

2. JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Stephen Williams

Stephen Williams is Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological College, Belfast. He is the author of Revelation and Reconciliation: a Window on Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Preface

The following account of Moltmann's thought was first published in 1987. It ended with an appendix on what was then Moltmann's latest major work, *God In Creation* (1985), the second of a series of volumes making up his studies in dogmatics. That work was succeeded by *The Way of Jesus Christ* (1989) and then *The Spirit of Life* (1992). At the time, I wrote brief reviews of these which are now reprinted here as part of the Appendix. Moltmann's series of studies in dogmatics began with *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, so we see how the subsequent three volumes followed a trinitarian sequence, dealing with God, Christ and the Spirit, respectively. Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity made its appearance in his second major work prior to this particular series, namely *The Crucified God*.

His very first volume, which launched him on to the international scene, was *Theology of Hope: On the Grounds and Implications of Christian Eschatology*. So, fittingly enough, these later trinitarian studies were followed by a volume on eschatology, *The Coming*

God.¹ This is Moltmann's latest, perhaps last, contribution to the series. It has attracted enough attention for Richard Bauckham, the leading British commentator on Moltmann, to edit a volume devoted to it.² Bauckham has always been more partial to Moltmann's work than I have and has concentrated more on teasing out underlying insights where I have tended to highlight difficulties.³

When the present account first appeared, Moltmann was just over sixty years old, having enjoyed two decades of a reputation that had gradually established him as one of the most influential figures in contemporary theology. That influence extended beyond Germany and the West to the Third World, and beyond academic institutions into pulpits. Hence the potential helpfulness of this brief critical introduction to his thought for those unfamiliar with it. While it concentrates on his major works, it makes use of the range of his writings. Over the years, Richard Bauckham has offered both bibliographical surveys and full-length treatments of Moltmann's work, which are invariably helpful.⁴

One cannot appreciate properly the flavour of Moltmann's thought without some grasp of the continental philosophy of the last two hundred years and of modern theology. One obvious limitation of an essay such as this is that the author's thought must be presented shorn of the technical, but important, intra-disciplinary discussions with his protagonists, past and present. It may therefore be useful for the reader to consult such general works as Colin Brown's *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969) or its expanded first part, *Christianity and Western Thought* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990) and introductions to twentieth-century theology by S. Grenz and R. E. Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992) and by S. Grenz and E. Miller, *Introduction to Contemporary Theologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). However, it is to Moltmann's credit that a presentation such as this essay can, in principle, be made without undue distortion of his thought, for he seeks in his work to recapture a biblical simplicity of thought, susceptible of relatively straightforward exposition where it is needed.

In his major works, Moltmann has concentrated on theological

principles and I have attended to this in the expositions. He is repetitive and hammers home his convictions on key themes such as eschatology or the Trinity time after time; but eschatology (generally, 'the doctrine of the last things') and the Trinity are explored and explicated in order to teach us to bear the cross of the present in our discipleship and seek therein the liberation of humankind, which is the goal of God. Moltmann's thought is anything but abstract in its intention. If one reads, for example, *The Experiment Hope* or *On Human Dignity*, one finds him reflecting on a range of social issues and making specific proposals about them. His own religious experience and appreciation of religious experience in general is set out in *Experiences of God*,⁵ and the importance of prayer and meditation conveyed in a generally illuminating essay in *Hope in the Church*.⁶ He is deeply and practically concerned for the handicapped.⁷ Even apparently technical philosophical distinctions, such as that between a 'dialectical' and 'analogical' principle of knowledge (into which I do not enter, despite its importance), are significantly earthed in Christian piety and outreach.⁸ Finally, he tells us that 'according to my conviction, scholarly theology has for its target the sermon'.⁹

I have certainly been critical of Moltmann's work, letting the reader, perhaps, find his or her own way to areas of agreement. But obviously there is much to commend in his theology, especially the alliance between theological reflection and call to action, and the attempt to discern and delineate the stark contours of biblical theology. Moltmann has spoken of his own youthful war-time experience thus:

As I continue to look back I see a young prisoner of war interned in an English camp. His horizon there is the barbed wire, even though the war has been over for some time. His path is one which curves in a circle around the edges of the barbed wire. Freedom lies beyond – out there where people live and laugh ... Hope rubbed itself raw on the barbed wire! A man cannot live without hope! ... The prisoner experienced an inner conversion when he gave up hope of getting home soon, and in his yearning he rediscovered that deeper 'hope against hope'.¹⁰

With that young man, his longings and his discovery, we can and surely must identify.

A theology of hope

Ideas, unlike ordinary physical objects, are in the air before they get off the ground, so to speak. In the 1960s revolution was in the air and sometimes on the ground; indeed, one should speak of revolutions, in the plural, when one takes into account student protests in France or Japan, civil rights or hippies in America. Moltmann proved sensitive to this feature of the contemporary scene. The most dramatic of all revolutions, however, judged by its slogan, occurred in the realm of religious ideas, for some theologians were heard to say 'God is dead!' The drama is lessened, though not lost, on recalling that what was broadly meant by this was that the joint pressure of new perspectives on Christianity from within and cultural changes without entailed, for some, abandonment of the traditional notion of God and associated norms of conduct. Moltmann himself took up the theme of the death of God, albeit with reference to ideas from early in the nineteenth century, and his own revision of traditional notions of God has proved to be pivotal in his work. Yet, in the 1960s he celebrated not the death of God but the birth of hope. His *Theology of Hope* did not spring out of nowhere, nor was it the product of purely private, unparalleled theological reflection.¹¹ However, it made its own peculiar impact and is one of the most important works of contemporary theology.

'No matter what Jürgen Moltmann publishes, he will always be remembered foremost for his *Theology of Hope*.'¹² The word 'hope' is probably the most persistent in Moltmann's entire theological vocabulary. It remains so in some of his most recent writings: *The Power of the Powerless* is dedicated to friends in 'a common hope' and the concluding essay of *On Human Dignity* refers to a 'common way of hope'. The word 'common' here is significant, for it is of a hope common to humanity that Moltmann has wanted to speak from the beginning. More than this, to speak of it is not only a theological responsibility, but the theological responsibility,

according to *Theology of Hope*. Years on, when other organizing principles of theological discourse have also been brought into play, one can still speak of eschatology, the doctrine of Christian hope, as 'the foundation and medium of Christian theology'.¹³ An important early essay, in *The Future of Hope*, refers to 'Theology as Eschatology'. *Theology of Hope* has proved memorable not just because it set out the content of Christian hope but because it charged Christian theology with the task of conducting its entire reflection in the light of it and as an exploration of it. 'From Moltmann's standpoint, the distinctive contribution of Christian faith is the hope it engenders in the midst of the ambiguous and even hopeless circumstances that plague human existence.'¹⁴ 'The Bible,' said Moltmann, 'is the textbook of hope, and the best presupposition for the theology and church of today to understand it correctly is this: every page and every word is concerned with the burning question, What may I hope?'¹⁵

The word 'hope' is familiar enough; but what exactly is 'eschatology'? The quick answer, mentioned earlier, is 'the doctrine of the last things'. There is a sense in which such a reply is acceptable to Moltmann. But the problem, as he sees it, is that eschatology has often been the last doctrine too. That is, it brings up the rear in books that offer general treatments of Christian doctrine. *Theology of Hope* expresses the conviction that, on the contrary, eschatology is pivotal. The key New Testament themes of the death and resurrection of Christ are really eschatological themes. In *Theology of Hope* it is the resurrection that is focal, and it is expounded in terms of the 'foreglow' of the end-time. The kind of hope set forth in the Bible is not an other-worldly hope, incapable of promoting this-worldly change. Authentic Christian eschatology presents us with a this-worldly eschatology, the driving force for this-worldly transformation. So Moltmann wants to establish the content of eschatology (this-worldly), its method (an exposition of Christology, set in the context of general biblical theology), its importance (the medium of Christian thinking) and its effect (world-transforming activity).

In taking up the question of eschatology and according it theological centrality, Moltmann was tackling a question that had surfaced with particular force at the turn of the century.¹⁶ He felt,

however, that the question had not been given realistic, biblical treatment in theology. For example, two mid-century theological giants, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, emphasized in different ways the finality of the revelation we receive through Christ in the present and *Theology of Hope* is largely a running battle with these two and others. The problem with this was that eschatology and Christianity came to be robbed of their future orientation. Moltmann, on the other hand, wants our gaze to be consistently 'forward, not upward', as it has been put. This he finds to be the biblical perspective, and therefore major portions of his book are given over to outlines of selected, but central, features of Old and New Testament theology.

In the Old Testament we encounter the God of promise. Moltmann plays this off against the idea of presence. If one asks concerning the revelation of God and the content of his word in the Old Testament, one is not directed to God's self-revelation in the present and communication of something presently done. Rather, one is directed to the promises that he will reveal himself in the future and what will be done then. Those promises, constantly renewed in the history of Israel, actually created history, for they drew Israel on into the future, ever moving towards the promised land of fulfilment. This perspective is by no means abandoned in the New Testament. True, something absolutely decisive has happened in Jesus Christ. By raising the crucified Christ from the dead, God has opened out history for all mankind, inaugurating some kind of trend that will culminate in the all-embracing glorification of God. History is now what happens between resurrection and eschaton (the end) according not to some immanent progress but to the operation of the divine promise. But this way of putting it shows that a future orientation and activity based on promise is still valid. It is thus misleading to think of the New Testament as related to the Old in terms of the fulfilment of promise, as though the present, not the future, could now be our chief interest.

Sustaining this thesis involved Moltmann in a number of important proposals. One had to do with the nature of God, a God with 'future as his essential nature', to quote the revisionist Marxist, Bloch, who has had such a profound influence on

Moltmann and other continental theologians.¹⁷ The importance of this conviction in *Theology of Hope* emerges in *The Experiment Hope*, chapter 4. Moltmann's doctrine of God here could be characterized in what will strike most of us as remarkable terms: '[Moltmann] will not say that God "is" or that "God is not", but he has no difficulty in saying that God is "still not yet".'¹⁸ What Moltmann is trying to do is to apply the biblical emphasis on the future to the very being of God. An exegetical foundation for this could be Exodus 3:14, translated as 'I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE',¹⁹ where God discloses himself to Moses. Gerald O'Collins stated that Moltmann surprisingly did not refer to this passage in *Theology of Hope*,²⁰ but it is implicit in reference to discussion of Exodus 3²¹ and later in his work explicitly cited.²² Still, it is not on a particular text that Moltmann's argument turns. Throughout *Theology of Hope* Moltmann underlines the contrast between Greek and Hebrew thought in many ways, including the emphasis on eternity (which is timeless) in the former and futurity (which is temporal) in the latter. This kind of contrast received powerful rebuttal in the 1960s in the work of James Barr.²³ But Moltmann wanted to detach from God the idea of timeless, eternal presence in order to keep in line with the biblical narrative which seems to portray God as a dynamic being, coming to the fullness of glorious being only at the end-time. Moltmann's thought here has provoked dissatisfaction from the outset and, in fact, he does not seem to have persevered in the notions implicit in the doctrine of God's being as future. Yet he has persevered in ascribing to God experience of time, as we shall later see.

A second important proposal involved in arguing the claims of *Theology of Hope* had to do with the interpretation of history. Moltmann pointed out that to be conscious of history today is to be conscious of the way it is punctuated by revolution and its potential so that some sort of permanent crisis seems to mark the movements we make, manage or endure. History is dynamic passage. Several philosophies of history have been devised to plumb its deep currents and Moltmann offers a critique of these together with an alternative proposal. His proposal is that we think of history in terms of its promised future in God's hands and the present impact of that promise. The Christian hopes in

the decisive, ultimate and universal manifestation of God in his righteousness. The gospel is a call to Jews and Gentiles to participate in the life and the coming glory of God; hence it is a missionary call, offering life for all and participation for all in missionary activity. 'Mission' was a key theme in Moltmann's work from the beginning²⁴ and received full-length treatment in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, as we shall see. Here, in *Theology of Hope*, it is emphasized that history is the arena for missionary work. In light of reconciliation begun and promised, the gospel calls for the emergence in man of the true humanity which is to be his. It calls for world transformation, activity which corresponds to the secret of history.

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that offers us a decisive perspective on all these things in *Theology of Hope*. If we are looking, in Moltmann, for a clear statement of belief in an empty tomb and corporeal resurrection, we will be disappointed.²⁵ But he certainly views the resurrection of Christ as an objective event forming and transforming history in its train. It instantiates and signals in the crucial way for Christianity the fact that God is the author of possibilities released into history, not derived from it. It inaugurates a trend that is not identical with the history of the world but yet is decisive in the purposes of God for history to bring it to its consummation. More exactly, it is the risen Lord himself, not some world process, that guides time to its goal. In this connection, Moltmann attends especially to Pauline theology and to 'apocalyptic', a complex theme which has nevertheless become important in biblical and doctrinal theology.²⁶ His discussion is ordered to show how the resurrection leads to the future which it anticipates, the future of the risen one, the future of life, righteousness and the kingdom of God. The heart of eschatology is thus manifested in the resurrection of the crucified one.

In the light and power of the resurrection, the church sets out not to achieve the kingdom of God itself but to achieve anticipations of it in history. It is an 'exodus church' aflame with the light of eschatological liberation. Christians are not to hang around and wait for the realization of the goal of history, for the 'hope of justice, the humanizing of man, the socializing of

humanity, peace for all creation'²⁷ are its passion and goal. Moltmann expounded some of the implications of this in *Religion, Revolution and the Future* where he expressed the conviction that 'unless it [truth] contains initiative for the transformation of the world, it becomes myth for the existing world'.²⁸ It is the task of hope to foster a Christian ethic, Christian ethics being 'the forward-moving, evolutionary and revolutionary initiative for the overcoming of man's bodily predicament and the plight of injustice'.²⁹ The accent is on social transformation. Moltmann is setting out, in accordance with needs that came to be felt in ecumenical circles in the 1950s, a general 'ethical field theory' for hope.³⁰ 'Field theory' recalls the quest in modern science for unifying principles that will explain some of the awesome totalities of the world, and readers with a background in modern physics may wish to press a comparison between what Moltmann (borrowing from Bloch) terms 'tendencies' and 'possibilities' with uses those terms have, for example, in discussion of quantum theory. But Moltmann's hope, while it unifies the Christian perception of reality, is not meant to titillate the intellect with its conceptual possibilities. It is meant to stimulate the activity that must correspond to divine possibilities. This goal, which comes to light in *Theology of Hope*, we must surely consider salutary.

The God of the cross

Perhaps the word 'hope' brings with it a different set of associations for different people. This is natural, as it bears varied meanings. But it often has a poignant ring to it. Its gaze is towards the future, towards the fulfilment of that wished or longed for, and its atmosphere is captured by Moltmann in the autobiographical fragment cited in the preface and sustained by him in his literature. Its future reference, however, reminds us that it advertises some sort of lack in the present, otherwise there would be no room for hope. Indeed, one might even speak of 'contradiction' here, for Moltmann's future hope is a hope of glory, whereas the present state of the world appears as its diametrical opposite. Moltmann,

in fact, adopts the vocabulary of contradiction in this very context. And instead of diametrical opposites he speaks of dialectical opposites. The concept of dialectic in Moltmann's theology is central. This word has had a long and rich history, particularly, for modern theological purposes, in the last couple of centuries, and it embraces a wide range of meaning. 'Dialectic' broadly directs us to the interplay of two opposite things. In relating future to present, glory to suffering, life to death, Moltmann focuses methodically on cross and resurrection, for do we not see here the stark antitheses of godforsaken death and glorious victory taken up into a unity whose reality and truth inform and engulf the story of the world? So Moltmann believes. If *Theology of Hope* focused on the resurrection, though it emphasized the resurrection of the crucified one, so the second major work, *The Crucified God*, focused on the cross, though it emphasized the cross of the risen one.

If strong claims had previously been made about the eschatological key of all Christian thinking, equally strong ones are made on behalf of a *theologia crucis*, a theology of the cross. In fact, it is largely the angle of vision that has changed in this work, for Christian eschatology is an eschatology of the cross.³¹ Moltmann tells us: 'I identify the Pauline theology of hope with his theology of the cross ... the theology of the cross is the theology of hope ...'³² Indeed, he could say: 'Not the great historical acts of God as such interest me (including resurrection), but the suffering of God in the Passion Story of the world.'³³ These words indicate that Moltmann connects the suffering of the cross with the suffering of the world. They also indicate Moltmann's willingness to speak of 'the suffering of God'. Both these things invite comment.

Timely awareness of the fact of suffering occasioned *The Crucified God* as a counter-balance to, though by no means contradiction of, *Theology of Hope*. Suffering is fundamental to human existence: 'I suffer, therefore I am.'³⁴ Its existence is a governing factor in a form of profound and pervasive modern atheism: 'protest atheism'. Its protest against suffering is a protest against the traditional God of pure omnipotence who compounds his threat to the freedom and humanity of man by co-existing impassibly (that is, without suffering) and all-powerfully with

suffering humanity. Under its aegis criticism of the status quo, as Horkheimer put it, became the substitute for faith in a heavenly judge. The problem of belief in God in the face of evil or of suffering is often termed the question of 'theodicy'. In *The Crucified God* Moltmann wants to take some steps towards resolving that question, convinced that a Christian view of God and the world that cannot take to its heart the truth in protest atheism is self-defeating and valueless. It is in a theology of the cross that we begin to find answers. Moltmann is not alone in forging a theology of the cross in some sort of dialogue with atheism; see the title of a work by his influential university colleague E. Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*.

Talk of the 'suffering of God' becomes (literally) crucially important in this context. At the heart of the attempt to work out a theology of the cross there must be a revolution, as Moltmann terms it, in the concept of God. Protest atheism rightly sees that the true humanity of man, burdened by his suffering, cannot possibly be squared with the glorious omnipotence of God, incapable of suffering.³⁵ But it is wrong to abandon the notion of God, as in atheistic conclusions. It is our idea of God that must be refashioned. And surely, as Bonhoeffer put it, 'only the suffering God can help'. However, it is not a case of atheism dictating here to Christian theology. It is the cross itself that is the critique of alien ideas of God within our own (Christian) tradition. Moltmann's special target here is the doctrine that God does not and cannot suffer, the doctrine of impassibility. To all appearances this was axiomatic in the early church, profoundly affecting its Christologies.³⁶ Hence the 'revolutionary' nature of Moltmann's proposal.

The point of a theology of the cross, like a theology of hope, is to energize us in our witness. Luther had spoken of a *theologia crucis*, but for our day it must take the form of a social criticism. It must be unashamedly iconoclastic of all the idols of power and glory especially in the political realm that are foreign to the mission and spirit of the crucified God. It must be gladly willing to identify with the wretched and godforsaken in the social realm that are invited to share the company of the wretched and

godforsaken Christ of the cross. This practical note, then, in *Theology of Hope* is also preserved. How does Moltmann execute his programme?

In *The Crucified God* he begins by outlining the 'identity-involvement' dilemma characterizing much contemporary Christianity.³⁷ Keeping one's Christian identity leads too easily to social withdrawal; social involvement in the name of relevance leads too easily to a forfeiture of distinctively Christian identity. Here the cross must guide us. Christian identity is forged and found in identification with the crucified Christ; the core of such identification lies less in mystical, passive suffering, ingredient though that is in Christianity, than in active, imitative suffering. This suffering arises from reaching out, as did Jesus, to the abandoned and godforsaken in their misery. Such activity leads the Christian to connect the cross of Jesus and the criticism of society. It leads to what has been described as 'political theology'.

'Political theology', Moltmann tells us, emerged as far as he was concerned, at the end of the 1960s (following the lead of the Catholic theologian, J. B. Metz) in translating the hope of faith into hope in action.³⁸ Broadly, it directs theology into the social-political arena; the concept is developed and expounded in several writings such as *On Human Dignity* (subtitled *On Political Theology and Ethics*)³⁹ and *The Experiment Hope*.⁴⁰ Political theology, as Moltmann describes it, denotes 'the field, the milieu, the realm, and the stage on which Christian theology should be explicitly carried on today. Political theology wants to awaken political consciousness in every treatise of Christian theology ... The church must develop a critical and self-conscious political theology'.⁴¹ This is no crude despiritualizing politicization of Christian religion. On the contrary it expresses authentic Christian spirituality – the spirituality of the crucified Christ. Did not his life, ministry, teaching and, finally, death at the hands of the mighty Roman Empire stand against the gods of power and self-glorification which are idolatrously formative of our cultures? And do not the biblical texts themselves unfold their meaning to those who read them as a clarion call to suffer in the world in the cause of God? Thus to a political theology Moltmann allies a 'political hermeneutics' of the gospel ('hermeneutics' being,

roughly, principles of interpretation). Here, then, a theology of hope is true to its missionary orientation when it becomes a political theology in the shadow of the cross.

Again, as in *Theology of Hope*, we note the Christological basis. Too often we approach Christ from a distorting perspective. The New Testament witnesses to him in the context of the eschatological future and redemption of the world. That future belongs to the one crucified – such is the nugget of promise set in the heart of the scandal of the cross. That scandal started with his ministry and life. For a long time biblical criticism has led us to ask how much we can know of the historical Jesus. He is sufficiently accessible to us, Moltmann insists, for the concrete reality of the cross, in its setting in the life and society of Jesus Christ, to manifest God and his truth to our understanding. As a matter of historical fact, Jesus, in God's name, proffered the kingdom of the Father to the outcasts – and blasphemed in the eyes of those who would be justified by the law. Further, he was a political rebel, for he substituted brotherhood with the poor for the kingship of political might. Yet, though he lived and acted in the name of God, his Father, at life's end, on the cross, the most bewildering thing of all occurred: he experienced forsakenness at the hands of the very God in whom he believed. In that desolate cry: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34) Moltmann discerns the answer to the riddle of God, suffering, righteousness and truth. How so?

We know that the one crucified was raised, and an eschatological Christology views this in the light of the world's future when divine righteousness and truth will be established. If that is the case, God, by the resurrection of Christ, has sealed the truth of Jesus' earthly witness to him. But if he identified with Jesus in his life, resurrection and eschatological lordship, does he not identify himself with him in the cross? How can such identification take place within the God-forsakenness experienced by Jesus? The answer gives us the clue to God's relation to the world. In that very God-forsakenness God comes to be present. The cross shows God taking into himself the burden of guilt, death, suffering and the misery of the world and humanity, for he identified himself, through Christ, with that humanity and takes up

into his divine being the story of human sin and sorrow. Here, then, we find a suffering God.

In claiming this, Moltmann certainly wants to disclaim a substantial conviction of early church Christology. He found its central difficulty in its failure to account properly for the suffering of the cross.⁴² In the classical Christological formula of the early church, Jesus Christ is spoken of as a single person but possessed of two natures: divine and human. Different properties may be ascribed to each nature: humanity suffers and dies, for example, but deity is immortal and impassible. To ascribe to God capacity for suffering would be to subject him to conditioning to that external to himself; that, in turn, would mean that he was changeable; that, in turn, would mean he was imperfect. So one could represent the broad logic of the patristic denial of impassibility in conceptually abstract terms. But, further, Chalcedonian Christology was set squarely within the frame of the doctrine of the Trinity. Is Moltmann then denying this doctrine?

On the contrary: the emergence of Moltmann's trinitarianism is a central feature of *The Crucified God*. He argues that only a trinitarian interpretation will do, confronted with the story of the cross. For here we have to do with the Son delivered up to death by the Father. The Father suffers the loss of the Son as the Son suffers death, but the Father himself does not die. These distinctions between Father and Son are inconceivable in the biblical perspective without thinking of God as two persons. Further, in their separation they are united, and out of the event of the cross comes the Spirit. Hence we have to do with a third person. When Moltmann later elaborates his trinitarian theology, he finds evidence of trinitarian activity, of course, in the creation of the world and the sending of the Son, but what the cross distinctively reveals and achieves is the way the Trinity opens itself out in time to embrace the extremities of God-forsakenness. Hence we learn too at the cross that God is not timeless, for he experiences time as well as suffering. God has a history – a trinitarian history. These are themes Moltmann will take up in his next major works.

Meanwhile, if we understand God thus, we are liberated. We are freed psychologically because the cross 'leads man into the

history of God' and this 'frees him for an acceptance of human life which is capable of suffering and capable of love'.⁴³ And political liberation comes in train of the recognition that God is no God of Caesarian power but God of the poor and abandoned, who can create anticipations in time of the liberation of the future. The God of hope is the God of the cross and the cross lifts up the head of the suffering that they might look forward to God. Present and future, suffering and hope are thus established by the event of divine trinitarian love in the death of Christ which led to a resurrection unto life.

Church and Spirit

Easter looks back to Good Friday and forward to Pentecost. As *Theology of Hope* had concentrated on resurrection and *The Crucified God* on the cross, so does *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* concentrate on the Spirit. The three works between them make up a trilogical series of attempts to take in the main elements in theology each time from a special perspective. Moltmann's next work, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, began a series of explorations of particular themes built on principles established in the earlier works. The explorations starting with *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* form units of a 'messianic theology' or 'messianic dogmatics'; *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is described as 'a contribution to messianic ecclesiology' in the preface and note the title of Richard Bauckham's forthcoming work which includes the phrase 'messianic theology'. The Messiah is the expected deliverer. First he must suffer before entering into his glory. The creation also groans in travail on the way to its own liberation. All theology is messianically oriented in its expectant suffering and hope, and the 'church in the power of the Spirit' must show forth this truth. In this work we encounter themes with which we are already familiar in Moltmann, but new, perhaps startling, implications are brought to light. As in the path from *Theology of Hope* to *The Crucified God* one might detect changes in the doctrine of God, here in the doctrine of God as Trinity, we are encountering development in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.⁴⁴ But in accordance with the purpose of this

essay I am not pursuing the discontinuities or the puzzles amidst the governing continuities and clarities, at least of intent.

The words 'church' and 'Spirit' in the title advertise that feature of the theological tradition that Moltmann wishes to challenge in this work. *Theology of Hope* had set out the universal eschatological perspective from which we look at the whole. But the bounds of the universe are wider than the bounds of the church. Hence, argues Moltmann, we must locate our understanding of the church and her mission within the wider context of the universal mission of the Spirit. Consistent with his earlier convictions Moltmann derives his view of the Spirit's mission from Christ's mission. In giving primacy to the universal mission of Christ, and then Spirit, in the context of universal eschatology, Moltmann is breaking with the tradition which orientates the world to the church rather than subordinating the church to the world, as Tripole puts it.⁴⁵ If pneumatology (the doctrine of the Spirit) and ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) are established thus on the foundations of eschatological Christology, how is the church to pursue her mission in the power of the Spirit? For in accordance with his emphasis on praxis (practice or activity), in this work Moltmann keeps a constant eye on the mission of the church.

Moltmann holds that if our eschatological perspective informs us of God's design for the future, this has some immediate implications for the task of ecclesiology. It becomes wrong to view the church according to a timeless nature, constant through history. It becomes wrong to separate the church from the world as though they are different unities with different destinies. It is in the context of God's dealings with the world that we understand his dealings with the church. 'Understanding' the church, however, is ordered to the task of world transformation; a doctrine of the church must be the point of departure for her reformation in the light and service of world renewal. The church is a channel for messianic mediation to the world. Protestantism rightly has connected the mediator with ecclesiology traditionally, by founding the church on the rock of justification in Christ. But if Christology is adequately understood, it is eschatological, so that there is a fuller perspective to be found for grasping the nature of the church in the eschatological calling of Jew and Gentile.⁴⁶ It is

in this way that the story of Christ, who bore his cross in order to lead the world into eschatologically liberating lordship in a new creation, becomes the focus of the church's responsive attention.

Keeping in mind the Christological foundation of our thinking, Moltmann is able in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* to expound what he terms the 'trinitarian history of God'. This way of speaking departs from traditional trinitarianism to the extent that the former ascribes timeless eternity to the trinitarian being of God, whereas Moltmann insists on the temporality of the Trinity, that is the inner reality of history for the being of God.⁴⁷ As trinitarian history, however, is exhibited and experienced in the event of the cross, it is seen to embrace world history, since the Spirit that flowed out of Calvary, in whose power Christ was sacrificed (Hebrews 9:14) unites the abyss of death and misery with the very being of God in himself. Moltmann thinks in what can be called dynamically panentheistic terms. God is dynamic, not static; there is a form of self-unfolding in his being. He is also not apart from the world (an idea which, in its extreme form, is often labelled deism) and yet he is not identical with the world (strictly, pantheism). He transcends the world by choosing freely a form of union with it, a union whereby he takes into his own being, voluntarily, the being of the world. This is the gist of Moltmann's panentheism. Its basis and distinctive slant is its trinitarian nature. A useful introduction to some concepts of God by a proponent of what is known as the 'classical' viewpoint in Christianity is Huw Parri Owen's *Concepts of Deity* which should help readers get acquainted with some of the options that have been exercised in traditional and modern doctrines of God.

It is because trinitarian history in its way comprehends world history that the church rightly allows the universal perspective to be her own. In the midst of the clamour to understand world history the great sign of the times, for the church, is constituted by the path of the liberating Spirit. That Spirit, binding Father and Son in dynamic love, flows out in mission to the world with that same love. The mission will be accomplished with the eventual glorification of the world. The trinity is the story of the eschatological unity of God with his creation to his glory. In this goal of the messianic mission of Christ and the creative mission of

the Spirit – for the new creation is the substance of the eschaton – the church participates. Here she finds her identity.

All this means that the presence of Christ in the Spirit cannot be confined to the church. Christ's messianic mission on earth terminated in representative self-giving destined to herald a liberating lordship. In this the church participates by setting forth all kinds of liberation in sympathy and joy, thus living in the presence of Christ. But 'Christ is confessed in the Holy Spirit and by him ... where the power of the new creation is active. He is confessed where prisoners liberate themselves from oppression.'⁴⁸ The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 is taken by Moltmann to teach the presence of Christ in the poor.⁴⁹ Christ is not present here in a Christian congregation, but his presence makes the poor fellow-members with the institutional church of the kingdom of God.⁵⁰ This is where eschatological Christology takes us in ecclesiology and missiology (understanding of mission).

What Moltmann is doing here is further exploring a theme, theologically prominent in our century, of the sacred and the secular, with a view to breaking down barriers in that realm that take the form of a church–world separation. Much of the inspiration for Moltmann's and others' way of thinking here came from Dietrich Bonhoeffer.⁵¹ In the later stages of his short life Bonhoeffer referred to 'religionless Christianity', sometimes (but questionably) rendered 'unchurchly Christianity' to get its proper force. This was done in the service of a wider attempt to relate the presence of Christ to the world, not just to the church. Moltmann also wanted to relate 'church' to the substance of Christianity in a non-traditional fashion, even if there are dissimilarities with Bonhoeffer. The upshot, as far as Moltmann is concerned, is that 'Christ's presence in word and sacrament points beyond itself (by virtue of its indwelling logic of identification and his presence itself) to his identity in the world'.⁵²

This has implications not only for relations between the church and the poor but also for relations with other religions. The church has her partners in the world 'who will never become the church',⁵³ but whose future is yet the universal lordship of God. A theology of hope knows no limits: 'It hopes for all, and it hopes

for everything.⁵⁴ Hence there is hope for Israel and hope for other religions. Israel has a special vocation in partnership with the church which must not be assimilated to the church's more specific vocation with respect to the gospel but which is nevertheless a true partnership, for the Messiah is the Messiah of Israel and of the church. They are united in a mission of hope: 'Let Christians and Jews turn to the world together, with the ardour of hope.'⁵⁵ Moltmann's treatment of Israel is important in his theology⁵⁶ and indeed the Christian attitudes to Israel and the Jews are exceedingly important in the modern world. What emerges in the context of his treatment here is that mission can be shared by Jews and Gentiles in some form and can thus take the form of promoting hope: 'mission is the infection with hope' (Hoekendijk) and 'Christianity is mission' says Moltmann.⁵⁷ The traditional missionary task of making disciples for Christ must be supplemented (not replaced) by the task of 'infecting' people, 'whatever their religion, with the spirit of hope, love and responsibility for the world'.⁵⁸ In adopting this attitude Moltmann, who is a Reformed theologian, partakes of convictions expressed within other confessions. The Lutheran George Lindbeck thus says that 'the missionary task of Christians may at times be to encourage Marxists to become better Marxists, Jews and Muslims to become better Jews and Muslims, and Buddhists to become better Buddhists'.⁵⁹ Lindbeck takes his own cue from attitudes that surfaced in Roman Catholicism in the 1960s, it would seem.⁶⁰

Moltmann's incentive to think thus is consistently Christological and eschatological. In its light he discusses the concrete forms of hope – social, political, economic, racial, cultural. Liberating activity here must 'correspond to' and 'anticipate' the kingdom of God. 'The church in the power of the Spirit is not yet the kingdom of God, but it is its anticipation in history.'⁶¹ New possibilities exist in the power of the coming new creation mediated by the Spirit. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* makes concrete the implications of *Theology of Hope* with the aid of developed trinitarianism.

Has Moltmann abandoned traditional elements of the doctrine of the church? In his view, he has rather reinstated them in proper

context. Receiving the word means liberation for the future; baptism is initiation into missionary participation in the trinitarian history of God; the Lord's Supper is an inclusive, not exclusive, feast of hopeful friendship; worship anticipates the eschatological doxology of creation. The church is in fact distinguished by all these things, but not immured in an ark of salvation with sealed safety valves, cocooned from a damned world. As is the case with 'means of grace', so with ministries of the church the Spirit must not be tied in exclusivistic fashion to ministry and sacrament. In line with the liberating Spirit, we must not go in for hierarchies which confer traditional 'monarchical' authority on individual bishops or hierarchical theologies which locate apostolic succession in hierarchical representatives rather than in community mission. It is the congregational community that serves to show the reconciling, humble presence of Christ to the world and in *Hope in the Church*, for example, Moltmann expounds the thesis that the future of the church lies in the local congregation, a prominent theme in his ecclesiological writings. Congregational fellowship is best set forth under the rubric of 'friendship', another concept used extensively by Moltmann, including in his description of the relation between God and man.⁶² Friendship is love in freedom which enables the truth of divine friendship, which is itself love in freedom, to shine forth. In this light, 'the goal of all strategies is the building up of mature responsible congregationalism'⁶³ for the sake of an open society.⁶⁴

Moltmann winds up with his reinterpretation for our day of the traditional marks of the church as set out in the Apostles' Creed. They are to be interpreted in the light of Christ's activity and in the service of hopeful living. They must confront the church with the world. Thus emerges unity in free, suffering solidarity with the oppressed; catholicity, which is relatedness to the whole world in mission; holiness, a sanctified suffering and poverty in this world, and apostolicity, which is 'a fellowship of poverty which becomes a lived hope'.⁶⁵ So Moltmann ends an account dedicated to ecumenicity and 'oppressed Christians throughout the world'. In suffering and hope the church marches on to the universal future in the power of the Spirit.

Trinity and kingdom

The doctrine of the Trinity is not one which, on the face of it, is likely to command detailed attention from the kind of theologian who wants theological thought geared to praxis. Many who believe in God as trinity and affirm the importance of such belief are likely, nevertheless, to feel that reflection soon comes up against the boundaries of what can and should be said on it. Presumably enough has been glimpsed of Moltmann's work up till now for us to see why he is unlikely to be disposed to share such a view. Reflection on the Trinity takes in reflection on the whole span of human history and our persistent missionary responsibility. In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann certainly wants to break with any theology of the Trinity that would bring on suspicions of a speculative luxury. But such a break had been attempted already by the greatest Protestant theologian of his century, Karl Barth. Barth, in his monumental *Church Dogmatics*, had put the Trinity in the forefront of the dogmatic, theological picture. It gradually emerged that Moltmann, heavily influenced by Barth (as many continental Protestant theologians have been), though often not persuaded by him, also wished to accord the doctrine of the Trinity a central place in theology. Yet the theological scheme is not that of Barth.

The juxtaposition of 'trinity' and 'kingdom' in the title of this work, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, is suggestive from the standpoint of New Testament theology. The 'kingdom of God' was apparently the dominant theme of Jesus' preaching but recedes in the preaching of the early church. To some extent it appears to have passed out of theological currency as time went on. On the other hand, it may be debated whether there is a doctrine of the Trinity at all in the New Testament. To be sure the answer to this depends in part on what one means by 'the doctrine of the Trinity', whether one means its classical form, attained in the fourth century (obviously that is not in the New Testament) or the elements of trinitarian doctrine (about whose presence or significance one might argue to a certain extent). At any rate, the doctrine of the Trinity looks from many angles like an understanding that emerged or developed late in or from the New

Testament writings in relation to the preaching of Jesus. Hence, while 'kingdom' is an early term with no obvious connotations of trinity, 'trinity' is a later one without any obvious connections with 'kingdom'. Moltmann, however, wants to wed the concepts. The goal of history is the kingdom of God; the unfolding of history is the trinitarian life of God. Such a connection can be established ultimately in sufficient detail to make proposals on its basis about the political structure of society.

If 'history' belongs to trinity, so 'freedom' belongs to kingdom. O'Donnell comments that in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* the main thing is that 'the path from history to freedom is opened up'⁶⁶ and that, indeed, Moltmann's 'entire theological enterprise is an effort to work out the theological implications of this vision'.⁶⁷ Yet again, the 'oppressed' are mentioned in the preface to *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*⁶⁸ and the battle for their freedom is fought by reiterated polemic against 'monotheism' and 'monarchianism'. 'Monotheism' in theological writing usually means 'one God' but when Moltmann attacks it he means to attack a concept of God which is not properly trinitarian. That, however, may apply to some traditional and contemporary doctrines of the Trinity in the church for they may obscure the reality of three trinitarian persons by emphasizing the oneness of God and the primacy of the Father in the Trinity. 'Monarchianism' is used in theological literature to refer to a group of heresies in the early church which could, for example, collapse the three trinitarian 'persons' (as they came to be called definitively in the fourth century) into effectively one person. Moltmann often uses it in much the same sense as 'monotheism'. But it links up with the political idea of 'monarchy'. As Moltmann sees it, false ideas of God as an absolute world ruler (monotheistic, monarchian ideas), dwelling in patriarchal unity, spawn unchristian political ideologies with absolute kingship ruling the roost. Attention to trinitarian history, which presents us with a fellowship of persons united by mutually interpenetrating activity, not Fatherly domination, will lead us to see how a kind of democratic socialism in political structure corresponds to the trinitarian being of God. Thus the path from history (trinitarian history in its principle) to freedom (social freedom in the end) is carved out.

Moltmann aims so to present his doctrine of the Trinity that it achieves ecumenical ends. Most broadly, this means a doctrine that connects up with Jewish theology, and thus Moltmann latches on especially to those Jewish theologians who emphasize the passion, the suffering of God. More domestically, this means a doctrine that creates rapport between Eastern and Western Christianity, officially split over the doctrine of the Trinity in the eleventh century. In a discussion of the so-called 'filioque' controversy in this connection, Moltmann tries to promote some unity. But, as in the case of Judaism, the ecumenical objective is to be attempted mainly by presenting a genuinely Christian understanding of the Trinity in general terms, which in its own right begins to heal some rifts.

As Moltmann expounds his position, several familiar themes receive renewed treatment. We read of participation in the history and experience of God; of ascribing suffering to God; of the passion and exaltation of the Son. The aim, however, is now to establish the distinction between persons to a large extent. Trinitarian theology has typically in the past walked the tight-rope between stressing the unity of God, thus obliterating the distinction between persons, and stressing the distinction of persons, thus heading for tritheism. There is no doubt as to the side on which Moltmann falls. He emphasizes the three persons. But he does not wish to approach the question speculatively. We start with the suffering of God; we learn that this suffering is the function of freely acting love; we learn of God's inner compulsion to reach out to man, and come to see love as the self-communication of the good, the opposite of solitude, the deep passion for friendship and self-disclosure. All this we learn, however, in the relations established in history between God and man through the relations played out in history between Father, Son and Spirit. The history of the Son, seen against the background of God's plan for the world, shows us the way to this understanding.

At least three sets of Moltmann's convictions in this context should be noticed. First, he is unwilling to separate the 'immanent' and 'economic' trinities. In theological literature the 'immanent' trinity is sometimes called the 'essential' or 'ontological' trinity and it refers to God as he is in himself, immanently. We learn to think

of God this way because of divine activity in history, at least in part, and that activity can be termed the divine 'economy', hence, the 'economic' trinity is the Trinity in action, as it were, in time and history. For Moltmann, if one took the line taken in the tradition, that God is timelessly eternal ('timeless' here strictly means that all is, to God, an eternal present) or impassible, then the immanent trinity is other than the trinity economic and that would mean that we do not apprehend God himself in the economy. Giving it his own distinctive twist and interpretation, he accepts the maxim of Karl Rahner, a leading Catholic theologian of our century, that the economic trinity is the immanent trinity.

Secondly, Moltmann insists that what God does affects himself. Traditionally, it had been held that divine activity has effects, of course, *ad extra*, in relation to that external to God. Creation, redemption or glorification affected the world, not God. Moltmann, however, holds that God is in himself affected by this. Does he not suffer, respond, listen, decide – all in response to human agents? Here one must note that Moltmann's determination to ground the doctrine of God in trinitarian economy is associated with a theological principle scarcely discussed *qua* principle in his work, namely the place of the biblical narrative in the formation of theological concepts. 'Narrative theology' has become important over the last few years, apparently grounded in the work of Karl Barth.⁶⁹ 'The New Testament talks about God by proclaiming in narrative the relationships of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, which are relationships of fellowships and are open to the world.'⁷⁰ Indeed, were God not as he is presented to us in the narrative, capable of being affected in some way, Moltmann claims he would be impoverished, for the capacity to suffer and to respond is part of the richness of love.

Thirdly, Moltmann is concerned to show how the pattern of interaction between the different trinitarian persons in the economy varies with the activity under consideration. Hence he concludes sections on the sending, surrender, exaltation and future of the Son with summaries of trinitarian activity in each case which exhibit varying patterns. The thrust of this is to establish, as far as possible, trinitarian life as one of mutual

fellowship, rather than domination by the Father, though there is room to make something of the traditional idea of the Father as *fons et origo divinitatis* ('fountainhead and origin in the deity'). Moltmann is anxious to stress how the nature of sonship and fatherhood displayed through Jesus Christ stamps itself on all other concepts, like lordship. The Spirit who is mediating to us the new creation of the future, mediates thus the filial lordship of Christ which creates patterns of sonship and relationship in the church corresponding to the non-monarchical trinity.

There is plenty here that has invited critical comment.⁷¹ Moltmann discusses several of the detailed questions discussed in the tradition in relation to the Trinity. But he has set it all in a new context. Moltmann's story of the Trinity is the story of universal salvation where world history is a vast exodus from bondage in light of messianic hope in world transformation. The creation of the world, the incarnation of the Son, the transfiguration of the cosmos by the Spirit are the main elements in the story. It is learnt at the cross where we discover God as trinity in suffering love and in light of the resurrection where we see the pre-reflection of coming glory. God created the world as an efflux of love for the Son and seeks by the Spirit the communion of that which is unlike himself, man. When God saves, he deals with sin, but the goal is more than the overcoming of sin, for the Spirit sets in motion the future of the world whose grand destiny is to be the divine domicile. In the world, the Trinity moves out that humanity may come in: that is the story and song of salvation.

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* a question which comes to light with regard to the Trinity concerns the ascription of 'personhood' to Father, Son and Spirit. It has often been pointed out that when the word 'person' was used in this connection in classical trinitarianism, it did not mean an independent entity which would turn the three persons of the Trinity into three gods. But does Moltmann use it tritheistically? He seems to take the risk, for he warns us not to fight shy of speaking of three centres of activity, three subjects in trinity. That, he says, is what the Bible does, after all. What is to be avoided is an extremely individualistic idea of 'person', as if one can be a person without being essentially related. Father, Son and Spirit are ever and always united in their

personal activities – that very unity in trinitarian fellowship suffices to establish the oneness – there is no tritheism here. Moltmann reminds us that as a matter of principle of course concepts expressed in our ordinary language undergo transformation when applied to a theme such as God as trinity.

In a fairly brief but important final section Moltmann considers the social implications of his doctrine of God as trinity. As human liberty is thwarted in the religious sphere by the traditional all-knowing, all-powerful God, so it is thwarted in the political sphere by the omnipotent earthly monarch. A ‘social’ understanding of the Trinity (as Moltmann’s can be termed) entails political socialism. But this is not the socialism of a static, timeless creed.⁷² Drawing on the work of the medieval thinker Joachim of Fiore, Moltmann adumbrates a scheme for looking at world history in terms of the kingdoms of Father, Son and Spirit, concurrent, not consecutive kingdoms and in accordance with the economy laid out in the Bible. How can such trinitarian history, culminating in such a kingdom, do other than promote freedom for man? Is that not the goal and method of God? Freedom in love; freedom for the possibilities of the world; the freedom of servants, children and especially friends – these are increasingly the privileges of man in relation to God. No social system that fails to adopt such principles into its political and ethical foundation can be worthy of our acclaim. So much the doctrine of the Trinity establishes.

Critique 1: the eschatological perspective

There are several welcome features of Moltmann’s work. He seeks to be biblical and applied in his theology; intellectual and spiritual. Karl Barth emphasized the spirituality of religious knowledge for the Christian and Moltmann continues in that vein. There is plenty that moves, convicts, humbles and challenges, especially when the ‘underprivileged’ are discussed in any way. Further, there is a studied and sustained attempt to ground our theological statements faithfully in the promises and activity given to us and undertaken for us by God in Christ.

Preliminarily to more specific discussion of the content of

Moltmann's thought, it is worth commenting on his style. In theological circles, corresponding to philosophical ones in this respect, one often comes across sharp differences between general ways of doing theology (or philosophy). One such difference is in mind here as far as theology is concerned: the difference between an analytical approach and a pervasively continental approach. The historical background and conceptual dimensions of this difference are not our concern. The analytical approach, often found in the English-speaking world, proceeds in practice much of the time by meticulous attention to the logic of concepts, the logical relations of concepts and the precise linguistic formulation of an argument. It would be wrong to deny that what I am labelling 'continental' approaches also often do this after a fashion. But if one cares to compare two of the books already mentioned, Kelsey's *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* and Moltmann's own *Theology of Hope*, taking Moltmann, for our purposes, as typifying a continental attitude, one will detect a difference in approach. David Brown complains of Moltmann's indifference to appropriate conceptual, philosophical analysis. Without expressing preferences or value-judgments here, let it simply be said that one certainly struggles in vain to understand mighty and evocative ideas expressed in technical language unless one can depict the contours of an argument for a conclusion which our ordinary words 'therefore', 'and', 'but', 'consequently' or 'merely', 'partly', and so on, signify. But if one finds Moltmann typically continental in his broad approach and would like to see more of the logical attentiveness that scrupulous handling of the above little words would imply, it is nevertheless our Christian and intellectual responsibility to offer any position we eventually reject its best defence on its behalf first. Writers such as Moltmann often have reason for expounding things in the way they do and can provide insights missing from the works of the more logically sophisticated. If it is a weakness of Moltmann's basic approach that he sets forward his theological judgments in a logically vulnerable way, it is also a weakness in the approach of a protagonist if such a failure is deemed to rob the work of theological merit. I say this without any intention of disagreeing with Brown or defending Moltmann or of expressing preference

for the approach of the one over the other to the general doctrine of the Trinity!

When Moltmann brought to the fore the eschatological perspective in Christianity, in his own way he gave good account both of its centrality and of its connection with cross and resurrection. His eschatology was both 'universal' and 'this-worldly' and it has persisted so since *Theology of Hope*. But there are deep problems at the heart of this.

'Universalism' can mean different things in theology. One of its most frequent meanings is the belief that all people, not some, will eventually be saved. Discussion of this in recent theology is usefully summed up in Stephen Travis's work.⁷³ When Moltmann, as he persistently does, speaks of the universal eschatological salvation of all humanity, he is seldom directly attending to the question of whether all without exception will enter the kingdom. Many people use the vocabulary of 'all' in a similar way, it would seem, though they profess ignorance on the question of whether any will finally, through constant rejection of God's love, forfeit that life eternal. Yet many of Moltmann's statements seem to point unavoidably to 'universalism' in the sense under consideration.⁷⁴ There are two problems with Moltmann on this count. The first is that he never defends universalism in this sense – he merely states it. In light of the traditional rejection of universalism in the church, it is not good enough to assume that the broad gist of one's theology of hope, eschatology or biblical theology constitutes an argument for universalism. Moltmann speaks of the crucified Lord as constituting the deepest grounds for Christian universalism,⁷⁵ though he seems to have in mind a perspective on cosmic eschatology (the grand future of this world), as he so often does, rather than a stricter view of the salvation of all individuals at this point. Nevertheless, he never demonstrates this stricter universalism on Christological premises in the way he tries to demonstrate that God suffers, or that eschatology is the context of Christology, for example.

It may be thought that criticism on this point is at best criticism of one element in his thought and not of anything very important in its general fabric. This brings us to the second problem. For Moltmann, universal salvation is the basis for missionary activity.

Because God calls and includes all to and in his kingdom, we are motivated without reserve in infecting all with hope, suffering in solidarity with all, reaching out to all. According to Moltmann's implicit belief, it is not, as some have traditionally thought, that universalism robs one of missionary incentive; rather, it constitutes it. This can be amply documented from almost any of Moltmann's major or lesser works where the broad question of eschatological hope or missionary activity is broached. Those of us, therefore, who dispute dogmatic universalism cannot accept this view of the link between eschatological perspective and missionary activity in the broader sense of that term.

It might, however, be argued that what Moltmann says in general is compatible with an agnostic, rather than dogmatic attitude to universalism, whereby he refuses to pronounce on the question of whether any forfeit salvation.⁷⁶ This is a widespread attitude across the different confessions in modern theology. If this is Moltmann's position at least he is clear that we must hope for all. The force of this would be that we are bidden, with good reason but without dogmatic certainty, to hope for the salvation of all, for this is the desire and design of God, though for all we know persistent rejection of him leads of itself to exclusion from the eschatological kingdom. Surely we can hope for all in this sense and must do so if we are to reach out in love to all?

The answer to this is that we must beware of the different meanings of the word 'hope'. In our ordinary language it has a variety of nuances, but we normally contrast it with 'certainty' or with a well-grounded certainty. To hope for something is to be unsure of whether it will happen, or if we are sure, we have to admit that we can scarcely justify absolute confidence about anything in the future. Such, at any rate, is a typical way of seeing 'hope'. However, where 'hope' appears in the Bible and thence in theology, it has a distinctive meaning over against this. 'Hope' here can be subjective or objective. 'Subjective' hope refers to what I may hope for, and arguments have raged in the tradition over whether any is entitled to have assurance or certainty that 'I' will be saved. We do not enter into this discussion here. However, there is 'objective' hope which refers to that which is hoped for. This can be described in the Bible and theology in a variety of

ways: for example, the reappearing of Christ or the consummation of the kingdom of God. These are taken, in the Bible, to be objective realities, albeit yet to come. Some today would protest against theology simply taking these over as 'objective realities', but that does not matter in our context, for Moltmann believes that such things are a matter of divine promise and that our hope is a certain one.⁷⁷

What is the force of this discussion of 'hope'? My point is that if Moltmann holds that we must hope for all, in the sense compatible with nondogmatism on the question of universalism, he is not using 'hope' in this biblical sense or in its biblically based sense in the tradition which sees it as one of the three 'theological virtues' (together with 'faith' and 'love'). Of course, there may be no reason why Moltmann should not in general use the word 'hope' in a slightly different sense, a sense more akin in relevant ways to the ordinary-language use mentioned earlier. Indeed, he distinguishes frequently and explicitly between the kinds of hopes that may be disappointed and the certain expectancy of deeper Christian hope.⁷⁸ The problem is that when he speaks of hope for all it is usually of the kind of hope that does not disappoint – it is of eschatological hope. The vocabulary of hope seems therefore to be confused unless Moltmann is a dogmatic universalist.

It might be objected to our critical discussion so far that the point of Moltmann's expositions of hope has been missed. For he holds that emphasis on individual salvation and destiny is misplaced – we must think of the entire created order in and with which humanity is to be redeemed. Hence we are fastening on to questions which draw his words out of context or at least to questions preoccupation with which is in some ways deleterious. In response to this, however, it must be remembered that his avowed aim is to imbue all with hope, to implant hope as a living thing in the hearts of the hopeless. For what, then, are the hopeless to hope? If it has to do with the redemption of the cosmic order, it is natural and right to ask about their own participation therein, for while certainly preoccupation with personal salvation can lead to selfishness, the New Testament clearly wishes to communicate a hope that informs us of our destiny. Moltmann acknowledges that in time we can create only

anticipations of the kingdom, not the kingdom itself and well knows that generations have died and will die, presumably, without even the realization of such anticipations in their particular society. Hope for earthly improvement in one's lot would thus be hope for possibilities, however greatly to be encouraged.

However, Moltmann's view of hope does contain hope for the individual's participation in the eschatological reign of God and, though he does not emphasize it, for life after death. It is true that doubt has been expressed about whether Moltmann holds such belief for the individual.⁷⁹ One could be excused for such doubt on the basis of the earlier major works, for Moltmann expresses the conviction that individual, other-worldly hope of personal survival hinders the task of world-transforming activity. Yet what he really has in mind seems to be a combination of certain types of belief in life after death and certain attitudes engendered by beliefs, for, despite omission of such reference when one might expect it,⁸⁰ resurrection seems to be unequivocally affirmed elsewhere.⁸¹ It is indeed difficult to know what his universal, eschatological hope, with its heart-lifting impact on the individual, would amount to *if* this were not the case. However, it is true that Moltmann does not want us to fix our theological gaze on precisely this. There is certainly something to be said for this, though Sykes appropriately asks whether indeed Moltmann has got right the historical and theological connection between individual eschatology and failure to engage in world-transforming activity.

This leads us on to consider the 'this-worldly' as well as universal aspect of Moltmann's eschatological perspective. The term 'this-worldly hope' is often, in theological writing, opposed to 'other-worldly hope' and often the meanings of the terms are taken to be obvious. But are they? In a recent article Richard Bauckham has called on theologians to give proper theological attention to the nuclear threat, so that the meaning of providence, hope and redemption can be articulated with specific reference to that context.⁸² He is clear that this threat conjures up the real prospect of extinction. The question that must arise for anyone who takes seriously such a prospect is the sense in which Christians may now speak of a this-worldly hope. If one believes in a new creation of

new heavens and a new earth inhabited by the redeemed, a world that is tangible inhabited by beings that are embodied, it would still not normally be described as this world in its historical future, if holocaust has taken place. And if 'hope' is held to mean 'certain expectation' then one can scarcely say that one has this-worldly hope and that nuclear holocaust may come about.

Bauckham indicates his own dissatisfaction generally with theology of hope at this point, though he does not press the case in the fashion stated. As Moltmann appears to admit the prospect of annihilation, his vocabulary of this-worldly hope requires far more attention than he gives it.⁸³ Yet this is a matter of importance for Moltmann, for the kind of hope he proffers is meant to stimulate a kind of activity culpably avoided by those who speak in other-worldly terms. It may, indeed, be that Christian hope is misleadingly characterized as 'other-worldly' or, if it is so characterized, requires explanation which strips it of elements found in it as often understood by people. It may be that New Testament eschatology cannot be characterized straightforwardly as either this-worldly or other-worldly. It may be that these forms of hope should be combined in some ways and that Moltmann, as seems to be the case very often, actually has that persistently in mind. Yet the meaning of this-worldly hope for one who admits the extreme nuclear prospect requires exposition. And that exposition would then have to demonstrate with more specificity than does Moltmann the relation of our ultimate eschatological hopes to the anticipatory activities of the kingdom promoted in history in its light.

I have laboured this theme because it is central in Moltmann's work. Clearly his analysis of eschatological hope or hope as a phenomenon in human existence is open to other kinds of response, for instance the relative importance that should be attached in theology to the sin of despair and the sin of pride and thus the hope that overcomes the former and the kind of humility that drives out the latter.⁸⁴ One major consequence, however, of denying universalism would have to do with the whole way in which Moltmann relates the church to the world. As far as he is concerned, church and world are set on the same course toward eschatological salvation. But his discussion ignores the types of

connection often drawn in the New Testament between the eschatology, the church and salvation, for example, in Ephesians and Colossians. It might be denied that the visible church is the 'ark of salvation', it might be admitted that there may be salvation outside the visible church, but even if such were the case, Moltmann's analysis of church and world could be found unsatisfactory. The importance of attaining faith in Christ in this world, reiterated in the New Testament, is scarcely given its due place in Moltmann's theology.

Having said this, Moltmann has much to teach us. Many churches are more interested in guarding the truth suspiciously than in sharing it joyfully, in proclaiming a truth that is against the world rather than one that is for the world. Many who bear the name of Christ do not suffer with the oppressed when they could, nor even care for the poor when they should. Few of us will care to exculpate ourselves entirely or even largely in these or affiliated respects. In setting before our eyes the eschatological hope, Moltmann provides the stimulus for Christian life and suffering which is provided by the New Testament itself, whatever we may deem defective in his presentation. The eschaton is at once goal and spur for Christian living and the element in which it dwells. It is better to have as our focus the crucified Christ, risen and hoped for. Of that Moltmann clearly reminds us.

Critique 2: God as trinity

In some of the great credal formulations of the early church, such as Nicaea and Chalcedon, Christological dogmas were hammered out in the interests of stating or preserving Christian belief on the person of Christ in the church. Reflection on his relation to God the Father led to the trinitarian affirmation when supplemented by reflection on the relation of the Spirit to Father and Son: God is one in three persons. Reflection on the relation of Christ's deity to his humanity, whose results were credally formulated after the trinitarian decision and within a framework of trinitarian theology, led to the Christological affirmation that Jesus Christ was one person possessed of two natures (divine and human).⁸⁵ Prior to

our century, however, these credal declarations were found, within the church, to be problematic for a number of reasons and today one can find them sustained, modified, reinterpreted or disavowed. Which of these procedures best fits Moltmann's enterprise is no doubt a moot point. Certainly he aims at doctrinal reconstruction. Its principal basis seems to be the biblical story about Jesus Christ.

The superficial difficulty of squaring features of the biblical account with the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy, as it came to be identified, in relation to Jesus Christ, is not difficult to see. If the cross of Christ in the context of his life and the prophecy of the Old Testament does not reveal to us a God who suffers, then surely what we can gather about God from the life of Christ seems exceedingly tentative, to say the least. Yet it is commonly said of the Church Fathers (and I do not wish to dispute it) that they denied God's capacity to suffer in a way that gave them enormous difficulty in accounting adequately for the sufferings of Christ. It could be and was said that those sufferings were sufferings of his humanity or that, paradoxically, the divine Word suffered impassibly in Christ. But this, in turn could accentuate doubt felt by people on the score of the doctrine of the two natures. Is the Christ of the Gospels really one of whom we can predicate two sets of characteristics, one human, the other divine? Does this mean that he was, for example, divinely omniscient and humanly limited in knowledge simultaneously? One can confess there is mystery in the deity of Christ, but is it this mystery, or is this a mystery of our devising? And what is the borderline between mystery and self-contradictory nonsense? All these questions have been given a thorough airing in contemporary theology.

Moltmann is determined to start with the biblical story about Jesus Christ and reject any subsequent view of the Trinity which cannot be squared with that story which forms part of a larger story constituting the very stuff of the biblical witness. Though in some contexts one might have to distinguish between them, Moltmann is happy to refer to this narrative story in terms of the history of Christ: the story is not like a fictitious account but it presents us with the real history of the Son. Subsequently we may speak of the history of God.

Whatever may be said about Moltmann's method of approach, however, it leads him to make a statement in *Theology of Hope* which throws into question his foundations for trinitarian thinking. He is developing a theme, given further treatment in *The Crucified God*, concerning the identity of Jesus Christ. The point is that the cross and resurrection constitute the identity of Jesus Christ. They are part of who he is; he is not a being whose identity is fixed, apart from any deed he accomplishes or events that befall him. In *The Crucified God* Moltmann protests that the separation of the two natures wrongly presents the biblical witness to God himself, identified with Christ. In the course of arguing this he makes a claim in *Theology of Hope*, the ramifications of which become obvious in *The Crucified God*. Jesus, he says, was 'wholly dead and wholly raised'.⁸⁶ In *The Crucified God* this leads to the claim that God thus embraced death in his own divine life: the reality of the death of Jesus Christ is indissolubly linked with the reality of God's appropriation of death, the most extreme of universal or human opposites, into his own history.

However, on the traditional trinitarian view, the claim that Jesus Christ wholly died would amount to the claim that the second person in the Trinity died. That would make deity, at least in the case of the second person, mortal. If Moltmann is really committed to saying this, he is in effect saying, at the very least, that God can exist as trinity or alternatively not exist as trinity, for one who is wholly dead cannot be part of trinitarian life. On the face of it, a response to this objection is that it presupposes the very understanding of the Trinity that Moltmann is concerned to challenge. That, of course, is true in a relevant way. The point is, however, that if a theology insists that Jesus Christ was wholly dead, then it cannot really count as a form of trinitarian theology. The question here concerns the limits of what may be called a 'reinterpretation' in new form of trinitarian theology. It is hard to see how Moltmann here avoids propounding a different, rather than legitimately reinterpetative doctrine, however one might conceive the latter.

It might, of course, be said that what matters for theology is whether a doctrine is right or wrong, not whether it should be called trinitarian or non-trinitarian. This raises many questions

outside our province. On the question of content, what grounds have we for saying that Jesus Christ was wholly dead? That he was biologically dead in the same way as all die, we must affirm. But quite apart from the view countenanced by some that there is a part of the self that cannot die in ordinary humanity, we must note that no amount of scrutiny of the biblical narrative in the light of those New Testament affirmations which some take to support the pre-existence of the divine Son can convince us that Jesus Christ was wholly dead. Nor, as I have indicated, is this an incidental point in Moltmann's work, for he insists on the importance of death in God so that in our suffering we might know we suffer in the most intimate participation in him and gain the victory of hope in the trinitarian life of God. Even if there is plenty of room to quarrel with traditional trinitarianism even on the points I have mentioned, Moltmann needs to demonstrate, which he does not, the validity of his argument for the ascription of death to God in this sense.

This discussion gives us an indication, too, of ways in which we might relate the biblical narrative to the doctrine of God. Moltmann is impressed by the reality of time in the divine experience, for the divine economy reveals a God in motion, as it were. In modern theology much has been made of Hegel, a philosopher of the last century who sought to unify theological and philosophical perspective in a grand, speculative scheme whose lynch-pin was the idea of God as one who unfolds himself in the processes of the world. Hegel's thought is patient of several interpretations, but the general influence of his way of relating God and history is marked on subsequent theology, including that of Moltmann. It would be wrong just to label Moltmann as Hegelian, for his frequent appeals to Hegel do not amount to an endorsement of his general theistic metaphysics (that is, the view of divine reality) and he takes issue with Hegel more than once. However, he prefers to ascribe temporality to God than to take a classical position on divine timeless eternity. And if we apprehend God in the life, death, resurrection and coming of Christ, why maintain that God himself does not experience time in the sense of its inner reality for his own being?

I do not intend to embark on an assessment of the classical

doctrine of God's eternity here. What must be said, however, is that attention to the biblical narrative does not compel us to adopt Moltmann's conclusions. We apprehend Christ through his words in conjunction with his life. He spoke, for example, of divine forgiveness and extended it to people himself; it would be impossible to believe in Christ and yet maintain that God was unforgiving. But of God's relation to time in the sense under consideration we learn nothing from Jesus or other biblical writers that would enable us to endorse definitely Moltmann's conclusions. Experiencing God's appearance or activity in time does not either tell us of the inner relation of God to time for, on the face of it, we can account for this either on the assumption of divine temporality or on the assumption of divine timeless eternity capable of unity and identification with those who are in time. This question, if it can be settled at all, requires consideration of issues not treated by Moltmann in sufficient detail to warrant his conclusion. It may, however, be thought that at least on one point we must not deny the persuasiveness of Moltmann's doctrine of God, namely on the question of impassibility. It is noteworthy in this context that even a leading and stalwart defender of the 'classical' doctrine of God, H. P. Owen, has admitted that leeway should be given here and that the ascription of suffering to God at least should not be ruled out.⁸⁷ Moltmann may indeed be right both on the need to ascribe suffering to God and on the fact that this ultimately requires a trinitarian interpretation. But the kind of trinitarian interpretation he gives it is connected with his claim that there is death in God, a claim which, as we have seen, rests on doubtful premises. Moltmann does not wish to espouse a doctrine of passibility or temporality which is non-trinitarian, nor does he wish to adopt a doctrine of the Trinity which holds God to be eternally impassible. This is why the general considerations advanced in this critical section bear specifically on his trinitarian theology.

If it is meticulous adherence to the biblical narrative, albeit interpreted, of course, in the context of New Testament theology, that occasions Moltmann's doctrinal tenets, it also accounts for his strong insistence that God is three persons. That insistence in itself is not the occasion of criticism here more than Moltmann's

admirable attention to the biblical narrative in the adumbration of theological concepts in principle. The difficulty can be expressed in the words of George Hunsinger, written long before the appearance of *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* but still relevant after it: 'The result seems to be three gods, separate in being yet united in intention. The unity of the trinity seems to be volitional, but not ontological.'⁸⁸ A 'volitional' unity is a unity of will; an 'ontological' unity is a unity of being. The Christological thought of Nestorius in the early church (who lent his name, perhaps improperly, to the heresy 'Nestorianism') was deemed inadequate by his theological opponents because he did not give proper account of the ground of union of the divine and human in Christ, making it look somewhat like a union of will. That, of course, tended to divide up Christ into two persons. A parallel criticism might be brought against Moltmann, though with important differences. Does he, like Nestorius, so fail to explain the ground of the unity of God that he leaves us with three gods?

In traditional trinitarian thought a distinction is often drawn between two different 'models', ways of conceiving the Trinity: 'analogies' as they can also be termed. According to the 'psychological' analogy, it is the human individual, looked at from a psychological viewpoint, that is a model for the unity of God (for example, the tripartite division of memory, will and understanding in the context of an ancient psychology shows three constituents of one being). According to the 'social' analogy it is three persons, looked at from the social viewpoint, that are a model for the unity of God; the unity of three apostles, for example, gives us an example of a unity embracing three persons. Moltmann, within his own revised framework, opts for the social analogy or model. But it must be admitted that his trinitarianism does seem to take the model to represent the reality far more strictly than it should. He talks, as we have seen, of three 'centres of activity'. Such language requires some elucidation at the best of times. When regeneration takes place in the individual life, does one have now a new centre of activity (the Spirit rather than the self)? How are self and Spirit related? Does this help us to understand anything about the Trinity? Given the unity of Father, Son and Spirit in the New Testament account, it seems difficult to say without hesitation that we have

here three centres of activity, as we would, confronted with three human persons. Moltmann does not distinguish sharply enough between the kind of unity the divine persons have and the kind human persons have, to avoid the charge of tritheism successfully. Granted, we may be able to say little about the divine unity. But we should avoid construing it along lines so similar to human unities.

Both in the expositions and in the criticism I have concentrated on theological principles. But just as Moltmann deemed a right eschatological perspective necessary for fruitful social activity, so he deemed a correctly trinitarian understanding of God necessary for worthy social witness. In terms of eschatological perspective, one challenge we are offered in Moltmann's work is the challenge of providing an adequate basis for mission and social action on non-universalist principles.⁸⁹

But what of the consequences of trinitarian theology? It is worth referring to two of them here, from Moltmann's perspective. Firstly, he feels that proper trinitarianism enables a proper ordering of the principles of political society along broadly socialist lines. Secondly, he feels that as an exposition of the cross (the Trinity is 'the theological short summary of the passion of Christ'),⁹⁰ this doctrine of God takes the sting out of protest atheism in the sense that it also protests against traditional theism, but does so in the name of authentic Christianity. In conclusion, it is as well to remark on these two consequences.

Clearly the way in which Moltmann draws consequences for social and political theory from his trinitarian doctrine is not quite open to those who question his particular trinitarianism. Yet a conclusion arrived at along different lines, that God's inner distinctions are real and worthy of the description 'personal', can certainly have political consequences not unlike those sponsored by Moltmann. Political theorists have often discussed 'individualism', though it is a term that can bear varied meanings.⁹¹ When the church is understood as 'the body of Christ', as it is in the New Testament, a certain kind of individualism is dismissed. The human self comes to self-fulfilment, if one wants to use that term, in mutual unity with others. The more one is integrated into the one body, the more one becomes what one is meant to be. True 'personhood' and 'individualism' in this sense are antithetical. If the relation of the

individual to the church is at all grounded in the relation of the divine persons to each other, one can see how the church, because it sets forth something of the mystery of the Trinity, reveals to the world that human society corresponds best to the trinitarian relations that ground our existence. It does so by emphasizing not the values of individual self-fulfilment but the unity of the 'body politic' in mutual submission. Let me stress, however, that this has been mentioned to draw attention to the possible fruitful lines to follow if one wants to connect trinity and political society; anyone who wants to establish such connections definitively has to take into account a host of considerations and distinctions that would make such a demonstration extremely demanding.

Finally, does a trinitarian theology of the cross affect 'protest atheism' in the way Moltmann holds? Again one must say that to the extent we have questioned his thought here it is not possible to draw lines exactly as he does between Christianity and atheism; and yet, to the extent that we have not challenged (or outrightly endorsed!) Moltmann's ascription of suffering to God, the virtues of this move on his part require comment. The whole question of theodicy is obviously so big and so emotive that it is of little avail to go into it here. Further, the whole question of the roots of modern atheism is so important and complex that no justice can be done to it here either. However, it is worth noting that Moltmann scarcely seems to question the 'good faith' of 'protest atheism' – that is, he seems to accept the translucent sincerity and justice of its spirit. There is no need, indeed, to doubt that false views of divine power have provoked resistance to Christianity or that protest atheists often protest in sincere good faith. But scrutiny of the historical development of modern atheism out of its proximate source in Enlightenment thought will suggest that any view of a transcendent God who at all legislates for man is likely to be anathema to the atheist. And reflection on the spiritual psychology of modern atheism in its Western form will likewise suggest to many of us that it is largely to be read as a manifestation of that rebellious self-will which is in all of us. If this is so, the problem of theodicy begins to wear a different guise in its context and the effectiveness of Moltmann's partial solution, in ascribing suffering to God, becomes questionable.

But I do not, by these concluding comments, mean either to underplay the problem of suffering or to impugn the integrity of all protest. Such would be the height of arrogance in any of us who do not really suffer with those who suffer or act on their behalf. And which of us has no plank in our eye in that respect? Moltmann has directed us to our tasks of solidarity with those who suffer and grounded our activity in the outgoing love of God. One may not see things in all respects as he does; but if we see or do less than we find in his presentation, we are scarcely in a place to criticize.

Appendix

God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation

Moltmann's work *God in Creation* (SCM, 1985), raises a number of issues rather different from the ones we have been considering, in the areas of evolutionary biology and theological concepts of space and time for example. I shall not pursue these critically here nor even give a full account of the argument of this work. Rather, some of the key themes will be indicated briefly. Here we find plenty of continuity with what has gone before. In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann tells us that 'by taking up panentheistic ideas from the Jewish and the Christian traditions' he wants to 'try to think ecologically about God, man and the world in their relationships and indwellings' (p. 19). He makes good his intentions in *God in Creation* which is subtitled *an Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. His method is to complement a certain insight developed in Jewish theology with a trinitarian account of creation (see *God in Creation*, pp. 15ff., 87ff.) and to do so with the eschatological perspective governing all. The familiar scheme, then, seems fundamentally to be still in business.

An 'ecological' account might lead us to expect discussion of environmental ethics in light of environmental pollution. The last page of the main account (p. 296) closes with reference to that. But, according to Moltmann, the ecological crisis is much more than this: 'this is really a crisis of the whole life system of the modern industrial world' (p. 23). Moltmann is therefore concerned to explore the general question of the relation of man to the world

in light of the doctrine of God, the Creator, and in order to integrate human social and natural life within the trinitarian vision.

Specifically, the doctrine of God as Creator must emphasize the Creator Spirit. Moltmann wants to draw attention to the divine immanence. Traditionally, God is conceived of as both transcendent (apart from his creation) and immanent (in some way present in his creation). Moltmann does not deny the divine transcendence: on the contrary, it is emphasized in the work and his defence of 'creation out of nothing', a test of Christian orthodoxy on the doctrine of creation, for many, apparently, seems to satisfy a condition for a view of divine transcendence that stands broadly in the tradition. Yet, says Moltmann, if such transcendence is domination, it leads to disastrous consequences, for then man takes to dominating his world, interpreting his creation orders in that light. However, the doctrine of the Trinity shows us that mutual indwelling is what we find in God and, moreover, an indwelling in his own creation and created humanity. The special agent of this indwelling is the Spirit. If we grasp that creativity comes from within the world by the agency of the Spirit apart from the primal act of God in creation, then our ecological doctrine of creation is on the right track for we live in a Spirit-filled environment.

Arguing this point leads Moltmann to the consideration of many themes. They include the question of our knowledge of God the Creator (where he maintains that the world is a kind of visual parable of future glory); the way in which creation occurred (by a process of divine withdrawal or contraction into himself thus allowing 'room' for the creation of the other); the nature of time (which is determined by the divine experience of time prior to, with and in the consummation of creation) and the nature of space (where he distinguishes between 'the essential omnipresence of God, of absolute space; second, the space of creation in the world-presence of God conceded to it; and third, relative places, relationships and movements in the created world' [p. 157]). Never, however, does he permit himself speculation that cannot be geared to practical ecological doctrine. Thus the doctrine of 'heaven and earth' that follows the discussion of space emphasizes heaven as a sphere of possibilities for the earth, though Moltmann distinguishes carefully between senses of 'heaven' in the tradition

and in doctrinal theology. There then follow sections on evolution (deemed compatible with a non-pantheistic doctrine of creation when the world is seen as a vast system, anticipating glory); the image of God in man (to be seen in trinitarian and eschatological – future – light); the importance of embodiment (against separating soul and body so that the former is the reality of man and focus of divine activity) and the sabbath ('the feast of creation', the ordained destiny of creation).

An appendix on 'symbols of the world' closes with a plea to avoid patriarchal domination of the world in view of an equality of the sexes and an integration of man and environment amply suggested to us by many of those symbols.

Moltmann's work is a welcome balance to his earlier attempts to relate God to human history by this study of the 'history of nature'. It is open to scientific critique both on the question of total evolutionary systems and relativity theory as it has been developed in modern physics. Theologically one of the principal points at issue is the coherence or cogency of the account of God's relation to space, including, e.g. the question of divine 'withdrawal'. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of this work, it is a thoroughly conscientious attempt to get to grips with a doctrine and its implications that are manifestly vital for our day.

The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic dimensions⁹²

A quarter of a century ago, *Theology of Hope* set the pace, though it was no pure, independent novelty. Now *The Way of Jesus Christ* stays the course, though it is not mere familiar repetition. The eschatological Christology of the former is still the lynch-pin of this third volume of Moltmann's 'Messianic dogmatics'. Here Christology is structured by the movement from Old Testament expectation to future parousia; it is answerable to the Bonhoefferian: *Who really is Christ for us today?*, and it is ordered to ethics. Moltmann examines the messianic mission, apocalyptic sufferings, eschatological resurrection, cosmic dimensions and parousia of Jesus Christ. This establishes an ethic wide enough to create solidarity with the poor and endure the whole span of sufferings, specific enough to treat the fertilized ovum as a person (p. 267) and call for punitive sanctions against exterminators of plant

species (p. 311). All this is undertaken only after taking steps to avoid alienating Jews or feminists.

Moltmann's is a singular exercise in rhetorical, narrative biblical theology. It is problematic. As regards biblical theology he will dissatisfy some to the right (who find his use of biblical data too selective) and to the left (who dispute his use of the same data as theological normative). As regards narrative, he justifies much too abruptly his method of constructing the identity of Jesus Christ by attending (largely) to the contours of the storied life. But the crucial difficulty is the status of his theological language. Rhetoric can illuminate; but it can also obscure. Things come to a head in the chapter on 'the eschatological resurrection of Jesus Christ'. The rather opaque claim emerges that 'the symbol of "the raising of the dead" also excludes ideas about a "life after death" ...' (p. 222), compounding the difficulty with an earlier section on 'the community of the living and the dead' (pp. 189–192). By the time the statement just cited is re-expressed (p. 267), we have read that all life 'endures death with pain' (p. 253), that 'Christ's resurrection is bodily' (p. 256) and that resurrection has become the universal law of creation for stones (p. 258). There are too many switchbacks here.

Positively, one recognizes that Christology with an ethical orientation is a worthy objective and one salutes the author's persistent commitment to serious applied theology. Here theologians may certainly follow if they follow the way of Christ.

*The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*⁹³

This is the fourth volume in a series that began with *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. Its thesis is: 'The Operations of God's life-giving and life-affirming Spirit are universal and can be recognised in everything which ministers to life and resists its destruction' (p. xi). This is developed by considering (a) biblical data, (b) the dogmatic *ordo salutis*, (c) the fellowship and Person of the Spirit. Moltmann picks up the threads of earlier works and ties them together as a theology of the Spirit and one is tempted to say that he is seeking to accomplish a dogmatics of the Holy Spirit where Barth did not. But 'trinitarian' is fairer than 'pneumatological'.

We have a typically Moltmannian contribution in two ways. First, one puzzles over whether the enterprise successfully

embraces the biblical and contemporary worlds or whether it hovers between them. That way of putting it, of course, indicates that Moltmann is no post-modern. Secondly, the ethos is familiar to those who have followed Moltmann's scrutiny of the eschatological horizon and his affirmation of humanity over the years of his authorship. There is longing. But I confess I found the work very weary and page 247 on kingdom, church and cosmos is an example. Further, it is perilously non-resistant to contemporary spiritualities which affirm body, life and eros in the divine but do so in glad freedom from the burden of the concept of sin. Was Augustine, against whom Moltmann contends, so totally depraved and blinded by 'sin'? And does the Spirit, for whom Moltmann pleads, so affirm life that one forgets just how much the heart deceives? Perhaps it is the logic of the decision to write of the Spirit of 'life' rather than the Spirit of 'holiness' that is worth probing here.

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- ¹ J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1996).
- ² Richard Bauckham, *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999).
- ³ My review of Bauckham's work, above, appeared in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (2.3), 2000. See also Stephen N. Williams, 'The Problem with Moltmann', in *European Journal of Theology* (5.2), 1996.
- ⁴ A bibliographical article pertaining to the period covered by my account was published in *The Modern Churchman* (28.2), 1986; *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987) looked at Moltmann from 1960 – 1979, and *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), dealt with the work up until then.
- ⁵ See especially pp. 6–17.
- ⁶ See pp. 21–36.
- ⁷ See, for example, *The Power of the Powerless*, ch. 17.

- ⁸ For example, *The Open Church*, p. 30; *The Power of the Powerless*, p. 100.
- ⁹ Preface to *The Gospel of Liberation*.
- ¹⁰ M. D. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), pp. x–xi. As Moltmann uses ‘man’ in the older generic sense, I often follow his usage in expounding his thought.
- ¹¹ See *ibid.*, *passim*.
- ¹² M. R. Tripole, ‘A Church for the Poor and the World at Issue with Moltmann’s Ecclesiology’, in *Theological Studies*, 42 (1981), pp. 645–659.
- ¹³ *On Human Dignity*, p. 100.
- ¹⁴ T. Runyon, in *Hope for the Church*, p. 10.
- ¹⁵ *The Gospel of Liberation*, p. 30.
- ¹⁶ *The Future of Creation*, ch. 2. See also the helpful survey by S. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man* (Leicester: IVP, 1980), esp. ch. 1.
- ¹⁷ *Theology of Hope*, pp. 16, 30.
- ¹⁸ W. H. Capps, *Time Invades the Cathedral: Tensions in the School of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), p. 49.
- ¹⁹ RSV, NEB, NIV margin.
- ²⁰ ‘Spes Quaerens Intellectum’, *Interpretation* 22 (1968), p. 40, n. 37.
- ²¹ *Theology of Hope*, p. 114.
- ²² *Man*, p. 17.
- ²³ J. Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (London: SCM, 1926), ch. 2, ‘The Semantics of Bible Language’.
- ²⁴ Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, *passim*.
- ²⁵ See *Experiences of God*, p. 29.
- ²⁶ Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, chs. 2–4.
- ²⁷ *Theology of Hope*, p. 329.
- ²⁸ *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, p. 138.
- ²⁹ *The Future of Hope*, p. 38; but note the relation of ethics to aesthetics, *Theology and Joy*, preface and p. 62.
- ³⁰ See Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, especially pp. 47ff. and 129.
- ³¹ See Bauckham, ‘Moltmann’s Eschatology of the Cross’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 30 (1977), pp. 301–311.
- ³² ‘The Cross and Civil Religion’, in *Religion and Political Society*, p. 41.
- ³³ In E. H. Cousins (ed.), *Hope and the Future of Man* (London: Teilhard Centre for the Future of Man, 1973), p. 51.
- ³⁴ See, for example, *Hope and Planning*, p. 41.
- ³⁵ For a concise statement of Moltmann’s convictions here see ‘The “Crucified God”: God and the Trinity Today’, *Concilium* 8.6 (1972), pp. 26–37.

- ³⁶ See J. Pelikan, *The emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 229ff.; but also, briefly, C. B. Kaiser, *The Doctrine of God* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), pp. 52f.
- ³⁷ For other succinct statements of lines of argument in *The Crucified God* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, see also G. Hunsinger, 'The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence', *Heythrop Journal*, 14 (1973), pp. 266–279.
- ³⁸ *Experiences of God*, p. 14.
- ³⁹ Especially ch. 6.
- ⁴⁰ Ch. 8.
- ⁴¹ 'The Cross and Civil Religion', in *Religion and Political Society*, p. 19.
- ⁴² *Concilium* 8.6 (1972), p. 30.
- ⁴³ *The Crucified God*, p. 313.
- ⁴⁴ See R. Bauckham, 'Jürgen Moltmann', in P. Toon and J. Spiceland (eds.), *One God In a Trinity* (Leicester: IVP, 1980).
- ⁴⁵ Tripole, 'A Church for the Poor and the World: at Issue with Moltmann's Ecclesiology', p. 659. Tripole's essay, in general, offers a well-judged criticism of Moltmann's ecclesiology, in my view.
- ⁴⁶ Romans 9 – 11. For the connection between justification and eschatology, see *The Future of Creation*, ch. 10.
- ⁴⁷ J. J. O'Donnell's exposition of Moltmann's trinitarian thought is actually entitled *Trinity and Temporality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
- ⁴⁸ Moltmann, *An Ecumenical Confession of Faith*, p. 18.
- ⁴⁹ See, too, *The Open Church*, pp. 125ff. *The Open Church* is a good general introduction to the themes of *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* and Tripole, 'A Church for the Poor and the World: at Issue with Moltmann's Ecclesiology', who offers an alternative exegesis.
- ⁵⁰ See *Hope for the Church*, p. 25.
- ⁵² See Moltmann's *Two Studies In the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, where his sympathy is often indirectly shown, and G. C. Chapman, 'Hope and the ethics of formation: Moltmann as an interpreter of Bonhoeffer', *Studies in Religion* 12 (1983), pp. 449–460.
- ⁵² *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 132.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- ⁵⁴ *The Gospel of Liberation*, p. 31.
- ⁵⁵ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 138.
- ⁵⁶ *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Theology, On Human Dignity*, ch. 12.

- ⁵⁷ *The Gospel of Liberation*, p. 32.
- ⁵⁸ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 152.
- ⁵⁹ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), p. 54, though note a qualifying clause.
- ⁶⁰ George A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), p. 37.
- ⁶¹ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 196.
- ⁶² *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, passim: *The Open Church*, ch. 4; in the context of sexism, *Humanity in God*, p. 121.
- ⁶³ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 336.
- ⁶⁴ See *The Open Church*, chs. 4, 8; *Theology and Joy*, p. 85.
- ⁶⁵ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 360.
- ⁶⁶ O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, p. 108.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- ⁶⁸ *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. xii.
- ⁶⁹ In relation to Barth, this is illuminatingly laid out in David Ford's work, *Barth and God's Story* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1985), and there is useful reference to Moltmann in the context of another helpful discussion of Barth in David Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 54ff.
- ⁷⁰ *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 64; see *The Future of Creation*, p. 74.
- ⁷¹ See J. Mackey, *The Christian Experience of God as Trinity* (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 202–209; D. Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985), pp. 307f.; and R. Olson, 'Trinity and Eschatology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983), pp. 213–227.
- ⁷² See, too, *Hope and Planning*, pp. 117–118.
- ⁷³ *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, ch. 7. See also the response to S. Travis by Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Christian Hope* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), pp. 217f.
- ⁷⁴ E.g. *The Gospel of Liberation*, p. 31; *Experiences of God*, p. 79.
- ⁷⁵ *Man*, p. 20.
- ⁷⁶ See, for example, *Experiences of God*, where the remarks of p. 36 lead on from the 'universalist' statements of p. 35.
- ⁷⁷ E.g. *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, p. 61; *On Human Dignity*, p. 103; *The Experiment Hope*, p. 27.
- ⁷⁸ We saw this in the autobiographical fragment in the preface, but see too, for example, *The Experiment Hope*, p. 36; *The Future of Creation*, p. 42.
- ⁷⁹ E.g. a generally perceptive criticism of Moltmann is found in S. Sykes, 'Life

- After Death', in R. McKinney (ed.), *Creation, Christ and Culture* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976).
- ⁸⁰ E.g. *The Experiment Hope*, pp. 36–39; *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, chs. 3, 8; *Man*, pp. 47–59.
- ⁸¹ *Hope for the Church*, p. 30; Kung/Moltmann, *Why Did God Make Me?*, pp. 101f.; see too *Theology and Joy*, pp. 55, 62, and *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, pp. 58, 169f.
- ⁸² 'Theology after Hiroshima', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985), pp. 583–601.
- ⁸³ E.g. *Following Jesus Christ in the World Today*, p. 61.
- ⁸⁴ See G. C. Chapman, 'Hope and the ethics of formation', p. 452, who notes the significance of Moltmann's preoccupation with apathy and despair as the significant forms of sin. See too an author who preceded Moltmann and whose work presents us with one of the most interesting foils to Moltmann's position in our century, Reinhold Niebuhr, e.g. in *Faith and History* (London: Nisbet, 1949), pp. 174ff.
- ⁸⁵ For a brief introductory account, see Alan Richardson, *Creeeds in the Making* (London: SCM, 1935; XPress Reprints, 1994).
- ⁸⁶ *Theology of Hope*, p. 200.
- ⁸⁷ *The Christian Knowledge of God*, pp. 249–252; *Christian Theism*, pp. 108f.
- ⁸⁸ G. Hunsinger, 'The Crucified God and the Political Theology of Violence', p. 278.
- ⁸⁹ Readers can be urged here to read the various writings of John Stott, e.g. *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (London: Church Pastoral Aid Society, 1977), ch. 1; *Issues facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), part 1; and to note the article by R. W. McKim, 'Reformed Perspective on the Mission of the Church in Society', in *Reformed World* 38.8 (1985). It is an area where more work is needed, but these writings will provide helpful pointers.
- ⁹⁰ *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Theology*, p. 47.
- ⁹¹ See S. Lukes, *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).
- ⁹² This brief review was originally published in *Modern Churchman*, 33.3 (1991), and is reprinted here by kind permission.
- ⁹³ This brief review was originally published in *Modern Believing* (1.1) (1994), and is reprinted here by kind permission.