

## Class One: Solidarity Cross as Love

1. What is our problem? We feel alone and afraid
2. What did Christ do on the cross? He showed God's solidarity with us in even the most extreme circumstances
3. How did that address our problem? It showed us that we are not alone and that God is truly with us [we are changed]<sup>i</sup>

### A: Man of Sorrows

Jürgen Moltmann (German, b. 1926)<sup>ii</sup>

- God in Christ chose death on the cross in order to be fully present to us in all our suffering and abandonment<sup>iii</sup>
- Christ carries the sin of the violent and bears the suffering of the victim → both perpetrators of violence and their innocent victims are saved in Jesus' death<sup>iv</sup>
- "In a civilization that glorifies success and happiness and is blind for the suffering of others, people's eyes may be opened to the truth, if they remember that at the centre of the Christian Faith stands the assailed, the tormented Christ, dying in forsakenness. The recollection that God raised the Crucified one and made him the 'Hope of the world' must lead churches to break their alliances with the violent and enter into solidarity with the humiliated."<sup>v</sup>

"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are"

(Hebrews 4:15)

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed."

(Isaiah 53:5)

### Critique and Questions

- "It does not help me to escape from my mess and mix-up and despair...if God is in the same predicament" (Karl Rahner)<sup>vi</sup>
- Is God suffering with humanity a comfort? Does this console grief or compound it?

## B: Moral Influence

Peter Abelard (French, 12<sup>th</sup> Century)

- “In teaching us by word and example even unto death, [Christ] has more fully bound us to himself by love, with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him.” (Peter Abelard)<sup>vii</sup>
- Christ is a model to us as to what a life of Christian love looks like; a moral example<sup>viii</sup>

“No one has greater love  
than this, to lay down  
one’s life for one’s friends.”  
-John 15:13

## Critique and Questions

- Is this too optimistic about our ability to be loving or to change?
- Does this idea of suffering as love valorize suffering?
- Paul says, “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Romans 7:18b-19). How would you respond to this from the moral influence theory standpoint?
- Is God a pushover in this model – not affected by evil and destruction?



Jürgen Moltmann



Peter Abelard

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<sup>i</sup> Sally McFague. "Is God in Charge?" in *Essentials of Christian theology*, ed. William Placher (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 114.

<sup>ii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%BCrgen\\_Moltmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%BCrgen_Moltmann)

<sup>iii</sup> Jürgen Moltmann. "The Crucified God: Yesterday and Today: 1972-2002" in *Cross examinations: readings on the meaning of the cross today*, ed. Marit Trelstad (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 132.

<sup>iv</sup> Moltmann, 132-133.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid. 128-129.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>vii</sup> William C. Placher. "How does Jesus Save?," *Christian Century* 126, no. 11 (June 2, 2009), <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2009-06/how-does-jesus-save>.

<sup>viii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral\\_influence\\_theory\\_of\\_atonement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_influence_theory_of_atonement)

<sup>ix</sup> Image credit: First image – "Jürgen Moltmann at the Hospitalhof in Stuttgart" in March 2016. Photo by Maeterlinck. Second Image – "Peter Abelard" from Ebenezer Cobham Brewer. *Character sketches of romance, fiction and the drama* (New York: E. Hess, 1892).