

# THE DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE OF MOLTMANN'S THEOLOGY

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It has become *de rigueur* in writing about a theologian's work to provide not only a theological context for his or her work, but also to begin with some sort of sociopolitical framework which sheds light on the situation and milieu within which the theologian works. In the case of Jürgen Moltmann, such a sociopolitical prolegomena is absolutely necessary for two reasons: first, Moltmann's work is intimately tied in with the social and political upheaval in post-World War II German culture; second, Moltmann's theology is deliberately and decidedly political in character, demanding that one always look to the political sources and results of his theology. This introductory essay will provide a framework, both sociopolitical and theological, for understanding the various twists and turns that Moltmann's theology has taken over the last thirty years. It will hopefully provide guideposts for understanding the subsequent articles in the volume which deal with specific aspects of Moltmann's thought.

Moltmann is a member of the first post World War II generation of Protestant theologians in Germany. The challenges that this generation faced were manifold. In the first place, all institutions, political, religious, social, and economic, were either destroyed or severely damaged either by Nazi totalitarianism or by the war itself. Because the churches still maintained some structural integrity, it fell to them to help provide the most basic of human services to the German people: food was distributed, shelter provided, and the rebuilding of the physical infrastructure of the country was begun. A more knotty problem remained, however: what was to be made of the atrocities caused by the Nazi regime over the previous decade, and what direction was the New Germany to take. There was the sense that the latter could not proceed without coming to grips with the former.

This dilemma was felt no more acutely than in the post-war Protestant churches. From the beginning of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933, members of the Protestant

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churches, including several of their national leaders, publicly supported the Nazi political program and in some cases became outright organs of the Nazi state. The so-called "German Christians" (*Deutsche Christen*), formed in July 1933, appointed Ludwig Müller, a Nazi, as its Reichsbishop and in an attempt to build a strongly Nazified Church, the Lutheran Youth Group was combined with the Hitler Youth Group. Hitler, himself, recognizing the value of having the organized churches behind him, in the beginning let the individual church governments have a great deal of autonomy. Within a few years however, the totalitarian nature of Naziism demanded that all power, including that traditionally held by the churches, be under its control. To that end, the appointment of Protestant clergy and hierarchy fell to the Nazi state, and an "Aryan paragraph," which utilized race as a principle for determining true "Germanness" and true faith, entered into church law.

For post-war Protestant churches, it was recognition of their complicity with the Nazi government, whether direct or indirect, that was the first step necessary in building a new Protestantism in Germany. It was in this spirit that on October 18th and 19th, 1945, the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany presented the "Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt" to representatives of the World Council of Churches. In part, the Declaration of Guilt read:

Not only are we in a great company of suffering, but also in a solidarity of guilt. With great pain do we say: through us endless sufferings have been brought to many peoples and nations.... We accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.

Now a new beginning can be made in our churches. Grounded on the Holy Scriptures, directed with all earnestness towards the only Lord of the Church, they now proceed to cleanse themselves from influences alien to the faith and to set themselves in order.

While not universally accepted by all Protestant church leaders at the time, this recognition of guilt has maintained a central place in the consciousness of the Protestant Church in Germany, and, as we shall see, is formative for much of Moltmann's theological program.

The complicity of the churches with Nazism also raised a question about what the correct relationship between Church and State was to be. Traditionally, Church and State in Germany operated in close relationship with each other. The relationship of *cujus regio, eius religio* (the religion of the prince determined the religion of the area), promulgated in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, still held much power in Germany. The ease with which Hitler had dominated the churches for his own political agenda now called this relationship into question. While many of the powerful members of the Protestant churches desired a return to the old, close relationship of church and state, a group of theologians felt that the only way to protect the autonomy of the churches was for the churches to maintain a critical distance from the state. The model that was adopted was based on the theology of the Confessing Church which developed in opposition to the Nazi takeover of the churches in the Third Reich. For many of the Nazified *Deutsche Christen*, Christ had indeed come again

in the person of Adolf Hitler, and National Socialism was indeed the will of God. Confronted by the specter of total control of the churches and their theology by the Nazi regime, a group of dissident pastors passed the celebrated Barmen Declaration. Written by Karl Barth, this declaration attested to the sole lordship of Christ in the Protestant churches: there can only be one lord of the Church, and that is Christ; any other claims of lordship, such as that of the Führer, were thus idolatrous. Based in this confession of the lordship of Christ, a group of dissident pastors formed a loose confederation of believers of various Protestant denominations known as the Confessing Church (*Behennende Kirche*). This Church, as the name implies, was not bound by political, social or national ties, and undertook the training of pastors in its own seminaries. At the end of the war, this model for founding a new church in Germany had much to offer. It had a theological, faith-centered foundation that maintained a critical distance from the state, thereby ensuring that the state had little chance of ever encroaching on church matters again. Organized as a loose confederation, it could allow for a diversity of denominational beliefs, and could provide a framework for a union of Lutheran and Reformed churches which would not be linked to geographical area.

It was in this situation of disorder and yet open possibility that Moltmann began the first stage of his theological study. While in the various prisoner of war camps, Moltmann was attracted to the ad hoc theological classes which were being run by pastors in the camps. When released in 1949, Moltmann undertook organized theological study at Göttingen, where he came under the influence of Barth's thought. Barth's record of resistance to encroachment of the State into Church matters at that time was impeccable. What Moltmann found attractive in Barth's thought was that Barth had recognized early on that Christianity had ultimately become so identified with German culture that the Christian message was consumed by the culture within which it developed. God and Kaiser, religion and culture, became so intertwined that they became effectively indistinguishable. And rather than understand this as exclusively a political problem, Barth had realized that a *theological* issue was at the core of the problem: the "theology of culture" prevalent in Germany had vitiated the critical power of the Christian message to stand over and against culture because it had defined that message precisely through culture. As early as 1914, Barth had rejected any theological support for the activities of the state. In his book, *The Humanity of God* (1956), Barth reflects on the event that started him, and the theological world at large, on a new path:

One day in early August 1914 stands out in my personal memory as a black day. Ninety-three German intellectuals impressed public opinion by their proclamation in support of the war policy of Wilhelm II and his counselors. Among these intellectuals I discovered to my horror almost all of my theological teachers whom I had greatly venerated. In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the time I suddenly realized that I could not any longer follow either their ethics and dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me at least, 19th century theology no longer held any future.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than see an easy correspondence between theology and culture as liberal theol-

ogy had done, Barth, in his controversial book, *The Epistle to the Romans*, defined his own method as a "recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity."<sup>2</sup> This paradigm of the "wholly other God" shifted the locus of revelation from the human person who is the recipient of revelation, to the transcendent God who is the source of all revelation. Rather than understand God to be identified with culture, Barth believed that faith places culture into KRISIS. It removes every ground of confidence except confidence in God alone.<sup>3</sup> For Barth, religion, understood as the actions of humans to justify themselves before God, was a form of criminal arrogance. Thus religion as an organ of culture must be discarded and replaced by a faith in the primacy of the grace of God, wherein grace is the free act of God and faith is the graced response of the Christian to God.<sup>4</sup> Confronted by the specter of (and later the reality of) the Hitler regime, Barth reiterated this necessary transcendence of God in a more Christocentric approach to theology. In Moltmann's mind, only a theology like Barth's that focussed on the sovereign lordship of Christ could withstand the onslaught of totalitarian regimes. For him, as for Barth, theology, speech about God, had to rediscover its own subject, Godself.

Within a few years, however, Moltmann was to discern certain weaknesses in Barth's theology and in the theology grounding the Confessing Church. In the battles with the German state, both Barth and the Confessing Church had, in effect, called for a "retreat" into the Word of God. For both, the primary problem facing the churches was the interference of the state into church matters. Consequently, the response to such an attack took the form of strengthening the bulwark around the rights of the Church to govern itself. This is not to claim that Barth was insensitive to the injustice going on in the country at that time; he spoke out often and loudly about the lack of human rights and the rabid anti-Semitism, proclaiming both as contrary to the will of God. At the same time, however, Barth did state,

I maintain the Evangelical Church ought rather to permit itself to be thinned down until it remain a tiny group in the catacombs than make a pact, even a covert pact, with this doctrine [that sees in the Nazi revolution another source of grace and revelation].<sup>5</sup>

Many of Barth's post-war writings also reflect a similar attitude.

Moltmann's ultimate move beyond a Barthian perspective into a second stage of his thought was due in part to his relationship with Ernst Bloch. Bloch, an atheist philosopher loosely related to the Frankfurt School of Social Research, emigrated from East Germany to Tübingen in 1961. His *Principle of Hope*, a three-volume philosophy based in the idea of hope as a means of promoting social change, was hailed by scholars throughout Germany as an extremely fruitful new departure in philosophy that had practical import. In his first years at Tübingen, Bloch took part in faculty seminars which brought together university scholars in various disciplines; it was here that Moltmann found a dialogue partner and a new direction for his theology. As Moltmann states in an autobiographical article, in Bloch's thought,

all at once the loose threads of a biblical theology, of the theology of the apostolate and the kingdom of God, and of philosophy, merged into a pattern for a tapestry in which everything matched.<sup>6</sup>

For Moltmann, Bloch's philosophy of hope had brought to the center of discussion a heretofore neglected element of theology: eschatology. In developing his philosophy of hope, Bloch had "rediscovered" the centrality of an eschatology intimately related to messianic impulses in Jewish and Christian scriptures. For Bloch, this eschatology called for a rethinking of the understanding of history which philosophy had held throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Traditionally, history had been perceived in a teleological sense, that is, the past was carried on through the present into the future. Historical meaning was thus derived from looking toward the past and tracing past impulses through the present and into the future. Jewish and Christian eschatology, on the other hand, understood historical meaning as not lying so much in the past, but in the future: the meaning of the past and present is fundamentally conditioned by the expectation of the future. In such a view, the expectation of the kingdom of God or the coming of the Messiah demands a rethinking and reordering of our understanding of the past and present. Where the Messiah is expected, all past and present history becomes an anticipation of the fulfillment which is coming in the future.<sup>7</sup> In Bloch's view, then, the present is filled with possibilities and an openness because what is ultimately possible is not determined by the past, but by the anticipated future. The present is not filled with accretions from the past, but with potentialities of the promised future; in a word, history becomes filled with HOPE. This perspective, which Bloch calls "utopian," has political consequences. Living in anticipation of the future means that one cannot view past political conditions as strictly determinative of future ones. The future contains elements of the new; it is, in some sense, a "novum."<sup>8</sup>

It was this new eschatological approach which allowed Moltmann to move beyond Barth and to develop a theology which was more in tune with his own socialist sensitivities. In 1964, Moltmann published *Theologie der Hoffnung: Untersuchungen zur Begründung und zu den Konsequenzen einer christlichen Eschatologie*. (English translation: *Theology of Hope: On the Grounds and Implications of Christian Eschatology*, 1967).<sup>9</sup> In this book Moltmann set off on his own path based in a futurist eschatology similar to that of Bloch. In the introduction to the German edition, Moltmann explains what he culled from Bloch's work. Of utmost importance was Bloch's insight that the substratum of all religion is *hope*. According to Bloch, hope, the person's longing for political and social freedom, prompts them to look to religion for answers. As an atheist in a Feuerbachian sense, Bloch understood God as a projection, but not necessarily as a self-alienation of human transcendence into a supreme being. Rather, for Bloch, humans projected their transcendence into an open future, into a vacuum. What is ultimately projected into this future are human hopes and wishes. For Bloch, however, if religion is understood fundamentally as *hope*, where hope is the "ontic difference between what is and what is *not yet*," then hope becomes grounded in the historical process. It is a transcendent horizon which opens up and stimulates transcendence in a new historical future; it has become concrete.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar manner, Moltmann claims that Christianity had neglected the eschatologi-

cal impulses which were inherent in its tradition. Where the churches had repeatedly emphasized the "realized" character of eschatology, that is, had predominantly been looking backward to the fulfillment of the promises of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus, they had refused to acknowledge the fact that the kingdom of God was to a large degree still outstanding and would only reach its fulfillment in the future. For Moltmann this neglect of the futurist elements of eschatology was not simply an oversight. Rather, this eschatology was in fact repressed by a church attempting to shore up its place and power in the social world and solidifying its hold over the Word of God.<sup>11</sup>

In *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann claims, like Bloch, that

... eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it. From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present... Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence and of the whole Church.<sup>12</sup>

Placing eschatology at the center of Christian theology meant much more than an interesting new starting point; it meant that all of traditional theology needed to be recast in light of this insight. In particular, the understanding of the nature of God and God's relationship to the world now took on new meaning. Moltmann set his sights on two perspectives which had gained ascendancy in the early to mid-twentieth century theology: the Neo-Orthodox theology of Karl Barth, and the existential theology of Rudolf Bultmann. In his *Epistle to the Romans*, and to a similar degree in his *Church Dogmatics*, in an attempt to maintain the absolute sovereignty and aseity of God, Karl Barth had emphasized God's "vertical" transcendence. Utilizing spatial terminology, Barth understands God to stand "over," "above," and "beyond" the world. The best that Barth can do within these parameters is proclaim that God has a "parabolic" relationship to the world.<sup>13</sup> In such a perspective, rather than be an impulse within history for its transformation, God's revelation is understood predominantly as an indictment of human history.

Like Barth, Bultmann underscored the qualitative difference between God and human, emphasized the radical fallenness of human existence, and maintained the paradoxical relationship of revelation and culture. Different from Barth, however, Bultmann claimed that knowledge of God is predominantly *existential* in nature. It is relational knowledge, in which God confronts the person of faith in such a way that a person's very existence is called into question and called to authenticity. In a term that became paradigmatic for Dialectical Theology, it is *heragma*, a word addressed to the human being by God which challenges the human being to respond.<sup>14</sup> For Bultmann, this call is revelatory of God as Other; but even more importantly it is revelatory of human nature.

For Bultmann, the biblical eschatology that emphasizes the end of history and the resolution of its fragmentary character is ultimately mythical in character. History has gone on, and will continue to go on. And even if we do expect the world to end in the future, it probably will be through natural catastrophe, not through some final battle of God and Satan.<sup>15</sup> When

it is demythologized, this cosmological eschatology becomes existential, as the moment when, confronted by the kerygma, the believer is placed into an existential crisis and ultimately opened up to new possibilities of existence. As such, it is the presence of eternity in the human present. The call to decision when confronted by the kerygma, in Bultmann's terms, is the call to authentic selfhood, the key to an individual's self-understanding.<sup>16</sup> It involves being grasped by the word of God and allowing it to call one's whole existence into question, so that one's life can be reoriented in a way that is more authentic. The decisive moment, therefore is the various "presents" in which the believer has surrendered his or her self to the Word of God.

For Moltmann, the perspectives of Barth and Bultmann share a fundamental flaw: both essentially undercut the social relevance of Christian eschatology. Barth had made God so "other," even in the Christian proclamation of the Word, that it becomes difficult to provide an adequate vision for social transformation. Bultmann's kerygmatic, existential theology provided for personal transformation of individuals, but seemed to ignore the transformation of the larger social situation. For Moltmann, the question was no longer how to keep already-established social structures in place, but how to transform them in light of justice. What was needed was a prod to liberation from old forms and the establishment of new forms. Thus, unlike both Barth and Bultmann, the new Political Theology was to be first and foremost critically related to society, and it needed to be recognized that the new relationship of churches in Germany demanded that this theology also be ecumenical in character.<sup>17</sup> In Moltmann's new turn, by making eschatology the framework within which theology was to be done, the ecumenical and practical/critical functions of theology could be maintained.

For Moltmann, the idea of the Promise of God becomes important as the concretization of that eschatology. Promise reveals the meaning of God, of history, and of the human person. Understood in terms of Promise, God is not primarily vertically transcendent to the world, touching it as a tangent touches a circle as Barth claimed. Neither is God the call to personal decision or the forces of preservation in the world. Rather, God relates to the world through Promise, the willful decision of God to open the horizon of the human future. It is through the Promise that God binds Godself to the world, and subsequently theology must always include those poles in its discourse.

Moltmann is clear, however, that the history of the promise is not identical with human history. We are not working out the Promise on earth. Rather, the Promise is first a critical movement in which God stands over and against what we humans have attempted. This is the so-called "eschatological reservation," in which the future promised by God stands as an indictment of what we humans have attempted to make for our own future. At the same time, however, the Promise provides a goal for society to attain. It is a lure to make real the future which is promised by God.<sup>18</sup> Since God is the subject of the Promise, its agent, its originator, God creates a situation of new possibility for humans by promising them something which has not been before, is yet to come, but is nonetheless, guaranteed: the kingdom of God. This is where Moltmann differs from Bloch: the hopes of humans are projected into the future, but not into a vacuum. Rather, the Resurrection Promise and the kingdom fill that vacuum. This understanding of Promise demands that history be understood temporally as the tension-filled interim between the

issuing of the Promise and its fulfillment in the future. As such, it is full of latencies and potentialities which derive from the kingdom itself. Since every promise includes an expectation of its own fulfillment within the promise itself, the Promise of God also includes not only the expectation, but also the anticipation of its fulfillment. Therefore the time between Promise and fulfillment is not an empty time, but a time which is shot through with the possibilities of the future kingdom which is understood by Moltmann as the transformation of the world. Perceived in this way, where Bloch ultimately recognizes the possibility of the fulfillment of human hopes in future history, Moltmann understands hope to always "overshoot the mark": It cannot ever be fully realized in history until the end of history in the kingdom of God. Yet history is not left meaningless; instead, it is filled with "anticipations," "proclivities," and "potentialities" which arise from looking with hope toward the kingdom. The completion of fragmentary existence, the fulfillment of human hopes, the peace and joy of the kingdom can be anticipated proleptically in the present.

As noted above, the publication of *Theology of Hope* prompted international discussion of the function of Christian eschatology in theology. The publication of his second book, *The Crucified God*, produced even more controversy and marks Moltmann's move into the third stage of his thought. This stage was inaugurated by a conscious effort on Moltmann's part to incorporate the sociology of knowledge into theology in an attempt to create a "critical theory of theology." Such a critical theory would be self-reflective and self-critical. It is the attempt to create

... a critical theory in which knowledge-guiding interests and the practical effects of this knowledge is revealed and reflected in men.... It is a turning from the theory of things to a reflection on the use and effects of things!<sup>19</sup>

Central to this development was Moltmann's participation in the Christian-Marxist Dialogues of the 1960s. As Moltmann, himself, stated at the time, the Marxists learned that Christianity was not merely an "opiate of the people," and we Christians learned that Christian messianism and eschatology, rightly understood, could take on revolutionary character.<sup>20</sup> This led Moltmann and others into discussions surrounding the question of the continuities between Christian theology and revolutionary political action. While both affirmative and negative replies were given, for Moltmann the Christian hope is essentially revolutionary. Hope understood as the difference between what is and what is not yet is first a critique of the current sociopolitical situation. One hopes for the new because the old is insufficient.

Beyond the revolutionary aspect of Christianity, Moltmann also learned from the Christian Marxist Dialogue that the "principle of verification" for theology, traditionally understood as the degree to which theology conformed either to tradition or to the tenets of logic, was essentially wrong-headed. What now made a theology "true" or not was *praxis*, whether the practice that was produced was liberative or not. Moltmann develops his own understanding of this in the first chapters of *The Crucified God*. In this book, Moltmann attempts to delineate the relationship between theory and praxis in theological discourse. He formulates the relationship between the two as the difficulty of maintaining the balance



between the *identity* of Christianity and its *relevance*.<sup>21</sup> From Moltmann's perspective, Christianity derives its identity from the uniqueness of the Christ event: Christ's history is what lends Christianity its identity. If this were the whole story, however, Christianity would have remained a closed community, a sect which envisioned itself much as the community limned in the Epistles of John. Christianity is not this closed-in community, however. It is a community which is in the world, is affected by the world, and in turn affects the world. Consequently, Christianity has to make clear its relevance to the larger world around it.

The problem which confronts Christianity in Moltmann's view, is that of keeping a balance between the two. If Christianity emphasizes its identity too much, it stands the danger of becoming self-contained and isolated. If, however, it emphasizes its relevance to the world, it very quickly becomes identified with the culture which surrounds it, and consequently loses its identity, that which makes it unique.

Moltmann attempts to resolve this dilemma through an understanding of the relationship between orthopraxy and orthodoxy. For Moltmann, the question of the relationship between identity and relevance, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, centers on the problem of the verification of the truth claims of theology. In traditional theological discourse, the truth of a theological statement is determined either by its agreement with already determined dogmas of a church, or by its adherence to the rubrics of logic. These two modes of verification lead to what Moltmann considers to be *orthodoxy*, the focus on correct theory as primary. A second means of verification concerns itself with the agreement of revelation with already conceived cultural truths. In such a case, the truth of theological statements can be considered true only if they correspond to what the predominant culture already knows to be true. The Liberal Theology of the nineteenth century is a prime example of this.

Moltmann attempts to find a middle way between these two positions by adopting *orthopraxis* as the only viable means of verifying theological statements. In this perspective, the truth of theological discourse can only be verified through the *practice* that it produces.<sup>22</sup> Understood in this manner, Moltmann's theology is a "functional criticism of the social, political, and psychological functions of religion and the Church." It must seriously consider whether theological discourse hinders or furthers liberation, freedom, and justice.<sup>23</sup>

The fourth stage of Moltmann's theological development is his reformulation of Christian doctrine in light of the insights of the earlier stages. In the early 1980s, Moltmann began what he called "a series of systematic contributions to theology."<sup>24</sup> In these contributions, Moltmann is not trying to present an overarching system of theology ala Barth, or a *Summa theologiae* ala Thomas. Rather, Moltmann wants to do doctrinal theology in such a way that the issues which are raised can lead to active dialogue and discussion between and within various religious traditions. Five of these contributions have already reached print. The first, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, develops a social doctrine of the Trinity and attempts a rapprochement between Eastern and Western views of the Trinity. The second work in this series, *God in Creation*, presents an ecological doctrine of creation. The third installment, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, makes explicit the messianic implications of Christian theology. The fourth book in this series is Moltmann's pneumatology, *The Spirit of Life*. In this work, Moltmann explains the Spirit not only as the source of fellowship within Christianity, but also as a source of fellowship with those outside the Church. He understands the Spirit to be that which creates, sustains, liberates, justifies, and sanctifies

life.<sup>25</sup> The most recent installment is *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. It is this book that fleshes out the eschatology that Moltmann began with *Theology of Hope*, enlarging it to include discussion of personal, social, and cosmic elements of eschatology.

#### MOLTMANN'S RELATIONSHIP TO SUBSEQUENT THEOLOGY

Determining the affiliation of anyone's theology to subsequent theological work is a bit of a tricky business because one is always aware of the possibility of making more of a connection than the exponents of such theologies might themselves acknowledge. Since there is no self-proclaimed "Moltmann School," direct links to other theological perspectives must remain indirect at best. It is probably most appropriate to recognize that theological perspectives similar to Moltmann's were being developed throughout the world and that there was a cross-fertilization among the different perspectives.

In North America, Carl Braaten, a Lutheran theologian from Chicago, attributed to Moltmann a central role in raising the political impetuses and consequences of theology. Braaten describes the role that Moltmann (along with Pannenberg) has had not only upon his own work, but upon the theological enterprise as a whole:

First, the giants of the older generation—Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich—let the dimension of the future slip into the eternal present.... Second, the "death of God" stage in theology, following so quickly on the heels of the older generation of dialectical theologians, was no accident. The "God above us" died as the retribution exacted from theology for the sterility of its future-less eschatology. We are now in a third stage that began with theologians like Pannenberg and Moltmann who seized upon the occasion to take up the theme of eschatology as a new point of departure for a total recasting of the Christian message.<sup>26</sup>

Braaten adopted the futurist eschatologies of Pannenberg and Moltmann and found in them a revolutionary impulse that he used to critique predominantly the Lutheran theological tradition. His primary target was Luther's "two-kingdoms" doctrine and the negative effect that it has had on politics. In Braaten's eyes, the two-kingdoms doctrine produces a fundamentally conservative political ethic that leaves little or no room (depending on the interpretation) for political transformation. Its major problem, Braaten opined, is a "defective eschatology" that totally separated the realm of redemption from the realm of history. Such a perspective overemphasized individual salvation and made it possible to declare the political realm as autonomous and beyond the churches' concerns. The political world and its institutions thus had nothing to keep its own self-interest in check.<sup>27</sup>

In Europe, political theology came to the forefront as a dialogue partner for post-Barthian and post-Bultmannian theologians. In the 1984 discussions surrounding the importance of the Barmen Declaration for contemporary theology, political theology was viewed as one of the most appropriate forms for expressing the relationship between theology and politics.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the increased interest in a "theology of revolution" that developed in the late 1960s was viewed by many European scholars as intimately related to the development of political theology.<sup>29</sup> Again, the futurist eschatology promoted by Moltmann and others was seen as a means of introducing a revolutionary, transformative force into political life.

In Latin America, the development of liberation theology (at least in its early stages) was influenced by the Moltmann's futurist eschatological perspective. Gustavo Gutierrez's programmatic book, *A Theology of Liberation*, considered by many to be one of the founding theological works of liberation theology, states that

Moltmann's work is undoubtedly one of the most important works in contemporary theology. It offers a new approach to the theology of hope and has injected new life into the reflection on various aspects of Christian existence. Among other things, it helps us to overcome the association between faith and fear of the future which Moltmann considers characteristic of many Christians.<sup>30</sup>

Moltmann's influence on liberation theology is also supported by a perusal of Jon Sobrino's *Christology at the Crossroads*, in which Moltmann is discussed or noted in virtually every chapter, and references to his work in the index of the book number more than any other theologian listed.<sup>31</sup>

Another important influence that Moltmann has had is his role in furthering interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. Moltmann is aware that he is writing from a very specific socio-political context which obviously conditions his work. At the same time, however, he attempts to relativize his own context by recognizing and utilizing a plurality of contexts which have produced a variety of different theological perspectives. For Moltmann, it is in the interplay of these perspectives that Christian theology grows and broadens itself.<sup>32</sup> For theologians it is important to allow one's individual theology to be influenced by that interplay. This is particularly the case with Moltmann's theology. A perusal of Moltmann's works shows that he has had a variety of dialogue partners all of whom have affected his thought in one way or another. As noted above, many of his early insights about religion as an ideology were formed through the dialogue between Christians and Marxists held in the late 1960s by the Paulus Society. Feminist theology, particularly that produced by his wife, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, has opened Moltmann's eyes to the inadequacy of traditional Christian symbols and language about God.<sup>33</sup> The liberation movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia have also conditioned Moltmann's work, demanding that he move beyond the Eurocentrism perspective which has characterized traditional European theology.<sup>34</sup>

Other Christian religions often act as dialogue partners for Moltmann's theology. Orthodox trinitarian thought informs the formation of his doctrine of the Trinity in *Trinity and the Kingdom*. Catholic theology, particularly that of Karl Rahner, not only provides a foil against which Moltmann develops his own theology, but also informs Moltmann's understanding of the God-world relationship.

Clearly, one of Moltmann's primary dialogue partners has been Judaism. From his first book, *Theology of Hope*, through his most recent, *The Coming of God*, his work has brought forward the continuities and discontinuities between Judaism and Christianity. And in 1984, Moltmann furthered the dialogue directly by collaborating with Pinchas Lapide on a volume comparing and contrasting Jewish monotheism and Christian trinitarianism.<sup>35</sup>

While Moltmann's theology has been extremely influential, it has not escaped criticism. The Post-Bultmannian theologian, John Macquarrie, called into question the futurist

eschatology of Moltmann's theology:

We have noted that 'epiphany' is a bad word with Moltmann. An entire tradition of Christian theology and spirituality, centering on what John Baille called 'the sense of the presence of God,' is thus summarily dismissed. With me, let me confess, 'epiphany' is a good word.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Macquarrie accused Moltmann (along with Pannenberg and Braaten) of re-mythologizing theology because they insisted on considering the resurrection as an historical event. Basing his argument on Troeltsch's principle that a past event must be considered more or less probable to the degree that it finds analogues in our own present experience, Macquarrie contended that Moltmann's belief in an historically "real" resurrection cannot be considered historical in any sense acceptable to historians because it lacks any such analogue in our experience.<sup>37</sup> Moltmann, it would seem, was hanging on to a mythological vestige that could not be proved historically.

Moltmann's theology is also critiqued from the "left." Rubem Alves, one of the few Protestant liberation theologians in Latin America, contends that Moltmann's theology, while extremely helpful as a critique of the status quo and as a prod to hope, is never fully grounded in the socio-political forces that shape history. In teasing out the implications of Moltmann's futurist eschatology, Alves finds that the negation of the present situation for Moltmann is grounded solely in God's promise of a new future. Possibilities are derived from that future, not from any state of affairs already extant; thus, the critique of the present is contradicted by the future promised by God. Alves asserts that in following this line, Moltmann makes hope purely transcendental, totally unrelated to any specific historical situation. Similar to Barth, whose "Wholly Other" God he critiqued in his *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann likewise has grounded hope in a "wholly other": a totally future Eschaton. Playing out the logic of Moltmann's eschatology, therefore would mean that "hope cannot emerge from our experience, from our present... It comes from a future truth."<sup>38</sup> Alves, on the other hand, wants to ground the negation of history in history itself, in the contradiction between the suffering in the present and the possibilities opened up to it if the sufferings were negated. Thus, for Alves, "the negation of pain is the mother of hope and effectiveness."<sup>39</sup> Critiques aside, the importance of Moltmann's theology cannot be denied.

In summary, then, it is appropriate to say that Moltmann is attempting to open up new horizons for theology by breaking the boundaries that traditional theology has erected. He has critiqued the theology of classical theism for its inability to provide hope. He has countered the overemphasis on personalist interpretations of the Gospels, focussing instead on their larger, sociopolitical, meaning. And finally, he has emphasized the commonalities among religions, fostering and utilizing elements from a variety of different religions and faiths. This he has done from his recognition early on in his theological career that God has opened human history and human relationships; thus, theology must also attempt to include that openness within its own discourse.

#### NOTES

1. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. J.N. Thomas and T. Weiser (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960), p. 19.

2. K. Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E. Hoskyns (NY: Oxford, 1980), p. 10. Cf. also J. Hamer, *Karl Barth*, trans. D. Maruca (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1962), pp. 215-63 for a discussion of Kierkegaard's influence on Barth.
3. Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 88.
4. These insights form the basis for the entirety of his book, *The Epistle to the Romans*. It is especially in his discussion of Romans 1-3 that he develops the idea of the Wholly Other and the sense of *krisis*.
5. Barth, "Die Kirche und die politische Frage von heute," in Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme 1938-1945* (Evangelischer Verlag, 1945), p. 90. Quoted in Will Herberg's introduction to *Barth's Community, State and Church* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1968), pp. 40-41.
6. "Politics and the Practice of Hope," *The Christian Century*, 87 (March 11, 1970) p. 289, cited in Meeks, p. 16.
7. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, vol III (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), chap. 53.
8. *Ibid.*, chap. 17.
9. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung: Untersuchungen zur Begründung und zu den Konsequenzen einer christlichen Eschatologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1964) English translation: *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (NY: Harper and Row, 1967). The English translation of the Introduction in the German edition is found in *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, trans., M. Douglas Meeks (NY: Scribners, 1969), pp. 148-76.
10. Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, p. 196ff.
11. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 15.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
13. Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 50.
14. R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. Smith & E. Lantero (NY: Scribners, 1958), p. 52.
15. "New Testament and Mythology," trans. R. Fuller, in H. Bartsch, ed., *Kerygma and Myth* (NY: Harper, 1953) I, p. 5.
16. Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 40.
17. Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, trans., M. Douglas Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 98.
18. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 21, 196, 269. Cf. also R. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), p. 40.
19. Jürgen Moltmann, *Umkehr zur Zukunft* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1970), p. 135 (translation mine).
20. This interest in Christian Marxist Dialogue led Moltmann to develop his own "Theology of Revolution," in *Religion, Revolution and the Future*.
21. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (NY: Harper and Row, 1974), chapter I.
22. This does not mean that there is no place for theory in Moltmann's thought. He maintains that theory and practice are always found in a dialectical relationship in which theory informs practice and practice informs theory. Cf. J. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, trans. M.D. Meeks (Phila: Fortress, 1984), pp. 107-8.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
24. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. M. Kohl (NY: Harper and Row, 1981), p. xi.
25. *Cod in Creation*, trans. M. Kohl (NY: Harper and Row, 1985); *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, tr. M. Kohl (San Francisco: Harper, 1990); *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl. (Phila: Fortress, 1992).
26. Carl Braaten, *The Future of God: The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 11-12.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-52.

28. See W. Burgmueller and R. Weth, *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung* (Neukirchen: Neukirchner, 1984). Apart from individual essays concerning the relationship between Moltmann's theology and Barmen, several of the remaining articles depended heavily on the approach taken by political theology.

29. See *Diskussion zur 'Theologie der Revolution,'* ed. Ernst Feil and Rudolf Weth (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1970). See especially, Feil's contribution, "Von der 'politischen Theologie' zur Theologie der Revolution," pp. 110-32.

30. Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas* (English translation): *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation*, trans. Sister Candida Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: 1973), pp. 216-18.

31. Jon Sobrino, *Cristología desde américa latina (esbozo a partir del seguimiento del Jesús histórico)* (Mexico: Centro de Reflexión Teológica), 1976. (English translation): *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978).

32. Cf. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. xii.

33. Cf. E. Moltmann-Wendel and J. Moltmann, *Humanity in God* (NY: Pilgrim, 1983).

34. Cf. Moltmann, "An Open Letter to José Miguez Bonino," *Christianity and Crisis* (March 29, 1976), pp. 57-63; and a volume Moltmann edited, *Minjung: Theologie des Volkes Gottes in Südkorea* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1984).

35. *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

36. John Macquarrie, *Thinking about God* (London: SCM 1975), p. 230.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 228-29.

38. Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975), pp. 59-60.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 62.