

Prologue

Central Mystery of the Christian Symbol of Divine Suffering

Introduction

THIS BOOK CONTINUES MY INTERPRETATION OF THE CHRISTIAN SYMBOL of divine suffering. The first volume of this hermeneutical endeavor disclosed both the hypothetical structure of this symbol and the two primary presuppositions or claims on the basis of which attestations to the symbol emerge.¹

In my study, the emerging basic structure of the symbol included a distinct creaturely occasion that correlated with each mode of divine suffering. Consequently, the first volume of my study identified a basic three-fold structure in the Christian symbol of divine suffering, three wounds of God that constitute divine responses to creaturely occasions: *the grief of God* or divine suffering *because of or from* faulted human finitude (human sin); *the self-sacrifice of God* or divine suffering *for* faulted and suffering human finitude (the misery or consequences of human sin); and *the affliction of God* or divine suffering *with* unfaulted, essential, or authentic human finitude. Based on my studies of testimonies to divine suffering in which I discerned the previous basic features of the symbol's structure, I formulated the following hypothesis about the Christian symbol of divine suffering. *Three primary moments or types of divine suffering constitute the fundamental structure of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, moments of God's suffering characterized as the free responses of divine love (within the*

1. Pool, *God's Wounds*, vol. 1, *Divine Vulnerability and Creation*.

conditions that God has established for the divine self with respect to the relations between the divine creator and the creation) to the three basic creaturely occasions for divine suffering. I then elaborated this hypothesis with three additional claims.

- First, the God whose life is love grieves, as occasioned by the inauthentic actualization of the divine image in human being as love, a creaturely love that *both* estranges itself from God, others, and itself *and* hurls itself into the hopelessness of all human efforts to overcome this triple alienation.
- Second, the God whose life is love sacrifices the divine self, as occasioned by the misery of the beloved human's inauthentic actualization of itself as love, in God's desire and effort *both* to re-create the possibility to actualize authentically the divine image in human being as love for humans who have estranged themselves from God, others, and self *and* to restore in humans a hopefulness for the ultimate completion of this three-fold reconciliation.
- Third, the God whose life is love suffers affliction, as occasioned by God's desire and effort *both* to participate in the afflicted authentic actualizations of human life as love in humans who share genuine community with God *and* to generate in them the hopefulness of their ultimate participation in God, communion with others, and integration as selves.

On the basis of my identification of the basic hypothetical structure of this symbol, I identified and analyzed the presuppositions that lay beneath attestations to divine suffering, providing the soil from which they emerged and serving as the conditions of possibility for the Christian symbol of divine suffering. Thus, the major task of the first volume in my studies involved an exposition of the two fundamental claims that this symbol presupposes: *first, God is the creator whose life is love; second, God has created the human in the image of Godself whose life is love.* Study of these attestations identified more specific features: on the one hand, God, whose life is love, limits the divine self with respect to God's creation of that which differs from, but also simultaneously resembles, God's own life, thus sharing power with creatures, especially

with humans; on the other hand, the human as the *imago Dei*, then, although finite, exists as love, which implies creaturely freedom to realize human life authentically as *caritas* or inauthentically as *cupiditas*. My analysis of the more specific features of the two presuppositions, therefore, yielded the conditions of possibility for divine suffering in the humility and vulnerability of God.

To this second volume in my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, I have given the following title: *Evil and Divine Suffering*. Under this title, the present study examines the first two wounds of God (divine grief and divine self-sacrifice), precisely since the first two modes of divine suffering arise as God's response to both human sin (human life actualized as *cupiditas*) and the consequences or misery of human sin (human life in bondage to *cupiditas*). In this respect, for the Christian symbol of divine suffering, the term "evil" refers to the regions of human or creaturely sin and its consequences, distortion of self, relations to other creatures, and relation to God, all of which arise from the human in one way or another and to both dimensions of which God responds in two modes of divine suffering.² For this reason, in the title, the term "evil" precedes the phrase "divine suffering." With this title, therefore, I intentionally reverse the order that appears in the title to the first volume of this study, *Divine Vulnerability and Creation*, since the first volume of this study addresses the conditions of possibility for divine suffering in both *the divine initiative* to create and the character with which God has endowed the creation, while the present study examines the divine response to *the human initiative*, the false actualization of the human as *imago Dei* and the misery or bondage of that life as *cupiditas*.

Thus, this second volume in my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering examines the central mystery of this symbol. Much like the larger and dominant orthodox Christian traditions, the majority of Christian testimonies to divine suffering attest to and focus upon divine suffering with respect to the doctrines of the divine incarnation and the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. By interpreting the

2. Here, my usage of the term "evil" resembles Edward Farley's use, who does not reduce the meaning of the concept to "agential evil" alone, but also includes under the term the results of agential evil, the consequences or misery of sin, that subsequently hold humans in bondage to sin (see Farley, *Good and Evil*, xv, n. 2) My later analyses of these human occasions of divine suffering will elaborate this point.

first two divine wounds in the Christian symbol of divine suffering, this present portion of my larger study focuses upon this central mystery of Christian faith.

Naturally, since the Christian symbol of divine suffering attests to three divine wounds, the question may arise: Why does this volume of studies examine the first two divine wounds together under the title, *Evil and Divine Suffering*, when symmetry of expression might suggest a separate volume of studies for each divine wound? For methodological reasons related to the theology of this symbol, I have followed this path, thereby to indicate the larger occasion of the first two divine wounds and, therefore, the close relationship that these two wounds have to one another. These first two divine wounds, according to the Christian symbol of divine suffering, occur with respect to humans who have willingly estranged or alienated themselves from God. The third divine wound, an interpretation of which will occupy a volume of its own, occurs in different circumstances altogether, with respect to an altogether different creaturely occasion, according to the Christian symbol of divine suffering. In addition, I have included my interpretations of the first two divine wounds in this second volume of studies precisely because these wounds attest to the symbol's interpretation of actual experience, not to the presuppositions or the conditions of possibility in divine vulnerability and reality that the human has not yet distorted through an actualization of its life as *cupiditas*. In other words, in this second volume of studies, my interpretation moves from an analysis of the symbol's attestation to the most abstract features in the relationship between God and creation, the vulnerable God's creation of essential or undistorted finitude, to an analysis of the symbol's attestation to the more concrete or less abstract features in the relationship between creation and God, the human distortion of its life or existential finitude that elicits from God responses of grief and self-sacrifice.³

3. Although the theological vision of the Christian symbol of divine suffering differs considerably from the theological perspective of Paul Tillich, methodologically, my studies of this symbol resemble the flow of Tillich's theological system. His own systematic interpretation of the traditional Christian symbols moves from the *most abstract and least concrete* features of the system of symbols in his interpretation of essential or created finitude in relation to God as creator (volume one), to the *more concrete and less abstract* features of the system of symbols in his interpretation of existential finitude or human sin in relation to Christ as savior (volume two), and finally to the *most concrete and least abstract* features of the system of symbols in his inter-

In the first volume of this project, I both established a hermeneutical method for the study of this symbol and, with that method, examined the two major presuppositions of this symbol, the presuppositions that attest to the conditions of possibility in both God and creation for all modes of divine suffering in terms of this particular Christian vision of God. Although I will not repeat in detail the method that I developed in the first volume of my studies, I will continue to employ the general features of that method in the present volume of this study.⁴ Nevertheless, for readers who have not had or may not have an opportunity to read the first volume of this work, I summarize the primary and most relevant features of the method that continues in the present book my studies of this profound Christian symbol. In addition, because my larger study of this symbol moves from the more abstract to the more concrete features of the human and divine experiences to which this symbol attests, this second volume of the larger project addresses features of this symbol that have required some additional methodological measures, in order to uncover the greater specificity of each divine wound, as well as to disclose the features that both distinguish the first two divine wounds from divine vulnerability more generally and distinguish the first two divine wounds from one another more specifically.

General Features of Method

I have previously delineated the most general features of the method through which I have approached the Christian symbol of divine suffering by delimiting the problem that my larger study addresses, elaborating the procedural principles that this particular problem implies

pretation of the ambiguity of life (the interaction of essential and existential finitude) in relation to the Spirit as the basis of community (volume three) (Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:66–68). Although my third volume of studies will interpret the third divine wound, divine affliction, as it interacts with tragic reality (as distinct from evil), methodologically, that study will differ from Tillich's interpretation in the third volume of his *Systematic Theology*, in as much as he understood the ambiguity of existence as the interaction of the essential and existential features of finitude or creation. By contrast, in my own third volume of studies, I will replace a bracket around the *imago Dei* as *cupiditas*, in order to interpret the attestation of the Christian symbol of divine suffering to the ambiguity of essential or authentic finitude itself in the tragic region of reality.

4. For more complete elaboration of my method, see the relevant portions of the first volume of this study: Pool, *God's Wounds*, vol. 1, *Divine Vulnerability and Creation*, chapters 1, 2, and 3.

and requires, and bringing into view the hypothetical structure of the Christian symbol of divine suffering that the previous two steps yield. In this chapter, while I have already reviewed the hypothetical structure of the symbol, I will briefly summarize the first two general features of my method. On the basis of the following review of the general features of the method through which I initiated this study, I will also identify additional features that expand aspects of this method, specifically in terms of methodological considerations that my study of the first two divine wounds requires.

Delimitation of the Problem

My study of the first two wounds to which this symbol attests will continue to examine the problem or question to which I originally and quite specifically delimited my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering. In the first volume of this work, I established seven limitations on the larger study.

First, like the previous volume of this study, I identified quite sharply the specific problem that my larger study would address through the following question: *What is the structure, and what are the structural dynamics, of the Christian symbol of divine suffering?* I also amplified the intent of my study with a slightly different form of the previous question: *What are the various modes of divine suffering, and how are they both distinct from, and related to, one another within the broader Christian symbol of divine suffering?* By seeking an answer to this basic question, I intentionally initiated a study of attestations to divine suffering, listening to and engaging the actual voices of this alternative Christian tradition of testimony and reflection about God. By approaching the Christian symbol of divine suffering from this perspective, I have aimed to allow a significant and profound Christian perspective to express itself most fully, by contrast to the history of its rejection, condemnation, and prohibition by the orthodoxies of the dominant Christian communities. My preference to engage the actual testimonies to divine suffering, therefore, explicitly avoids several other questions, again questions that have also had the effect of marginalizing, minimizing, trivializing, and finally silencing the real, linguistically and conceptually rich, Christian claims that God suffers. Therefore, my study does not engage several other major inquiries, as represented by the

following questions, all of which presuppose the phenomena to which I have addressed this study. *Can* God suffer? If God can suffer, *does* God suffer? What are the origins and history of the idea of divine suffering? Is language about God, and more specifically about the suffering of God, possible at all; and, if so, what sort of meaning do God-language and this specific form of God-language convey? Of course, addressing those other questions remains very important. Nevertheless, before one can fairly address those historical, philosophical, and theological questions, one must understand the fullness of the perspective to which the orthodox Christian communities and the academic communities have addressed those questions. My study, therefore, continues to analyze this symbol, through the present interpretation of the first two divine wounds, aiming to allow the full expression of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, even though in various places my study will continue necessarily to touch upon selected facets of the previous historical, philosophical, and theological questions as they relate specifically to the question that this study addresses.

Second, I maintain my delimitation of this problem to a study of the *Christian* symbol of divine suffering. On the one hand, my study will neither trace the historical development of attestations to suffering gods in the history of non-Christian religious traditions nor describe diverse attestations to suffering deities in other religious traditions in order to compare them to Christian attestations to divine suffering. On the other hand, because *orthodox* Christian communities (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Catholic, Anglican Catholic, and even Lutheran and Reformed traditions) have highly developed dogmatic traditions that have rejected and condemned Christian attestations to divine suffering, understanding those marginalized testimonies as *Christian* voices presents a problem of definition for this work. Exactly what specific characteristics identify these testimonies to divine suffering as *Christian*, particularly since the dominant (or *orthodox*, especially in terms of decisions in the earliest and ecumenical Christian councils) Christian communities largely and with great consistency have excluded them as *non-Christian* from the conversations about the development of doctrine in the larger Christian community? I will continue to investigate only those attestations to the symbol of divine suffering that its witnesses represent as *Christian* claims: by virtue of their confession of Jesus as Christ in some sense, their participation in

Christian communities, their adherence to one or another of the very similar canonical scriptures of these Christian communities, and their explicitly-stated relationships with the God to whom all of these witnesses attest. At this point, I also acknowledge that the many Christian testimonies to divine suffering do not all agree with one another about the character or contours of this symbol, precisely because this factor will require additional considerations of method to answer the question of this larger study, especially in this present volume of my project.

Third, this study continues to employ the concept of religious symbol with which I originally initiated this study. I distinguished between the concept of religious symbols and the concept of religious doctrines, even though religious communities *symbolize* the realities to which they attest with *doctrines*. Nonetheless, since the dominant Christian communities have officially ruled attestations to divine suffering as unorthodox and even condemned those teachings as heretical, I have not designated Christian attestations to divine suffering as doctrines or official ecclesiastical dogmas. Nonetheless, Christian attestations to divine suffering remain religious symbols in the sense that I have previously described. Thus, I continue to describe the object of my interpretation of the first two divine wounds as the Christian *symbol* (rather than doctrine) of divine suffering. Moreover, in the first volume of this study, I also described the concept of religious symbol that informs my understanding of this particular Christian symbol. Without repeating my description of this concept, that concept of religious symbol will continue to operate in this second volume of my interpretation of the Christian symbol of divine suffering.

Fourth, this second volume of my interpretation of the Christian symbol of divine suffering will maintain the enriched theocentric posture of my approach, which I brought into view in the first volume of this study. Because religious symbols refer to a threefold extra-linguistic reality (the Sacred or God; the world—in both its social or historical and natural dimensions—as the condition for and context of interaction between the divine presence and humanity; and the human self and community), with the Sacred or Ultimate Reality as the focal point, I have distilled from the Christian symbol of divine suffering three dimensions of its theocentricity: theological, cosmological, and soteriological theocentricity. With respect to each of these three dimensions,

with three questions, I previously activated and continue to maintain these dimensions of my theocentric approach to this study.

- What significance does the Christian symbol of divine suffering possess for the purposes, glory, and respect of God's own self?
- What resources does the Christian symbol of divine suffering offer for indicating the place of the cosmos in the divine purposes?
- What significance does the Christian symbol of divine suffering have for understanding both the place of the christological focus in the greater soteriological efforts of the whole divine life and the place of human salvation within the greater purposes of God for the cosmos as a whole, as well as for Godself?

I have adopted the theocentric dimensions of the Christian symbol of divine suffering into my approach to this symbol, therefore, in order to enable a more careful identification of the symbol's rationality and the deeper structures of the dialectical relationships among all three extra-linguistic referents of this symbol.

Fifth, I continue to restrict my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering to the fundamental structural levels of the symbol that both the threefold extra-linguistic reality of religious symbols and that referentiality's threefold theocentric character exhibit. I will continue, as a consequence, to examine three structural levels in this symbol: (1) in this present study, two of the three basic modalities or forms of divine suffering themselves; (2) the correlative structure between God and the creature in each of these principal modalities, the structure generated as each moment of divine suffering finds its occasion in the creature; and (3) the supportive principles or structures, the symbolic system that the attestation to divine suffering presupposes, that supply the conditions of possibility for the attestation that "God suffers."

Sixth, in this second volume of my study, I continue to develop my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering with respect to the cultural context that I described in the first volume of my study. I have described the framework of the larger method that informs my hermeneutic of this symbol as a correlative theological method. This

method describes the task of Christian theology as the correlation of the Christian message with the questions, needs, problems, or issues of the contemporary situation. Thus, that larger method of correlation entails three stages: (1) an eidetic analysis of the meaning of the symbol on its own historical terms; (2) an analysis of the contemporary situation, in order to make visible and describe the religious dimension of the contemporary questions and understanding of issues or problems; and (3) a mutually-critical correlation of the results from the two previous analyses, an interpretation of the dialectical relationship between the meaning of the symbol and the characteristics of the situation. I have restricted my study of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, however, to the first stage in this theological method: eidetic analysis of the symbol, its world of meaning and rationality, bracketing this task from the other two stages of a correlational theology. Nevertheless, as I noted in the first volume of my study, I conduct each portion of this study within a unique contemporary situation: on the one hand, a world in which the various features of modernity (most to the point, its challenges through science and reason to the dogmatic perspectives of religious communities and traditions, Christian doctrines even more particularly) have helped to liberate the Christian attestations to divine suffering from their marginalization by dominant Christian traditions of classical theism, but simultaneously a situation in which the proclamation of the death of God continues to reverberate through all religious (including Christian) experience and discourse; and, on the other hand, a world in which massive forms of suffering, both human and non-human, have come to occupy a place at the center of contemporary global experience. Most certainly, this situation affects my eidetic analysis of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, and certainly continues to erode the distinction between historical symbol and contemporary situation, if only because many of the attestations to this symbol have arisen precisely as result of and response to this contemporary situation. Nevertheless, in spite of the problem that this creates for my study, I will continue to guide my interpretation of this symbol by limiting this work to an eidetic analysis of the Christian symbol of divine suffering.

Seventh, therefore, I have limited the aim or goal of this study to an interpretation of the structure and dynamism in the Christian symbol of divine suffering. As I mentioned in the first volume of this study, my eidetic analysis of the first two divine wounds will review multiple

Christian attestations to divine suffering in order to discern the underlying rationality of this symbol, in order to reconstruct the relatively most adequate account of the structure and dynamism of this symbol.

Procedural Principles

The first orientation to an encounter with the Christian symbol of divine suffering, through the delimitation of the problem that this study will consider, yielded the need for a second orientation to this symbol, procedural principles by which to approach and engage this symbol. I mentioned in the first volume of this study that, just as I have derived central features of the method by abstracting them from the object upon which my study focuses, each of the procedural principles contains dimensions of abstraction in relation to one another as well. I conduct my study of the first two divine wounds by employing three procedural principles: eidetic, criteriological, and anthropological principles or lenses through which to consider or engage the Christian symbol of divine suffering.

EIDETIC PRINCIPLE

With the eidetic principle, my study examines the eidetic or first stratum of significance in the Christian symbol of divine suffering. As I stated previously, I have delimited my interpretation of this religious symbol to this stratum of significance, as the object of analysis in the first pole of a constructive or correlational theology. The eidetic stratum of significance denotes a symbol's historical meaning, the meaning that it reflected in both its original witnesses (Christian scriptures) and in the texts that have interpreted and re-interpreted those attestations to divine suffering across time. This principle, of course, entails two stages: the more objective stage of eidetic abstraction; and the more subjective stage of eidetic reduction.⁵

Eidetic Abstraction. The more objective stage abstracts or separates the meaning of a religious symbol for other historical periods from its meaning for the contemporary situation (the experiential, ontological,

5. Again, as I indicated in the first volume of this study, I repeat my reliance (with slight modifications) on the theological methods of both Langdon Gilkey and Edward Farley: see Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 134–55; and Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection*, 183–216.

and praxiological significances for contemporary human life). This more objective stage, with a focus on the various historical meanings of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, aims to bracket or temporarily to withhold an application of this symbol's meaning to, or an appropriation of the symbol's meaning in, personal, social, and global situations of contemporary experience. This eidetic stage, however, certainly yields a plurality of historical meanings through its examination of multiple claims that God suffers.

Eidetic Reduction. Thus, in order to identify or discern the symbolic structure of a religious symbol, an eidetic analysis requires a second stage, a stage in which the interpreter seeks a common pattern or structure within the many versions of this particular religious symbol. Therefore, although the second and more subjective stage of eidetic analysis remains historical, it also entails a creative and constructive task as well. Given the plurality of voices that attest to divine suffering, and given the marginalization of these voices by the dominant forces in various orthodox Christian communities that have prevented the fullest exploration and elaboration of the coherence and systematic implications of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, eidetic analysis seeks to discover the logic or rationality, the internal coherence, of the Christian symbol of divine suffering. To accomplish this aim, however, eidetic analysis must reduce the plurality of attestations to the most consistent form or structure of this symbol, noting the inadequacies, weaknesses, or internal contradictions of many partial or fragmentary testimonies to this symbol. Only the identification of a basic structure or form of this symbol can enable the constructive or systematic theologian to proceed in correlating this particular message about the suffering God to the contemporary situation. Therefore, the reductive stage of eidetic analysis aims to reduce the plurality of attestations to a unified and coherent structure or form of this symbol, one version of this religious vision, this attestation to the God who suffers in response to creaturely occasions. Although this stage of eidetic analysis may not fully satisfy the historical purist, this reductive stage does not entirely forfeit the historical character of eidetic analysis, precisely since the eidetic principle continues to abstract this stage of interpretation from an appropriation of this constructive version of the symbol's meaning for life in the contemporary situation. In order to move into this reductive

stage of the eidetic principle in this hermeneutic, however, the interpreter requires a criterion on the basis of which to evaluate whether or not, and if so to what extent, any proposed unified eidetic meaning conforms to the religious traditions from which the interpreter has abstracted it. Toward that end, then, the eidetic principle elicits a criteriological principle for this hermeneutical approach to the Christian symbol of divine suffering.

CRITERIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

The interpreter requires a criterion on the basis of which, first, to identify those religious testimonies to divine suffering that constitute *Christian* attestations or testimonies, among the plurality of religious attestations to divine suffering. Only after gathering the many Christian testimonies to divine suffering, which constitute the raw materials of an eidetic analysis, can the interpreter then move into the reductive stage of the eidetic principle, in order to reconstruct a unified meaning or to discern the rationality of the Christian symbol of divine suffering. Moreover, second, this Christian criterion will then function as the evaluative standard also against which to measure the Christian character of the eidetically-constructed symbol of divine suffering itself.

In the first volume of this study, I initiated this study on the basis of the following criteriological principle. *An interpreter may evaluate attestations to divine suffering as appropriate or inappropriate attestations to the Christian traditions, on the basis of their conformity or non-conformity to the following criterion: God most fully discloses the divine self as love in Jesus as the Christ.* In that first volume of my study, therefore, initially I deployed this criteriological principle as epistemologies by which to identify and describe the dimensions that constitute the two presuppositions of divine suffering: first, an epistemology of divine life as love; and, second, an epistemology of human life or the *imago Dei* as love.⁶

Without repeating a full exposition of this principle, I will extend my study of this symbol by continuing to employ this principle, first, to identify Christian attestations to divine suffering and, second, to

6. For descriptions of these epistemologies, see the relevant portions of the first volume of this study: Pool, *God's Wounds*, vol. 1, *Divine Vulnerability and Creation*, especially chapters 4 and 6.

test the components and features of my own eidetic construction of the Christian symbol of divine suffering. As I stated in the first volume of this study, however, I have abstracted and condensed the formal content of this principle, or its criterion, from the material content, or “the Christian fact,” of the principle itself.⁷ Although I will continue to employ this criterion in this second volume of my study, I refer readers to the first volume for a more complete elaboration of the criteriological principle.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

In my effort to identify the structure and dynamism of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, I also encountered an additional problem that prevented the distinctive features of this symbol’s structure and dynamism from emerging. In their claims that God suffers, many Christian testimonies to divine suffering have not distinguished carefully or clearly between various modes, kinds, or types of divine suffering. By discovering the source that obscures the distinction among the various forms or modes of divine suffering in the occasions of divine suffering, as identified by the testimonies to divine suffering themselves, I discovered the need for a third major hermeneutical principle.

The vast majority of Christian attestations to divine suffering identify various human or creaturely realities as the occasions of God’s suffering. Because these testimonies do not carefully distinguish even the creaturely *occasions* for divine suffering from one another, I developed a hermeneutical principle to distinguish the creaturely occasions from one another and, thereby, to allow the distinctive modes of divine suffering (as correlates to various creaturely occasions) to emerge. Through a double reflection, on the one hand, on human experiences of evil and suffering and, on the other hand, upon testimonies in Christian scriptures to such experiences, I developed an anthropological principle

7. As I noted in the first volume of this study, with some modifications, I have borrowed this description of both the originaive Christian fact (the event of divine self-disclosure in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ in the context of the history of God’s relationship with Israel) and the derivative Christian fact (the extension of that event and its historical context in terms of subsequent Christian scriptures, tradition, and the history of their interpretation) from Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy (see Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 143; and Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 15n.5, 60n.33, 72, 250n.2).

that allowed the appearance of distinct creaturely occasions for divine suffering, when applied to the many Christian claims that God suffers.

Although I will not recount those reflective analyses in this book, I derived and stated an anthropological principle by which to re-view the many testimonies to divine suffering, in order to distinguish the various forms, kinds, or modes of divine suffering from one another. My formulation of this anthropological principle follows. *One can distinguish the occasions for the various modes of divine suffering, as found within Christian attestations to God's suffering, from one another as one views those attestations through the prism of the following distinction: unfaulted finitude, the essential realities and structures of the finite world as unaffected by the evil will, refuses an unqualified equation with faulted finitude, the finite world as affected by the evil will.* This principle yielded three distinct occasions for divine suffering in testimonies to the suffering of God: first, faulted human finitude, human sin or evil, appears as the most immediate occasion for divine suffering in attestations to that phenomenon; second, the misery of human sin, a type of suffering that faulted human finitude experiences, appears distinctly as an occasion that results from the first occasion; and, third, the affliction of authentic human life through the tragic features of essential or created reality and experience exhibits itself as the least accessible and most problematic of the three occasions, since it results from neither of the previous occasions (originating in its present form through the creative activity of Godself), but remains intimately intermingled with the two previous creaturely occasions in actual creaturely experience itself.

On the basis of the three previous hermeneutical principles that I have summarized, I identified the basic structure of the Christian symbol of divine suffering that I have already restated at the beginning of this chapter. Nonetheless, even though the previous method operates fully within this present study of the first two moments of divine suffering, as this study has proceeded, various features of this symbol's structure and dynamism have required some elaborative modifications of my phenomenological-hermeneutical method.

Specific Modifications of Method

Given the movement of my study from the more abstract to the more concrete features of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, the exami-

nation of actual Christian attestations to various forms of divine suffering have required some modifications in the method of my larger study. These modifications, however, deepen features or develop elaborations of the method largely in continuity with the character and aims of the original method, but specifically with respect to the first two divine wounds, as my analysis begins to disclose the unique features of those phenomena, rather than changing the method or approach entirely.

In the first volume of this study, I identified and described the two major presuppositions of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, emblematically stated in the following condensed forms: (1) God is love; and (2) the human in the image of God is love. My analysis of these presuppositions entailed a twofold operation, on the basis of the epistemologies that I had developed (thus, extending the criteriological criterion) to discern the nature and characteristics of both divine and human loves from the Christian attestations to divine suffering. My analysis operated similarly with respect to both presuppositions. In the first operation, I abstracted divine life as love (or “being” in the philosophical language of classical theism) from divine activity in creation and human life as love (*imago Dei*) from the actualization of human life as love (*imitatio Dei*), in order to specify more fully several features of these presuppositions: on the one hand, the features of God’s actualization of the divine life as love in creation of humans in the image of God; and, on the other hand, the features of the relationship between human life as given by God and the exercise of human freedom in actualizing that life for itself in relation to God. In the second operation of my analysis, I abstracted the structural characteristics or formal dimensions from the dynamic characteristics or material dimensions of both divine life as love and human life as love.

With respect to the methodological features that I have just described, this present volume of my study reflects both continuity and discontinuity. In terms of continuity, my interpretation of the first two divine wounds continues to distinguish between the formal or structural and the dynamic or material features of both each creaturely occasion for divine suffering and each divine wound. My method in this present volume of the study reflects discontinuity with my method in the previous volume of this study in the following ways.

First, in my interpretation of the two major presuppositions in the Christian symbol of divine suffering, I referred to the formal and mate-

rial *dimensions* of both divine life as love and the *imago Dei* as love. In my analyses of the structure (or form) and dynamics (or matter) of the actual divine wounds, however, I have substituted the term “characteristics” for the term “dimensions.” I have made this conceptual alteration to indicate the movement from the more abstract, essential features in the two presuppositions of this symbol to the more concrete, existential features of the actual forms of divine suffering themselves.

Second, the method of the present volume of this study also differs from the method in the first volume of this study by not distinguishing between life (being) and the actualization of life (act) for either the creaturely occasions of divine suffering or the moments of God’s suffering themselves. Again, because the present study has moved from the more abstract to the more concrete features of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, in terms of the first two divine wounds, the present volume of studies examines attestations to actual divine suffering, in which God actualizes the divine life as love in suffering.

Third, my method in this present portion of the larger study differs especially in terms of questions that I will address to each of the specific modes of divine suffering. Generally, the questions take the following forms. (1) *What is the relationship between divine vulnerability and each mode or stage of divine suffering?* (2) *To which operation or role of the Christian God does a particular mode of divine suffering primarily refer?* (3) *Toward which subjects does a specific mode of divine suffering direct itself or with which subjects does God concern the divine self in a specific mode of divine suffering?* (4) *What are the spatial and temporal characteristics of each mode of divine suffering?* These questions roughly seek answers with respect to each mode of divine suffering about the relationship of divine suffering to several basic categorical differences by which to understand phenomena, although not an exhaustive examination of every category: such as substance, state of affairs, relation, causality, space-time, possibility, necessity, activity, passivity, and so forth.⁸

8. See the following classic statements of philosophical categories: Aristotle, “Categories,” in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1:1–24; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Also, see the following helpful history of philosophical discussion about categories: Amie Thomasson, “Categories,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2004/entries/categories/>.

Fourth, this current study reflects another methodological discontinuity with the first volume of the larger study. In order to initiate my examination of the first two divine wounds, I have temporarily removed one set of brackets around the phenomena that attest to divine suffering, a set of brackets that I both had methodically imposed and had carefully maintained as consistently as possible (at least, insofar as epistemological concerns did not dictate otherwise) in the first volume of this study. I refer to the brackets that I placed and held around the Christian testimonies to the divine experience of and response to faulted human finitude and its bondage—or evil—in that first volume. The same large and complex reality, evil (or sin and its consequences), occasions two divine wounds: *divine grief* and *divine self-sacrifice*. Together, I have characterized these wounds as divine victimization by evil, as divine experience of and response to evil. For this reason, I have included my studies of both the first and the second divine wounds in the second volume of this larger project.

Conclusion

This present series of studies, then, includes the second major portion of my explorations into the Christian symbol of divine suffering, but in two major parts. In part one, I examine divine grief or the first divine wound. Part two contains my analysis of the second wound of God or divine self-sacrifice. The same pattern or structure occurs in both parts of this study. A creaturely reality occasions a twofold divine response. Thus, each part in this present volume of my larger study contains three divisions, while each division contains two chapters that analyze the formal and material characteristics of each creaturely occasion for divine suffering and of both stages in each divine wound.

Nonetheless, in this second volume of my hermeneutic of the Christian symbol of divine suffering, I continue to hold another set of brackets in place around certain phenomena to which this symbol attests. In volume one of this study, I distinguished the region of tragic reality and experience from the realm of evil (sin and its consequences). In this present work, I have restricted my explorations into the Christian symbol of divine suffering to an examination of the Christian testimonies to the realm of evil and the divine suffering that corresponds to it. Thus, I endeavor temporarily to withhold this symbol's testimony to the

tragic region from its intimate, though not essential, relationships with this symbol's witness about the realm of evil. Only in the third volume of this larger study will I release this second set of brackets. When I do so, however, I will re-impose the first set of brackets around this symbol's attestation to the realm of evil and its effect upon God, in order to focus attention on the third divine wound.

SAMPLE