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Ngien, Dennis. *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's 'Theologia Crucis'*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005.

Dennis Ngien

**The Suffering of God
According to Martin Luther's
'Theologia Crucis'**

Foreword by
Jürgen Moltmann

REGENT COLLEGE PUBLISHING
Vancouver, British Columbia

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First published 1995 by Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York

This edition published 2005 by Regent College Publishing
5800 University Boulevard, Vancouver, BC V6T 2E4 Canada
www.regentpublishing.com

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Ngien, Dennis, 1958-

The suffering of God according to Martin Luther's theologia crucis / Dennis Ngien.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 1-57383-369-X

1. Luther, Martin, 1483-1546. 2. Suffering of God—History of doctrines—16th century. I. Title.

BR333.5.S85N45 2005

231

C2005-904479-9

*This book is dedicated to my Ceceilia who shares
my labour and my dream.*

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Chapter One

Divine Suffering In Early Church History

Rather than offer a systematic review of the history of the doctrine of divine impassibility, chapter one will give brief attention to the historical background for the passibility-impassibility debate. I will select a few examples of theological perspectives in the course of Christian history prior to the time of Martin Luther.¹

The word "impassibility" means incapable of experiencing pain or emotion; the word "passibility" means capable of experiencing pain or suffering. Christianity's embrace of impassibility stemmed from two Greek metaphysical concepts: apathy (*apatheia*) and sufficiency (*Autarkeia*).² Russell explains:

Apathy means insensibility to passion or feeling. For Aristotle, immateriality and pure reason (*nous*) characterize God's nature; moreover, an immaterial God of pure reason experiences neither passion nor feeling. God's experiencing passion would imply being acted upon from without. For these reasons, Aristotle attributes apathy to God's nature. So divine apathy undergirds the Christian rejection of external passibility within God's nature.³

Divine sufficiency also supports the Greek conviction that no external being affects or moves God. Aristotle's self-sufficient God lacks nothing and desires nothing. Satisfying conditions of insufficiency requires that some being affect or move the individual who experiences deficiency. But a completely actual God like Aristotle's has no potential for change. Consequently, Aristotle exempts his self-sufficient God from movement, and he thus describes God's nature as immutable.⁴

Hence there existed an antinomy, as Moltmann points out, between the Greek idea of God's *apatheia* and Christ's *pathos* on the cross: "The platonic axiom of the essential *apatheia* of God sets up an intellectual barrier against the recognition of the suffering of Christ, for a God who is subject to suffering like all other beings cannot be God."⁵

It was mainly the influence of Greek metaphysics that prompted the early Christians to adopt the position of divine impassibility.⁶ Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides and the Stoics developed an understanding of God as the Absolute monad, self-sufficient, immutable, impassible and static.⁷ These philosophical categories, which continue through the patristic and medieval periods, have been adopted by Christian theologians to describe God, usually leading to a distortion of God's nature as biblically revealed. More specifically, the idea of divine impassibility, which held its grip on what may or may not be said of the Christian God, was, as Bauckham notes,

a Greek philosophical inheritance in early Christian theology. The great hellenistic Jewish theologian Philo had already prepared the way for this by making *apatheia* a prominent figure of his understanding of the God of Israel, and virtually all the Christian Fathers took it for granted, viewing with suspicion any theological tendency which might threaten the essential impassibility of the divine nature.⁸

I shall survey historically the theopaschite attempt to reconcile the suffering of the passible Son with the impassible nature of God.

Although early theologians such as Ignatius and Irenaeus occasionally link Christ's passion with God's passion, they deny suffering as a legitimate divine attribute.⁹ They subscribe to the paradoxical assertion that God could not suffer except in Christ. God is impassible, yet in Christ He suffers. Commenting on Christ in his *Letter to the Romans* (6:3), Ignatius says, "Let me imitate the Passion of my God"; but in his *Letter to Polycarp* (3:2), he depicts God as "above time, the Timeless, the Unseen, the One who became visible for our sakes, who was beyond touch and passion, yet for our sakes became subject to suffering, and endured everything for us."¹⁰ Furthermore in his *Letter to the Ephesians* (7:2), he

says: "There is only one physician—of flesh yet spiritual, born yet unbegotten, God incarnate, genuine life in the midst of death, sprung from Mary as well as God, first subject to suffering then beyond it—Jesus Christ our Lord."¹¹ The same is true with Irenaeus, who describes Christ as impassible yet capable of suffering in the incarnate state. In his *Against Heresies III, 16.6.*, he writes of Christ who "took up man into Himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in Himself."¹² For both thinkers, having adhered to the Greek philosophical idea that emotions are not fitting for deity, suffering finds no eternal grounding in the divine nature. No attempt is made to explain the paradox created by the idea of divine impassibility, this idea which occurs nowhere in the New Testament but is introduced into the doctrine of the Incarnation.¹³

An attempt to break through the Greek axiom of divine impassibility was made by the Patripassianism of the second century, with Noetus and Praxeas as its key representatives.¹⁴ Patripassianism erred in its failure to maintain a distinction between the Father and the Son. Noetus believed that "Christ was the Father in person (who) had been born and had suffered and died."¹⁵ Tertullian wrote of Praxeas who believed that "the Father Himself descended into the virgin, that He likewise was born of her, and He Himself suffered, even that He Himself in Jesus Christ."¹⁶ As such, God, the Father, was viewed as the subject of the earthly sufferings of Jesus.¹⁷

Tertullian's conflict with Patripassian Monarchianism in the third century helped crystallize the impassibility position. Praxeas, for one, taught that the divine person in Christ was the Father, and that while the flesh suffered, the Father suffered in sympathy (*compassio*) with the suffering of the flesh. Tertullian, by contrast, refused to grant any distinction between suffering (*passio*) and sympathy (*compassio*), thereby accusing Praxeas of "crucifying the Father" and "putting the Paraclete to flight."¹⁸ Tertullian argued, "The Father did not suffer with the Son. ... If the Father is impassible, then he cannot suffer with another; if He can suffer

with another, then He is passible. ... But the Father is as unable to suffer with another as the Son is unable to suffer in virtue of His divinity."¹⁹ Tertullian, then was the first to assert the impassibility of the divine nature in Christ, accentuating "the stoic exaltation" of *apatheia*.²⁰

The Alexandrian theologians such as Clement and Origen were more explicit in their denial of the passibility of the divine in Christ. Clement says that Christ was "entirely incapable of suffering and inaccessible to any emotion, whether of pleasure or pain."²¹ Origen, in an early stage, explicitly affirmed divine suffering in his homily on Ezekiel 6:6. The savior, Origen says, "descended to earth in pity for the human race, He suffered our sufferings before He suffered the cross and thought it right to take upon Him our flesh. For if He had not suffered, He would not have come to take part in human life. First did He suffer, then He descended and was seen. What is that passion which He suffered for us? Love is passion."²² This idea, however, did not play much part in Origen's developed theology. In his homily on Numbers 23.2, he resorted to the use of allegorical exegesis to dismiss divine passibility. Origen's theology of the divine *apatheia* is obvious in the following passage:

All those passages in scripture in which God is said to lament, rejoice, hate or be happy are written figuratively and in a human way. It is entirely foreign to the divine nature to have passions or the feelings of mutability, since it endures in unchanged and uninterrupted happiness.²³

According to Mozley, Gregory of Thaumaturgus, one of the Alexandrian theologians, composed the only treatise on divine impassibility before the nineteenth century.²⁴ The basic argument of Gregory was, as McWilliams puts it, "God cannot experience a conflict between his will and his nature because of the unity of his character."²⁵ Hallman further clarifies that "only in us can nature and will be contrary. God's will is always joined to God's essence, even if God submits to suffering when God is by nature impassible."²⁶

The impassibility doctrine conquered, and was considered as

axiomatic in the early Christian history. In the Arian controversy of the fourth century, for instance, both Arius and Athanasius asserted that it is the human in Christ which suffers. Athanasius retains the Greek idea of divine impassibility: "In nature the Word Himself is impassible, and yet because of the flesh which He put on, these (i.e. all the wants and sufferings which belong to the flesh), are ascribed to Him, since they are proper to the flesh, and the body itself is proper to the Saviour."²⁷ The paradox of God is discernible in Athanasius' assertion of the *communicatio idiomatum* through which things pertain to the flesh are ascribed to the divine: the impassible One suffers in Christ.²⁸ The impassible Logos assumed the passible humanity in order to redeem it. (God became human so that humans may partake of God.) "Because the impassible Word was in the passible body of Jesus, it destroyed the body's weaknesses in order to do away with them in us and to 'invest us with what was his,' that is, immortality."²⁹ Here Athanasius was in full accord with the Alexandrine claim that "What Christ did not assume, he could not redeem." Athanasius wrote: "He took the flesh and became man and in that flesh He suffers for us." He further wrote that "in that flesh,"

He carries our infirmities, and He Himself bears our sins that it might be shown that He has become man for us. ... And henceforth men no longer remain sinners and dead according to their proper affections, but having risen according to the Word's power, they abide ever immortal and incorruptible.³⁰

Like Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus accentuated the substantial unity of the divine Logos and fleshly body in Christ. Gregory, even though constrained by Alexandrian Christology to ascribe the sufferings of Jesus to the Logos, can do so only by a paradox that "by the sufferings of Him who could not suffer, we were taken up and saved."³¹ Gregory further elaborated on the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ:

... God, who for us was made man and became poor, to raise our flesh... that we might all be made one in Christ... that we might ... bear in ourselves the stamp of God, by whom and for whom we were made...³²

Gregory's antithesis between "passible in His flesh, (and) impassible in His Godhead" is a result of the union of the two natures in one Person. This antithesis left the relation between the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ unattended, eventually leading to the Christological debate between Nestorius and Cyril. This debate subsequently was "settled" by Leo's Tome and the Chalcedonian formula (A.D. 451), and it ultimately ended with the Monophysite and Theopaschite expressions of the fifth and sixth centuries.³³

Nestorius, unlike Gregory of Nazianzus' emphasis on Mary as the *Theotokos* (God-bearer), insisted upon Mary the mother of Jesus as *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer).³⁴ Nestorius' argument is not that Mary only bore the human nature, but that she bore the one person of Jesus Christ who is constituted by two natures and two *hypostases*. He rejected *Theotokos* because this title tended to an understanding of God who experiences suffering in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Nestorius' strength lay in his emphasis on the full humanity of Jesus Christ, accentuating the Antiochene tradition. His weakness lay in his disdain for the "hypostatic union", the concept which he felt eliminated the distinctiveness of the two natures. Thus he preferred the term "conjunction" to the term "union."³⁵ The result was that Nestorius could not conceive of the divine nature being involved in the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth.³⁶ As such the two natures of Christ cannot be regarded as an ontological union but merely a moral union,³⁷ and thus he was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431).

On the other hand, Cyril of Alexandria repudiated Nestorius' use of *Christotokos*, which conceived the indwelling of the Logos as a mere accident.³⁸ In company with Nazianzus, Cyril affirmed the title for Mary as *Theotokos*, insisting that the two natures be substantially united in the person of Christ. Cyril asserted, "God the Logos did not come into a man, but He 'truly' became man, while remaining God."³⁹ Cyril affirmed in his *The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius with the XII Anathematisms* that the differences between the two natures of Christ are not abolished by the union, yet in that union they constitute a single *hypostasis*. Cyril wrote: "Confessing

the Word to be made one with the flesh according to the substance... we do not divide the God from the man, nor separate Him into parts... but we know only one Christ."⁴⁰ Though Cyril was able to maintain the substantial union of the two distinct natures, he, like Nazianzus, failed to understand the relation of the two natures in the one being of Christ. Both Nestorius and Cyril affirm the impassible nature of God and the passible nature of the flesh.⁴¹ In Cyril's response to Nestorius' "anathema," he asserted:

...although according to His own nature Jesus was not subject to suffering, yet He suffered for us in the flesh. ..., and although impassible, in His crucified body He made His own the sufferings of His own flesh; and by the grace of God He tasted death for all.⁴²

Like Cyril, Leo affirmed the Word of God who suffered in the flesh but refused to include suffering in the impassible God. Leo wrote:

Thus the properties of each nature and substance were preserved entirely, and came together to form one person. Humility was assumed by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity; and to pay the debt that we had incurred, an inviolable nature was united to a nature that can suffer. ... The man Jesus Christ ... was able to die in respect of the one, unable to die in respect of the other.⁴³

Nevertheless the relationship of the divine nature to the human nature in the one person of Jesus Christ remained an open question, even after Chalcedon.

The Monophysites and the Theopaschites emerged after Chalcedon. The Monophysites rejected the Chalcedonian emphasis on two distinct natures, fearing that it tended toward the moral union of Nestorianism.⁴⁴ They instead argued forcefully that Jesus had only one nature (*physis*) after the Incarnation: "His humanity was absorbed into the divine like a drop of vinegar into the ocean."⁴⁵ The outcome of such an assertion was the affirmation of divine passibility, and hence the Theopaschite movement was born out of the Monophysite emphasis on the one person of Jesus Christ. Here the Monophysite position led to controversy over the dogma of the Trinity.⁴⁶ The Theopaschites provided the

Monophysites with their distinctive formula: "*unus de trinitate carne passus est.*"⁴⁷ McGuckin explains:

Even after the mystery of the Incarnation the Trinity continues to abide because the same God the Word, even with His own flesh, is one of the Trinity. And this is not because His flesh is of the substance of the Trinity but because it is the flesh of God the Word who is one of the Trinity.⁴⁸

In this formula: "One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh," Leontius clearly draws a distinction between *hypostasis* and *nature*. He holds that while God the Word suffers in His human nature, He remains impassible in His divine nature. From the time of the Incarnation, the human nature becomes essentially Christ's. The flesh of Christ is the flesh of the Logos, the Son of God. His flesh is life-giving because it is the very own flesh of the Word that gives life to all things. All that is Christ's belong essentially to the Logos. His crucifixion is the death of the Logos in the flesh. Because the Word and the flesh are constituted as one *hypostasis* or particular reality, the Word suffers hypostatically. In his twelfth anathema against Nestorius, Cyril wrote:

If anyone does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, and was crucified in the flesh, and tasted death in the flesh, and became first-born from the dead, and so as God is life and the one who makes alive, let him be anathema.⁴⁹

Divine passibility was explicitly rejected during the Theopaschite controversy of the sixth century. The repudiation of the Theopaschite position, as Pelikan notes, occurred precisely because the impassibility of God was a basic presupposition of all Christological doctrine.⁵⁰

The impassibility tradition had been upheld by Hilary of Poitiers, Augustine and later by the scholastic theologians, none of whom were able to break away from the language and conception of immutability derived from philosophical and Christian traditions. Hilary argues for the unchangeability and impassibility of the Logos: "For (Christ) was able to suffer, and yet the Word was

not passible. Passibility denotes a nature that is weak; but suffering in itself is the endurance of pains inflicted, and since the Godhead is immutable and yet the Word was made flesh, such pains found in Him a material which they could affect though the person of the Word had no infirmity or passibility. And so when he suffered his nature remained immutable, because like his Father, his person is of an impassible essence."⁵¹ Augustine saw *passio* as "a commotion of the mind contrary to reason" and therefore unfit for God.⁵² In Augustine's thought, anthropopathic language was incorporated into the Bible so as to accommodate to the human language and understanding. For instance, when the Bible speaks of divine emotions, Augustine in summary fashion explains them by placing them not in God's nature but in our perception:

God's repentance is not because of error; his anger has no ardor of a perturbed mind; his mercy does not have the compassionate misery suggested by the Latin term; the jealousy of God has no spite of mind. But the repentance of God refers to things ruled by his power which change expectedly for us; the anger of God is the punishment of sin; the mercy of God is providence, which does not allow those which it has subdued to love with impunity what it prohibits.⁵³

Augustine's influence was so strong that he provided the Western Christianity with the framework within which the discussion of the question of divine immutability and impassibility is held. Ever since Augustine, the paradox of a loving and an impassible God abided. Anselm, for one, in order to preserve the Aristotelian idea of divine impassivity, had to deny any real feelings of love and compassion in God Himself, maintaining that although we experienced God as compassionate, there was really no compassion in God Himself.⁵⁴ Anselm asked:

But how art thou compassionate, and at the same time passionless? For if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy with the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. But if thou art not compassionate, whence cometh so great consolation to the wretched?⁵⁵

Anselm's solution to the paradox of a compassionate and an impassible God is to assert that

... thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, but not compassionate in terms of thy being.

... Truly, thou art so in terms of our experience, but thou art not so in terms of thine own. For when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the feeling of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling. Therefore, thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched, and spare those who sin against thee; and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness.⁵⁶

Similarly, Thomas Aquinas upheld the impassibility tradition. Mozley writes of Aquinas: "The notion of a *Deus passibilis* is incompatible with the definition of a primary being who must be 'pure action without admixture of any potentiality, because potentiality itself is later action. Now everything which in any way is changed is in some way in a state of potentiality, whence it is obvious that God cannot in any way be changed'."⁵⁷ God is *actus purus*, and thus "(t)he passive *potentia* is wholly absent from Him, for *passio* is to be attributed to something only in respect of its deficiencies and imperfections," and cannot exist in God.⁵⁸ Aquinas baptizes impassibility into Christian theology by appealing to how Aristotle understands passion and God's nature.⁵⁹ John Russell writes:

As *Actus purus*, however, God's nature involves no potentiality and hence, no change. But passibility entails change. Therefore Thomas, like Aristotle, ascribes impassibility to his immutable God. He underscores that properties like deficiency, being acted upon from without, and imperfection characterize the nature of passive beings (cf. *Summa Theologica* 1.25.1). Contrastingly, God's acting upon other beings pertains to the *actus purus* nature of God. Accordingly, the idea of *Deus passibilis* contradicts Thomas' idea of a self-sufficient, purely actual, and unchanging God.⁶⁰

Theologians of the Reformation, except in the case of Luther,

the Socinians and of certain elements among some Anabaptists, did not bring about any breach with the ancient and medieval theologies in respect to the impassibility issue.⁶¹ The reformer John Calvin, for one, obviously assumed the impassibility of God, for he said: "Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched with hands."⁶² "By a very customary figure of speech," Mozley writes of Calvin, "(God) assumes and applies to Himself human passions."⁶³ The only reformer, who was receptive to the doctrine of *deus passibilis*, according to Mozley, was Martin Luther.⁶⁴ For Mozley, the communication of properties in Luther's exposition occurs not between the nature and the person but between the two natures. "The distinction which Cyril in his *Epistola Dogmatica* draws between the proper nature of the Word and the body which the Word had made His own vanishes in Luther's exposition."⁶⁵ Luther's doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* provided the most complete reciprocity between the divine and human natures and the mutual sharing of attributes.⁶⁶ If Christ suffered, God also suffered. It will be seen that for Luther the communication occurs not only from the human nature to the person but also in between the natures themselves. And so the suffering of Christ is predicated both of the Person of Christ and the divine nature. God suffered and died by virtue of hypostatic union *via* the *communicatio idiomatum*. More especially, Luther was highly critical of the understanding that the death of the Crucified One was treated as an event which affected only the "true man" but not "the true God." Simply put, Luther did not define the person of Christ by a prior doctrine of God, namely, the Greek idea of divine *apatheia*. The suffering of Jesus as God's own suffering, for Luther, lies in the unity of the personal identity—Jesus, the God-man *in toto*.⁶⁷

To conclude this chapter, I have provided a survey of theopaschite expressions in early church history in order to furnish the historical and theological context for the present task.⁶⁸ Chapter two will analyze Luther's *theologia crucis*, which is for him a theology of revelation centered on the incarnate and crucified Christ, not on any *a priori* doctrine of God.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 This book will use Althaus' term "dei-passionism" (God suffers) as descriptive of the Reformer's passibility position. See Paul Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p.197. See also Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ* trans. J.A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), p.171.

Chapter One: Divine Suffering in Early Church History

- 1 For further discussions on the passibility - impassibility debate, see John Mozley, *The Impassibility of God: A Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926); Joseph Hallman, *The Descent of God: Divine Suffering in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Lester, J. Kuypers, "The Suffering and Repentance of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 22 (Sept., 1969): 3-16; T.E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8 (Dec., 1955): 353-364; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 2., trans. George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 119-183; Gerald Wondra, "The Pathos of God," *The Reformed Review* 18 (Dec., 1964): 28-35; Richard Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God can Help' : Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9 (1984):6-12; Ronald Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," *The Christian Century* 103 (April 16, 1986): 385-289, and his "Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann and the Theopaschite Revolution," in *Festschrift: A Tribute to Dr. William Hordern*, ed. Walter Freitag (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press, 1985); B.H. Streeter, "The Suffering of God," *The Hibbert Journal* (April 1914): 603-611; H. Wheeler Robinson, *Suffering, Human and Divine* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Theology* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985); Kenneth J. Woolcombe, "The Pain of God," *Scottish Journal of*

Theology 20 (June, 1967): 129-148; Marcel Sarot, "Patricianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," *Religious Studies* 26 (1990): 363-385; Francis House, "The Barrier of Impassibility," *Theology* 83 (1980): 409 - 415; R.S. Franks, "Passibility and Impassibility," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 9, ed. James Hastings, (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1917), 658-659; Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Werner Elert, "Die Theopaschite Formel," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 75 (1950): 195-206; Edward Burnley, "The impassibility of God," *The Expository Times* 67 (1955/56): 90-91; Peter Forster, "Divine Passibility and the Early Christian Doctrine of God," in *The Power and Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1989); Lucien Richard, *What are they saying about the theology of Suffering?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992).

- 2 See Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us; A Systematic Inquiry into a concept of Divine Passibility* (The Hague: Martinus Nihhoff, 1974), p.28.
- 3 John Russell, "Impassibility and Pathos in Barth's Idea of God," *Anglican Theological Review* LXX:3 (1988), p.222.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p.233. See also Francis House, "The Barrier of Impassibility," *Theology* 83(1980), pp. 410-411; Colin Grant, "Possibilities for Divine Passibility," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 4 (1988), pp.6-8; Charles Taliaferro, "The Passibility of God," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989), p.218. The attributes of immutability and impassibility are closed related, but not equivalent. Immutability means that God does not change in any way, even from within, while impassibility suggests the impossibility of being affected by any other realities, even in the emotional sense.
- 5 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson & John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), p.228.
- 6 For further studies on the influence of Greek ideas upon classical Christianity, see Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 38-106; Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, ed. A. M. Fairbairn (London: William and Norgate, 1892), pp. 3-5, 114-115; Pannenberg, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God," pp. 134-137; Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, p.47. See also Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.354 who comments properly the consequences for the early church's embrace of the Platonic idea of the absolute: "much that was distinctive in Christianity was either lost

or falsely expressed, and alien elements which (were) imported into Christian thought have cursed theological thought ever since their time."

- 7 See McWilliams, *The Passion of God*, pp.10-11.
8. Bauckham, " 'Only the Suffering God can help'," p.7. See also Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, p.182. It is Hatch's observation that the writings of Philo have largely contributed to the sublimation of the Christian doctrine of God into the hellenistic worldview. For further study on Philo, see Joseph C. McLelland, *God the Anonymous. A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology* (The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1976), pp.23-44; Hallman, *The Descent of God*, pp.23-29.
- 9 Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.357. See also Cyril C. Richardson, ed. *Early Christian Fathers, in The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1853), pp.105, 118-119; Elert, "Die Theopaschite Formel," p.195.; Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p.63.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.357.
- 12 *Ibid.*, cf. Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p.33: "Irenaeus' view of God (late second century) is virtually the same. God is uncreated, unbegotten, incomprehensible, without figure, has no beginning or end, is impassible and immutable. The *Adversus Haereses* raises the question of divine impassibility because of the Gnostic creation myth. In his critique of the myth, the impropriety of divine feelings becomes Irenaeus' major theme."
- 13 McWilliams, *The Passion of God*, pp.11-12: "As the *via negativa* and Neoplatonic thought exercised more influence in doctrinal development, God's transcendence was further accentuated and anthropopathic language was summarily dismissed. Very early theologians began to distinguish between Christ's divine and human nature: his divine nature was impassible and his human nature was passible." See also Franks, "Passibility and Impassibility," p.658.
- 14 See Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp.30-332; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 176-180; John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Harper & Row, 1968), pp.100-123; Aloys Grillmeier,

- Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon* (451), vol. 1., trans. J. S. Bowden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964), pp.133-54.
- 15 See Hippolytus of Rome, *Contra Noetum*, ed. & trans. Robert Butterworth (London: Heythrop Monographs, 1977), p.42.
- 16 Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, trans. A. Souter (London: The MacMillan Co., 1920), 1, p.25.
- 17 See *Against Praxeas* 27. Tertullian means by 'Pater' the first person of the Trinity, whereas the modalists use 'Pater' in the sense of 'God *simpliciter*.' Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp.100, 112-113, 119-123. Franks, in his "Passibility and Impassibility," reports concerning the modalists that "there was only one God, impassible and invisible when He does not suffer and die, passible and visible when He suffers and dies" (p.658). This Patripassian Monarchianism only draws a distinction between the visible and the invisible "modes" of the one God, refusing to maintain a distinction between the Son and the Father.
- 18 See *Against Praxeas*, ch.1 as quoted in Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.358. Franks, in his "Passibility and Impassibility," p. 658, quotes Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* ii. 27: "Whatever attributes therefore you require as worthy of God, must be found in the Father, who is invisible and unapproachable, and placid, and(so to speak)the God of the philosophers; whereas those qualities which censure as unworthy must be supposed to be in the Son, who has been seen, and heard, and encountered, the Witness and Servant of the Father, uniting in Himself man and God."
- 19 See *Against Praxeas*, ch. 29 as quoted in Pollard, *ibid*.
- 20 Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p.38.
- 21 Clement, *Stromateis*, VI.9 as cited in Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.358. See also Hallman, *The Descent of God*, pp. 36-37.
- 22 Origen, *Contra Celsus* 8:384-85 as quoted in Hallman, *The Descent of God*, Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers) pp. 23-25. Moltmann argues on the basis of this text that in the patristic period, Origen is the "only one" who speaks theologically about God's suffering. But Moltmann ignores the developed theology of Origen.
- 23 See Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p.42 where *Contra Celsus* 7. 211-214 is quoted. Cf. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p.60, where *Contra Celsus* 4.

- 71-72 is quoted: "We do not therefore ascribe human passions to God, nor do we hold impious opinions about Him."
- 24 See Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp.63-72 where Gregory Thaumaturgus' monograph on divine impassibility was quoted and summarized. See also Hallman, *The Descent of God*, pp.46-48 and Forster, "Divine Passibility and the Early Christian Doctrine of God," pp.36-37.
- 25 McWilliams, *The Passion of God*, pp.12-13.
- 26 Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p.47.
- 27 *Against the Arians*, III. xxvi. 34 as cited in Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," pp. 258-259. Cf. Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p.83. Hallman recognized that the issue of divine impassibility became important in the fourth century because of Arianism. He writes: "If the Logos was changeable and capable of suffering, it could not have divine status."
- 28 Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.359. See also Justo González, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970-75), vol. 1, p.309; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, pp.381ff.
- 29 Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p.83.
- 30 Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians* 3.26. 32-33, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), vol. 4, pp.410-412. See also González, *A History of Christian Thought*, pp.298 & 300.
- 31 *Theological Oration*, IV.5 as cited in Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," p.359 and Bauckham, "Only the Suffering God can help," p.8. See also John Egan, "God-forsaken: The Crucified Christ or Suffering Humanity? Current Evaluation of Jürgen Moltmann's and Gregory Nazianzen's comments on the Crucified Christ's Cry of Abandonment," in *Tradition and Innovation*, ed. Jos. B. Gavin, S.J. (Regina: Champion College Press, 1983), p.63.
- 32 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Panegyric on his Brother S. Caesarius*, 7.23, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, 237.
- 33 Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp. 87ff. See also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp.278-290.
- 34 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), vol.2, p.727.

- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 728. See also Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 311-312.
- 36 See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 363-388.
- 37 See Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1981), p.46.
- 38 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 405.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 See Cyril of Alexandria, *The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius with the XII Anathematisms* in *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris: 1857-1866), vol. 77, col. 105. See also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp.406-412.
- 41 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 365. Cf. Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 47-48. See also Grant, "Possibilities for Divine Passibility," p.4
- 42 Cyril of Alexandria, *The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius with the XII Anathematisms*, vol. 77, col. 105.
- 43 See Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 50-52.
- 44 See George Miucumakes, "Monophysitism," in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed., J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 672-673.
- 45 A.A. Luce, *Monophysitism Past and Present: A Study in Christology* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1920), p.69.
- 46 Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, pp. 270-272; see also Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp. 95-96.
- 47 See J.A. McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession: (Text and Historical Context)': A Study in the Cyrilline Reinterpretation of Chalcedon," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35:2 (1984), p.240.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p.250. See also Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God," p.373.
- 49 *Second Council of Constantinople* (553), *anathema* 12 as cited in Norman Nagel, "Heresy, Doctor Luther, Heresy!' The Person and Work of Christ, "in *Seven-headed Luther. Essays in Commemoration of a*

Quincentenary 1483-1983, ed. Peter Newman Brooks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p.31

- 50 See Pelikan, *Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, pp. 270-271; McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession'," pp. 239ff.
- 51 See Hallman, *The Descent of God*, pp. 101-102, where he quoted Hilary's *De Synodis* 49, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 10. 516B-517A.
- 52 Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1950), p.263.
- 53 See Hallman, *The Descent of God*, p. 122, where he quoted *Contra Advers. Legis et Prophet* 1.20.40 in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris. 42, 627. Hallman comments that "although God is immutable and impassible for (Augustine), the Incarnate Word is *Deus humilis*. This points the way to another view, one that could have taken divine mutability and passibility seriously on the philosophical level. Obviously Augustine did not develop this view" (p.123).
- 54 See Rem. B. Edwards, "The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God," *Religious Studies* 14 (1978), pp.307-308.
- 55 See Anselm, *Proslogion*, ch. 8. in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, p.13 as cited by Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p. 248. Also quoted in MacWilliams, *The Passion of God*, p.13 and Edwards, "The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God," pp.13-14.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, pp. 113-114. See also Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, pp. 49-50.
- 58 *Ibid.* See also Michael Dodds, "Aquinas, Human Suffering and the Unchanging God of Love," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 330-344. Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 361-391.
- 59 See Russell, "Impassibility and Pathos in Barth's Idea of God," p.223.
- 60 *Ibid.* p.223. Russell further explains: "God's love involves only intellectual desire (for Thomas). Hence an immaterial God's intellectual desires concern neither sense-grounded nor bodily actions. Thomas thus reasons that God's love—an intellectually rooted desire—represents an *actio* rather than a *passio*. Thus God experiences love and nonetheless

- remains impassible" (Cf. *Summa Theologica* 1.20.1).
61. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p.119.
62. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles & ed. John T. McNeill in *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 1, bk. II. xiii. 2, p.484. Also quoted in Wondra, "The Pathos of God," p.28.
63. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p.121.
64. *Ibid.* See also McWilliams, *The Passion of God*, p.14, who sees in Luther the communication between the two natures. Cf. Wondra, "The Pathos of God," p.34. Wondra says that biblical revelation portrays God as one who has suffered in the cross of His Son, concerning whom "there is no talk ... of suffering only in the human nature. Moreover, there is no formulation of two natures in Christ. It belongs to His person as the mediator, the eternal High priest, that He is the God-man."
65. *Ibid.* See also Lienhard, *Witness to Jesus*, p.341.
66. See Woollcombe, "The Pain of God," pp. 137-138: "All the experiences of the Incarnate One, however endured, were experiences of the One Divine Person; and it was just because the cross was not the cross of a man but of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Cross saved." Cf. Franks, "Passibility and Impassibility," p. 658, who sees the cross as "a fresh point of contact between God and passibility in so far as the man Jesus Christ is regarded as the Incarnation of God." See also Galen Tinder, "Luther's Theology of Christian Suffering and Its Implications for Pastoral Care," *Dialog* 25:2 (1986), p.111. Tinder correctly perceives that Luther's notion of the *communicatio idiomatum* allows him to assert that in Christ, God himself suffered on the cross. "This proved an intolerable thought to those of Luther's age who were imbued with the Greek assumption that God is impassible and free of limitation and imperfection."
67. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, p.121. Mozley indicates that Luther's "retention of the doctrine of impassibility is crossed by his Christology."
68. See Wondra, "The Pathos of God," p.34. Wondra quotes Emil Brunner favorably: "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the theological doctrine of the Divine attributes, handed on from the Early Church, has been shaped by the Platonic and neo-Platonic idea of God, and not by the Biblical Idea" (p.31). Cf. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), p. 153. See also

H.M. Relton, *Studies in Christian Doctrine* (London: MacMillan, 1960), p. 79, where he makes a remarkably far-sighted statement: "There are many indications that the doctrine of the suffering of God is going to play a very prominent part in the theology of the age in which we live."