

B. Christianity | Sample Answer

Compare the understanding of Jesus that is emphasised by a writer of books about Christology with the way Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels (2019 Section B [b])

There are many different books about the life and teaching of Jesus. Jurgen Moltmann and Chiara Lubich are two famous writers of books about Christology.

Jurgen Moltmann is one of the most influential contemporary German Protestant theologians. As a young man, he experienced the horror of World War II. The gruesome depth of inhumanity left him disillusioned and caused him to ask; "How can we speak of God and how can we do theology after Auschwitz?". Moltmann's major focus in his theology was eschatology. He emphasised the need to focus again on the futuristic expectation just like the early Christian community. They looked to the future believing in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Jesus' promise of the coming of the Spirit and the Second Coming. Moltmann believes God understands that this world is subject to sin and suffering. He explains that hope in the resurrection prompts us to engage with possibilities for change in the world, not allowing things to stand still and to work for a better world.

Another key concern for Moltmann is the importance for Christians to have a Christianised understanding of God. In his book "The Trinity and the Kingdom of God" he outlines his fear that the notion of God which many Christians have is not really Christian in the sense that it is a vague, philosophical, generalized notion of a monarchical figure of God. He invites us to understand creation, reconciliation and glorification as revolving around our sharing in the mutual love that has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

In his theology, Moltmann echoes the reformed tradition of emphasizing Jesus' cry of abandonment on the cross; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". This, for Moltmann, has to be the centre of Christian thinking as the image of the crucified Jesus allows us to see God participating in our human suffering. For Moltmann, Christology is inseparable from Christopraxis. Who we say Jesus Christ is and how we live go hand in hand. It is in living and following Jesus'

message in a community of discipleship that we know and understand him. For Moltmann, holistic Christology, the doctrine of our salvation and our ethics are all linked. The Kingdom of God is central to this idea and how we experience Jesus Christ in a real way.

Chiara Lubich is the founder of the Focolare Movement and is one of the best-known spiritual writers today. Like Moltmann, she experienced the horror and destruction of life during World War II. Together with her followers she turned to the Gospel as a source of relief and explanation for the cruelty and adversity they experienced during World War II. The Gospel prompted them to see the various faces of Jesus surrounding them. They became aware of the closeness of God and the life of God through this. In the influence of sentences such as “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren. you did it to me”, they realised the omnipotent nature of God, they concluded that Jesus was present in everyone, in the poor, the orphaned and in each other as brothers and sisters. The Focolare Movement understood that to gather in the name of Jesus Christ meant living out the gospel message. It meant not going to God simply alone and creating an individual relationship with God but instead going to God together as a community and live based on the Word, Eucharist and mutual love.

A key moment for the movement was when a priest proclaimed that in his opinion Jesus suffered moisture in the cross and not as it was believed in the Garden of Gethsemane. This became a turning point for the movement as they realised that if this was the moment that Jesus suffered the most, it is also the moment he loved the most. When Jesus cried on the cross he took on and transformed all our divisions and darkness, introducing us to the unity he shares in his relations with the Father and Spirit.

Chiara Lubich’s spirituality has resulted in new perspectives for theology and Christology. She emphasises the eschatological dimension of the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed and spread. It is a reality “already” present among us when we love one another. But it will be “even more” an experience of love and unity in the heart of God the Father.

Similar to Moltmann, Lubich views Christopraxis and Christology as inseparable. We know Christ only when we live his art of living contained in the Gospel. To know about Jesus, we need to learn and experience for ourselves through entering into the Gospel as a way of life, to discover the wisdom of Jesus Christ who informs mind, will and action.