

## Humanity in God

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983),

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The “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” is not the God of the Pharaohs, the Caesars, and the slave holders. That God is the God who led the Hebrew people out of slavery into freedom. The First Commandment begins: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Ex. 20:2).” All other commandments of God are based on this fact. This is the Old Testament definition of God: God the liberator. The experience of God is therefore the experience of the exodus. Therefore the name of “God” means freedom.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983), 57-58. Jurgen Moltmann is a professor of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen.

Moltmann relates this God to **Jesus Christ**; “This is the God of the humiliated, abandoned, battered Jesus, crucified by the Roman occupational forces in the name of the Roman Empire and the Roman gods. Whoever believes in Jesus and follows him abandons the gods of power and of success, those demon idols of oppression and humiliation.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983),58.

Who is the real and true God? **The New Testament says**, “God is the one who raised Jesus from the dead.” This is the New Testament definition of God: God, the liberator from the power of sin and of death. This God’s power is life-creating power. Therefore the experience of God is the experience of resurrection. To believe in this God means nothing less than leaving behind resignation and oppression and reaching out for freedom. To believe in this God means to stand up and be free. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor. 3:17).

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At the heart of the Old Testament tradition is the exodus from political slavery into the promised land. At the heart of the New Testament traditions is resurrection from death into the life of messianic kingdom.

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Moltmann relates exodus theology and resurrection theology to each other by saying, “Exodus theology is not yet resurrection theology, but resurrection theology must always include exodus theology and must again and again be embodied in acts that liberate the oppressed. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983),59.

### **God paid the price for human liberation.**

There is one simple but often overlooked question that neither liberation theology nor resurrection theology must suppress: Who pays the price of freedom? According to the

exodus story, Pharaoh and his army must be destroyed that Israel may become free. This negative side of liberation belongs inevitably to the root experience of Israel, the destruction of the demonic power.

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When prophets subsequently promised the people in the Babylonian Exile the new and final exodus into freedom, they developed various concepts about the “ransom” for Israel....God sends a servant to pay the ransom for Israel’s liberation, to pay the price of freedom. God takes on the necessary burden and the sacrifices of the liberation of humankind.

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In the Old Testament prophecy (Is. 53), Israel’s freedom has its deepest root in God’s own suffering... The servant of God liberates by taking the suffering on himself; “Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed (Is. 53:5).” Freedom born out of suffering is no privileged and is not exclusive. Israel’s freedom born out of God’s suffering will bring freedom to the nations but not demand sacrifices

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983),60.

In the New Testament one can see that God’s power is revealed not only in the glorious resurrection of Christ but also in the offering of Christ to death on the cross. Resurrection freedom is an inclusive freedom, because the price, the ransom, of liberation is paid already in the suffering and death of Christ. A truly Christian liberation theology is therefore at its core a theology of the cross: God became human that human beings should gain divine freedom. God is humiliated that human beings may stand up. God suffers death, that humans may live. Let all people therefore recognize that the ground of our freedom is the cross of Christ, the power of our freedom is the resurrection of Christ, and the truth of our freedom is life-giving creative love. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. *Humanity in God* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983),60.