

# The Church as a Messianic Fellowship in Jürgen Moltmann's and Wolfhart Pannenberg's Public Ecclesiology: Constructing a Holistic and Participatory Pneumatology and Ecclesiology

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## KEY WORDS

| Pannenberg | Moltmann | Public Ecclesiology & Pneumatology |  
| Messianic Fellowship | Church & Society | Non-Violent Resistance |

## ABSTRACT

In this article, I critically put Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg in dialogue as to their understandings of the Creatorship of the Triune God and its implication for the Church's responsibility to witness and embody the divine life. This article seeks a theologically balanced reconstruction of the notion of divine transcendence and immanence and its implications for the churches' participation in public advocacy as a witness to the gospel of Christ. In this comparative and constructive work, I argue that the Triune God's transcendent immanence in creation is not only (self-) revelatory, but also co-suffering yet liberative, and that accordingly, living in compassionate solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalized is determinant to the Church's identity as a messianic fellowship. The liturgical life of the Church shines forth the reality of the kingdom of God as its sign. At the same time, the Church is to participate in the continuous divine liberation of the world in order to be the authentic body of Jesus Christ. This life of Christians is to be non-violent but resistant to the injustice that stands against the life-affirming Spirit of Christ. It seeks a Christian witness through public advocacy that is grounded in the Trinitarian revelation. .

## INTRODUCTION

The approaches of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann to theology are similar, but, at the same time, they are discrepant. A notable similarity between the two theologians' approaches is that both theologians bring the hope for the eschatological kingdom of God into the center of the Christian life. They both stress in their theology the power of the future over the present. However, whereas Moltmann is interested in relating his theology to the experiences of life, especially the problem of suffering, Pannenberg tends to focus more on presenting a coherent and mutual dialogue between theology and other academic disciplines in pursuit of the Truth of God who

is the "unifying unity" of all reality.<sup>1</sup>

This seems to logically lead to the difference in their views of the power of the future over the present. In the conflict between the divine promise of the kingdom of God and the reality of the present world, Moltmann regards the promised future of God as a transformative overcoming of creatures' suffering from evil in the present creation. Pannenberg, on the other hand, regards the promised future of God as the driving force which leads different pieces of history into unity and totality, based on his view of history as the sphere of a gradual divine

1 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonough (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 336, 368.

revelation.

This difference is reflected in their distinct views of the Church as a messianic fellowship. For Moltmann, the Church is a messianic fellowship, which is called to embody the reality of the kingdom of God in the presence and the power of the Spirit. At the same time, the Church understands the “creative tension” between the reality of its contemporary world and its hope for the future kingdom of God as the history of the Spirit that makes all things in creation new.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the fact that the Church lives in the tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ does not make the Church withdraw from the contemporaneous context of its life but makes the Church “a messianic fellowship in the world and for the world.”<sup>3</sup> According to Moltmann, “the synoptic writers, in the tradition of Deutero-Isaiah [40-55], evidently present Jesus as the One who brings the good news of the expected last time.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom to the poor and called them into the genuine liberty of the eschatological kingdom of God. In his life, cross, and resurrection, he was regarded as the eschatological Son of Man or the herald of the kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup>

The category of the poor is comprehensive in that they represent not only those who suffer from physical, social, and economic poverty but also those who experience psychological, moral, and religious poverty.<sup>6</sup> The poor according to Mark and Luke include “all those who just have to endure the acts of violence and injustice without their ability to defend themselves

against oppression, injustice, violence.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, the Church is called to the same messianic ministry in the presence and the power of the Spirit of Christ.

Like Moltmann, Pannenberg regards the Church as an eschatological community that participates in the creative and redemptive work of the Triune God that embraces the whole of humanity and the entire creation.<sup>8</sup> What defines the Church as a “messianic fellowship” is the inner liturgical life of the Church as the sign of the kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup> The Church’s political ethic is important also for Pannenberg since the Church is the sign of the kingdom that will be the renewal of this world. However, as discussed in this article, unlike Moltmann, Pannenberg does not regard the active standing in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed as a kernel of the Church as a messianic fellowship.

In my view, the difference in their understandings of the Church as a messianic fellowship seems to lie in the dissimilitude of their understanding of the Spirit’s presence in the world. For Moltmann, “The messianic community belongs to the Messiah and the messianic word.”<sup>10</sup> In present creation, the Spirit of Christ continues to stand in solidarity with the suffering of creatures that originates in the conflict between the present and the promised eschatological new creation.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, for Pannenberg, the work of the Spirit is observable to the public eye in

2 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 279, 286.

3 Ibid., 198.

4 Ibid., 78.

5 Ibid., 215-24.

6 Ibid., 79.

7 Ibid.

8 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), vol.3, 98. Henceforth, *ST III*.

9 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 65.

10 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 226. In his *God in Creation*, Moltmann also calls the Church “a messianic fellowship of service for the kingdom of God.” *God in Creation*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 228-29.

11 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 69

his framework of the concept of God as the all-determining reality.<sup>12</sup> That is, while the eschaton as the all-determining reality is still hidden from us, the work of the Spirit continues to be revealed in the history of the world.

In this article, I argue that the presence of the Spirit of Christ is not only revelatory but also represents God’s redemptive co-suffering in creation, and that accordingly, living in compassionate solidarity with the oppressed in the world is determinant to the Church’s identity as a messianic fellowship. The liturgical life of the Church shines forth the reality of the kingdom of God as its sign. At the same time, the Church is to participate in the continuous divine liberation of the world in order to be the authentic body of Jesus Christ.

To that end, I first perform a comparative evaluation of Moltmann’s and Pannenberg’s concepts of the Church as a messianic fellowship. I ground this evaluation on my critical engagement with their understandings of the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world. In so doing, I also make a constructive suggestion as to Pannenberg’s view of the presence of the Spirit in the world through employing Sallie McFague’s concept of religious language as a metaphor. Also, I suggest non-violent resistance as an example of the Church’s solidarity with the oppressed. I believe this work is significant as it brings into light the holistic nature of the Spirit’s Creatorship.<sup>13</sup> In so

12 Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 344. Also, see his *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), vol. 1, 158-161 (Henceforth, *ST I*) as well as Ted Peters, “Introduction,” in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature*, ed. Ted Peters (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 13-4.

13 According to José Comblin, in the Western Christian traditions, the disconnection between the Wisdom Christology and the Logos Christology eventually led to the ignoring of the cosmic role of the Spirit and the institutionalization of the Spirit for the sake of the salvation of a person’s soul. The Spirit was regarded as engaging with the inner piety of a believer through the celebration of the sacraments and the hearing of the Word of God. In this

doing, this article investigates how the followers of Christ are invited by the Spirit to engage with the secular sectors of society by participating in the redemptive yet co-suffering presence of the Spirit in the world.

## II. THE COMMONALITY OF MOLTSMANN’S AND PANNENBERG’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH FOR THE WORLD AS A MESSIANIC FELLOWSHIP

For both Pannenberg and Moltmann, in the tension between “already” and “not yet,” the Church as a messianic fellowship is called to proclaim the eschatological coming of the kingdom of God in the world. It appears obvious that, for both of Moltmann and Pannenberg, the fulfillment of the kingdom of God is both apocalyptic and historical. To be more specific, based on the resurrection of Jesus, Moltmann affirms that the Spirit continues to faithfully fulfill in this world the universal reality of the resurrection as an eschatological reality that God promised in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here, Moltmann regards the reality of the kingdom of God as *adventus* that breaks into the present with the new possibilities from the promised new creation, whereas *futurum* is extrapolated from the processes of the past and the present.<sup>14</sup> This eschatological reality can

way, the Western soteriology finally led to the opposition between salvation that is detached from the liberation of the world, and a liberation of the world divorced from God. José Comblin, *The Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR : Wipf & Stock, 2004), 15. It was not until Vatican II that the Western Churches began to rediscover the Creatorship of the Christ and the Spirit. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 57.

14 Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 58, 212. Likewise, the resurrection of Jesus is both apocalyptic and historical in that it is an event transformative of the present

be hoped for only in “the trust that God will remain faithful to his promise” just as what took place in the bodily resurrection of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

For Moltmann, Logos Christology is originally Wisdom Christology, and is as such cosmic Christology.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, we can categorize Christ’s mediation in creation into three different phases: “(a) Christ as the ground of the creation of all things (*creatio originalis*), (b) Christ as the moving power in the evolution of creation (*creatio continua*), (c) Christ as the redeemer of the whole of creation (*creatio nova*).”<sup>17</sup> Cosmic Christology is inseparable from the cosmic pneumatology. According to 1 Peter 3:19, in the body, Jesus was put to death and brought back to life by the power of the Spirit. In Romans 8:11, Jesus Christ became the first fruit of the general resurrection. For Moltmann, the whole of creation awaits the resurrection in the Spirit in whose power Jesus rose from the dead. In that sense, the Spirit is the pledge of the kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup> In *creatio continua*, the Son and the Spirit are the two hands of the Father working together in unity toward the fulfillment of creation.

Likewise, for Pannenberg, “[t]he Spirit as the source of life as a whole and the dynamic field in which creatures exist, and finds its eschatological salvation.”<sup>19</sup> Based on the bodily resurrection of Jesus as a proleptic event of the new creation, Pannenberg contends that the

Spirit as the power of the eschatological future is immanent in the present creation through continuing to fulfill the promised eschatological kingdom of God. While creation as a whole is contingent on the Creatorship of the Triune God, throughout *creatio continua*, the faithfully creative presence of the Son and the Spirit indirectly demonstrates who God is. That is, “as God fulfills God’s vows.”<sup>20</sup>

In this regard, for both Moltmann and Pannenberg, since the eschaton is not only the goal of creation but also the basis of creation, the Triune God’s Creatorship bears a fundamentally soteriological dimension.<sup>21</sup> In the context of their understanding of God’s creation and redemption of the present creation, the Church as a messianic fellowship is essentially *missionary* for the world. Moltmann affirms that the Church is to be missionary because it is essentially “relational to God and to the world.”<sup>22</sup> Being missionary embraces the political nature of the ministry of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Pannenberg also defines the Church as “essentially missionary” as its existence points to the coming kingdom of God that represents the consummation of history.<sup>24</sup> Only in the eschaton can the present creation find its telos and ultimate meaning under the just and peaceful reign of God.<sup>25</sup> In my view, both Pannenberg and Moltmann advance their public ecclesiology based on their cosmic pneumatology and in their eschatological ontology of creation.

“embodied” creation while it cannot be conceived based on the past and present experiences. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 247-52.

15 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 149.

16 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 282.

17 Ibid., 286.

18 Ibid., 45. For his discussion of the relationship between logos Christology and spirit Christology, see *ibid.*, 73-8.

19 Stanely Grenz, *The Reason for Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 275.

20 Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History,” in *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays*, 19 [13-80].

21 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 94-6. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), vol. 2, 77-84, 388-394. Henceforth, *ST II*.

22 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 19.

23 Ibid., 1-18.

24 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 46.

25 Pannenberg, *ST II*, 173-4.

### III. THE DISSONANCE BETWEEN THE TWO THEOLOGIANS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE MESSIANIC FELLOWSHIP

In comparing Moltmann's and Pannenberg's ecclesiology, I see disparities between Moltmann's and Pannenberg's notions of the Church as a messianic fellowship. I contend that their ecclesiological views diverge because of the divergence of their pneumatology. To be more specific, as Christ is in the world as the co-suffering and liberating risen Lord, the Spirit of Christ is in that messianic presence.<sup>26</sup> The Church is to participate in the mission of the Spirit of Christ by standing in compassionate solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed, who bear the name of "ochlos."<sup>27</sup> For this reason, Moltmann affirms that "[h]ope for God's kingdom and the experience of poverty among the people of the poor, the sad, and the suffering, go together."<sup>28</sup>

Moltmann calls for recognizing the dialectic of eschatology and history when the present is in "discord" with the eschatological future.<sup>29</sup> In that sense, the Church is called to actualize "the possibilities of the messianic era, which brings the gospel of the kingdom to the poor, which proclaims the lifting up of the downtrodden. . . , and begins the glorification of the coming God through actions of hope in the fellowship of the poor, the sad and those condemned to silence, so that it may lay hold on all men."<sup>30</sup> This messianic life is "neither to be legalistic,

nor moralistic", but is lived out of freedom.<sup>31</sup> In order for this life of mutuality, freedom, and unity to be lived out, the renewal of a life is to be a holistic redemption, in which body and soul are transformed into conformity to the reality of the kingdom of God.<sup>32</sup>

For Pannenberg, on the other hand, the active political and social participation of the believers in solidarity with the oppressed and the marginalized does not seem to be essential to the life of the Church as a messianic fellowship. I notice that for Pannenberg, living out the ethic of the kingdom of God is irreducible in the Christian faith. While the cosmic Spirit is working towards the universal consummation of the history of the world, the Spirit's ministry within the Church is distinctive. It always relates to the history of Jesus as well as the eschatological reality – namely, a corporate life of the entire humanity in freedom and justice in the kingdom of God – which has already dawned in Jesus' resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

However, Pannenberg does not believe that an active act of standing in solidarity with the oppressed constitutes the kernel of the Church's identity as a messianic community. He emphasizes "the Church's function as a witness to the incomplete nature of any human political structure."<sup>34</sup> His affirmation is based on his belief that the kingdom of God is not established by the human capacity to accomplish the order of the peace and justice that belong to the kingdom of God.<sup>35</sup> It is crucial for the Church to perceive the discontinuity between political actions and the coming of the kingdom of God.

26 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 93-4. Also, see his *The Spirit of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 62-64.

27 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 124.

28 Ibid., 127.

29 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 49. [emphasis mine]

30 Ibid., 226-27.

31 Ibid., 278.

32 Ibid., 280.

33 Ibid., 20.

34 Stanley Grenz, *Reason for Hope* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2005), 247.

35 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 42-6.

Therefore, as Stanley Grenz points out, while Pannenberg emphatically limits Christian political actions, he sharply articulates the limits of Christian fellowship.<sup>36</sup> In his *What is Man?*, while Pannenberg supports the responsibility of a government to protect the boundaries of freedom, he does not take into serious account that there are at times the need for active reforms to be made in favor of the marginalized and the oppressed.<sup>37</sup>

Rather, for Pannenberg the Church serves this role primarily through celebrating the proleptic presence of the future rule of God by means of the pure proclamation of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments – especially the Eucharist.<sup>38</sup> To put it differently, the Church “can only try to fulfill its function as a sign pointing to God’s kingdom . . . in its liturgical life.”<sup>39</sup> The Church becomes a messianic fellowship by means of “the celebration of the proleptic presence of the future rule of God in [its] worship life.”<sup>40</sup> In this liturgical life, the Church as a messianic fellowship becomes inherently missionary as the people of God that turns the world toward the anticipation of a renewed humanity as the witness to the kingdom of God.<sup>41</sup>

Pannenberg’s view diverges from Moltmann’s understanding of the messianic identity of the Church. For Moltmann, Article VII of the Augsburg Confession and Article III of the Barmen Declaration is right to affirm that the presence of the Church is “not restricted merely to the pure preaching of the gospel and the right

administration of the sacraments.”<sup>42</sup> Rather, the Church is to be seen as present where creation is liberated from the powers of sin and death through Christ’s on-going saving presence in *creatio continua* through the presence of the Spirit.

#### IV. MOLTMANN AND PANNENBERG IN DIVERGENCE ON THE SPIRIT’S PRESENCE IN CREATION

In my analysis, Moltmann’s and Pannenberg’s discrete understandings of a messianic fellowship consist in their different perspectives of the presence of the Spirit in creation. To be specific, Moltmann believes the Incarnation is “an event of the past which opens up the divine future in an eschatological sense.”<sup>43</sup> The Incarnation constitutes the ground of our understanding of God’s “holistic” redemption of God’s creation from all the powers of sin, death, and evil.

This redemptive history of God in creation is inherently the Triune God’s standing in co-suffering solidarity with creatures suffering from the dominating powers of sin, death, and evil. When the Son was crucified, the Father himself experienced “abandonment in the form of this death and this rejection.”<sup>44</sup> Yet this is not to be regarded as representing a form of *patripassianism*. The Father and the Son suffer on the cross but in different manners. “When the Son suffers the pain and death of the cross, the Father gives up and suffers the loss of the Son.”<sup>45</sup> Also, the Spirit, who binds the Father

36 Ibid., 247-48.

37 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man?*, trans. Duane Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 103.

38 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 101.

39 Ibid., xv.

40 Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 247.

41 Ibid.

42 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 65.

43 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 212.

44 Ibid.

45 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. Magaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 54.

and the Son in love, suffers the pain that the Father and the Son shares on the cross.<sup>46</sup> In that sense, Moltmann sees the cross as the locus of the Trinitarian suffering.

The cross as the Trinitarian suffering is central to the mode of the Trinitarian involvement in the world in the interpretive light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup> While Jesus’ resurrection corresponds to the eschatological new creation of the world, Christ’s suffering on the cross corresponds to the suffering of creation like a birth pang for the new creation.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, in the light of the resurrection of Jesus in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), the co-suffering presence of the Spirit on the cross means the Spirit’s liberating presence in *creatio continua*.<sup>49</sup> As the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit’s presence is to be regarded as compassionate yet liberative. The Spirit becomes “most concrete and deepest in the midst of our suffering,”<sup>50</sup> just as Jesus enjoyed heart-to-heart table fellowship (Mark 2:13-7) with the poor and sinners, and he suffered on the cross so they could be redeemed from the power of sin and death. In that co-suffering presence, the Spirit carries on the messianic liberation of creation towards the fulfillment of the eschatological new creation. In that vein, Moltmann writes, “God does not desire to find rest without the new creation of man and the world with the Spirit.”<sup>51</sup> This is the Triune God’s own history of overcoming of the present sinful states that contradict the kingdom of God.<sup>52</sup>

46 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 210.

47 Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 184.

48 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 172.

49 Richard Baucham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (NY: T&T Clarke, 1995), 187-9.

50 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 336.

51 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 63.

52 Timothy Harvie, “Living the Future: The Kingdom of

For Pannenberg, on the other hand, while actualizing the Trinitarian life in the history of creation, God rarely co-suffers with creatures in *creatio continua*. Pannenberg identifies the Spirit as “the force field of God’s mighty presence,”<sup>53</sup> which is analogous to the notion of the energy-time-force field advanced by Michael Faraday. The Spirit as the all-embracing field works in all creatures as “the vitalizing principle, the lure of independent creatures to self-transcendence as the power of ecstasy.”<sup>54</sup> The Spirit brings into being “independent creatures,” and lures them toward harmony in self-transcendence. This lure toward harmony is the lure to the eschatological future in that the perfect unity among creatures only lies in the eschatological kingdom of God.<sup>55</sup>

Here, the principle of creation can be seen as the Logos, while the Spirit is regarded as the source of the movement and life of creatures.<sup>56</sup> The historical ground of this affirmation is Christ’s “self-distinction” from the Father in his life and cross, and his unity with the Father in the Spirit that reaches the climax at his resurrection.<sup>57</sup> The work of the Logos and the Spirit finds expression in “the ecstatic nature” of independent organic lives.<sup>58</sup> However, the creatures’ free responses to the Spirit’s ecstatic lure toward the eschatological unity are subject

God in The Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* vol.10 No.2 (Apr. 2008), 153-6.

53 Pannenberg, *ST I*, 382.

54 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God,” in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, ed. W. Pannenberg, A. Dulles, & E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 23 [13-31].

55 Pannenberg, *ST II*, 144-6.

56 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 4.

57 Pannenberg *ST II*, 183.

58 Pannenberg, “The Spirit in Creation and the People of God,” in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, eds. W. Pannenberg, A. Dulles, and C.E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 36.

to fail. Their final judgment is hidden until the eschatological consummation of history when the Son as the principle of creation becomes the judge.<sup>59</sup>

I think Pannenberg focuses on the creative and revelatory dimensions of *creatio continua* whereas Moltmann does not. For Pannenberg, the Spirit is the pledge of the eschaton that gives the existence and meaning to the past and the present. Yet he does not emphasize the co-suffering solidarity of Christ and the Spirit in creation. Ironically, while Pannenberg regards the transcendent immanence of the Son and the Spirit as the ground of the genuine contingency of creatures, he tends to ignore the transformative conflict between the present and the future of God in the latter's inbreaking into the former. Rather, Pannenberg claims that "the absence of God is the negative side of his futurity. In Jesus' message, it is only as future that God is present."<sup>60</sup> In this statement, Pannenberg even speaks of the sinful state of the present creation as God's absence rather God's compassionate overcoming of the power of death and sin through co-suffering with creatures.

Accordingly, Moltmann contends that Pannenberg's political ethics follows from "his emphasis on the anticipatory character of the message and resurrection of Jesus and from his neglect of the contradictory character of Jesus' message and resurrection."<sup>61</sup> Timothy Harvey concurs with Moltmann's assertion writing that "Pannenberg views the kingdom present only in expectation aroused from proclamation, rather than materially present in Christ's person and acts in a penultimate sense."<sup>62</sup> Accordingly,

59 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 608-20.

60 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 68.

61 Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 112.

62 Timothy Harvie, "Living the Future," 154.

Pannenberg seems to focus on the cognitively revelatory dimension of the Trinitarian creation and the all-embracing aspect of the eschatological kingdom of God, while not interpreting the gap between the present and the kingdom of God as the suffering presence of God in the world.

Like Pannenberg, Moltmann also affirms that since God reveals Godself proleptically in the Christ event, our knowledge of the kingdom of God has the character of anticipation of the end of history. Nevertheless, Moltmann differentiates himself from Pannenberg by holding that Christian proclamation is not to be centered on offering total interpretations of the world and seeking the harmonization among the sundry pieces of history.<sup>63</sup> Rather, the Christian proclamation of the gospel is to be heard as "the language of liberation."<sup>64</sup> In other words, what connects the past and the present to the future is not a substance that penetrates the whole of history, but rather the hope that points beyond any given moment, which is transformative, healing, and renewing.

## V. TOWARD A MORE HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE SPIRIT: THE CO- SUFFERING AND LIBERATIVE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Pannenberg believes that God reveals God-self indirectly through historical events by making promises and fulfilling them. In the same vein, Robert Jenson contends that God, according to the gospel, is the God of the future who is not the God of atemporal eternity. For Jenson, it is problematic to see God as an atemporal

63 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 215.

64 Ibid.

one, because that kind of notion makes God as "a God of the past,"<sup>65</sup> which contradicts the gospel's portrayal of God as the One who comes from the future of God opening up the horizons of hope for the future. However, as discussed above, Pannenberg rarely discusses the co-suffering presence of Jesus Christ in the development of history as Moltmann does.

Against Pannenberg, I affirm that the lack of awareness of Christ's co-suffering and liberating presence in the world should be problematic, since such a view is not faithful to the way in which the Trinitarian God is involved in the world as the Creator and the Redeemer. The Triune God is to be seen as present in history as the One who suffers with those who suffer and redeem what God created. To be specific, the Spirit, "the Spirit of God," is also the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7) and "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). The New Testament's (NT) images of the Spirit are "thoroughly Christological, as its Christology is thoroughly Trinitarian."<sup>66</sup> If so, the Spirit is the One who continues to be not only revelatory but also renewing co-suffering in *creatio continua*. That is, "rather than a neutral observer of world events, [the Spirit] is to be seen as pathetic."<sup>67</sup>

According to C.F.D. Moule, the concept of "wisdom" in the OT breaks down into the Logos and the Spirit in the NT; thus, both the Logos and the Spirit has a "cosmic" dimension just like the OT notion of wisdom. Jesus Christ was empowered by the Spirit as the breath of life for the whole of creation, and after the cross and resurrection, the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit who makes universal not

only the scope of the work of Christ but also the work of Christians for the world. Even though in the NT the Spirit is more often used to describe the work of Christ in the believers in Christ, its matrix is the presence of the Spirit who effects the work of Christ in creation in general.<sup>68</sup>

Likewise, one may also find the universality of both the concept of the Logos and wisdom in the writings of the church fathers like Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus.<sup>69</sup> Ted Peters writes, "Like wisdom, the Logos organizes the creation, and like wisdom the Spirit as the life-giving power . . . Both are universal in scope."<sup>70</sup> That is, according to 1 Peter 3:19, in the body, Jesus was put to death and brought back to life by the power of the Spirit. In Romans 8:11, Jesus Christ became the first fruit of the general resurrection, and in Romans 8:18-22, the whole of creation awaits the renewal in the Spirit in whose power Jesus rose from the dead.

Accordingly, first, I think that the presence of the Spirit of Christ is to be regarded as redemptive in creation in a holistic way.<sup>71</sup> Jesus Christ's continuous compassionate ministry in the world through the presence of the Spirit liberates the whole of the world from the power of death, sin, and evil. As 2 Cor. 3:17 says, "Where there is the Spirit of the Lord, there is freedom." Just as the Spirit empowered the messianic life of Jesus of Nazareth, "the Spirit acts in the world to incorporate all humanity and creation into the Sonship of Christ and reconcile them with

68 C.F.D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 19-21.

69 Theophilus of Antioch, *Autoclycus*, 2:15; Irenaeus of Lyons, *Heresies*, 4.7.4. (Accessible at <http://www.ccel.org>)

70 Ted Peters, *God - The World's Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 253.

71 In that vein, the Spirit is universally present in creation, in that "God's ruach is the life force immanent in all the living, in body, sexuality, ecology, and politics" (Job 33:4, 13ff.; Ps. 104:29ff.). Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 225-6.

65 Robert W. Jenson, *God after God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1969), 22.

66 Anselm Kyongsuk Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World* (New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 95.

67 Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 349.

God the Father, so that God will be all in all.”<sup>72</sup> This transformation entails the overcoming of all alienating, oppressive, and ungodly divisions in the community of God’s good creation. The ultimate triumph over the power of death and sin is promised in the “bodily” resurrection of Jesus. As Gustavo Gutierrez writes, “the eschatological promise is a historical promise”<sup>73</sup> which affirms “the renewal of this-worldly realities in the coming of the new creation as part of the coming of the new creation.”<sup>74</sup>

Second, this liberating presence of the Spirit entails divine co-suffering in the process of renewing God’s loved creatures including their physical, psychological, and political dimensions. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes, “[Jesus’] healings are the signs of profound sympathy and of co-suffering (Matt. 14:14), similar to giving leadership to confused people (Mark 6:34; Matt. 9:36) or providing food for the hungry (Mark 8:2; Matt. 15:32).”<sup>75</sup> Likewise, Moltmann argues that Jesus’ healing of the sick signifies the coming of the kingdom of God as it represents the liberation of people from the bondage of sin and death that oppresses their minds and bodies.<sup>76</sup>

All in all, the healing ministry of Jesus signifies his compassionate participation in the suffering of the poor and the oppressed as well as his liberation of those people from the powers of sin and death.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, the Spirit of Christ

carries out the messianic ministry of Christ for the oppressed and the poor in his earthly life. In that vein, Justo Gonzalez contends that Scripture is to be read in the grammar of politics.<sup>78</sup> The stories of Scripture speak of God’s liberation of the oppressed and need to be translated into the life of the people who are suffering in a particular type of oppression.<sup>79</sup>

## VI. CONSIDERING COMPATIBLE MEATAPHORS FOR THE SPIRIT

Accordingly, I affirm that Pannenberg’s pneumatology needs to more robustly correspond to Jesus Christ’s messianic life for the poor and the oppressed. While Denis Edwards agrees with Pannenberg’s description of the Spirit as “the power of the future that gives creatures their present and duration,” he goes beyond this idea. Edwards maintains that “the Spirit is far more than an impersonal life-giving power.”<sup>80</sup> The Spirit is the personal presence of the loving Creator. Above all, the Spirit’s presence is “the faithful companion with every creature, accompanying each with love, delighting in each, suffering with each in its suffering, and promising its future in God.”<sup>81</sup>

I think Pannenberg needs to seriously consider the “co-suffering” and “liberating” presence of the Spirit in the world. Thereby, his

72 Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, 98.

73 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 153.

74 Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 374.

75 Ibid., 66.

76 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 108.

77 Jesus was born into the group of the people of Israel who were suffering from the oppression by their religious leaders and the Roman Empire. In the Incarnation, God made himself known in their history by becoming Incarnate as one of them. Jesus was one of the oppressed as we can see in the fact that at his birth, Joseph and Mary

had to flee with the baby Jesus to avoid the King Herod’s killing (Matt. 2:13-23). In that vein, James Cone maintains that it is crucial to see Jesus Christ as the Son who became “the Oppressed One” to liberate all people suffering from oppression. James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1970), 116.

78 Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 83-6.

79 Ibid., 89.

80 Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 83.

81 Ibid.

view of the Church as a messianic fellowship can include the Church’s response to the divine call to actively get involved in the Trinitarian history of liberation through standing in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. In so doing, Pannenberg’s view of the Church as a messianic fellowship could bear a more transformative character amidst the unsettled conflict between the eschatological promise and the situations of suffering at present.

Pannenberg understands the Spirit as the Spirit of unity since he writes that “in the Eucharistic feast, believers feast with one another in their anticipation of their fellowship with God in the eschatological kingdom of God.”<sup>82</sup> Yet what his idea of the Spirit lacks is “the self-sacrificial, persistent, and caring love of a mother”<sup>83</sup> that was revealed in the life, ministry, and passion of Jesus Christ. If this aspect of the Spirit were considered, his notion of the Church as a messianic fellowship would embrace the Church’s participation in Christ’s persistent messianic liberation of the world in the presence of the Spirit. Langdon Gilkey argues that Pannenberg’s theological tendency that moves God to the future seems to inevitably weaken the motivation of the Church to take political action.<sup>84</sup>

While holding on to the concept of the Spirit as the creative and life-giving field, Pannenberg would be able to conceive of other metaphors of the Spirit, since the Spirit is not bound to one metaphor. Pannenberg would be able to take into consideration a “more interpersonal analogy” that appositely expresses the Spirit’s self-sacrificial, persistent, and caring love”

which resembles that of a mother.<sup>85</sup> Like Pannenberg argues, I think the doctrine of the Spirit generally speaks of “how God creates and recreates the world so as to unite all things with himself in the intimacy of his own divine life, so that God may be ‘all in all’ (1 Cor. 15:28).”<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, we should also notice that the biblical images of the Spirit are rich in content. For instance, with regard to the activity of the Spirit, Scripture speaks not only of his making choices (1 Cor. 12:11), guiding (John 16:13), and teaching (John 14:26), but also of being resisted (Acts 7:51), being grieved (Eph. 4:30), being quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), and even being blasphemed (Matt. 12:31). In Romans 8:26, it is said, “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” In all these, the Spirit gently empowers creatures in love like a dove (Matt. 3:16) and clothing (Acts 1:8). As is seen in these examples, the notions of the Spirit are comprehensive since the work and the attributes of the Spirit are comprehensive.

When considering this comprehensive nature of the Spirit, Sallie McFague’s notion of religious language as a metaphor can help extend the horizons of Pannenberg’s perspective of the Spirit. McFague points out that human language is creative, in the sense that it constructs our worldviews including religious perspectives. Yet when considering the limitations of human language, on the one hand, we should notice that there is not one exclusively valid construction.<sup>87</sup> Any theological concept or language has both continuity and discontinuity with the real identity of God due

82 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 107.

83 Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 349.

84 Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 234-6.

85 Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 349.

86 Min, *The Solidarity of Others*, 100.

87 Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 21-8.

to its inherent limitations. McFague argues that viewing theological language as “metaphorical” is adequate. The rationale behind the view of theological language as metaphors is to “refuse to identify human constructions with divine reality.”<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the Spirit of Christ finds expression in multiple concepts and terms so it can be more fully comprehended. Pannenberg’s understanding of the Spirit reflects significant aspects of the nature of the Spirit’s presence in creation. Nonetheless, I think Pannenberg needs to consider other dimensions of the Spirit too. Pannenberg’s notion of the Spirit as the creative life-giving field does not necessarily have to be given up while including the redemptive co-suffering of the Spirit in his pneumatology. In the light of the promise of the new creation manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the suffering is to be seen as a birth pang or an apocalyptic birth pang for the eschatological new creation.

## VII. THE MESSIANIC FELLOWSHIP THAT BEARS JESUS CHRIST’S CROSS FOR THE WORLD

All in all, the immanence of the Spirit is not only creative and revelatory but also co-suffering as well as liberative. Christ is in steadfast solidarity with the suffering world through the presence of the Spirit. As Pannenberg affirms, it is theologically proper to contend that in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments, one can

88 Ibid., 22. McFague attempts re-mythologization of theological language in the contemporary context, rather than stopping at a deconstruction or demythologization process as many Western deconstructionist philosophers do. For McFague, we cannot directly know the nature of God, but only indirectly and in a mediated way because “God-language can refer [to its referent] only through the detour of a description that probably belongs elsewhere.” Ibid., 34.

have hope for the eschatological kingdom of God that is promised in the resurrection of Christ.<sup>89</sup> Moltmann also finds the distinctiveness of the Church as a messianic fellowship in its being a foretaste of the world’s future. In that sense, the kerygma of Jesus Christ and the sacraments represent the eschatological hope for the kingdom of God revealed in the life, message, cross, and resurrection of Christ. In the Spirit they represent the liberating presence of Christ.<sup>90</sup>

I agree with Moltmann that the presence of the Church as a messianic fellowship should not be limited to the truthful proclamation of the pure gospel and the right administration of the sacraments.<sup>91</sup> Rather, the Church is called to participate in the on-going transformative work of Christ in today’s world because the Church is living in “*eschatologia crucis*” in which the Spirit is in redemptive co-suffering in and with creation to faithfully fulfill the new creation.<sup>92</sup> If so, I believe that the church is called to participate in the messianic call of the Spirit in the world. The Church is founded on “a twofold divine economy: the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit.”

According to the legacy of the Eastern tradition, while the Church is the body of Christ, the Spirit is the fullness of the Church.<sup>93</sup> This is because, like I discussed as to the inextricable relationship between logos Christology and spirit or wisdom Christology, there is a mutual relationship between Christ and the Spirit.<sup>94</sup> That is, while the Son become incarnate and works in the power of the cosmic Spirit (Eph. 1:23), the

89 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 99-110.

90 Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 200-60.

91 Ibid., 65.

92 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 154.

93 Vladimir Lossky, *The Mythical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1991), 157, 174.

94 Ibid., 158-9.

same Spirit is sent by the Son (John 15:26) and reveals the Son (John 16:14). In the same vein, Basil claimed that "Christ comes, the Spirit goes before. [Christ] is in the flesh, and the Spirit is inseparable from him."<sup>95</sup>

I notice that Pannenberg also contends that it is improper for the Church to be disinterested in the political issues because the Church is the sign of the kingdom of God that will be the eschatological reality of this world. Nevertheless, Pannenberg sharply articulates the limits of a Christian political action. Furthermore, the Church's active political action in solidarity with the oppressed of society does not constitute the kernel of the Church as a messianic fellowship as I discussed in the previous sections.

Unlike Moltmann, Pannenberg does not see the coming of the kingdom of God as a process that involves the co-suffering solidarity of the Triune God. Accordingly, Pannenberg does not see the divine call for the Church to work with God who suffers with the world and keeps liberating the world in its birth pang for the new creation. Rather, Pannenberg does not go beyond the emphasis of the Church's function as a witness to the incomplete nature of any human political structure through the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Here Moltmann certainly contributes to Pannenberg's ecclesiology.

### VIII. COMPASSIONATE SOLIDARITY THROUGH NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

I think that a way in which the Church can stand in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed is non-violent resistance. In his book,

95 Basil, *De Spiritu Santo*, 19:49. Cited by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2002), 71-2.

*I Have a Dream*, Martin Luther King, Jr. writes, "When I went to Montgomery as a pastor. . . , I simply responded to the call of the people for a spokesman. When the protest began, my mind, consciously or unconsciously, was driven back to the Sermon on the Mount, with its sublime teachings on love, and to the Gandhian method of non-violent resistance."<sup>96</sup> King writes that the motivation of his engagement in nonviolent resistance was the teaching of Jesus on the love of God and neighbors. For King, based on the teaching of Jesus, nonviolent resistance to injustice is inseparable from following the command of Christ to love God and neighbors.

I agree with King that the life of Christ according to the gospel is a clear indication that the peace of the kingdom of God is realized through nonviolence. However, with King, I also believe that nonviolence is not to be translated into nonresistance. Jesus' passion shows "nonviolent resistance" to the power of death and sin. On the cross, Christ stands in solidarity with the sinful world in order to redeem it. Christ's suffering "with us" also mean Christ's suffering "for us" (Rom. 5:8). As Kärkkäinen contends, "it is difficult to deny the importance of the need for atonement in terms of [particular] divine intervention and overcoming of the severe effects of the Fall."<sup>97</sup> In that vein, Romans 4:25 speaks of the need of the Messiah's suffering and death for the sake of vanquishing the power of sin and death to justify us. Christ's dying for us means his dying for our sins in our place, therefore, with us.

Moltmann also claims that the fulfillment of the messianic peace is to be carried out by Christ's followers only through the messianic

96 Martin Luther King Jr., *I Have a Dream*, ed., James Washington (New York: Harper One, 1992), 59.

97 Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 331.

peace characterized as non-violence.<sup>98</sup> Non-violent resistance against the unjust patterns of society is a responsibility of the followers of Christ because only in this way can they participate in the messianic mission of the Spirit through breaking the vicious cycle of victimization through an oppressive system by dying to its requirements and rewards.<sup>99</sup>

### IX. THE IRREDUCIBLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BEARER OF THE GOSPEL: ANTICIPATING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THE MESSIANIC REIGN

I find helpful Pannenberg's view of the importance of Christ in the final judgment and its implication for the missionary role for the Church. According to Ephesians 1:10, God unites all things in Christ, not only the things on the Earth but also in heaven. In the same vein, in Colossians 1:20, it is said that Christ will reconcile all things to himself.<sup>100</sup> However, at the same time, according to the same Pauline letter, there will be neither fornicators nor impure and greedy persons will enter the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5). Accordingly, just like Calvinistic determinism, I think a universalism does not honor the free choice of people in receiving the gospel like Jerry Walls contends.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, a prayerful hope for the salvation of all seems to be a proper stance to take while respecting the outcome of creaturely free

choices. As Kallistos Ware writes, "Our belief in human freedom means that we have no right to categorically affirm, 'All must be saved.' But our faith in God's love makes us dare to *hope* that all will be saved...Hell exists as a possibility because free will exists. Yet, trusting in the inexhaustible attractiveness of God's love, we venture to express the hope. . . that in the end... we shall find that there is nobody there."<sup>102</sup>

I think that Pannenberg does justice to this hope without abandoning the final judgment of Christ through purification in fulfilling the kingdom of God.<sup>103</sup> That is, unlike Moltmann, Pannenberg also considers that there can be certain pieces of history that will persistently resist the truth of God to the point where they cannot be part of the eschatological kingdom of God. This is because creatures are granted genuine contingency. Moltmann also does not trump the freedom of human choices but affirms that God's grace is greater than human sinfulness to the extent that God has the desire and power to convince even sinners by having "confidence in God: what God wants to do he can do, and will do."<sup>104</sup>

Yet I agree with Ware that we do not have the right to assert that all "must" be saved due to our finite understanding of the mystery of God's salvation. We only prayerfully hope for the salvation of all. In the final judgment, since the gospel of Christ serves as the standard to judge their lives, Christians are called to concretely embody the gospel of Christ in their lives in every dimension by "relating their lives to Jesus Christ in baptism and faith."<sup>105</sup> In faith, they are "sure already of future participation in

98 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 127-36

99 Ibid., 130-1. Also, see Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 140-41.

100 Moltmann cites these verses as well as Colossians 1:20 and Philippians 2:10-11 in support of his idea of the universal salvation in his *The Coming of God*, 240-1.

101 Jerry Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1992), 58-87.

102 Kallistos Ware, "Dare We Hope for the Salvation of All?" in *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Press, 2000), 215 [193-215].

103 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 608-20

104 Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 243-46 [244].

105 Pannenberg, *ST III*, 616

salvation.”<sup>106</sup> Accordingly, I believe that without the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments there cannot be genuine hope for the kingdom of God. At the same time, the Church has to live out the hope in the world by bringing the messianic liberation to the sinful world by participating in the call of the liberating Spirit of Christ.

## X. CONCLUSION

In this article, I discussed that the Spirit is not only creative and revelatory but also co-suffering and liberative in creation toward the fulfillment of the eschatological new creation. As the church belongs to Christ the Messiah, it is to be called to be messianic in the world. I argued that the Church lives out its calling when it participates in the eschatological ministry of the Spirit through co-suffering with and liberating the world from the powers of death, sin, and evil. The Church is to exist for others in solidarity with the oppressed and the poor suffering in the sinful world. In arguing this, I discussed how Pannenberg’s and Moltmann’s pneumatology and ecclesiology can complement each other in pursuit of a holistic public ecclesiology. Through this comparative work, I demonstrated how the Church is called to serve as the sign of the eschatological reign of God in continuity and discontinuity with the rest of the world.

### **Jongseock Shin**

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106 Ibid. For the similar idea according to Joseph Ratzinger, see his *Eschatology* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America Press, 2007), 206. Also, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 199-202.

