrorization stops, not when the condition of the terrorized is lauded as a preventive influence.

THE CRITICAL TRADITION

Many theologians of the modern and post−modern period have directed severe criticism at the traditional atonement concepts. Biblical concepts of suffering as traditionally interpreted have been reexamined and found not only wanting but also contributing to oppression. These critical theologians have claimed that classical atonement theories have been used to maintain the status quo and exonerate the purposes of a tyrannical God. They have seen that their task is to free God from the charge of Divine Oppressor and then join with this liberated God in laying the ax to the root of oppression, that is, to end the suffering that is at the heart of oppression. This has been done by insisting that all suffering must be regarded as negative and not ordained by God. All, that is, except Jesus'! This is where the critical traditions fall short of pushing the challenge to its logical conclusion.

Three trends in the twentieth−century critique of classical atonement theories may be identified. One trend criticizes the traditional view of God as impassive and asserts that God suffers with us. A second interprets suffering as an essential and inevitable part of the historical process of the struggle for liberation. A third trend radically critiques the notion of redemptive suffering but insists on retaining the cross as an image of liberation.

The Suffering God

Ronald Goetz has suggested that the notion of the "Suffering God" is becoming a new orthodoxy in the twentieth century.[22] He says that until this century the orthodox position affirmed again and again the doctrine of God as immovable and impassible, but twentieth−century theologians from even radically diverse schools of thought have forwarded the image and concept of Cod as one who suffers passionately what the world suffers. Goetz lists those he would characterize as modern theopaschite thinkers: "Barth, Berdyaev, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Cobb, Cone and liberation theologians generally, Kung, Moltmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Pannenberg, Ruether and feminist theologians generally, Temple, Teilhard and Unamuno."[23] We would add to this list Edgar Sheffield Brightman and the personalists, and process theologians in general.

In our view the emergence of the notion that God suffers with us is theological progress. God as one who experiences, feels, and knows life, as one intimately bound up with the creation in all its tragedy and turmoil, resurrects God from the grave of stony impassibility. To live is to experience, and, finally, the doctrine of an impassible God cannot be reconciled to the doctrine of a living God. To see God as the "fellow sufferer who understands" is to draw God close to all those who suffer and give divine companionship to the friendless.

We would not reject the image of God as a Suffering God and would welcome the demise of that distant, impassive patriarch in the clouds who is beyond being affected by the turmoil below. The advent of the Suffering God changes the entire face of theology, but it does not necessarily offer liberation for those who suffer. A closer examination of one form of Suffering God theology will reveal that this apparently new image of God still produces the same answers to the question, How shall I interpret and respond to the suffering that occurs in my life? And the answer again is, Patiently endure; suffering will lead to greater life.

Edgar Sheffield Brightman, a Boston personalist[24] of the 1920s and 1930s, proposed one of the clearest doctrines of a Suffering God. His definition of God is captured in this passage:

> God is a conscious Person of perfect good will. He is the source of all value and so is worthy of worship and devotion. He is the creator of all other persons and gives them the power of free choice. . . . There is within him, in addition to his reason and his active creative will, a passive element which enters into every one of his conscious states, as sensation, instinct, and impulse enter into ours, and constitutes a problem for him. This element we call The Given. The evils of life and the delays in the attainment of value, insofar as they come from God and not from human freedom, are thus due to his nature, yet not wholly to his deliberate choice. His will and reason acting on The Given produce the world and achieve value in it.[25]

This definition may be put more concisely in the following terms:

> God is a Person supremely conscious, supremely valuable, and supremely creative, yet limited both by the free choices of other persons and by restrictions within his own nature.[26]

In Brightman's view God has limited power, and this limitation is not the result of divine free choice but is imposed by God's very nature. It is the tension within God's self as God responds to the "Given" within Godself. Gradually God is working out God's purpose, as God responds to the Given in a way that will transform/transcend all evil. The reason there is evil is because things just do not fit together. Evil is inherent in the nature of things, what Brightman calls the "cosmic drag." God is unfinished.. Suffering occurs because of the conflict between what is and what could be within God. Hence, God participates in the suffering of all the creation, groaning together with the creation the travail of perfection coming to birth. Brightman says of God,

> He is supreme goodness conquering all obstacles, although slowly and with round about and painful methods. He is a God who suffers and who redeems. He is a finite God, working under the conditions given by his own eternal nature. He is not free to emancipate himself wholly from these conditions, although he is able to accomplish his purpose of achieving good in every situation and is never finally baffled by any problems. He is not responsible for causing the evils of life; he is responsible for dealing with them.[27]

Brightman's identification of the origin of suffering in the conflict between what is and what could be views all suffering as a byproduct of God's progressive creativity. It must be criticized as inadequate for explaining those forms of suffering that are the consequence of blatant injustices committed by human beings, such as slavery, abject poverty, or violence against women.

Brightman's answer to oppressed peoples struggling to interpret their suffering is: God suffers with you, knows, and understands your pain. God suffers actively, not passively, a suffering that knows a change is needed. So must we all become active sufferers.

> One [who is] moved by pity and love, uses every ounce of strength he possesses in fighting disease and disaster, pain and woe of every kind; but he has the insight to see that lamentations over the imperfection of the result would only add to the sufferings of life and consequently he is patient even when his efforts are most unsuccessful. Patient submission to the inevitable is a virtue only when one has gained the right, by one's attitude, to call it inevitable. To ascribe war, crimes, and lawlessness to fate is a cheap and irresponsible patience.[28]

Brightman challenges patient acquiescence before suffering and provides a way to continue to work against oppression when success is not immediate. The atonement is to be understood as support for this struggle. It is in the struggle of Christ on the cross that we see and know that God struggles and suffers for the world's salvation.[29]

Brightman, with critical theologians in general, uses God's suffering with us to call human beings to suffer with one another for liberation, suggesting that "suffering with" is itself a redeeming action. The identification in Suffering God theology of solidarity with redemption should be questioned. Bearing the burden with another does not take the burden away. Sympathetic companionship makes suffering more bearable, but the friendship between slaves, for example, does not stop the master from wielding the lash. Goetz also makes this observation:

> There is a certain immediate psychological comfort in the notion that God does not require of us a suffering that he himself will not endure However, if this comfort is to be any more than a psychological prop, it must show how God's suffering mitigates evil. This explanation has been, to date, curiously lacking in the theodicy of divine self−limitation.[30]

The challenge of how to claim that a suffering God offers not only comfort and companionship but also redemption is perhaps met by the argument that the cross makes relationship where relationship has been lost. It breaks down the dividing wall between suffering humanity and an impassive God and calls disciples to cross the barrier that separates oppressor from oppressed, rich from poor, healthy from sick, into a new humanity in which each takes on the burdens and joys of all in a fellowship of mutual openness and support. Such a passage into community involves being open to one's own pain and the pain of others. Thus it involves being willing to face reality, to feel, to see, instead of to repress feeling and hide from the truth or insulate oneself and ignore the realities of injustice. Such commitment to live establishes new community, and it is the establishment of community in which the alienation caused by rejection of suffering is overcome through mutuality that creates justice. The vision of such a community commends itself to all people. The creation of such a community surely does involve individuals choosing to see their intimate connection with those they may have rejected or ignored and choosing to admit those others into the circle of their concern and commitment Indeed, such commitment involves facing the fact that an image of the self as impassible and immutable to pain blocks a person from being in relationship to others. A God who cannot feel cannot be alive and intimately related to other lives. So also a human being who idealizes the transcendence of emotion and seeks freedom from "being effected" by others cannot be fully alive or intimately related to others. Life is changed by the decision to feel, to be involved, to care, and to not turn away out of offense at or fear of another's suffering. The new community that is brought into being by God's intimate connection to us and by our openness to the life in ourselves and in others claims our attention and indeed has a right to be called redemption.

But a question arises: Even if the creation of communities of just relationship mitigates the evils of oppression, abuse, injustice, and alienation, that is, even if the establishment of *right relationship is* the meaning of *redemption,* how is it that the torturous death of Jesus can be spoken of as initiating this new community? Do we need the death of God incarnate to show us that God is with us in our suffering? Was Jesus' suffering and death required for revelation to occur? Was God not with us in our suffering before the death of Jesus? Did the death really initiate something that did not exist before?

It is true that fullness of life cannot be experienced without openness to all truth, all reality; fullness of life involves feeling the pain of the world. But it is not true, that being open to all of life is the equivalent of choosing to suffer. Nor is it right to see the death of Jesus as a symbol for the life−giving power of receptivity to reality.

It is not acceptance of suffering that gives life; it is commitment to life that gives life. The question, moreover, is not, Am I willing to suffer? but Do I desire fully to live? This distinction is subtle and, to some, specious, but in the end it makes a great difference in how people interpret and respond to suffering. If you believe that acceptance of suffering gives life, then your resources for confronting perpetrators of violence and abuse will be numbed,

Jurgen Moltmann for example, fails to make this distinction and hence continues the traditional presentation of Jesus as one who chose to stiffer. He writes, "Jesus himself set out for Jerusalem and actively took the expected suffering upon himself."[31] Moltmann explicitly rejects the interpretation of Jesus' death that says Jesus died because of the "deep rooted evil of other people"[32] and speaks instead of Jesus *inciting violence against himself.*

> Jesus did not suffer passively from the world in which he lived, but incited it against himself by his message and the life he lived.... By proclaiming the righteousness of God as the right of those who were rejected and without grace to receive grace, he provoked the hostility of the guardians of the law, . . . he incited the devout against him.[33]

Moltmann's view amounts to blaming the victim. Jesus is responsible for his death on the cross, just as a woman who walks alone at night on a deserted street is to blame when she is raped,

Moltmann's intent is to distinguish between what he calls "active suffering" (i.e., chosen suffering) and acquiescence to suffering viewed as fate. But by continuing a theology that cloaks the perpetrator of violence and calls the choice *for life* a choice *to suffer*, he fails to present a theology capable of moving beyond suffering as fate to be endured.

At issue is not what we choose to endure or accept but what we refuse to relinquish. Redemption happens when people refuse to relinquish respect and concern for others, when people refuse to relinquish fullness of feeling, when people refuse to give up seeing, experiencing, and being connected and affected by all of life. God must be seen as the one who most fully refuses to relinquish life. Lust for life−-the insistent zest for experiencing and responding−-is what has the power to create community and sustain justice. The ongoing resurrection within us of a passion for life and the exuberant energy of this passion testifies to God's spirit alive in our souls.

By confusing "suffering with" with action that does something about evil instead of asserting that testifying for life is what sustains justice, the Suffering God theologies continue in a new form the traditional piety that sanctions suffering as imitation of the holy one. Because God suffers and God is good, we are good if we suffer. If we are not suffering, we are not good. To be like

God is to take on the pain of all. In this form of piety, pain becomes attractive−-the. more we suffer the more we can believe we approach God. By interpreting Jesus' suffering as a sign that chosen suffering is salvific the Suffering God theology baptizes violence done by people resistant to grace and abundant life, and uses Jesus' death to invite people to be open to all of life. This theology is offensive because it suggests that acceptance of pain is tantamount to love and is the foundation of social action.

There is another motivation for our commitment to live in solidarity with others. It is found in the rightness of the claim that burns in every human heart that we are created for life and life abundant. Life calls us to not abandon one another to the grave, and it is the claim of life that should inspire us to remain faithful to one another—not the glorification of pain.

The Necessity of Suffering

The second major trend in twentieth−century critiques of classical atonement theories is that suffering is an essential part of the process of liberation. A version of this is seen in Brightman's theology: God is unfinished, and the creation is slowly moving toward a final harvest of righteousness. More recent theologians have not shared the Social Darwinism of early twentieth−century optimistic progressive theology, but in a different form have insisted, nevertheless, that suffering be understood within the larger context of historical processes of change. Returning to biblical themes of hope, they interpret the crucifixion of Jesus as a sign that before the dawn of a new age a period of struggle, violence, sacrifice, and pain will inevitably occur. In liberation and critical theologies the suffering of Jesus becomes a symbol for the conflicts that occur when people fight for new and more just social forms. The old must pass away before the new comes, and in its death throes the old lashes out against the new. The martyrs of the revolution are the sign that the beast is dying. Their blood gives hope, because it reveals the crisis that is at hand. Furthermore, violence against the vanguards of a new age is to be accepted. Acceptance witnesses against the perpetrator of violence and ennobles the victim. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, accepted the inevitability of the violence directed against the civil rights movement and saw it as the responsibility of people in the movement to bear the suffering in order to transform the situation.

> Suffering can be a most creative and powerful social force.... The nonviolent say that suffering becomes a powerful social force when you willingly accept that violence on yourself, so that self−suffering stands at the center of the nonviolent movement and the individuals involved are able to suffer in a creative manner, feeling that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that suffering may serve to transform the social situation.[34]

King's view is similar to the "moral influence" theory of the atonement: unjust suffering has the power to move the hearts of perpetrators of violence. The problem with this theology is that it asks people to suffer for the sake of helping evildoers see their evil ways. It puts concern for the

evildoer ahead of concern for the victim of evil. It makes victims the servants of the evildoers' salvation.

King sees suffering as necessary because the very suffering of the victims of injustice will cause change by inspiring evildoers to change. Archbishop Oscar Romero reflected similarly:

> The only violence that the Gospel admits is violence to oneself. When Christ lets himself be killed, that is violence—letting himself be killed. Violence to oneself is more effective than violence against others. It is very easy to kill, especially when one has weapons, but how hard it is to let oneself be killed for love of the people![35]

This martyrdom theology ignores the fact that the perpetrators of violence against "the faithful" have a choice and, instead, suggests to the faithful that when someone seeks to silence them with threats or violence, they are in a situation of blessedness. Romero wrote,

> To each of us Christ is saying: if you want your life and mission to be fruitful like mine, do like me. Be converted into a seed that lets itself be buried. Let yourself be killed. Do not be afraid. Those who shun suffering will remain alone. No one is more alone than the selfish. But if you give your life out of love for others, as I give mine for all, you will reap a great harvest. You will have the deepest satisfactions. Do not fear death or threats. The Lord goes with you.[36]

Instead of making the straightforward observation that those in power resist change by using violence to silence and terror to intimidate any who question an unjust status quo, these theologians are saying that suffering is a positive and necessary part of social transformation. The violence of those who resist change becomes mythologized as part of a divinely ordained process of transformation, exemplified through Jesus' death and resurrection. In this mythologizing, historical realities are clouded, as Jon Sobrino rightly observes:

> There has been. a tendency to isolate the cross from the historical course that led Jesus to it by virtue of his conflicts with those who held political religious power. In this way the cross has been turned into nothing more than a paradigm of the suffering to which all human beings are subject insofar as they are limited beings. This has given rise to a mystique of suffering rather than to a mystique of following Jesus, whose historical career led to the historical cross. [37]

The Negativity of Suffering

The third trend in twentieth−century critical traditions' view of the atonement is perhaps the most radical. It rejects the concept that human suffering can have positive or redemptive aspects. This trend is represented by such people as Jon Sobrino, William R. Jones, and Carter Heyward. Their critique is radical in the sense of the questions raised regarding theodicy.

The whole question of God finds its ultimate concretion in the problem of suffering. The question rises out of the history of suffering in the world, but it finds its privileged moment on the cross: if the Son is innocent and yet put to death., then who or what exactly is God?[38]

In his book, *Is God a White Racist?* Jones searches for the answer to the how and why of suffering, particularly ethnic suffering. He recognizes four features of ethnic suffering: maldistribution, negative quality, enormity, and noncatastrophic character. From these he postulates what he terms "divine racism." The question of divine racism arises when this ethnic suffering is joined with a particular interpretation of God's sovereignty over human history. Is God responsible for evil and suffering, and does this responsibility fit in with our traditional concept of a benevolent God? Some feminist theologians have challenged the traditional understanding and interpretation of the suffering servant and the suffering and death of Jesus. Most reject the traditional use of the crucifixion to bless the victimization of women.

> Women are particularly sensitive to the way in which the suffering servant image has functioned in the Christian tradition, for we have invariably played that role within the family and vis−à−vis man in the larger society. . . . And in carrying the sins of the male half of the world on their shoulders, women are discovering that they have allowed men to escape from the responsibility of bearing their own burdens and coming to terms with their own sin and guilt.... Thus the suffering servant role model, a product of the patriarchal consciousness, has functioned to perpetuate that very dichotomy and alienation between human beings that the tradition claims to overcome. in accepting that particular interpretation of the Christ event as normative for their *lives,* women have participated in their own crucifixion. As feminists, we must exorcise that image from our midst in order to discover the roots of that true reconciliation which can only come about between equals.[39]

But even while recognizing the link between Jesus' suffering and theirs, most feminist theologians have been reluctant to criticize the idea of the atonement. Carter Heyward, in her book *The Redemption of God*, comes closest to this type of critique by challenging and rejecting a notion of a sadistic God. But even with all these radical critiques and theodicies, these theologians continue to save the cross as a viable, meaningful, indeed necessary, part of what Christianity is.

Jon Sobrino, in *Christology at the Crossroads*, best represents this idea, especially among Latin American liberation theologians. He radically critiques traditional views of the cross, which have spiritualized the impact and taken away the scandal. He asks what justification there is for a God who allows the sinfulness of the world to kill his son and, by implication, other human beings as well.[40] But Sobrino goes on to point out the positive aspect he sees in the cross:

> On the positive side the cross presents a basic affirmation about God. It says that on the cross God himself is crucified. The Father suffers the death of his Son and takes upon himself all the sorrow and pain of history. This ultimate solidarity with humanity reveals God as a God of love in a real and credible way rather than in an idealistic way. From the

> ultimate depths of history's negative side, this God of love thereby opens up the possibility of hope and a future.[41]

This idea is closely related to the suffering God idea discussed above, but it carries the concept a bit further. The cross and the suffering and death of Jesus are necessary for God to have any solidarity with the poor and oppressed of the world. Without it God cannot be the compassionate, loving God we have posited. Without the cross there is no Christianity.

Latin American liberation theologians have focused on the cross as an example of commitment to justice and liberation. It is the result of working for justice. It is the example of love and hence of life. It enables us to endure. These ideas encompass each of the trends of the critical tradition, and, in a time of severe persecution such as Christians in Latin America are currently experiencing, it is understandable: There is a need to understand a situation of senseless suffering and death and to remain courageously committed to the struggle in the face of the despair and grief such suffering brings. But to sanction the suffering and death of Jesus, even when calling it unjust, so that God can be active in the world only serves to perpetuate the acceptance of the very suffering against which one is struggling. The glorification of anyone's suffering allows the glorification of all suffering. To argue that salvation can only come through the cross is to make God a divine sadist and a divine child abuser.

William R. Jones has a stronger critique of the cross than does Sobrino. His critique begins with the suffering servant motif, which he sees involved in many black justifications of black suffering. Jones states that the suffering servant motif cannot deal with non-catastrophic suffering, such as has faced the black race, because an exaltation-liberation event must occur for the interpretation of deserved punishment to, be dismissed. The suffering must cease, the suffering servant must be vindicated, and the suffering must be replaced by liberation.[42] This, says Jones, has clearly not happened in the black situation. He expresses this especially in terms of the crucifixion−resurrection event, which is traditionally viewed by Christians as *the* liberation event.

> To speak of the cross, in the Christian tradition, has been to speak of human redemption, their salvation and deliverance. But the fact of oppression after the occurrence of the normative event of reconciliation raises special questions.[43]

Hence Jones insists on viewing all suffering as negative, for if we define an instance of suffering as positive or necessary for salvation, we are persuaded to endure it. This has been used too long by the oppressors to both justify their positions and release them from any responsibility for the oppressed's condition and suffering. Jones states that a theology of liberation must provide persuasive grounds for removing the sanctity and hallowed status from those it seeks to challenge.[44] Any attempt to eliminate or reduce suffering or to challenge one's condition is, by that very act, a direct challenge to the appropriateness of that suffering and condition .[45] It is to challenge God, if one believes in God's responsibility for all things in this world. It is to call God a white racist.

How can we judge God's motive or character at this point? Jones looks at the approach of the Hebrew Scripture writers to this critical issue. He finds that their convictions about the nature of God's future acts were grounded in the character of God's past and present acts.[46] What conclusions can be drawn about God by looking at past and present persistent and ruthlessly enforced suffering of the oppressed? Unrelieved suffering is explicable if (1) there is no God; (2) God exists but is not active in human affairs; or (3) God exists and is active in certain sectors of human history but is absent from the struggle for liberation. The elimination of oppression is not a priority item on God's agenda, if it is found there at all. God is clearly an oppressor, a white racist .[47] This view is theologically impossible if one posits a universally benevolent God. If one assumes God's intrinsic goodness and justice, one must do one of two things: (1) adopt a theodicy based on God's benevolence (Jones sees this as question begging and ultimately skirting the issues or desperately attempting to justify God's position) or (2) opt for atheism or, as Jones presents his solution, humanocentric theism. This humanocentric theism stresses the functional ultimacy of humans by virtue of their creation and eliminates God's responsibility for the crimes or errors of human history. This ultimacy is in total conformity with the sovereignty, purpose, and will of God .[48] It is in respect for human free will, which God created, that God acts as a persuader rather than a coercer. By becoming human in Jesus of Nazareth, God affirmed that God's activity in human history from then on would be carried out in the activity of particular people.

In this view of God, this humanocentric theism, God is not for the oppressed, in terms of their being "unique objects of God's activity in a manner that differs from persuasion."[49] It is essential for Jones's system that human activity be decisive for one's salvation or liberation. History is open−ended, "capable of supporting either oppression or liberation, racism or brotherhood."[50] This, he argues, does not remove hope from theology; it restores responsibility to humanity. He challenges some of the traditional beliefs of blacks as being, in fact, part of their oppression.[51]

Jones's critique comes closest to naming the problem. He labels all suffering as negative, asserts that the crucifixion is not liberating without the resurrection, and suggests that our cherished beliefs may, in fact, be part of our oppression. But he, too, fails to make the connections among all these ideas. Why is the crucifixion necessary? Does God demand this suffering and death as payment for sin or even as a condition for the forgiveness of sin? Is the question not Is God a racist, but rather, Is God a sadist? And is the identification black people, particularly black women, felt with the suffering Jesus part of their oppression? Again, Jones does not intend to denigrate the suffering and oppression of black. people. Jesus is clearly seen as a political messiah for blacks. The condition of black people today signifies Christ's crucifixion. His resurrection signifies black hope.[52] The suffering that Jesus experienced is not being questioned. God's demand, the sacralizing of the suffering, is at issue and is not addressed by Jones.

Carter Heyward makes the most radical departure from traditional views of the atonement. She does so because she approaches the question free from some theological trappings. First, she asserts that Jesus is important if he is only and fully human. She also implies that there is no original sin in the classical sense, hence nothing from which humanity needs to be redeemed. For Heyward, Jesus' death was an evil act done by humans. It was unnecessary, violent, unjust, and

final.[53] This leads her to condemn the glorification of suffering found in traditional Christian theology.

> Any theology which is promulgated on an assumption that followers of Jesus, Christians, must welcome pain and death as a sign of faith is constructed upon a faulty hermeneutic of what Jesus was doing and of why he died. This theological masochism is completely devoid of passion. This notion of welcoming, or submitting oneself gladly to, injustice flies in the face of Jesus' own refusal to make concession to unjust relation. [54]

Jesus died because he was a radical who challenged the unjust systems under which he lived. Jesus challenged the theological idea of a sadistic God:

> The image of a Jesus who, in the prophetic tradition of Israel, despised the blasphemous notion of a deity who likes sacrifice, especially human sacrifice, can assure us that we are not here to give ourselves up willingly to be crucified for anyone's sake, but rather to struggle together against the injustice of all human sacrifice, including our own.[55]

Heyward, by rejecting the notion of a sadistic God, argues very effectively that this notion is blasphemy. But she fails to identify the traditional doctrine of the atonement as the central reason for the oppressiveness of Christianity. Despite her many unorthodox beliefs, Heyward still locates herself firmly in the Christian tradition and struggles to stay there. It is precisely this struggle that prevents her from labeling Christianity as essentially an abusive theology. She struggles to redeem the doctrine of the atonement. Despite her reimaging of a Jesus who "redeems" by showing us that "salvation" consists in being in an intimate, immediate love relationship with God, has she merely reworked the traditions and called them blasphemous when in reality that blasphemous God, the God who demands sacrifice, that patriarchal God, is the one to be found in the text, is, in fact, the God upon which the entire Christian tradition is built?

CONCLUSION

Christianity is an abusive theology that glorifies suffering. Is it any wonder that there is so much abuse in modern society when the predominant image or theology of the culture is of "divine child abuse"—God the Father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son? If Christianity is to be liberating for the oppressed, it must itself be liberated from this theology. We must do away with the atonement, this idea of a blood sin upon the whole human race which can be washed away only by the blood of the lamb. This bloodthirsty God is the God of the patriarchy who at the moment controls the whole Judeo−Christian tradition. This raises the key question for oppressed people seeking liberation within this tradition: If we throw out the atonement is Christianity left? Can we call our new creation Christianity even with an asterisk?

We do not need to be saved by Jesus' death from some original sin. We need to be liberated from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy. If in that liberation process there is suffering it will be because people with power choose to use their power to resist and

oppose the human claim to passionate and free life. Those who seek redemption must dare to live their lives with passion in intimate, immediate love relationships with each other, remembering times when we were not slaves.

Our adventure into freedom is empowered by rejecting and denying the abuse that is the foundation of the throne of sacrifice, We choose to call the new land we enter Christianity if

> Christianity is at heart and essence justice, radical love, and liberation.
>
> Jesus is one manifestation of Immanuel but not uniquely so, whose life exemplified justice, radical love, and liberation.
>
> Jesus chose to live a life in opposition to unjust, oppressive cultures. Jesus did not choose the cross but chose integrity and faithfulness, refusing to change course because of threat.
>
> Jesus' death was an unjust act, done by humans who chose to reject his way of life and sought to silence him through death. The travesty of the suffering and death of Jesus is not redeemed by the resurrection.
>
> Jesus was not an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the whole world because God does not need to be appeased and demands not sacrifice but justice. To know God is to do justice (Jer. 22:13−16). Peace was not made by the cross. "Woe to those who say Peace, Peace when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). No one was saved by the death of Jesus.
>
> Suffering is never redemptive, and suffering cannot be redeemed.
>
> The cross is a sign of tragedy. God's grief is revealed there and everywhere and every time life is thwarted by violence. God's grief is as ultimate as God's love. Every tragedy eternally remains and is eternally mourned. Eternally the murdered scream, Betrayal. Eternally God sings kaddish for the world.
>
> To be a Christian means keeping: faith with those who have heard and lived God's call for justice, radical love, and liberation; who have challenged unjust systems both political and ecclesiastical; and who in that struggle have refused to be victims and have refused to cower under the threat of violence, suffering, and death.
>
> Fullness of life is attained in moments of decision for such faithfulness and integrity. When the threat of death is refused and the choice is made for justice, radical love, and liberation, the power of death is overthrown. Resurrection is radical courage.
>
> Resurrection means that death is overcome in those precise instances when human beings choose life, refusing the threat of death. Jesus climbed out of the grave in the Garden of

Gethsemane when he refused to abandon his commitment to the truth even though his enemies threatened him with death. On Good Friday, the Resurrected One was Crucified.

NOTES

1. Perdita Huston, *Third World Women Speak Out* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1979), 36.

2. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 77.

3. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, chap. 24.

4. Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1983), 162.

5. Ibid., 159.

6. Ibid., 164.

7. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, chap. 9.

8. Ibid., chap. 12.

9. Ibid., chap. 11.

10. Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1917), 174, chap. 15.

11. Ibid., 49, chap. 6.

12. Ibid., 184, chap. 15.

13. From John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1986), 129–46.

14. Judy Grahn, "From Sacred Blood to the Curse and Beyond," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1982), 265–79.

15. Nancy Jay ("Sacrifice, as Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman," in *Immaculate and Powerful*, ed. C. W. Atkinson, C. H. Buchanan, and M. R. Miles [Boston: Beacon Press, 1985], 283–309) shows the relationship between blood sacrifice and the subordination of women.

16. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 82.

17. Alfred of Rievaulx, quoted by Caroline Walker Bynum in *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982),123.

18. William of St. Theirry, quoted by Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* 120.

19. Peter Abelard, "Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans," in Gerhard 0. Forde, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *Word and World*, vol. III, no. 1, p. 22.

20. Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 79−98.

21. Ibid., 88.

22. Ronald Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," *The Christian Century* (April 16, 1986): 385.

23. Ibid.

24. Personalism is the name of any theory that makes personality the supreme philosophical principle; idealistic personalism makes persons (and selves) the, only reality. E.g., Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Holt & Co., 1951), 218.

25. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Problem of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931), 113.

26. Ibid.

27. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Finding of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931),123.

28. Ibid., 140.

29. Brightman, *Problem of God*, 94.

30. Goetz, "Suffering God," 389,

31. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 51.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted. in *A Testament of Hope,* ed. James Washington (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 47.

35. Quoted in *The Church Is All of You,* ed. James Brockman (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1984), 94.

36. Ibid., 69.

37. Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), 373.

38. Ibid., 224.

39. Sheila Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1974), 88–89.

40. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads,* 371.

41. Ibid.

42. William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), 81.

43. William R. Jones, "Reconciliation and Liberation in Black Theology: Some Implications for Religious Education," *Religious Education* 67 (Sept.Oct. 1972): 386.

44. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* 68.

45. Ibid., 55.

46. Ibid., 13.

47. Ibid., 29.

48. Ibid., 188.

49. Ibid., 201.

50. Ibid., 1%.

51. Ibid., 202.

52. Remarks made by Jacqueline Grant in a panel discussion entitled, "Women's Issues in the Development of Black Religion," American Academy of Religion, Nov. 26, 1985.

53. Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God* (Washington, D.C. : University Press of America, 1982), 54–57.

54. Ibid., 58.

55. Ibid., 168–69.