

# Elizabeth a. johnson book reviews example

[Religion](#), [God](#)



## **Consider Jesus**

### Chapter 8 Abstract

#### I. Thesis

In Chapter 8, Johnson starts by presenting the traditional debate on suffering and God's relation to it. In particular through Christ and the Cross. He presents the two main sides, one where God is seen as present in history and close to those who suffer. This position is based on Scripture. The other position, based on Greek Philosophy, sees God as pure and perfect being and as such He cannot suffer. These two perspectives do not meet.

#### II. Methodology

The classical positions of the broad debate are based on the Scripture, both from the Old Testament, and the history of God and the people of Israel and God's direct interventions, and also the New Testament and Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection.

The other position is the Greek Philosophy where God is seen as pure being, perfect, and who does not suffer as his divine nature is perfect and not affected by suffering.

The two other perspectives use both these two positions above but have a dialectical methodology, first developed and used by Hegel. This philosophy says that history comes from a dynamic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

On the other hand, Schillebeeckx's approach tries to remain with the analogical imagination of the Catholic tradition. It preserves God's nature from the capacity of suffering, which is a sign of God's transcendence and freedom. It presents God's compassion as the one that reaches out to those who suffer, and this is out of Love.

### III. Argument / Main Points of Chapter 8

A. The broad debate on suffering is divided by two perspectives of God who do not meet. The one where God does not suffer, a God, who is far from the people. This one comes from the Greek philosophy that sees God as a perfect being, pure being, and thus unable to suffer. This is the position from which atheism in the 20th century comes from: God is far, God does not suffer and because of it he does not deserve our love.

The other side of the debate is based on Scripture. God is seen in the Old Testament as a very present God. Saving his people over and over again. There are beautiful psalms and canticles of David where God presents himself as a suffering God for his creatures. This is strongly reinforced in the New Testament with God made man, and suffering on the Cross to give us eternal life.

**These two are both on their right; however they do not meet.**

B. Another strong opinion is that of Moltmann. For him God chooses, out of love for his creatures to be affected by suffering. In this way, God's nature is not affected by suffering. This is solved in Christ on the Cross. It is the human nature that is imperfect, and that suffers, but God as God does not suffer.

So under this perspective, both the divine nature, God as pure being is not affected by suffering, however, God is not absent or distant. He chooses to take part of history as it is seen in the Scriptures and chooses to suffer out of Love. This is seen explicitly in that God sent his son, assumed a human nature, and this nature is the one that suffers. Through this, he suffers with us, while his divinity is not affected, and still he is with us. The Cross opens a

new way between the world and God. God admits the pain of the world into himself.

C. Schillebeeckx has another solution to the classical debate, staying close to the catholic tradition. HE says that God does not suffer as Malcolm says. Instead, God because of his solidarity for us enters in contact with those who suffer through the incarnation of Christ. Through the cross God rescues us, rescues the ones who suffer. In other words, God enters into solidarity with human suffering, in order to rescue us. This is done through Christ and the Cross. God does this to save.

This position keeps God's perfect being from suffering, but it shows God's compassion in that he enters in contact with those who suffer in order to save. Again this is not a distant God, and it is still a perfect God, perfect divine nature. God shows himself as the Living God.

#### D. Discussion Questions

This Chapter discusses and questions the meaning of suffering, especially throughout the history of humanity in the light of so much suffering, all the victims of useless suffering due to injustices.

The main question of this chapter is whether God is with men, and suffers with men because of so many atrocities, or if God is absent, and does not suffer.

These topics bring even more questions such whether God deserves to be loved if He is indeed absent and does not understand or feel the suffering himself as men do.

It is unanswered as well why certain people only suffer and some other not

so much, and how suffering relates to the salvation plan of God.

Consider Jesus

## **Chapter 9 Abstract**

### I. Thesis

In Chapter 9, Johnson presents the debate around the salvific plan of God. In a world with many religions, or no religions at all, how it is that God's plan is to save all people, and how are they saved if they are not all baptized. The chapter presents three positions that try to answer whether all men are saved, are they saved through Christ, the only savior and if so, how it is possible if not all are baptized.

The first position states that salvation is only in the Church, through Christ and there is no salvation outside it. This position in its absolute does not leave room for God's plan of salvation for all men.

The second position is presented by Karl Rahner. He says that there are some people that are anonymous Christians. He says that all those people who do not put obstacles to God's grace, who live a good moral life according to their culture and religion they were born to, are still being faithful to God's grace and being saved in one way, or another by Christ. This position was severely criticized, however; the main point is that even if it is not exactly clear how, people who are not baptized can still be saved through Christ, if they are faithful to God's grace in their life according to their concrete circumstances.

The last position is less Christ and God centered. It supports the idea that Christ is very important, but not necessary for salvation. God saves in different ways. For some people, Christ is essential, but for others, their

salvation comes from different salvific figures, such as in other religions. This last theory has a lot to work on to sustain its claims.

## II. Methodology

Christology looks for ways to provide answers in a world with so many injustices, with so many religions that are increasing rather than decreasing, and even lack of religious. It looks for meeting points and explanations of how God is the Lord of all creation and the savior of the whole world, and so not only of humans but all creation. With the ecological problems arising in this time, where species are dying, Christology looks for ways of answering how Christ saves all men, and the role it plays in the World and the whole creation.

It uses the bible to answer the questions especially Genesis that places a great responsibility on men to care for the whole of creation, not only men's physical and spiritual needs. Through this method, it intends to meet with other religions to show how the church looks for the salvation of men but also the caring of the whole creation of God.

## III. Argument / Main Points of Chapter 9

A. There is only salvation in the Church through Jesus Christ and thus through baptism. Those outside the Church cannot be saved. This brings difficulties to provide answers to how all people can be saved, in other words, how is then possible God's plan of salvation of all men.

Even in patristic times it was thought that while salvation is by Jesus Christ and through the Church, still outside the Church men are saved as God's plan is for all men to be saved, but this is unknown to us, and it is an extraordinary way.

B. Another strong opinion is that of Karl Rahner. He believes that while not all people are Christians, and each has different concrete circumstances and cultures, still they can be saved if they live a good moral life and do not put obstacles to God's grace. All salvation in whichever way is done, it is done through Jesus Christ, whether they people are baptized or not. This position has been criticized, but still it is very popular, and it provides a solid explanation of how God saves all men, and how salvation is done through Jesus Christ.

C. The last position is less strong. It needs a lot to work on to provide solid arguments. It defends the position of other religions that while for Christians Christ is essential for their salvation, it is not necessary for others. The reason of this is because there are other salvific figures that play an important role in other religions. This position is less God and Christ centered.

#### D. Discussion Questions

The chapter presents new questions in the end. It reminds us that we are in a world where due to pollution and lack of clean water and global warming the Earth and Gods creation is suffering. There are species in extension and not only men are suffering but all of its creation.

So Questions arise such as in what way does God is the savior of all creation if all of the creation is suffering? How are they saved? And what role does the Church and Christians have to play?

### **Do we have a moral responsibility with the rest of the World? With the rest of the beings?**

Does Christ save the whole creation or only men?