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PROMISSIO SPEI
GOD'S ESCHATOLOGICAL ACTION IN THE CHURCH

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematics
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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June 2013

Approved by

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To my parents and to my wife, Laurie.

But, lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day: The saints triumphant rise in bright
array; The King of Glory passes on His way. Alleluia! Alleluia!

William W. How, *For All the Saints* (Stanza 7),
Lutheran Service Book (St. Louis: Concordia,
2006), 677.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the faculty at Concordia Seminary. Their humble wisdom has helped me grow as a Christian and theologian. Amongst the faculty, I wish to especially thank Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, and Dr. Robert Weise, both of whom have served as mentors and friends. Without their encouragement I would not have made it this far.

I wish to also thank my doctoral adviser, Dr. Kent Burreson. His willingness to be an active part in my studies and to help in shaping the course of my research has been invaluable. His wealth of liturgical and sacramental knowledge have broadened my awareness and given me insights that have affected my whole theological outlook. His ability to help me refine my thoughts is what brought this work to fruition and for that I offer my sincerest thanks.

I must also acknowledge the ongoing support of my parents, whose continued prayers have given me the strength and patience I needed to stay the course. Finally, I must also thank my wife, Laurie. Her love has supported me through the writing process. She has sympathetically shared in our mutual doctoral struggles and rejoiced in our successes, and for that I am eternally grateful.

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession

ABSTRACT

Davenport, Richard A. "Promissio Spei: God's Eschatological Action in the Church." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2012. 213 pp.

This dissertation, a work in systematic theology, examines the nature of Christian hope in the context of current scholarship in systematic theology. Its goal is to assess the way in which Christian hope is rooted in God's word of promise and the extent to which that promise affects Christian life. The eschatological outlook presented in Scripture shows that God's promises, and the hope that they offer, are presented to all of creation. This dissertation investigates the process by which the communication of hope from God's word to creation takes place, as well as the implications of that hope for all who come in contact with it. The dissertation conducts an investigation of the places where God's word enters into creation to see how hope is created by it.

In a hope-filled eschatology, God's word is found not only in the direct, proclaimed word, but also in the sacraments that form the foundation for Christian life. This promise of God directs Christians toward the future that he is creating and calls them to be a part of that future. The sacraments form a connecting point between the present world and the future that God is creating. This enables Christians to interact with that future and experience it. This further allows their hope in God's promises to take shape as they see for themselves what God is creating.

The liturgy of the worship service that surrounds the sacraments helps Christians to understand what it is they are experiencing by connecting Christian eschatology to their everyday life. It also turns their attention to the world outside the church that is in need of the hope given by God. The liturgy sets them on the path to carry that hope out into the world through their lives.

The eschatological Christian hope is not intended only for humanity, but all of creation. One way that creation experiences this hope is in the work Christians do in the world. The act of caring for creation and for the world brings a piece of the future back into the present and gives concrete form to God's promises.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Within the past century, many theologians have examined the subject of eschatology. Plumbing the depths of this extensive field, they have presented systematic formulations regarding the purpose of the Last Day and how it relates to contemporary Christians. In some cases, theologians will try and follow eschatology back to its source, looking at the activity of God that brings it about. Other theologians focus more on how eschatology intersects the modern church and the effects that it has on it. In order to broaden the Christian understanding of how eschatology connects to the lives of modern Christians, both the eschatological activity of God and the effect it has on the church must be investigated. With an understanding of how God acts to bring about his Kingdom and the assurance that he offers to his people that they will be a part of it, the church is given hope. This hope for the future Kingdom is not only the beginning of the restoration of the people within the church, but also the tool the church can use to help restore the world.¹

Sadly, the connection between hope and the church, particularly as hope enters into the life of the church in the worship service, is relatively unknown. It is increasingly evident in the church, particularly in America, that Christians have lost sight of the purpose of liturgy and the divine action contained within it. That there is a drive in various denominations that seek to

¹ As the eschatology presented will contend, Christ's return will usher in a restoration of all creation, not just of his people. This understanding of restoration will be the basis for the usage of the word throughout this dissertation. Analysis of the eschatological restoration will be a major focus for this dissertation.

make the liturgy more meaningful or relevant to believers and non-believers alike is a testament to this.² Without understanding what God is doing through the liturgy and what effect this has upon the assembled congregation, these movements become mired in fads and questionable theology. Orthodoxy, ὀρθή δόξα, becomes subjugated to the desire to make the liturgy connect with peoples' lives to the exclusion of God's already-present action in the liturgy; an action that is not only continually relevant, but also continually seeking to recreate them into a people who have hope in the face of every evil.

The Thesis

This dissertation will argue that the Christian hope for the future is only properly sure and certain hope when God's Word of promise for the future instills hope in the Christian through the baptismal and Eucharistic life of the church, and that the liturgy that surrounds the sacramental activity of the church directs the Christian to live out that hope in the rest of their lives as they confront the brokenness of creation. This dissertation will primarily be looking at God's Word and how that Word creates hope. It will assert that the Word is the foundation to hope. Hope, as this dissertation will use it, is defined as the assurance of a better future. Christian hope, specifically, is the assurance of the future promised by God. This Christian hope focuses on the promise of the Kingdom that God offers. The eschatological kingdom of God is not a theological concept that stands monolithically on its own as a feature of apocalyptic writings. The future Kingdom is intimately integrated into the chief articles of the Christian faith alongside the belief in the Trinity and the death and resurrection of Christ and forms the foundation for the place of

² Thomas Fisch, ed., *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann* (Crestwood: St.

the church in the world and the hope that it has. Hope, then, is the ability to look for that future in spite of the brokenness of the world around it. Without the promise of God to his people, which is given in his Word and which forms the basis for his Kingdom, the church would have no assurance that it has a place within that Kingdom. Without the hope that they are given by experiencing the future Kingdom in the sacramental and liturgical activity of the church, the people of God would have nothing to offer the world and no role in the restoration that culminates with the return of Christ.

God's grace does not come to the Christian immediately but instead is mediated by the structure he has set up for this purpose. The liturgy that elevates the church into the kingdom of God is also the primary vehicle of communication between God and man. Thus, the liturgy is not an isolated activity that operates in absence of doctrinal content. Rather, it is shot through with Biblical themes and imagery, even to the point of constituting the central activity of the church.

This dissertation will use liturgy here in both a broad sense and a narrow sense. In the broad sense, liturgy is defined as the activity of the people of God gathered around Word and Sacrament. Thus any meeting or assembly could be seen as liturgy so long as God's Word and/or Sacraments are the central focus of the activity. In a narrow sense, liturgy refers to the specific *ordo* in use at a worship service.³

This dissertation will use both senses of the word. In the broad sense it will deal with the church's liturgical life as a whole. It will examine the concept as a whole and show how

Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 28, 45.

³ Much of Alexander Schmemmann's liturgical theology is in reference to one of the two major Eastern ordos: St. Basil or St. Chrysostom. This dissertation will not seek to address concerns with the Eastern ordos to any great degree and will instead adapt Schmemmann's theology to Western forms.

sacramental and eschatological theologies are foundational to liturgical activity and establish the purpose for the gathering of the people of God. In the narrow sense it will investigate individual rites and observe the interplay between the rites and the sacraments they are in conversation with in the context of the structure provided by the ordo.

One of the primary themes within the liturgy is hope. The hope a Christian has comes from participating in the eschatological kingdom of God that is made present in the church through the sacraments. The liturgy then brings the people of God into contact with the sacraments and with the eschatological Kingdom. As part of the eschatological Kingdom today, the people of God are given hope through the restoration of creation that is already beginning. This hope and restoration is given shape by the liturgy. It also has transformative effects on those who participate in it, as they are able to display the hope and the beginnings of the final restoration of body and soul in their present lives. This hope and restoration manifests in the life of the Christian in various ways, such as: confidence in the face of death, perseverance in times of trial or oppression, and a steward's attitude toward creation.

This issue is important because modern forays into eschatology, when they deal with the concept of hope at all, are concerned more with what God does to create hope and not with how Christians come to receive that hope. Even though God creates the possibility of hope through his promises, if the Christian is not aware of those promises he also has no reason to hope. Also, without an awareness of how the hope that arises from God's promises functions, Christians risk missing the continuity of hope that flows from God out to all of creation. If the Christian does not see how God's promises drive baptism and the Eucharist, or how the liturgy is molding him into a disciple of God's hope who can share that hope with the world around him, he loses one of the primary gifts God offers to his people and his creation.

The Current Status of Eschatology

The first field under examination in this dissertation is eschatology. Some theologians have attempted to develop eschatological systems that connect the present age of creation to the future referenced in Scripture. In order to show how the eschatology presented in this dissertation demonstrates the continuity of hope from God to creation that modern eschatological structures have failed to investigate the dissertation will first discuss the eschatology of a number of theologians who have done work in the area. The work of some of these theologians is roughly a century old and yet is still guiding the course of modern study of eschatology, while others provide more recent contributions. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it should serve to give a sense of the major movements within eschatology as well as present some of the issues this dissertation seeks to address.

This section will be broken up into two broad methodological categories. The theologians in the first group generally look at eschatology and its relation to the divine being of God. For these theologians, the eschatological fulfillment involves humanity being taken up and integrated into the life and activity of the Trinity in some manner. For the second group, the main emphasis is on history and how eschatology represents the fulfillment of history. These theologians tend to see the eschatological fulfillment as the final chapter in the progression of history and discuss the ramifications of this fulfillment in a historical context.

One of the pre-eminent figures in 20th century systematic theology is Karl Barth. Though Barth was unable to finish the section in his comprehensive theological work that would have expounded on eschatology in detail, his work still echoes a great deal of thought about eschatology and the purpose of time. Barth falls into the first methodological category. His primary eschatological focus is on how God reveals himself in the person and work of Christ

Jesus. Barth elucidates the various ways Christ reveals the inner workings of the Trinity, in terms of the attributes of God. He also discusses the many things Christ reveals about God and unpacks their implications.

Though Barth spends a great deal of time dealing with the particulars of divine revelation, he never goes so far as to connect this revelation to humanity. That is to say, humanity may see God revealed in Christ, but humanity is never shown how this revelation applies to them. The revelations of God are generalized statements of who God is and what he is doing, but how these revelations are meant to benefit humanity directly is not examined. Thus hope, as a concept, is not one that fits within Barth's theological structure. Christians are never told or shown that what God intends for the future is something they will be a part of in any explicit sense. Barth indicates that Christ is the one who guides humanity toward the goal he has laid out, but does not indicate how Christ interacts with people to do this.⁴ This means that Christians are left without any concrete assurance in God's activities concerning that future.

One of the fundamental concepts of God upon which Barth grounds his theology is that of God's divine freedom.⁵ God, in his divinity, is utterly free from any constraint that binds his creation. Because Christ is the focal point, God's election is embodied, and indeed wholly contained within, the person of Christ.⁶ Creation is then seen as the arena for God's election to take place. Even aspects of creation such as sin and evil are part of God's electing process. For

⁴ John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy* (Burlington, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124–25.

⁶ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrence, trans. G. W. Bromiley, et al., vol. 2, bk. 2 of *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 94.

Barth, God does not promote evil. Rather, evil is a necessary possibility that must exist for God's election and perfection of being to be demonstrated.⁷ This means that creation and history are ultimately about God revealing himself in Christ and freely imparting his divine grace on those upon whom he chooses to have mercy. In the act of election, Christ reveals not only the realities of sin, but also his unconditional grace.⁸ Election thus becomes the foundation for history, as the unfolding of God's grace within creation.

Though Barth's development of the overwhelming mercy of God would seem like the perfect basis for hope, it is questionable how effective the virtue of hope is in Barth's theology. The hope that Christians have is not in a thing but in the person of Christ and his death and resurrection.⁹ While hope certainly does encompass the presence of Christ and the life that Christians are a part of because of his resurrection, the concept of the kingdom of God covers a broader region; one which includes the presence of Christ as well as other concepts. Barth explains that the role of Christ in creation is to conquer all things that are opposed to him.¹⁰ In his incarnation, Christ takes up the cause of his fallen creation as well as his own divine purpose and destroys all that is antithetical to him. However, without a connection from God to man, a way for man to know that he is one of God's people and a citizen of the Kingdom, he has no assurance in the work of Christ. Man has no certainty in the future because he cannot say whether or not he is still an enemy of Christ and destined for destruction.

⁷ Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 316–17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁹ John C. McDowell, "Karl Barth's Having No-Thing to Hope For," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006): 1–49.

¹⁰ Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, 302–6.

Another voice in systematics that falls within the first category is that of Karl Rahner. Rahner contrasts with Barth by focusing on how God's attributes of mystery and hiddenness pervade his activity, particularly with respect to the future. Rahner sets up a number of points that he believes are necessary to properly understand the role eschatology plays within the greater field of theology. He begins by stating that any eschatological assertion must pertain to the future in some way.¹¹ Rahner explains that eschatology cannot simply be de-mythologized into a discussion of the present day. Eschatology must bear witness to a not-yet-present time in order to be a true exposition of the faith. This also means that man must be placed within time. He also states that man only understands himself and comes into his being by grasping where history has brought him and what lies before him in the future.¹² This might suggest that Rahner actually falls within the second methodological category. However, Rahner is not so much interested in the future as fulfillment as he is in exploring the relationship between God and the future in regards to the mystery and hiddenness common to both. Thus, Rahner is concerned more with this connection and how the future resembles certain attributes of God, rather than how history is resolved in the future.

For Rahner, the future is a hidden object and this idea of hiddenness becomes a major theme within his eschatology.¹³ The Scriptures repeat that man will not know the day or time of the Last Day, but this is only a part of the hiddenness that is intrinsic to this event. This idea of hiddenness is not to be confused with something that is unknown. Even the known qualities of

¹¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 4:326.

¹² *Ibid.*, 330–31.

¹³ Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 4:329–30.

God's eschatological activities, such as the judgment and consummation events, are hidden and mysterious. The revelation that comes at the end of time is the event which brings the hidden mystery of God into our presence. For Rahner, a discussion of eschatology must maintain the mysteriousness of God and his future, for they are fundamental to the faith and hope of the Christian.

This focus on the mystery of God and the future that Rahner utilizes works against the idea of hope. Though Scripture certainly indicates in passages such as Mark 13:32 that the time of Christ's return is a mystery, there is also a great deal of certainty regarding the events of Christ's return. Christians are given ways to see some of what that future holds for them and for the world. They are told what that future will do for them and for the world and are assured that they will be a part of it. Rahner does not go so far as to say that the future is entirely a mystery. He indicates it will bring about the salvation of humanity.¹⁴ He also describes how it will culminate in a reintegration of man into the perfect community.¹⁵ However, he never indicates how an individual is to know that the salvation that comes with the future is for him, thus depriving him of the hope the future also offers.

Though he distinguishes himself from the previous theologians in terms of his own methodology, Hans Urs von Balthasar still falls solidly in the first category under examination here. One of the most important features of von Balthasar's theology is the analogy. Analogies form the basis for von Balthasar's work and provide the means by which he joins the disparate

¹⁴ Ibid., 332–33.

¹⁵ Peter C. Phan, *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner's Eschatology* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1988), 176–77.

segments of his theology into a cohesive structure.¹⁶ Von Balthasar utilizes analogy to investigate the nature of God and how man is brought into the life of the Trinity.

In regards to hope, how helpful von Balthasar is for a discussion of hope that takes seriously the realities of final judgment is questionable. Though von Balthasar does not fall into the same category as Barth and others in supporting universal salvation, he also fails to ascertain the full breadth of meaning in God's judgment. Reflecting on von Balthasar's theology, that the threats of judgment are a call by God for conversion and faith is unquestioned. That Christ's resurrection is a conquering of death is also a Biblical theme. However, the things that stand in opposition to God are not limited to death. The God of Psalm 110, who makes a footstool of his enemies, is not merely conducting an existential judgment against death, but against all who oppose his reign. Furthermore, von Balthasar's assertion that one makes the final decision for or against God only in death denies the certainty that comes from faith and the sacraments during earthly life and thus introduces doubt into the hope Christians have for the life to come.¹⁷

In von Balthasar's theological system, God is not seen as the antithesis to human or created attributes, such as finitude, in terms of being a negation of them. God is always viewed as the One who is ever-greater, whose comparatives expand into infinity.¹⁸ This extends to God's existence in time. For God, time is not non-existent or unperceived, but expanded, such that every point of human time is present for God. Because Christ is God who enters into human

¹⁶ Eunsoo Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity: A Trinitarian Analogical Understanding of Time and Eternity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 244.

¹⁷ Jan Ambaum, "An Empty Hell: The Restoration of All Things? Balthasar's Concept of Hope for Salvation," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 18 (1991), 49–51.

¹⁸ Ambaum, "An Empty Hell: The Restoration of All Things?," 275.

time, God's time allows human time to come out of eternity in creation and then back to eternity in the Eschaton. This process is analogously represented in the life of Christ who comes down to earth from eternity and returns to eternity after his Ascension.¹⁹

Nicholas Healy notes that van Balthasar's eschatology is bound up in an expansive analogy that draws on the language and movements of drama to describe the relationship between God and creation.²⁰ Christ, through his entry into the world and his return to the Father, acts out the salvific work that draws the world back into communion with the Father with him. In this way, Christ reveals the mystery of intra-Trinitarian life through his dramatic interaction with the world.

This Trinitarian life comes to humanity in the form of a gift. The death and resurrection of Christ is the act of God that reveals this gift. The gift is the Spirit himself who pervades all of creation with his activity. The Spirit enables the church to involve itself in the world to a greater degree as well as to exist in communion with God. Christ, in his incarnation, analogically embodies the exchange that takes place. As God, he gives of himself as a gift to creation freely and in abundance. As man, he eucharistically offers thanks and praise back to his Father. This exchange exemplifies the nature of the gift and the state that man and God will exist in as communion when Christ returns to draw the world back into eternity.²¹ Until he returns, the church persists in a waiting period situated between Christ's resurrection and his return.²² Christ

¹⁹ Ibid., 280–85.

²⁰ Nicholas J. Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3–4.

²¹ Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 211–16.

²² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: Theology: The New Covenant*, ed. John Riches, trans. Brian

already accomplished what was necessary for the redemption of humanity, so the church awaits the final act in the drama that God unfolds within history which will bring the fruits of his act of love in the form of communion with him.²³ Thus, von Balthasar is not interested in history as such or in what becomes of creation in history. His focus is firmly fixed on the relationship between God and man that results from God's eschatological activity.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is another major figure in systematics whose eschatology does not have the narrow focus of man's relationship to God, as von Balthasar does, and begins to draw on both of the methodological categories under examination here. Pannenberg differs from Barth by his use of the kingdom of God as the foundation to all other doctrines of the faith, including Christology.²⁴ Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God is what ultimately binds the present and future together into a cohesive whole and thus is what serves as the basis for eschatology. This means that, though he also draws on some elements of the divine being methodological approach, categorized by the theologians above, he also draws on elements of a historical perspective.

Pannenberg takes up the nature of eschatology in relation to the concept of promise in his systematics. He criticizes Moltmann and others who base their eschatology on God's promise and attempts to correct what he sees as flaws in this form of eschatology. He notes that for promises to be a valid foundation for eschatology, they must be promises from the true God

McNeil, vol. 7 of *A Theological Aesthetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 177.

²³ Ibid., 185.

²⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 53.

whose being is inextricably linked to the world's future.²⁵ He asserts that the future that is outlined within the promise must be consistent with the natural orientation of creatures receiving the promise. For this to happen, the God making the promise and the God who created the creatures must be one and the same. When this is true, the promise can be a benefit to the creatures as they respond to the future for which they have already been molded.²⁶

Pannenberg emphasizes the importance of eschatology for understanding how God has designed his creatures and their relation to the promise. As creatures that have received the promise and are oriented toward the future of that promise, an awareness grows based on that future. The future is seen as the consummation and fulfillment where creation is made whole again. In seeing the future as the whole, the reality of the present day can be seen for what it is: a fragmentary and lacking existence that falls short of the perfected state to come.²⁷ God's sovereign reign over the world, which will come to unify all creation under his domain, is an aspect of the future that is attested to by Christ in his ministry.²⁸ The fact that not all things have been drawn under the rule of God yet is a sign of the fragmented nature of the present and an indication of how creation is meant to function. For Pannenberg, the kingdom of God found in the future is the primary creative force for reality and the source of meaning for existence.

People do not look to the past to gain an understanding of the future. Instead, they take the future

²⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:540.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 541.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 543.

²⁸ Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 59–61.

and apply it to the past, because the future Kingdom holds their purpose and the fulfillment of their existence.²⁹

Though there are many things within Pannenberg's eschatology that are helpful in a discussion of hope, there are also some factors in his theology that are cause for concern. Bradley Hanson notes that, for Pannenberg, participation in the kingdom of God means the love of ones' neighbor.³⁰ He also notes that God has not yet come into the fullness of his being, as he does not yet rule over all things. This suggests that, for Pannenberg, man has a role in bringing about the future Kingdom. If God does not yet rule over all things, then man's participation in the Kingdom and the hope that is found in his striving for the future may be either an innate part of his nature or may be self-made. Though Pannenberg formally ties the eschatological hope to the resurrection of Christ, this hope can only be affirmed if it is certain that the Kingdom that is foretold, which will join everyone together in that resurrection, will actually come about.

As another voice from systematics, Robert Jenson also draws on elements of the first category in his examination of the implications of eschatology, but his focus and structure fall within the second category, which deals with the relationship of eschatology to the outcome of history. Jenson criticizes the eschatology of others, such as Barth, for organizing their eschatology around the essential nature of God. He notes that this type of eschatology loses the temporal nature that is intrinsic to it.³¹ For Jenson, all of theology, eschatology included, is focused on answering the question: "What does the gospel promise?"³²

²⁹ Ibid., 67–69.

³⁰ Bradley C. Hanson, "The Church's Mission in a Secularized World: Pannenberg's Theology of Hope," *Religion in Life* 40 (1971): 228–35.

³¹ Robert W. Jenson, *The Works of God*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press,

As Jenson works through how eschatology describes the fulfillment of the gospel promise, he begins to delineate what that fulfillment looks like and how it fits into the overall answer to the question he posed. The first item of note is that this eschatological fulfillment involves inclusion into the life of the Trinity. This means that the fulfillment will be shaped and defined by the presence of the Trinity and only things that can persist and function in the continuing presence of God can be a part of the Eschaton. He uses this concept to narrow the field of eschatology from the many possible answers provided by other belief systems down to the specifically Christian hope in the fulfillment of the promise given by God.³³ Jenson goes on to state that, because the eschatological fulfillment is bound up in the triune life, any understanding of eschatology must be encompassed by God's will and purpose for creation and for humanity. This means that any attempt to construct an eschatology that separates people out into individuals and divorces them from the community of the Body of Christ must be denounced. Instead, the life and person of Christ define the Eschaton. The lives of those who are the Body of Christ are bound to the life of Christ and to his activity.³⁴ While Jenson does make use of the theme of hope and connects it to eschatology, he does little to extend his conclusions into a discussion of the future restoration and its effects on the world today.

To give a fuller example of what this looks like, Jenson describes the community of the Eschaton. As love is a defining feature of God, so will it be the foundation for the Body of Christ. As the Three Persons demonstrate perfect love for each other, so will the community of

1999), 309–10.

³² Ibid., 311.

³³ Ibid., 317.

believers be a depiction of this love for one another. Each member will retain his own identity and yet still be bound together into the perfect community of God's love. This community will come to resemble aspects of the interaction of the Trinity, as the Father sees his Son in the life of each believer, and each offers that life in humble obedience back to the Father.³⁵

In relation to hope, Jenson discusses its connection to eschatology as a looking forward to a future event. For the believer, hope is not tied to a generalized feeling of love as Jenson surmises, but to the love of a specific person, namely God. Hope is not a virtue that continues on into the Eschaton because hope is always looking toward a future that has not yet arrived. The arrival of the fulfillment of this hope does not remove its recipients from life under the promise of God; it merely transitions them from hopeful expectation to life under the fulfillment of the promise.³⁶

In contrast to Jenson, who still draws somewhat on the first category, Joseph Ratzinger, now the retired Pope Benedict XVI, falls solidly within the second category. Ratzinger, like other theologians, draws on the concept of the kingdom of God for his eschatology. He spends time laying out the exegetical details necessary to begin an examination of eschatology. In this, he notes that when Jesus references the kingdom of God in Gospel accounts, he is not describing some faraway place or time, but rather God's activity both in the present and the future.³⁷ By his very presence, Christ brings the kingdom of God from the future to the present day. The

³⁴ Ibid., 318–19.

³⁵ Robert W. Jensen, *The Works of God*, 319–20.

³⁶ Ibid., 320–21.

³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, ed. Michael Waldstein, trans. Aidan Nichols (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 26.

Kingdom may not be visible in a physical sense, but yet it resides in the midst of those who abide in his presence.³⁸

Through his ministry, Christ tells his readers and listeners that those who are part of the Kingdom are those who have encountered God and have humbled themselves to his work. Man seeks to become united in his own being and reunited with creation and the community around him. In his sinful desire for freedom from creaturely limitations, man seeks to become God. This is impossible for man. However, if man allows God to humble him so that he becomes a son of God, then he is joined together with the activity of the true Son of God and is ushered into the Kingdom he brings.³⁹ In this way, man is set free from his desire to become God and is content in the place he has been given.

Ratzinger's work correlating eschatology to the kingdom of God and the life of Christ is detailed and well-structured. However, the eschatological fulfillment and its relationship to hope is not a major theme he deals with in his systematic treatment. His exegetical work outlining the major eschatological themes, such as death and heaven, provides a great deal of support for the conclusions he draws. However, the major sub-heading to his eschatology is the theology of death. He spends much of his time examining the nature of death and its effect on man. Resurrection and restoration are there, but they are not the major thrust of his work. In addition to this, some of his arguments are supported primarily from sources in Catholic tradition, rather than clear Scriptural sources. Without the Word of God standing behind these conclusions, the assurance a Christian looks for in the promised future is lacking.

³⁸ Ibid., 34.

³⁹ Ibid., 62–65.

The final theological examination is of Geoffrey Wainwright, whose eschatology covers a number of themes. Unlike Ratzinger, Wainwright works to integrate his eschatology with a liturgical theology. Wainwright brings concepts such as life beyond death, the coming Kingdom, and even hope into his discussion of eschatology and does so in a liturgical perspective. In terms of methodological categories, he sees eternity as a continuation of history, in a similar way to Jenson and Ratzinger. Time proceeds onwards from the present into the infinite future. However, there is a radical discontinuity that comes from Christ's return and his establishing of the Kingdom. From this point forward, all who are a part of the Kingdom will enjoy salvation and the ongoing relationship with God. This establishment is not static, but allows for ever greater growth in the relationship between God and man.⁴⁰

Wainwright also spends time discussing hope and its relationship to a theology of death. He first points out how Christian burial liturgies have brought out the connection between sin and death. Though this is a powerful, even necessary, strain in the context of burial, it is also joined with the deceased's hope in the resurrection. That Scripture details a future in the presence of God becomes a source of hope for Christians facing death.⁴¹

Wainwright touches briefly on the concept of a restoration that extends beyond the confines of the church. He notes that the sacraments are directed toward the inclusion of the rest of creation. He also notes that the future world may bear certain resemblances to the present.⁴²

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 456–58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 444–49.

⁴² Wainwright, *Doxology*, 460–61.

The flaw in Wainwright's eschatology is that he sees an inevitable universal salvation. He rests this point on what he sees as an absurdity. A God who loves man to the depth that God does will not allow anyone to suffer permanent condemnation. He also states that this view falls in line with the liturgical practices of the church throughout history. Though his point that excommunication is directed at bringing the lost back into the fold of the church is true, he is wrong to assume this act does not have lasting, even eternal, consequences.⁴³ Excommunication is also an explicit confession that there are things that are needful for individuals that can only be found in the church. Hope and salvation are only obtained through the worshipping community through the faithful reception of God's promises. The confession and absolution that mark the beginning of present Lutheran liturgies reveal the realities of final judgment that only God's grace can avert. As will later be discussed, baptism and the Eucharist are able to accomplish what they do because they connect the faithful to the Kingdom in the present age. This gives hope to the faithful by their participation in the Kingdom. Those outside the church, and thus those who are not partaking in the sacraments and the Kingdom, have futures that are still in doubt. This doubt precludes any sure and certain hope for their futures. This evidence indicates that he has either misunderstood or ignored the eschatology contained within the liturgical traditions he is utilizing. He fails to see that the Scriptural and sacramental activity is so intrinsic to the liturgy specifically because they provide hope that is found nowhere else.

This brief overview of the eschatological thinking of prominent systematians provides some insight into two of the broad themes within the field in recent years. The differing views on

⁴³ Ibid., 459–60.

the function of history and its relationship to eternity can be seen. Barth, von Balthasar, and Rahner fall into the first category, which makes the primary factor in their study of eschatology the inner being of the Trinity. Their understanding of who God is in his own being drives their understanding of what fulfillment looks like and how history fits within it. Since eternity is part of the divine essence, they connect humanity with eternity based on how humanity participates with or is drawn into the divine being. This approach leads them to dealing with questions regarding what man's state of existence will be, but generally ignores issues regarding how man's vocation is shaped by eschatology and what the church should do with the eschatology God has given it. Ratzinger, Wainwright, Jenson fall into the second category, which sees eternity as something that unfolds as man moves from one period of history to the next. The return of Christ ushers in a new age that is defined, in part, by its perpetuity. Thus, eternity has a less omnipresent nature for them than it does for Barth or Rahner and is not something that can be found in its fullest expression prior to its inauguration with Christ's return. Jenson and Pannenberg both bridge the two categories to different degrees. They examine how the forward progression of history connects man to the inner workings of the Trinity and in some ways brings a completion to both.

Most of these theologians, especially Barth and Pannenberg, are focused on examining the existential realities they believe are connected to the eschatological fulfillment and how they are different from the state of being that had come before. For these theologians, this typically means that the movement of history is defined by moving from one existential state to a higher, more complete one. For others, like Ratzinger, von Balthazar, and Jenson, history has a forward momentum that is defined more by the story or activity of God within history. Though they

acknowledge that man's existence does change with the final culmination, this change lies in the future with the return of Christ and is not interwoven into the fabric of the rest of created time.

The idea of promise and its relationship to hope and future events is taken up by some of these theologians, notably Pannenberg and Jenson. They contend that the promise of God is one of the primary points of interaction between God and man, within which other activities such as Christ's ministry and his death and resurrection fit. For Barth and von Balthasar, the defining point is often the resurrection itself and how it alters the rest of creation and brings man into contact with God. With the resurrection altering the state of creation as they contend it does, hope is largely unnecessary and thus is not a major theme in their eschatology.

The two theologians that form the foundation for the eschatology of this dissertation address the shortcomings of the other theologians discussed. Hope has not been a major theme in the work of most of the theologians above, nor has it been discussed in the context of the restoration the Kingdom brings with it, making them unusable for this investigation. This overlooks the theme of hope in the context of eschatology that Scripture repeatedly makes use of in places such as Romans 8. God is explicit through Scripture that hope is a gift he offers to his people. Thus the theme of hope must be explored so that Christians may be confident in the hope that God gives to them. To this end, both Jürgen Moltmann and N. T. Wright examine the link between hope and the restoration in the context of eschatology. Both Moltmann and Wright draw on the themes and language of the second category, as they discuss how God is shaping the future through his Word and how man participates in the fulfillment he has set in motion.

In his book, *Theology of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann examines what the word "hope" means for a Christian.⁴⁴ His concern is that modern culture has invaded eschatological thinking to such a degree that many Christians no longer know what the end result of God's salvific activity in the world will be. There is a vague notion of a promise yet to be fulfilled, which is tied to Christ's return, and there is a nebulous concept of a heavenly afterlife, but that is as far as many Christians understand. Any sort of concrete view of the Christian afterlife and what it will entail has been muddied with a hazy spirituality that posits a generally benign and unremarkable existence. This stands in sharp contrast to the very concrete physical existence that both Moltmann and Wright find described in Scripture; where perfected man lives out his vocation in a perfected earth in the presence of God.

Moltmann responds to this issue with two major themes. He first examines what the Bible states the end result of history actually is. He points to the final resurrection and restoration of creation as the event that Christians hope for. The coming of this concrete and real event is what gives Christians hope because they, through faith, will be a part of it. All present trials and struggles can then be viewed in light of this assured event.

Moltmann then looks broadly at all of salvation history. If the final restoration were just a blind promise made with little corroborating evidence of fulfillment, then the hope that Christians have in the event would be undermined. There would be no assurance of its arrival and thus could be no trust that it would ever come. This is not to say that the promise, as God's Word, is not effective. Rather, Moltmann demonstrates that God does not leave his people with a

⁴⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

promise alone. God provides evidence that he can and will carry out what he promises.

Moltmann shows this by showing that all of history has been a series of promises made by God, which were then fulfilled. More than that, each fulfilled promise has carried the seeds of a future promise that God had given his people to look forward to for a fulfillment. Thus this interaction between God and his people has been a series of promises, which were later fulfilled. With this evidence in hand, Christians could rightly trust in the final restoration, and the hope they had in its eventual fulfillment would become a source of strength and perseverance in light of the tribulations they face.

One of the drawbacks to Moltmann's theology is that he never places the individual Christian into the history of salvation in anything more than a cursory way. That modern Christians have eschatological hope is Moltmann's main point; however he never gets around to demonstrating how that hope manifests itself in the world or in the church. This leaves the question: how does one enter into salvation history? Since he fails to address this point, Moltmann's eschatology is in need of additional theological viewpoints to provide continuity for God's Word and its relationship to hope for humanity. In order to make this connection, the dissertation will examine the benefits and shortcomings of Moltmann's eschatology and will show how it complements the work of N. T. Wright and Alexander Schmemmann.

In addition to this disconnect, there are a number of concerns within Moltmann's own theological structure that prevent him from being accepted without reservation. Though the concepts he brings out in *Theology of Hope* are generally beneficial to a Lutheran eschatology, many of the conclusions he draws from this perspective in later books are questionable. Jeremy Wynne brings some of these criticisms up in his examination of Moltmann's theology. One of the

most critical points made by Wynne is Moltmann's unwillingness to take Biblical statements of sin and final judgment seriously.⁴⁵

Moltmann's later eschatology indicates that God will take up all of creation into himself and that everything inimical to God will be destroyed. Even Hell, which is not so much a place as it is an existential state, is powerless to stop God from calling an individual out of this state to join him in the final restoration.⁴⁶ In Moltmann's own words regarding Hell, "It was not a place anywhere in the world, not even in the underworld. It was an existential experience, the experience of God's anger and curse on sin and godless being."⁴⁷ Because of Christ's suffering on the cross and descent into Hell, Hell is broken open and its inhabitants are subject to God's eternal grace.⁴⁸ "Through his sufferings Christ has destroyed hell. Since his resurrection from his hellish death on the cross there is no longer any such thing as 'being damned for all eternity.'"⁴⁹ Because of these things, hope still has power for Moltmann, but it lacks a sense of urgency and fails to adequately impact the present life of the Christian. This is because Moltmann is downplaying the strong message of Scripture regarding the judgment that will occur when Christ returns. The looming threat of condemnation that Christ's judgment carries with it cannot be swept aside in favor of a system that espouses the eventual, grudging acceptance of the gospel by

⁴⁵ Jeremy J. Wynne, "Serving the Coming God: The Insights of Jürgen Moltmann's Eschatology for Contemporary Theology of Mission," *Missiology: An International Review* 35 (2007): 446.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 448.

⁴⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 252.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 374n245. Moltmann adds an interesting footnote regarding this: "According to the Armenian view, Christ '*per suam passionem destruxit totaliter infernum.*' I believe that this is correct, although this opinion was condemned by the patristic church."

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

everyone. It is precisely because of this threat of condemnation that God sends his people into the world to share the gospel and the hope that comes with it. Those who receive the promise of the gospel have hope in part because they know that threat no longer hangs over them.

The result of Moltmann's assertion of the weakness of sin is an emphasis on a life of service over the active proclamation of the Gospel.⁵⁰ Though he claims the support of Luther, when Confessional sources such as A.C. VII define the church as the place where the Gospel is properly preached, this assertion is questionable.⁵¹ With a weak understanding of sin and of the need for preaching the Gospel, human freedom of choice takes precedence over a doctrine of the bound will. Because of these issues, the sacraments lose their relevance as means of grace and no longer become a major factor in salvation. Moltmann has no need for sacraments that forgive sins and which act as vehicles for God's grace because God's restoration will encompass everyone regardless.

This universality to God's final restorative activity has led some, such as Jeremy Wynne, to accuse Moltmann of panentheism.⁵² Wynne notes that Moltmann's panentheism comes from what Moltmann refers to as a perichoretic union between God and creation. Moltmann's concept takes on the features of the hypostatic union of Christ and thus goes beyond what can be reliably defined from Scripture because it is not just that creation is being renewed but that God makes all things part of him. This then means that all things, in some aspect, can be called God.

⁵⁰ Wynne, "Serving the Coming God," 448.

⁵¹ Moltmann's emphasis on universal salvation obviates the need for public proclamation. If everyone will be saved eventually, as Moltmann believes, then humanity's efforts are better spent bringing joy and comfort through works of charity.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 448–49.

Others, such as Joe Davis, do not see God's encompassing of creation to be quite as total as Moltmann does.⁵³ Instead of panentheism, Davis sees the end result of Moltmann's eschatology as God's fully revealing himself. At this point, humanity is no longer barred from participation with the Trinity. While humanity is still not God in the strictest sense, the boundary becomes blurred as man is no longer truly finite either. Whether one labels Moltmann's eschatology as panentheistic or sees it as God's full revelation, either suggests that creaturely limitations are something that Moltmann believes will be left behind in the final restoration.⁵⁴

The main purpose of these arguments by Moltmann is the desire to set the death and resurrection of Christ as the foundation for his eschatology. This is done such that Christ's death is set above even other theological doctrines such as faith.⁵⁵ For Moltmann, because faith has no bearing on the status of one's salvation, the dynamic of his overall theological system is altered beyond what Lutheran theology can assimilate.⁵⁶ Because of these aspects of Moltmann's theology, many segments of it are unusable outside of the theological schema that Moltmann has crafted. However, not all of it must be discarded if it is to be incorporated into a Lutheran eschatology. Using a doctrine of the Word as a corrective, certain portions, such as his promise-

⁵³ Joe Davis, "The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 36 (1994): 27.

⁵⁴ Wynne, "Serving the Coming God," 449.

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 254.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 245. Moltmann finds himself caught between the two poles of universal salvation and a "double outcome of Judgment." He sees the double outcome, specifically salvation or condemnation, as the result of one's assent and acceptance of Christ. He believes this puts the question of salvation in the control of humanity, rather than God. Not wanting to impinge on God's freedom, he chooses a universal salvation that extends to everyone. By focusing on these two poles he misses the Lutheran middle ground that allows for both man's rejection of God and for God's sovereign election to coexist.

fulfillment paradigm, become beneficial for understanding eschatology and the modern church's relationship to it.

N. T. Wright's eschatology takes a different approach to that of Moltmann and provides a foundation that allows hope to enter into the lives of individual Christians and the church as a whole. Like Moltmann, N. T. Wright's book, *Surprised By Hope*, also seeks to address the pervasive misinformation in the church regarding the afterlife and what the Christian hope is.⁵⁷ Instead of focusing on salvation history and the promise-fulfillment motif that Moltmann follows, Wright accents the life and ministry of Christ and the unique theme of the kingdom of God that is found there. He delves into the concept of the kingdom of God as the ruling activity of God and the beginning of the restoration of all things that will arrive with Christ's return. He discusses how our hope is bound up with our participation in the already-present eschatological Kingdom that is spilling over into our life as God grants us the ability to face the brokenness of our world. Christians have hope because they are already in the Kingdom that is active and at work restoring all of creation.

Wright also draws on Christ's resurrection as a foundational event in history for the presence of hope. The resurrected Christ is both the model for the future body of the resurrected believer as well as the means by which those believers will be raised.⁵⁸ "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."⁵⁹ Wright takes this passage, and others like it, to demonstrate the logic of his system. Since Christ is the firstfruits,

⁵⁷ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 15:20 (ESV)

by his resurrection he is telling the rest of the world that they will do likewise.⁶⁰ This means that every person now has a reason to look beyond death into the new life that is to come. Having seen Christ rise from the grave, they now have a concrete example of someone who has conquered death as well as the assurance that this new life extends to them as well. This, in turn, gives them reason to hope for what is to come.

In addition to this, Wright notes that the resurrection of Christ has implications not just for humanity, but also for all of creation.⁶¹ Christ did not simply die and assume a spiritual, non-corporeal existence, but a renewed bodily existence. Had he not done so, death would not have been destroyed, merely circumvented. Since Christ did return to a bodily existence and destroyed death, death will not only be powerless against humanity in the new life to come, but against all of creation. Christ's resurrection extends to all of creation and removes the forces of destruction and chaos that afflict it.

Taken as a whole, Wright's eschatology is very concrete. He takes many examples from Scripture and shows how they are a foreshadowing of what is to come. As Alan Bandy discusses, Wright sees the various parables of Christ and the apocalyptic literature of Scripture as not being metaphysical or sociological descriptions, as others have claimed, but as a reworking of the historical narrative that was known to the Jews of Christ's day.⁶² They were not necessarily literal descriptions of the future, but metaphorical reinterpretations of the historical narrative of Israel that would have been understood in the context of the time and culture. As an example, in

⁶⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 98.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶² Alan S. Bandy, "Eschatology and Restoration: The Relationship Between Eschatology and Theology in the Writings of N. T. Wright," *Faith & Mission* 22 (2005), 60–61.

the parable of the sower, the seed that Christ mentions is linked to the remnant who returned from exile and the parable would be heard in that light. When viewed through the lens of the narrative of the day, the hearers gained a glimpse of life beyond death and the physical reality that would accompany it.

Yet, Wright's work also runs into the same problem that Moltmann's work does. Beyond some brief discussions of the sacraments and the sacramental life of the church, little connection is made between his eschatology and the modern Christian's life. He draws some connections to justification and sanctification, and references activities such as prayer, but any in-depth investigation of how and where a Christian becomes a part of the eschatological Kingdom is lacking, especially when looking at the contemporary church.

Bandy also points out that the major theme Wright uses to unite the various aspects of his argument is that of exile. Wright relates the theme of exile to the state of being outside the promised land and awaiting the time when God leads his people into that land. Wright makes the case that this was the predominant theme of Judaism in the time of Christ, but he may be emphasizing exile to such an extent that other themes are pushed aside.⁶³ In addition to this, Wright criticizes those who took Jesus' words about him returning by descending on a cloud at face value. He states that this is not the point of the message Jesus was intending to convey. Bandy notes that Wright attacks this notion to such a degree that the reader can come to the

⁶³ Bandy, "Eschatology and Restoration," 65–68. This is particularly a problem for the contemporary church that does not look for the restoration of the earthly nation of Israel as part of its narrative. The idea of exile, to make a connection to the modern Christian, must either be allegorized into a concept such as social injustice, or reinterpreted again as exile from a different land. Allegory runs the risk of assigning meanings that were not at all intended, and reinterpretation runs the risk of losing the concreteness of meaning that was there for the Jews of Jesus' day. Bandy's point that Revelation gives such a reinterpretation is worth noting in this regard.

conclusion that Wright himself does not see evidence for the physical descending of Christ to usher in the new age.⁶⁴

In conclusion, both Moltmann and Wright see the coming Kingdom as the fulfillment of history. They see this fulfillment as the ultimate act of God's activity in the world. Though they see that certain attributes of God are applied to humanity through his eschatological activity, the chronological nature of history is not reduced to an "eternal present," as Barth suggests. Neither do they see that hiddenness is the major theme of God's eschatological activity, as Rahner believes. The work of God's Kingdom is one that brings assurance and certainty. Neither Moltmann nor Wright assert that all of the details of Christ's return can be known, God has given humanity enough information through the course of history and through his Word to know that this event will be the greatest reward for humanity and for all of creation.

As this dissertation will be examining the nature of hope and how it connects to the church and to creation, theological categories beyond eschatology must also be investigated. The broad category of liturgical theology encompasses aspects of sacramental theology as well as the connection between the church and creation, therefore an evaluation of the context of liturgical theology is also appropriate. To provide this context, two liturgical theologians who also enter into a discussion of eschatology are presented and critiqued here.

One of the major liturgical theologians of the modern church is Gordon Lathrop, so he serves to set the stage for this investigation. Though Lathrop draws on eschatological themes

⁶⁴ Bandy, "Eschatology and Restoration," 67–68. It is also possible to argue that Bandy is overstating his critique. Much of Wright's work is on the very physical and verifiable nature of the future Christ was inaugurating. Thus, to say that Wright does not allow for the physical return of Christ may be taking his assertions too far.

periodically in his works and relates them to aspects of the restoration, hope is not one of the major themes he utilizes.

Lathrop opens his concise discourse on Christian worship by asking, “What exactly do we do if we mean to enact Christian public worship?” He begins by looking at a couple of broad views regarding the structure and function of liturgy. First, Lathrop looks at those who assert that plurality forms the basis for Christian activities, including worship. Those who hold this view, according to Lathrop, see any attempt to find and hold up unifying features in Christian worship as either fruitless or tyrannical. He critiques this view by noting that, while it is beneficial to support diversity where it is appropriate, there is something both Biblical and fundamental to the idea of unity. As a people who are bound together into one body and who are connected through one baptism, unity is an important foundation for Christian worship.

Lathrop next looks at Christian ideas, such as mercy or grace, and how liturgical theologians use them to form the basis for Christian worship. Again he critiques this view of plurality by pointing out that faith and worship are more than any one particular idea. Faith and the communal activity of the church are, at their root, an encounter with Christ and his physical presence. Because the essence of faith is the presence of Christ, the places where Christ has made himself present become the essential points of worship; notably the reading of God’s Word and the sacraments. These form the basis for the communal activity of the church.

As Lathrop turns his attention to adiaphora, he expands on the purpose of the rest of the ritual activity of the worship service. Though there are many items within the service that are not essential, meaning that they do not directly impact our connection with God, they are not to be seen as unimportant. He notes that while there will be many things within the worship service that are secondary, in that they are not the direct presence of Christ in Word and sacrament, these

things are there to assist and further reveal the content of the things that are primary. Items such as music, minor festivals, and the presider over the service all function to guide and direct the flow of the service and to bring out further meaning for those in the assembly.

All of these things, Word, sacraments, rites, music, and so forth, are necessary in Lathrop's view, because the spiritual things of God are directly connected to the material things around which the church gathers. Lathrop references Alexander Schmemmann in saying that liturgy is a searching "for words appropriate to the nature of God."⁶⁵ The theology of the liturgical assembly is then nothing more than an attempt to describe all of the things contained within the assembly and the functions they perform on its behalf.

Lathrop emphasizes the communal aspect of the people of God coming together as the church. This is a useful examination, and one that Schmemmann brings into his liturgical theology as well, but it is also limited. Lathrop's discussion of the church and liturgy looks primarily at how the liturgy affects the people, but does not examine the nature of the assurance gained from the promises of God. Because Lathrop does not deal with eschatology to a great extent and makes no real connection between the Word and eschatology to any degree, the work of the church within the world also does not connect to the coming Kingdom in a concrete way. Christians are left without knowing how their activity within the liturgy and their activity outside the worship service, such as in proclaiming the Word to nonbelievers, relates to God's restoration in the Kingdom. Thus, the certainty that God offers in his promises is diminished or lost.

⁶⁵ Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 3.

As another major voice in the context of modern liturgical theology, Peter Brunner also makes eschatological connections in a similar manner to Lathrop. Brunner's discussion of the interplay between God and man, which is mediated by Christ, that takes place in the liturgy is helpful for liturgical theology as a whole and does have some implications for eschatology, but fails to adequately attend to eschatological themes. Brunner is interested more in examining how the liturgy functions as *leitourgia* and not in the connections it may have to other areas of theological inquiry.

In his book, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, Brunner spends some time analyzing the attributes of worship amongst the Israelites of the Old Testament in order to set the stage for the unique place of worship in the New Testament church.⁶⁶ He notes that much of the focus of worship for the Israelites is on the ritual provisions, which God provided for them for the appeasement of his wrath. Though the Israelites recognized that salvation ultimately came from the presence of God in the midst of their sacrifices, the ongoing performance of these sacrifices clouded their nature as signs pointing toward the final sacrifice effected by Christ.

According to Brunner, Christ's death and resurrection changes the nature of worship. Christ's presence in the midst of his disciples after the resurrection pointed to the connection between earthly and heavenly events. Notably, this means that the church already exists in a state of exaltation in God's heavenly presence. With his death and resurrection, Christ points toward the eschatological culmination of history and eternally fills the role of priest, offering his *leitourgia* before God on behalf of the world.

⁶⁶ Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, trans. M. H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 11–23.

Brunner cites Luther in affirming that the true sense of worship is the faith that receives mercy and forgiveness from God and responds with love for God and neighbor. Christ's service before God, offering up his life and sacrifice, are the basis for Christian worship according to Brunner. In their service of worship, Christians are cleansed by Christ's sacrifice and moved into the new era of salvation inaugurated by him. Brunner sees the service that Christians offer as extended to a wide range of activities that are prompted by the Holy Spirit revolving around service to one's neighbor. These activities are not part of ritual activities of the gathered assembly of Christians, yet are still one aspect by which the Christian offers worship to God.

Though this type of service marks the life of the Christian, the true center of Christian worship is found only in the gathered assembly. The assembly becomes one of worship because it gathers together in the name of Jesus and in the presence of the Triune God. Because the assembly is gathered in the name of God, the rites of the worship service become God's service to the congregation, offering his blessings and mercy through the reading of the Word, the sacraments, and related liturgical activities. At the same time, the congregation serves God through its worship in prayer, song, and confession as it stands in the presence of God. These two features form the broad structure and purpose to the liturgy, with God serving his people and the people serving him in faith.⁶⁷

Though restoration themes can be found there, particularly regarding man embodying once again his vocation as creature, Brunner fails to examine connections to the life of the Christian

⁶⁷ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 197–213.

outside of the worship service. Brunner does not address the theme of hope and thus, he does little to establish the certainty of hope for the Christian or for creation.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

Jürgen Moltmann states that there is a disconnect in current eschatological theology, such that eschatology is rarely seen as interwoven with the other major fields of Christian theology.⁶⁸ This shortcoming is not restricted to any one denomination, and a survey of current Lutheran scholarship shows many of the same issues. It is not that what theologians are saying about eschatology is necessarily wrong. Rather, they are focused on other issues or are inquiring into other theological fields and tend to make only passing connections to eschatology, and more specifically to hope.

The modern Lutheran dogmatic tradition demonstrates that an eschatology can be internally sound and consistent and yet disconnected from the larger corpus of theology. John Stephenson's dogmatic treatment of eschatology goes into detail about what is and what is not part of Lutheran eschatology.⁶⁹ He answers many questions regarding the final resurrection, the coming judgment, and other areas of concern. However, this treatment of eschatology is segregated into a volume unto itself. This treatment never breaks beyond the narrow discussion of eschatology to unite it with other major theological themes.

The dogmatics of Francis Pieper runs afoul of the same issues. Eschatology occupies a few pages at the end of his dogmatics and is also concerned primarily with explaining specific issues

⁶⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15–16.

⁶⁹ John R. Stephenson, *Eschatology*, vol. 13 of *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, ed. Robert D. Preus and John R. Stephenson (Fort Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 1993).

within the field of eschatology and not with presenting a theological view that brings together themes like eschatology, justification, and creation into a unified whole. This means that Pieper is also unsuitable for a discussion of hope as a continuous theme through eschatology, sacramental theology, and other areas. Certain statements by Pieper even suggest that in the resurrection, man will lose some of the fundamental creaturely attributes, such as eating and sleeping, implying a rift between man and the creation that has been given into his care.⁷⁰

This brief look at these two Lutheran systematicians shows that they have fallen victim to the same mentality that Moltmann is seeking to correct. Segregating eschatology from the other major doctrines of the Christian faith implies that it is both distinct from the others and that it is self-contained. This makes neither of these theologians useful for an investigation of the continuity of hope.

The situation is somewhat different when looking at Martin Luther. Luther does bring up concepts such as hope and promise, even connecting them to the sacraments and other major doctrinal themes.⁷¹ Unfortunately, the scattered comments of this kind that Luther makes are often in passing. Setting forth an eschatological framework is simply not something Luther attends to in his work. This means that, though Luther does provide helpful information on this topic, his work is more useful as a guide or as a corrective. It is not substantive enough to serve as a foundation for this investigation. Therefore, another source must be used to supply the

⁷⁰ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), 3:538–9.

⁷¹ Martin Luther, *Word and Sacrament II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 36 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 42.

necessary details of how the eschatology and hope presented by Moltmann and Wright can be connected to Christian life.

To bridge the gap between the eschatology of Moltmann and Wright and the present activity of the church, the sacramental and liturgical theology of Alexander Schmemmann comes into play. Schmemmann sees the liturgy, and the sacraments that constitute the focal point of the liturgy, as the primary expression and activity of the church. Through the sacraments, Christians return to the eucharistic life that existed before the fall.⁷² Christians collectively offer the only thing of value, namely Christ himself, up to God and receive the sacraments in return.⁷³ The sacraments themselves are eschatological in nature. They point forward to the coming Kingdom and begin that eschatological renewal within the life of the church. This eucharistic life is what brings Christians together to constitute the church on earth. The sacraments are seen as the events that establish the church, rather than the church being the institution that carries out the sacraments. Since the sacraments are seen as what constitutes the church, they are also the place where the eschatological Kingdom comes breaking into the present world and provides the connection to the work of Moltmann and Wright.

Schmemmann does not believe the sacraments exist in isolation. He sees the sacraments and the liturgy as part of a unified whole. The sacraments are necessarily found within the liturgy, for it is the rest of the liturgy that completes the work and activity of the church on earth. The liturgy

⁷² Eucharistic here is used in the same sense Schmemmann makes use of it. It is not a direct reference to the sacrament, but instead is referring to the joy that fills the life of the redeemed Christian.

⁷³ Schmemmann's language here can evoke images of the Catholic Mass, but the Catholic propitiatory sacrifice is not what he is describing. Rather, he depicts the relationship between God and a people who are already forgiven and part of the restoration of the Kingdom. Through faith, the church offers a Eucharistic sacrifice of joy and thanksgiving to God; knowing that the only thing needful for their restoration is what Christ has already done on

allows the church to praise its Creator and Redeemer. The liturgy sets the stage for "the ascension of the Church to heaven" that comes in the Eucharist.⁷⁴ This ascension language is an endeavor to describe the mystery of the church of the present, broken world and its participation in a time that has not yet come into the world. It is not that Schmemmann is advocating a departure from man's place as creature, or even a Platonic spirit/body dichotomy. Rather, he is attempting to take seriously what it means for man to receive the benefits of the coming kingdom of God. Schmemmann sees man, through the sacramental activity, restored to his vocation as creature, not separated from it. Man is given the ability to confront the broken creation and carry out his vocation within it because he has participated in the life of the Kingdom where that restoration is complete.⁷⁵ The liturgy reorients the Christian to the times and seasons set up within creation and within God's activity.⁷⁶ Thus, the sacraments are only a piece of the overall whole. They may be the most important pieces, but, according to Schmemmann, they still must be maintained within the structure designed to bring them to their fullest expression in the life of the church.

While Schmemmann connects his sacramental and liturgical theology to eschatology, he is not focused on delving into all of the eschatological ramifications they contain. When he does draw upon a particular virtue it is often joy, which follows his discussion of the eucharistic

their behalf.

⁷⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 37.

⁷⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 84. Schmemmann drives this point home here saying, "Christ saves us by restoring our nature, which inescapably makes us *part* of creation and calls us to be its *kings*. He is the Saviour *of* the world, not *from* the world. And he saves it by making us again that which we are."

⁷⁶ Ibid 47–66. Schmemmann sees the liturgy as not only reinforcing the liturgical year of the church, with its particular celebrations such as Easter and Christmas, but also the seasons of the calendar year as well as the ordering of the days of the week. For Schmemmann, all of these have meaning when viewed in connection with God's activity

nature of the liturgy and sacraments. The hope and the promise-fulfillment schema of Moltmann do not enter into his theology in any meaningful way. Thus, his theology provides a solid foundation for uniting eschatology to the present activity of the church, but does not address the specific emphases of the promise-fulfillment paradigm or hope in the kingdom of God.

A final critique of Schmemmann is that he has little to say about God's Word in connection with any part of this process. Though he sees the sacraments as integral to the restored creation manifesting itself in the present day, he never addresses how God's Word is active in this process outside of the specifically sacramental sense. Because the Word, or any sort of etiological discussion, never enters into Schmemmann's sacramental theology, this leaves the question as to what the foundation for the sacraments is for Schmemmann. Exactly what the criteria are for treating an activity as sacramental is never explored.

This dissertation uses these three specific theologians because their unique contributions meld into a cohesive whole that illustrates the path of God's activity through Word, eschatology, sacraments, liturgy, and finally into the broader life of the individual Christian and the collective church. Though theologians such as Ratzinger utilize the theme of the eschatological kingdom of God in ways similar to N. T. Wright, they do not emphasize the particulars of what this means for ongoing Christian life to the degree Wright does. Wright connects hope not only to eternal life for the Christian, but also examines the ramifications of the eschatological restoration for all of creation. Thus, his understanding of the effects of the future restoration on the contemporary

in the world.

church extends beyond the restoration of community that Pannenberg describes and addresses issues such as the stewardship of creation itself.

However, N. T. Wright does not demonstrate how Christians can draw upon this eschatological hope and certainty. For this, Alexander Schmemmann becomes indispensable. Though Schmemmann does not spend much time discussing eschatology or the present restorative activity engendered by it, what little he does describe overlaps Wright's work in both theme and language. Since the bulk of Schmemmann's work is in sacramental and liturgical theology, he is essentially connecting the two halves of Wright's eschatological structure: the hope for the coming Kingdom, and the restoration at work today. Taken together, Wright and Schmemmann fit together into a single theological unit that demonstrates how the eschatological hope enters into Christian life within the church.

The drawback to the theological structure of Wright and Schmemmann is that neither takes the question of the source for Christian hope back to the beginning. The Christian hope for the future is meaningless without the Word of God declaring that the coming Kingdom and the presence of God are for his people, his church. To address this shortcoming, the paradigm developed by Jürgen Moltmann becomes essential. Moltmann illustrates how all of salvation history has been a series of God's declarative promises to his people and how God certifies the hope placed in those promises by continuously fulfilling them. Though the eschatological Kingdom will be in one sense radically new and different than anything that has come before, it will also be just the last and greatest promise in a long line of fulfilled promises God has given his people. With the Word of God standing behind the eschatological hope of the church, the power and efficacy of the sacraments, liturgy, and the active restoration of creation can be seen as an outgrowth of that Word of promise.

This dissertation will take the major points of all of the theologians described above and show how their theology is interconnected. Though theologians such as Alexander Schmemmann have shown a link between eschatology, sacramental theology, and liturgical theology, none has yet explored the specific theme of hope presented by Jürgen Moltmann and N. T. Wright in relation to the sacraments and liturgy. This dissertation will demonstrate that the Christian hope found in a Biblical eschatology is a theme that is tightly interwoven with liturgical and sacramental theology. It will show that only through this eschatology can we know not only why God molds his people through liturgy, but also what God is molding them into. Only when the eschatological purpose of the liturgy is comprehended can eschatology's place in the greater corpus of Christian theology also be recognized.

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

This dissertation will make use of the methodology employed by Regin Prenter in his examination of the relationship between God's Word and the sacraments in Luther's theology.⁷⁷ Prenter details how Luther does not see the sacraments as acting entirely independently as a provider of grace. Prenter follows Luther's line of thinking as he evaluates what actually gives the sacraments their ability to provide grace: God's Word of promise. Prenter unpacks Luther's Theology of the Word and illustrates how God's promise of grace flows out of his Word. He goes on to explain how the sacraments, as means of grace, function as signs of that promise. Prenter expands on the implications of God's Word as promise, how it reveals God's redemptive activity, how it functions as sign that points toward the eventual fulfillment, and how it

⁷⁷ Regin Prenter, *The Word and the Spirit: Essays on Inspiration and the Scriptures* (Minneapolis: Augsburg,

undergirds all of the sacramental activity. The Word operates in and through the sacraments as a sign of his promise and of the fulfillment of that promise.

This dissertation will follow a similar procedure to that of Prenter, focusing on the theme of hope, rather than the related theme of grace. The dissertation will first draw on Jürgen Moltmann's theology to demonstrate how God's Word establishes his promises and points toward the fulfillment of those promises. The dissertation will outline the path of God's activity, from his Word, through the sacraments, and onwards to fulfillment and restoration. N. T. Wright's theology of hope will extend Moltmann's argument in detailing how God's promises interact with the church. It will then provide a launching point for the sacramental and liturgical theology of Alexander Schmemmann who shows how God's activity organically flows through eschatology, sacraments, liturgy, and the restoration of creation. N. T. Wright's theology will continue the argument and provide a greater context for God's work in restoring creation. In this way, the dissertation will demonstrate how each of these themes are invoked and joined together through God's Word. None of the outward activity and signs, such as the sacraments, can be divorced from the Word that provides them with their meaning and purpose.

The Outcome Anticipated

Schmemmann's view is that eschatology is integral to the proper understanding of the sacraments and of the liturgy. Taken together with Moltmann and Wright's assertion that the eschatology of the contemporary church has veered widely off course, there are important implications for the understanding and performance of both sacraments and liturgy. The results

1965), 125-148.

of the divergence of eschatology fall on a spectrum. On one end there is a restricted liturgical awareness that is no longer able to encompass the full breadth of meaning that it was created to bear on one end of the spectrum. On the other end of that spectrum is a liturgy that actively distorts our apprehension of the goodness of God's creation and our place in it lies.

The outcome this dissertation seeks to achieve is to bring about a greater awareness of the eschatological nature of hope and how it is expressed and supported by liturgy. By recognizing the foundational nature of hope that exists in the structure and rites of the liturgy, a greater appreciation can be gained for the place of hope within the life of the church as a whole, as well as its ultimate aim and purpose. When viewed through the lens of hope, the liturgy can be seen not merely as an act of worship or as a dialogue between God and man, but also as the vital power of God at work in his church and in the world; a power beginning the restoration of all things. With this awareness, the church may give greater expression to the hope that it has and the assurance of God's promises as it lives out this hope in its worship and in the daily lives of its members. Having this hope, the church has a greater awareness of how to confront the suffering and corruption it encounters in the world and is able to begin the restoration that will ultimately be fulfilled in the arrival of God's Kingdom.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIAN HOPE

In beginning the examination of eschatology, the nature of the discussion must first be delineated. Eschatology covers a wide range of lesser topics from the Biblical basis of the Rapture to the existence of Hell. Rather than deal with the details of Biblical apocalyptic literature, this dissertation will instead focus on the nature of hope that flows out of eschatology.

To begin to understand the nature of hope, a definition of hope must first be arrived at in order to guide further investigation. While many theologians delve into the concept of hope, as the previous chapter has shown, it is rare that any provide a concise, comprehensive definition for hope. More often, hope is discussed in terms of what its purpose is and how it functions. This discussion then forms the foundation for further exploration. One such example of this is provided by Luther. In his comments regarding Romans 16, he says,

In the first place, “hope” signifies a thing which is naturally hoped for, but this hope was not of this kind. In the second place, however, it also signifies something which is supernaturally hoped for. In both instances “hope” must be taken in the sense of a thing to be hoped for and not in the sense of the power of hoping. And this beautifully suggests the difference between the hope of people generally and the hope of Christians. For the hope of people in general is not contrary to hope but according to hope, that is, what can reasonably be expected to happen. For men do not hope where only that which is contrary to their hopes appears, but rather when that appears which is very similar to their hopes or that which has a definite potentiality to occur. Hence this faith is more a negative than a positive thing, that is, they presume that when certain things have begun, then that which was hoped for will come to pass. And then, finally, they hope that there will be no impediment to prevent what they have hoped for. Thus in regard to what is positively hoped for, this hope wants to be certain and to know, but in regard to the negative it is compelled to remain uncertain. By contrast, the hope of Christians is certain about the negative aspects. For it knows that the thing hoped for must come to pass and will not be hindered, as long as it is hoped for. For no one can hinder God. But with respect to the positive side, this faith

is very unsure, since it has nothing certain in which it can trust, for all things are too hidden, and everything appears contrary. Thus this hope is more positive than negative.¹

Luther's discussion here illustrates how hope is generally dealt with by theologians, yet provides enough substance to formulate a working definition and a basic structure to guide investigation. For this dissertation, hope will be defined as the expectation and confidence of a desired, and presumably better, future. Christian hope is the assurance of the future brought about by God. Given the breadth of the topic, other definitions of hope are possible. This dissertation will not seek to explore every possible definition or framework for hope. It will demonstrate that the definition of hope used is one that flows out of a comprehensive Biblical theology and can be used to explore nearly every aspect of God's relationship to humanity and creation.

Luther's comments allow for a definition of hope that can be utilized for further investigation. His comments also give rise to a number of questions that help guide that investigation. What are these things that are hoped for? What is looked for that is uncertain? How are these things assured? How are the people who hope connected to the things they hope for? All of these questions center around the concept of hope and thus will be the basis for the examination of hope and its connection to eschatology. Faith and hope are tied to the ideas of assurance and looking for things that are not currently visible.² This association of hope and

¹ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, vol. 25 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1999), 283.

² Luther's statement regarding faith suggests that faith is that which trusts in God. This dissertation will operate with a definition of faith as that which trusts specifically that God's promises will come to pass, both for the individual and for creation. Faith allows the Christian to trust that those promises are intended for his benefit. Hope assumes faith, but is distinct from it. Hope is that which draws the Christian's attention forward through history to look for the fulfillment of the promises in which he has placed his hope and trust. As with hope, many other definitions of faith are possible. A comprehensive exploration of the nature and function of faith lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

assurance will be the overarching theme of this chapter. The questions that arise from Luther's comments will provide the structure for this chapter. The dissertation seeks to answer these questions as it unpacks the nature of hope and its connection to and impact on the Christian life in the chapters that follow.

"First, what is the ultimate Christian hope?"³ This question asked by N. T. Wright sets the stage for an investigation into how eschatology is the basis for all hope. This question is vital to Christian life. Christian hope is focused on the outcome of all that God is doing in history and awaiting its completion. Thus, the answer to the question of Christian hope is also the answer to the purpose of God's activity in the world. Without this understanding, the Christian cannot fully grasp his own purpose and place in the world and what God intends for him.

Luther's comments indicate that faith is trust held by the faithful in something that is still uncertain and hidden. However, there is also an awareness that God cannot be hindered. Thus, God is standing as guarantor of the object hoped for and assuring the faithful that it will come to pass. This means that the faithful are on a path that inevitably leads to the point in time when God follows through with his promise and the object of hope arrives. For the faithful, life is a movement forward toward this event and everything up to that event is marked by the expectation of its eventual arrival. However, this does not answer the question. It merely reveals to us that the object of hope stands in the future at some point unknown to the world, awaiting the time appointed by God for its appearance. To further understand the nature of hope, the future event promised and why one can expect that future event to come to pass must be known.

³ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 5.

Jürgen Moltmann, in the introductory discussion of his *Theology of Hope*, notes the problem this poses, "But how can anyone speak of the future, which is not yet here, and of the coming events in which he has not as yet had any part?"⁴ This is the chief concern Moltmann seeks to address. When speaking of the future, how can a Christian have assurance, and thus hope, if he has no way of knowing what is coming or how it will come to pass?

With these thoughts in mind, this chapter will investigate the nature of hope and its relationship to the world in a broad sense. It will show that hope comes into being through the activity of God in guiding history. It will show that the hope that arises from God's activity is not confined to the past, but is offered and accessible to Christians in the present day through the resurrection of Christ. It will also explain how this hope enters the lives of God's people in the present age.

Christians Have Hope in God's Promises

In order to begin deeper investigation of hope and eschatology, N. T. Wright's question, wanting to identify what the ultimate Christian hope is, must first be answered. Only with the answer to this question can the Christian's place in relation to it be delineated. Once this answer is outlined, the further questions of how that hope is assured and how it can be looked forward to can be explored.

Many theologians have investigated eschatology and its connection to hope in the past. The virtue of hope has been tied to events such as Christ's resurrection or to Christ's future return. However, neither of these instances explains the existence of hope in the first place. Rather, they

⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

are examples of why the people of certain times and places have hope in their day and age. The concept of hope is much broader than this, and extends backward to the very beginnings of history. The need for hope has existed since the fall, and God has given it to his people from that point forward. In order to fully understand how the Christians of today have hope and how that hope is functioning in the world, it must first be understood how hope initially comes into existence.

As stated above, the resurrection is often the primary source for investigation into the nature of hope. Without a doubt, the resurrection has important ramifications for hope and is central to any discussion of hope in the present day church. However, without a connection between the resurrection and the individual Christian, there is no hope to be found. For the resurrection to function as a source of hope, the Christian must be brought into the event and joined to it in some way. A declaration by God that Christ's resurrection is not just an isolated event but is accomplished on behalf of the world and has benefits for the faithful is a necessary component of hope.

In addition to this, looking at the resurrection alone, without putting it into the context of history, presents a stunted view of hope. Even if it is assumed that the resurrection is the most pertinent event to Christians, neglecting the rest of history implies that it has no real bearing on hope for present day Christians. However, an examination of the rest of history does illustrate a broader structure of hope for Christians and demonstrates that the resurrection is not an isolated event, but rather one in a long series of hope-inspiring actions by God in the world.⁵

⁵ The resurrection of Christ is indeed unique in many respects. This event has many implications for both the present and future, some of which are explored later in the chapter. However, the resurrection can also be seen

The development of history and its connection to hope and the resurrection is something that has been variously explored by different theologians with different methodologies. Some theologians develop a process theology that takes a look at the unfolding of history and plots out a contiguous thread that assumes the future will be a natural outgrowth or development of what is currently taking place in history. Rather than beginning directly with the resurrection or assuming a natural development to history, Jürgen Moltmann takes an approach that looks at how God interacts with creation and how history is molded by this interaction.⁶ Instead, history is characterized by a series of distinct segments. In each, God is leading his people toward a specific goal that lies in their future. This goal is always a radical alteration of how the people relate to God or understand him. Within each goal is also the seed of a new and greater goal, ensuring that the people of God are never left directionless. Surrounding these goals are larger, longer-term goals that span hundreds or thousands of years and provide the overall structure to history and creation's movement through time. Thus history is defined by periods of waiting followed by arrival, promise followed by fulfillment. The broader view of God's activity that Moltmann utilizes accounts for all of history and provides a way to understand the full meaning of the resurrection and other events within their context.

within the same category as events such as the exodus—salvific acts of God within the world. Therefore it bears many similarities to these other events and should not be completely isolated from them in the context of Christian hope.

⁶ Randall E. Otto, "The Eschatological Nature of Moltmann's Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 54 (1992): 115. Otto points out the subtle difference between the theology of Moltmann and a typical process theology. For both, the forward motion of history is the same. Both are pointing to some ultimate event that lies on the chronological horizon. For a process theologian, history moves itself forward and the activity of man in creation has some effect on God or benefits him in some way. For Moltmann the process is reversed. The motion of history is effected by God and the activities of God are of benefit to man and creation.

In Moltmann's view, the answer to the question that he poses requires one to examine history and determine which promises are in effect. He notes that the Christian hope, along with the Christian understanding of hope in the form of eschatology, functions by looking at the current place in history and announcing the future and *telos* of the promises in effect.⁷ Thus, to speak about the future, one must look to the promises of today. These promises may not give a full and complete picture, but they enable the Christian to speak to the issue to some degree. As Luther noted at the beginning of the chapter, there is a degree of uncertainty in the future. Moltmann expands on this by saying,

But how can anyone speak of the future, which is not yet here, and of coming events in which he has not as yet had any part? Are these not dreams, speculations, longings and fears, which must all remain vague and indefinite because no one can verify them? The term 'eschatology' is wrong. There can be no 'doctrine' of the last things if by 'doctrine' we mean a collection of theses which can be understood on the basis of experience that constantly recur and are open to anyone. The Greek term *logos* refers to a reality which is there, now and always, and is given true expression in the word appropriate to it. In this sense there can be no *logos* of the future, unless the future is the continuation or regular recurrence of the present.⁸

The future is not something that can be interacted with in a direct sense. Thus, it will always have an aspect of hiddenness and uncertainty. In order to speak about the future, one must find what reveals that future and use it to sketch a picture of what the future holds.

Part of how this is done is found in the idea of fulfillment. Fulfillment implies that, prior to its arrival, something is lacking which the fulfillment is addressing. There is something in creation that could be made better, whether that be quality of life, or community or any number

⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16–17. Moltmann emphasizes that eschatology is not simply a collection of doctrines of the last things. Instead, it is the doctrine of Christian hope which comes to fruition on the Last Day and beyond. Since eschatology is the study of the "Last Things" it is also the study of what awaits the world in the future, and thus it deals directly with what Christians look forward to as the object of their hope.

of things. If a fulfillment includes a solution to one of these issues, then examining the deficiency addressed by the promise that seeks to bring about the fulfillment can then lead to discussion as to what existence would be like without that inadequacy.

In order to begin describing the future, one must examine God's promises and their connection to the future. Moltmann points out that the promises of God involve more than mere prophetic utterances predicting future events. The promises of God are what have defined the people of God throughout history and how they have come to understand truth. "The real language of Christian eschatology, however, is not the Greek *logos*, but the *promise* which has stamped the languages, the hope and the experience of Israel. It was not in the *logos* of the epiphany of the eternal present, but in the hope-giving Word of promise that Israel found God's truth."⁹ God is doing more than simply laying out a future direction; he is telling people who he is. God's promises are his mode of self-revelation that allows the people of God to grasp who he is.¹⁰ This means that hope, in part, is bound to an awareness of who God is. As the Christian grows in their relationship with God, they also grow in their understanding of how God is active in the world and in their lives. Hope is found in a God who is relational and who interacts with his people in community. They are bound together as a people in their interaction with him and guided toward the hoped-for future as a community. In looking at this hoped-for future, the question of who this God is that is making these promises becomes all-important.

⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16–17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

If it is to be assumed that God will fulfill his promises to his people, then the question posed by Moltmann gives a direction to the investigation: "...when and where does the God of the promise reveal his faithfulness and in it himself and his presence?"¹¹ The answer to this question lies in how God makes himself known. This can be seen in passages such as 2 Timothy, where Paul asserts that there are certain aspects of God that relate to humanity: God's enduring faithfulness, his lordship, and his judgment. Paul also asserts that this is a trustworthy statement, and thus not subject to confusion or doubt. Thus, in events and actions where God is revealing himself in these ways, he is also affirming the trust placed in his promises. In order to see how God is connecting his faithfulness to his promises, one must look to the specific events where he reveals himself. As an example, the Exodus event promised both freedom from slavery and a land for the Israelites to call their own. Despite the grumbling, idolatry, and even calls to return to slavery in Egypt, God still brought them out of Egypt, led them to a land of their own, and gave them peace and prosperity within it as long as they remained faithful. Even with all of the trouble the Israelites caused and the time it took them, God demonstrated his faithfulness to the promise he had made them. This faithfulness can also be seen in the return from the Babylonian exile. As the Israelites had no reason to believe they would ever leave Babylon beyond God's promise that their exile was limited, they could easily have fallen away from the faith and instead believed they had been forgotten. However, they are not forgotten and at the appointed time God faithfully follows through on his promise and brings them back to their own land.

¹¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 42–42.

Moltmann grounds the assurance of God's promises in the ultimate event of God's self-revelation: the death and resurrection of Christ.

This means that the Easter appearances and revelations of the risen Lord are manifestly understood as foretaste and promise of his still future glory and lordship. Jesus is recognized in the Easter appearances as what he really *will be*. ... It is this that forms the ground of the promise of the still outstanding future of Jesus Christ.¹²

It is not simply that Christ, having risen from the dead, reveals himself as the victor over death and of all things opposed to him. His appearances to the apostles after his resurrection point forward to a future reality. Christ's presence among the people announces, even creates, the future reality that awaits them. Christ reveals not just that he has risen, but is giving his people a demonstration of what it means for him to be the future lord over all of creation. In this singular event, Christ demonstrates that he has the power to give life even after death and to restore people to a glorified state that is no longer concerned about death. In this event, God reveals himself as faithful, by giving the world a down-payment, as it were, of the promise he offers to all. In this way, the promise is not just heard but seen in the beginning of its fulfillment, and God is known to be as trustworthy as Paul says. Christ's victory establishes the future promised and the Christian hope in that future as the destination of creation in history. Christ's demonstration of lordship, because it is active in the present, means that some of the benefits of Christ's Kingdom are already making themselves known. The church as the body of Christian believers and citizens of Christ's future Kingdom are already manifesting some aspects of that Kingdom through their communal life and proclamation of Christ's lordship to the world.¹³

¹² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84–85 [italics in original].

¹³ How this takes place will be explored in more detail in chapter 5.

This future vision of Christ as glorified lord over all things can only truly be a fulfillment of the promise he presents in his post-Easter appearances because the two actions are in accord and uniquely bound to one another. Like the resurrection of Christ and his subsequent appearances, the future fulfillment of the promise of God is not a natural consequence of history. There is nothing inherent in Christ's death that would result in his later resurrection. It is only God's promise that brings the future fulfillment into being and thus the fulfillment can only exist because God declares it to be a part of history.

In this way, God's promises drive against the standard course of human history. "Rather, [the promise] contradicts existing reality and discloses its own process concerning the future of Christ for man and the world."¹⁴ The fulfillment promised by God makes humanity aware of the deficiency and the inevitable outcome of creation if God were to abandon it. The difference between the promise and its fulfillment is not a quantitative one. The difference is not such that if life were a little better in one aspect or another then the promise would stand fulfilled. The fulfillment of God's promises brings about a change that fundamentally alters the place of people within history. The promise does not encourage people to bring about a state they can achieve on their own. Rather, God's promise breaks into history and creates an event that is otherwise unattainable by anything in creation. This event can be foreshadowed by God and imagined by men, but not achieved by limited human capacities. The stark dichotomy between the world that exists before the promise and the world after the fulfillment shows that there can be no confusion as to when the promise is fulfilled. Moltmann explains:

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 86.

‘Promise’ is in the first instance also a different thing from an eschatologically oriented view of reality as universal history. Promise announces the coming of a not yet existing reality from the future of the truth. Its relation to the existing and given reality is that of a specific *inadaequatio rei et intellectus*. On the other hand, it does not merely anticipate and clarify the realm of coming history and the realistic possibilities it contains. Rather, ‘future’ is the reality which fulfils and satisfies the promise because it completely corresponds to it and accords with it. It is only in that event which is spoken of as ‘new creation out of nothing’, as ‘resurrection of the dead’, as ‘kingdom’, and ‘righteousness’ of God, that the promise contained in the resurrection of Christ finds a reality which accords with it and completely corresponds to it. The revealing of the divinity of God therefore depends entirely on the real fulfillment of the promise, as *vice versa* the fulfillment of the promise has the ground of its possibility and of its reality in the faithfulness and the divinity of God.¹⁵

It is in this alteration of history that God reveals who he is. God reveals aspects of himself, such as his lordship and his faithfulness, through the guiding of history. He reveals his authority over creation by using his Word of promise to move events of the world along a path that would otherwise be beyond the realm of possibility. Christ, in his post-Easter appearances, completes the fulfillment of the promise of his life and death, and then gives his disciples a promise, a foretaste, of what is to come. He reveals himself not in his full glory, but rather in a partial and incomplete form. This incomplete revelation points the recipient toward the future completion and drives him to seek it out. In this way, God not only alters the course of history, but is actively driving history from one point to the next.¹⁶

Because God is driving history forward through promise and revelation, the Christian hope becomes inextricably intertwined with God’s movement of history. Christians look to God’s revelations of himself and his promises for the future.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 85–86.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87–88.

The revelation in the appearances of the risen Christ has therefore to be described not only as 'hidden', but also as 'unfinished', and has to be related to a reality which is not yet here. It is still outstanding, has not yet come about, has not yet appeared, but it is promised and guaranteed in his resurrection, and indeed is given along with his resurrection as a necessary consequence: the end of death, and a new creation in which amid the life and righteousness of all things God is all in all. Thus the future of the risen Lord involves also the expectation of a creative act.¹⁷

God's revelations offer humanity a vision of the future that he is moving them toward; a future that stands in opposition to the fallen state of creation and the self-destructive activity of man.

God creates a reality that is otherwise unattainable by man's otherwise limited and fallen capacity and offers him a way out of his corrupt and impotent future. Here, God's Word of promise is not simply foretelling an eventual outcome, but actively changing the course of history to one of his choosing.

Moltmann's comment also outlines another factor in the forward motion of history. The "hidden" and "unfinished" nature of the restoration brought about by Christ's resurrection stands as a testimony to what will be and not to what already is. Christians can look at the world and see suffering, death, evil, and everything inimical to God still flourishing in spite of man's efforts to quell them. The brokenness of the world itself becomes a sign that the final restoration has not yet arrived. If the Christian seeks something better, he must look to the future and not to the present, for the present world has no hope to offer. Schmemmann expands on this idea saying,

Christianity often appears, however, to preach that if men will try hard enough to live Christian lives, the crucifixion can somehow be reversed. This is because Christianity has forgotten itself, forgotten that always it must first of all stand at the cross. Not that this world cannot be improved—one of our goals is certainly to work for peace, justice, freedom. But while it can be improved, it can never become the place God intended it to be. Christianity does not condemn the world. The world has condemned itself when on Calvary it condemned the One who was its true self. "He was in the

¹⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 88.

world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (Jn. 1:10). If we think seriously about the real meaning, the real scope of these words, we *know* that as Christians and insofar as we are Christians we are, first of all, witness of that *end*: end of all natural joy; end of all satisfaction of man with the world and with himself; end, indeed, of life itself as a reasonable and reasonably organized “pursuit of happiness.”¹⁸

Schmemmann here is highlighting the fact that Christ’s resurrection was not merely something the world had never seen, but even more, was something that stood and continues to stand in opposition to what the world holds. To receive God’s promise means to acknowledge that the fulfillment will not be found in the present, broken world. Instead, the Christian must look to the future and follow God’s promise through history until God brings about the fulfillment.

In addition to this, because God’s promise stands as the prime director of the history it creates, the fulfillment does not require man’s involvement to come to pass. Man’s future depends utterly and entirely on the outcome of the risen Lord’s course, for he has staked his future on the future of Christ.¹⁹ Humanity may be involved in the workings of history under the aegis of the promise, but the limited capacity of man is unable to bring about this radically new direction of history that is created by the promise. This means that those who accept the promise given by God receive it as a gift and are assured that the fulfillment will come in spite of the inability of humanity to contribute to it.²⁰ God’s Word of promise comes from outside the bounds of creation and creates a sequence of events that creation would otherwise have never been capable of experiencing. “If the world were a self-contained system of cause and effect, then

¹⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 23–24 [italics in original].

¹⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 91.

²⁰ A discussion of how man receives or rejects the promises of God would require an investigation of the nature of faith and the relationship it creates between God and man. That investigation lies outside the scope of this dissertation. For the purposes of this dissertation, faith is viewed in light of the promises God makes to humanity

hope could either regard this world as itself the fulfillment, or else in gnostic fashion transcend and reflect itself into the supra-worldly realm. That, however, would be to abandon itself.”²¹

This then helps to solidify the understanding of Christian hope. God takes hold of the course of history and grants humanity a future that would otherwise be beyond reach. God reveals the nature and form of this future by uniting himself to the promise he gives; making it his own future which he offers to humanity. Because it is God, and God alone, who is creating this future, man is assured of its eventual fulfillment. The Christian hopes in the promises of God because the reality created by that promise transcends the cause and effect nature of the world in which he lives. “Christian hope is meaningful only when the world can be changed by him in whom this hope hopes, and is thus open to that for which this hope hopes; when it is full of all kinds of possibilities (possible for God) and open to the resurrection.”²² Hope is not possible where everything is fixed and static; where the outcomes are known before the events take place. Hope is possible specifically because God himself takes a hand and introduces something new into history that could not be known or predicted; something that changes the inevitable outcome of history into something better than anyone could have expected.

If one were to examine the Gospel accounts of Christ and the promises he offers through his activity, it might seem as though the resurrection were a new and unique working within creation. In one sense this is true. The incarnation of Christ and his resurrection have a unique

and those promises are what faith appropriates and is shaped by them.

²¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 92.

²² Ibid. Moltmann is not arguing for a process theology here. His intention is to point out that God is not restricted to the normal course of history or the capabilities of humanity in directing that history. The Christian who hopes in God’s promises is therefore trusting that the preternatural outcomes of those promises, even if it means the resurrection of the dead, are indeed possible.

place within history and theology. However, the promises of God that are embedded within these two actions and their effect on history are not radically new. They also function as fulfillments of prior promises given by God to creation. The incarnation of Christ in particular was the fulfillment of a promise the people of God had been fervently hoping for and eagerly anticipating.

As Moltmann moves backward in history to explore the relationship between God and the Israelites of the Old Testament, he sees many of the same sorts of interactions as Christ had with the people of his day. Moltmann finds Yahweh standing out as unique amongst the gods of the surrounding nations. In the days of their wandering, the Israelites have no permanent residence. The gods of the surrounding people are tied to the countries themselves and their territories.²³ Yahweh binds himself not to a particular region, but to the people; travelling alongside the people he has called his own. Because he was amongst them and leading them, God gave the Israelites a new view of existence. Citing Victor Maag, Moltmann explains,

Here existence is felt as history. This God leads men to a future which is not mere repetition and confirmation of the present, but is the goal of the events that are now taking place. The goal gives meaning to the journey and its distresses; and today's decision to trust in the call of God is a decision pregnant with future. This is the essence of promise in the light of transmigration.²⁴

This distinction is seen also in the various appearances of God to the Israelites. The interest in God's appearances to the collective Israelites or to various prophets is in the Word of promise that God grants in the context of his appearance.²⁵ Rather than clinging to the place or time of

²³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 96–97.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope.*, 99–100.

God's appearance and looking for meaning within it, the Israelites find God's appearances are linked to promises he is giving to them. The recipients are then driven by God's promises into the future those promises have created. In his analysis of past and present liturgical practices, Schmemmann offers a remark that draws on this very concept and shows the continuity of the eschatological direction of history,

But just as the Church of the Old Covenant, the old Israel, existed as a *passage* to the New Covenant, was *instituted* in order to prepare the ways of the Lord, the Church as *institution* exists in order to reveal — in “this world” — the “world to come,” the Kingdom of God, fulfilled and manifested in Christ.²⁶

This shows that God's Word of promise has been providing a forward momentum to history as the Old Testament people of God prepare for the New Testament and the New Testament people of God prepare for the world to come.

Until such time that God brings about the fulfillment of the promise, the recipients are in a state of hopeful expectation; aware that their futures are bound to the course of history God's promise has created. The fulfillment of the promise brings about a definitive completion, as human expectation encounters the reality that was promised. This means that history is given a constant forward motion from the giving of the promise to its fulfillment. This also means that history is not cyclical.

The history which is initiated and determined by promise does not consist in cyclic recurrence, but has a definite trend toward the promised and outstanding fulfillment. This irreversible direction is not determined by the urge of vague forces or by the emergence of laws of its own, but by the word of direction that points us to the free power and the faithfulness of God.²⁷

²⁶ Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 77 [italics in original].

²⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103.

Due to the fact that history is moving forward along the course laid by God, events of the past are never lived through again. This further strengthens the character of Christian hope because the Christian looks to the past to see the evidence of God's promises and their fulfillment in history, but looks to the future to see the brighter and more glorious reality that God has in store when the promises in effect for this point in history come to completion.

The individual movements within history that God creates via his promises are not individual, isolated events. Instead, they fit within the eschatological structure provided by God. Since God has promised to one day return and restore creation, all of history is moving inexorably forward toward this point and thus history is governed by this overarching focus. This means that the individual promises of God that drive history in the short term each spill over into the next promise and the next fulfillment.²⁸ The fulfillments of these promises have never yet brought about the realization of the ultimate goal and are therefore transitional in nature. Each fulfillment carries with it the seed of a new promise which keeps history from languishing in a static and unfinished state. In his discussion of how Old Testament promises have progressed, Moltmann says,

But it could also be said that the God who is recognized in his promises remains superior to any fulfilment that can be experienced, because in every fulfilment the promise, and what is still contained in it, does not yet become wholly congruent with reality and thus there always remains an overspill. The fulfilments in the occupation of the land do not fulfil the promise in the sense that they liquidate it like a cheque that is chased and locked away among the documents of a glorious past. The 'fulfilments' are taken as expositions, confirmations and expansion of the promise. The greater the fulfillments become, the greater the promise obviously also becomes

²⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 107–9.

in the memory of the expositor at the various levels of the tradition in which it is handed down.²⁹

As each promise finds fulfillment, God offers his people a new and greater promise; one that is closer to the final goal, closer to the full revelation of God who has declared himself Lord of creation. This is not to say that God himself is developing or growing. God is always complete in and of himself. Because of this, it cannot be said that history has any control over God. Rather, it is creation that is imperfect and in need of development and restoration. Through the events of history, God drives creation toward this needed restoration through the process of promise and fulfillment.

These promises serve as the structure for Christian hope throughout history. The Christian is able to look back through history and see how God has revealed himself to his people in ever greater ways as time moved ahead. Saving them from bondage through the exodus, making his presence known to them as they wandered through the wilderness, and leading them to a place of rest and placing his Name in the midst of them shows a progression in God's revelations to the world. Extending beyond that, the incarnation of Jesus, his resurrection, and his post-Easter activity give the world an even greater understanding of God and his relationship to creation.

In addition to this, as the Christian is able to examine the accounts of God's progressive activity, the words of Paul in 2 Timothy and passages like it take on greater validity. Thousands of years of fulfilled promises stand behind the promises that God offers to the Christian in his own day. With each promise fulfilled offering yet another promise for the future, the Christian is always looking forward to the ultimate conclusion, where further promises will no longer be

²⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 105.

necessary. The Christian is never left wallowing in a historical stasis, with no awareness that the trials he faces are temporary. The Christian has hope because he sees God making good on the promises he gives and ensuring the Christian has a promise to which he can cling. With this promise, the Christian knows that he and the rest of creation are marching forward to the time when all of the struggles and tribulations of history come to an end; the time when God returns and reigns as lord over his creation, bringing the sequence of promises and fulfillments to a close. Without these promises, the Christian has nothing to cling to and no reason to hope in a brighter future. God's Word of promise is therefore the source and foundation for all Christian hope.

The Christian Hope is Active in the Present Day

Moltmann's promise-fulfillment paradigm provides the broad framework for God's driving of history toward the goal he has created for it. However, this structure needs to be focused specifically on the modern age of the church in order to understand what the Christian of today hopes in. It is not enough to lay out the structure of hope in a general sense. N. T. Wright's question of "What is the ultimate Christian hope?" must be drawn out again. It is not a matter of asking, "What is hope?" but the specific emphasis on what the Christian believes that is important here. In order to find how hope is manifesting in the world of today, it must first be determined what promises God has given to his people. Only by examining the promises active today can the results of those promises, expressed as hope for the restoration, find their source. This section will take the promise-fulfillment paradigm developed by Moltmann and, with the insight provided by N. T. Wright, demonstrate how God's promises continue to offer hope to the modern world.

Both Moltmann and Wright examine how the singular and unique event of Christ's resurrection and its implications for the future of creation narrows the focus of history to the present day. Moltmann's analysis draws on the paradigm he has previously established and places the resurrection within that paradigm, while also highlighting its distinct differences. He investigates how the resurrection affects the Christian hope for the future, saying things like, "The Christian hope for the future comes of observing a specific, unique event – that of the resurrection and appearing Jesus Christ."³⁰ This indicates that Christian hope is both similar to the hope held by God's people in the past, as they look forward to a fulfillment, but also that it has a unique property that sets it apart. The fact that Christian hope for the future is driven by an event of the past alludes to the distinct difference of Christian hope.

In order to help round out the eschatological outlook of Moltmann, N. T. Wright takes a similar understanding of the resurrection and its implications for the future and connects it to the kingdom of God.³¹ In their own ways, Moltmann and Wright examine the question posed and together they provide the necessary insight for how the promises of God are made manifest in the resurrection of Christ. They also lay the necessary groundwork for understanding further how the hope that arises from the resurrection enters into the life of the church. This means that identifying the ultimate Christian hope in its connection to the resurrection and the kingdom of God is an important step in connecting God's promises to the future of creation and thereby establishing hope in the present day.

³⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 194.

³¹ Though it will be touched on here, a fuller examination of the connection of the kingdom of God to the present and future of creation will be taken up in the final chapter.

To begin with, Wright outlines the major issue that led him to delve into this topic to begin with. In looking at the major beliefs that spring up outside of the church regarding the afterlife, he sees systems that espouse total annihilation, reincarnation, a nebulous melding with nature, or some form of ghostly, spiritual existence.³² When looking at the popular eschatological beliefs within the church, Wright notes that the understanding most Christians have is in going to Heaven and spending the rest of eternity floating on clouds and playing harps.³³ This belief has infiltrated the church to such a degree that its liturgical practice, and in particular its hymnody, has developed to reflect this erroneous eschatology.³⁴

The issue Wright has with this misguided eschatology is that it subverts the church's understanding of the present world and its place within it. When the world is looked at through the lens of the Platonic spiritualism that holds sway within the church, little of value is seen. The present world is simply part of what is destined for destruction as the church is called home to Heaven when Christ returns. However, when looked at through the lens of resurrection, Wright notes that the present world becomes enormously important because it radically realigns not only how the church speaks to those outside it, but how it acts toward the world itself. He states,

³² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 9–12. Wright is not concerned with addressing these pagan belief systems so much as demonstrating the confusion of beliefs that exist both in the church and in the world around it. This dissertation is also focused on a specifically Christian eschatology, however having an understanding of what hope means to those of other belief systems can only strengthen a Christian's ability to share their faith, and thus their hope, with those of that belief system. This idea will be further developed in the final chapter.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16–20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 20–25. The confusion in the liturgy reinforces the problem raised by Wright. Christians may be familiar with hymns like "How Great Thou Art", which Wright notes has truncated its eschatology such that it leaves out any mention of the resurrection, as well as "For All the Saints", which demonstrates a full-bodied eschatology ending in the resurrection. However, even with knowledge of hymns like "For All the Saints" the belief in a heavenly, spiritualized afterlife persists.

What we say about death and resurrection gives shape and color to everything else. If we are not careful, we will offer merely a “hope” that is no longer a surprise, no longer able to transform lives and communities in the present, no longer generated by the resurrection of Jesus himself and looking forward to the promised new heaven and new earth.³⁵

With this in mind, it is important to know both what God’s promises are and whether he is capable of fulfilling them. This discussion is relevant to the topic of God’s modern promises because unless one understands what it is that God is promising, then any statements regarding what the actual goal is and how God is driving history toward that goal become untenable. The incongruity that Moltmann describes that comes about as people compare the present, insufficient world with the better world God promises is what drives them to seek out that world. Without that drive, it is possible to presume that there is nothing better; that one has arrived at the final fulfillment. This destroys hope because without the knowledge of something better, one never becomes aware that the current brokenness of the world can be transcended.

At the same time, one must recognize that the promise-fulfillment paradigm has its origins at the beginning of history. By not seeing that God’s promises for the church are supported by the promises and fulfillment given to previous generations, the Christian loses the certainty that God will fulfill the promises given to the world today and may fall into despair. As Moltmann says,

Despair is the premature, arbitrary anticipation of the non-fulfilment of what we hope for from God. ... The pain of despair surely lies in the fact that a hope is there, but no way opens up towards its fulfillment. Thus the kindled hope turns against the one who hopes and consumes him. ... Our hopes are bereft of faith and confidence. Hence despair would seek to preserve the soul from disappointments.³⁶

³⁵ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 25–27.

³⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 23.

Wright takes the promise-fulfillment paradigm and narrows the focus down to the age of the church; examining how Christ gave a new direction to history through his life. In doing so, he helps elucidate those promises in which Christians have been putting their hope since the time of Christ. The assertion that Wright puts forth is that the early Christians did not see the world gradually improving throughout history and had no expectation that it would ever do so.³⁷ Instead, they recognized that the only solution would be to restore it entirely. At the center of this restoration is the resurrection of Christ. All Christian thought regarding the future and God's activity within it flows out of this one event. Wright remarks, "Take away the stories of Jesus's birth, and you lose only two chapters of Matthew and two of Luke. Take away the resurrection, and you lose the entire New Testament and most of the second-century fathers as well."³⁸ This indicates that the promises of the modern age are part of the overall continuity of the promise-fulfillment paradigm.

In his analysis of what life will be like when Christ returns, Wright, in discussing Romans 8, states that Paul connects Christ's resurrection to hope for the future.³⁹ Christ's resurrection stands as a demonstration of proof of what the future holds for Christians. Even though God has consistently made good on his promises in the past, Christ's resurrection shows that God is both willing and able to do what he says he will.

³⁷ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

Wright notes that, for the early Christians, resurrection itself was not a radically new concept. Even the fact that there would be a general resurrection of all the dead was tacitly accepted by many Jews of Christ's day. He also remarks,

Of course, other Jewish movements roughly contemporary with early Christianity also held some kind of inaugurated eschatology (that is, the belief that "the end" had already in some sense begun. . . . But we never find outside Christianity what becomes a central feature within it: the belief that the mode of this inauguration consisted in the resurrection itself happening to one person in the middle of history in advance of its great, final occurrence, anticipating and guaranteeing the final resurrection of God's people at the end of history.⁴⁰

The major difference with Christ is that he ushers in the resurrection in his own life. Though the promise of God, given through the resurrection, is in continuity with previous promises it also is fundamentally different, as it is bringing a future event into the present. Alexander Schmemmann elucidates this concept,

What is Resurrection? Resurrection is the appearance in this world, completely dominated by time and therefore by death, of life that shall have no end. The One who rose again from the dead does not die anymore. In this world of ours, not somewhere else, not in any "other" world, there appeared one morning someone who is beyond death and yet *in* our time.⁴¹

Here Schmemmann pinpoints what is strange and wonderful about the event of Christ's resurrection. It is not simply that someone came back to life, since this has happened at various points in Scripture already. The key is that the world is given a glimpse of someone who had died and now will never die again.⁴² Moltmann echoes Schmemmann's thought in saying,

⁴⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 45.

⁴¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Christian Development Through Liturgical Experience* (New York: Department of Religious Education: Orthodox Church in America, 1974), 76 [italics in original].

⁴² Schmemmann's comment demonstrates how the promise-fulfillment paradigm is at work even in the resurrection of Christ. The Old and New Testaments contain numerous stories of people being raised from the dead: both specific individuals and entire groups of people. There is no suggestion in the text that any of these people lived

Certain as it is that the Easter appearances of Jesus were experienced and proclaimed in the apocalyptic categories of the expectation of the general resurrection of the dead and as a beginning of the end of all history, it is nevertheless equally certain that the raising of Jesus was not merely conceived solely as the first instance of the final resurrection of the dead, but as the source of the risen life of all believers. It is not merely said that Jesus is the first to arise and that believers will attain *like him* to resurrection, but it is proclaimed that he is himself the resurrection and the life and that consequently believers find their future *in* him and not merely *like* him.⁴³

The resurrection functions in similar ways to other promises made by God that can be found in Scripture. Taking the statements of Moltmann and Wright together it can be concluded that in the previous promises of God there are often descriptions given of what the fulfillment will look like. As God leads the Israelites to the Promised Land, he declares, “But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples.”⁴⁴ Likewise, regarding the coming Messiah, God tells his people, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”⁴⁵ Though Christ’s resurrection functions similarly, to give the world a small sample of what awaits, it also does more. It is not just a glimpse of the fulfillment that Christ is giving the world, but actually drawing a piece of that fulfillment back from where it rests in God’s planned future to the first Easter morning. Though the resurrection solidly plants the world on the path to fulfillment in

forever from that point on. It is presumed that each of them went on to live a natural life and die again at some point in the future. Though they died again, they were a living testimony to God’s ability to raise the dead and breathe life into something that was inanimate. In this way each foreshadowed the later event of Christ’s resurrection and served as a reminder that God would eventually make good on his promise. In this way also, Christ’s resurrection becomes the first “true” resurrection which has rendered death powerless.

⁴³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 82–83 [italics in original].

⁴⁴ Leviticus 20:24 ESV

⁴⁵ Isaiah 7:14 ESV

ways similar to the exodus event or to Christ's own birth, the resurrection transforms all of history that follows into a period where the fulfillment is in certain ways already being enacted. This means that the future fulfillment of God's promise of a general resurrection of the dead is already visible in the present.

Placing the discussion of the resurrection into the promise-fulfillment framework, the days after Christ's resurrection become the last in the over-arching sequence of promises God has given humanity.⁴⁶ Christ's return on the Last Day, ushering in the new creation which stands as the fulfillment of all of God's promises, also serves to establish the kingdom of God on earth. At this point hope will no longer be necessary because there will be no reason to look to the future for something better.

As a result of the Kingdom's connection to the resurrection, it also has a unique place in the history and future of creation. Just as the promise of the resurrection is already realized partly through Christ's resurrection, the Kingdom and the promises associated with it are also active in certain ways in the present. Though the kingdom of God only comes in its fullness with Christ's return, Wright states that his resurrection has already brought the Kingdom into the world.⁴⁷

Bandy, commenting on Wright's eschatology, says this,

Jesus' inauguration of the new covenant instituted a monumental eschatological development in salvation history. Therefore, Christians are now experiencing the benefits of living in the eschatological days. An eschatological dualism between "this

⁴⁶ At first glance, it may appear that Moltmann succumbs to a form of process theology that sees the resurrection event as just another iteration of the promises that God gives to the world. Though there are aspects of the resurrection that are in continuity with the promise-fulfillment paradigm, in that it foreshadows the eventual fulfillment and drives the world toward that fulfillment, it is also distinct from the rest of God's promises. The resurrection is functioning in a way that no other promise has done, and thus is a unique event within history, because the resurrection brings aspects of the fulfillment from the future back into the present day.

⁴⁷ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 29.

age” and “the age to come” is evident in the Jewish apocalypses, Rabbinic writings, and even the OT prophets. However, with the coming of the Messiah, the Kingdom, and the Holy Spirit, the new age is inaugurated during this present age. . . . A future expectation remains for the fullness of the Kingdom’s arrival on earth as well as the final resurrection. Therefore, those who are “in Christ” presently live with the tension of the “already and not yet,” while awaiting their final vindication and the complete renewal of creation.⁴⁸

All of this indicates that God is giving the church proof not only that he can fulfill the promise presented in the resurrection, but that it is already being fulfilled. Though the forward direction of history that comes with God’s promises is still present, the church is able to experience the fulfillment in certain ways in its own day.

Though the promise of the resurrection is a future event, its unique nature has implications for the present as well. Much of the focus of the resurrection is on the Last Day and the general resurrection of the dead that will accompany it. Wright stresses that the result of all of Christ’s work on earth is not restricted to future events. As Christ’s resurrection has an effect in the present and on into the future, so does the broader restorative work of God’s Kingdom. Drawing on Paul’s theology in 1 Corinthians, Wright says, “What you *do* in the present—by painting, preaching singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—*will last into God’s future.*”⁴⁹ His work on earth begins in the present day the restoration that will ultimately be fulfilled with the coming of his Kingdom in the future. This restoration is ultimately God’s

⁴⁸ Bandy, “Eschatology and Restoration,” 70.

⁴⁹ Wright., *Surprised by Hope*, 192–93. The discussion of what this entails will be taken up in chapter 5.

work, but because it is already active in the present day it involves the whole of the church in its workings.⁵⁰

Christ's resurrection is an act of restoration in the overcoming of death. However, it is also a declaration of Christ's authority over death, which then points to his authority over all of creation. Christ's authority or lordship expands the scope of the restoration from new life to new creation, all of which is bound up in the coming of the Kingdom. The proof of the beginning of the Kingdom is evidenced in Christ's demonstration of lordship. Wright finds that this lordship and Christ's claim to authority over both heaven and earth that comes at the end of Matthew's gospel is a declaration of the Kingdom.⁵¹ As Moltmann described earlier, God reveals himself through his promises. Christ's revelation of lordship acts as a foreshadowing event, allowing the disciples to see a glimpse of who Christ is and ultimately will be upon his return. As Christ demonstrates his lordship over creation, he demonstrates his ability to bring about the fulfillment he promises in the arrival of the Kingdom. His resurrection is an example of his ability to restore even the most broken aspects of creation, and thus an assurance that his promise is within his capabilities to fulfill.

God's lordship does more than reveal the Kingdom; it connects the Kingdom to the present day. Wright notes how God never states that creation is inherently evil. There is no indication that God's intention is to redeem people so that they may be taken out of the physical world to live out the rest of eternity in a spiritual existence. God seeks to redeem all of creation and to

⁵⁰ The details of how the present activity of the Kingdom affects the life of the church will be taken up in the final chapter. Here it is important simply to note that the future Kingdom is already spilling over into the present day in certain ways.

⁵¹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 201.

restore humanity to its rightful vocation as stewards over that creation. This restoration of creation and of humanity's place within it is part of the promise that God is driving history to fulfill.⁵²

Wright ties the two threads of Christ's resurrection, and subsequent declaration of lordship, with the future Kingdom by saying,

But when we reintegrate what should never have been separated—the kingdom-inaugurating public work of Jesus and his redemptive death and resurrection—we find that the gospels tell a different story. . . . It is the story of God's kingdom being launched on earth as in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been decisively launched, and Jesus's followers have been commissioned and equipped to put that victory and the inaugurated new world into practice.⁵³

Christ's resurrection is not only a revelation of lordship that demonstrates his power over creation but also the beginning of the restoration that comes to its culmination with the arrival of the Kingdom. Christ's resurrection is an example of creation being set to rights and death being removed from the picture. Because Christ is lord over all creation, his return will extend this restoration to all of creation, removing the brokenness and death from it. This restored creation, with Christ as lord over it, is the kingdom of God in its fullness.

Given that God has promised to establish his Kingdom on earth one day, with the attendant restoration that will accompany it, and because Christ has already brought a measure of that Kingdom into the world through his resurrection, the world of today must be viewed in light of that promise. God has offered the world a glimpse of the future Kingdom and is moving history toward the fulfillment that will come with Christ's return. This view of the future and the

⁵² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 202.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 204.

knowledge that God will fulfill the promises made gives hope to all who have lived since the resurrection of Christ. The present day is marked by an awareness that Christ is already rendering death meaningless.

With Christ's resurrection ushering the kingdom of God into the present world, even in an incomplete fashion, the character of Christian hope takes on a new and greater form than the hope of God's people in the past. God's promise to Abraham, that he would have an heir, or his promise to the Israelites wandering the wilderness, that they would be led to the land flowing with milk and honey, offered nothing outside of God's own assurance and his record of promises fulfilled in the past as a guarantee of the current promise. Abraham did not see the fulfillment of the promise until it stood fulfilled in the birth of his son. The Israelites were not settled in the Promised Land until God physically brought them there and drove out the inhabitants.⁵⁴ In contrast, with the kingdom of God being active already in the present day, Christians are not left to rely only on the Word of God's promises; they are able to experience and even participate in the Kingdom today. This changes the nature of the assurance God gives his people, as the fulfillment is able to be seen in concrete forms prior to its full realization. With this assurance, the promise becomes even more concrete. The fulfillment of the promise was only realized when it came into being. The church of today is given the opportunity to see the aspects of the fulfillment prior to its arrival and thus a greater appreciation for what awaits them as well as a greater sense of hope for that promised future.

⁵⁴ It could be argued that events such as Numbers 13-14 show the people receiving part of God's promise prior to the fulfillment, but no part of the promise was fulfilled at this point. The promise made was that the Israelites would be settled in the land and no longer be wanderers. Since the people rejected the promise of God at this point, they continued being wanderers and did not experience being settled in the land for many years to come.

Wright's emphasis on knowing the true outcome of what God promises in the fulfillment becomes even more relevant because Christians have the ability to interact with God's future Kingdom today. God's assurance to Christians extends beyond the powerless words of humanity and beyond the record of history. God's assurance extends to bringing Christians into that future fulfillment prior to its arrival. However, that participation in the Kingdom only functions as assurance if Christians see that participation for what it is. Without an awareness that the Kingdom is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise, Christians are unable to connect what they are interacting with to the future promised in the Kingdom. The vision and experience of the Kingdom no longer functions as a source of hope and the resurrection of Christ fails to have the impact on the life of the Christian that was intended. Therefore, in order for Christians to have the hope that the Kingdom offers, he must see that God is intending those promises specifically for him, not a general assurance for the world, but that the Christian himself will be a part of the future Kingdom.

Christians Participate in the Future Kingdom

The kingdom of God has important implications for Christian hope. Though hope is tied to God's promises, that hope is concretized in the Christian's participation in the Kingdom. The actual experience of the Kingdom and the restoration that comes with it is a demonstration of all that the promise offers. Thus, identifying how and where the Christian can participate in the Kingdom becomes imperative for bringing about the full expression of hope for present-day Christianity.

Both Moltmann and Wright have described how the Christian has hope because of Christ's resurrection. It is an important point that they make and serves as the basis for understanding

how hope functions in the present day, but it is also truncated. By itself the resurrection has little meaning for the Christian. It stands as an event in history and may speak of things to come, but does little for the Christian unless God extends that resurrection to him in some way and makes him aware of it. Therefore, in order to discover how God brings the resurrection, and the future it expresses, into the life of the Christian, it must first be discovered how it enters into the present time. Specifically, this means looking for the future kingdom of God in the present day.

Though the future kingdom of God enters into present time and begins the restoration of creation, it is only the final fulfillment that restores all of creation. Prior to the final fulfillment the Kingdom only manifests itself in certain places. As discussed above, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom through his life and work on earth. Thus, the places where Christ makes himself present in the current age in a way that brings about the restoration that he began are also the entry points for the Kingdom in the modern world.⁵⁵ This also means that if one wishes to see the fulfillment that is both coming in the future and already begun in the present, and gain the hope that comes from this experience of the Kingdom and the promises associated with it, one must first be brought where the Kingdom is revealing itself. To do this, must look for where the fruits of that restoration are at work.

The Kingdom, the resurrection of Christ, and the restoration are intimately connected. As N. T. Wright states, “When Jesus spoke of God’s kingdom, he was talking not about a heaven for which he was preparing his followers but about something that was happening in and on this

⁵⁵ There are several places in gospel texts where Jesus states he will be present in an ongoing capacity. Matthew 18:20 is an example of Jesus explicitly stating that he will continue to be present in gatherings of believers. The difference between this and the manifestations of Christ described in this chapter revolves around what the result of that presence is. The presence of Christ described here and throughout the rest of the dissertation brings about part of the restoration that is coterminous with the kingdom of God.

earth, through his work, then through his death and resurrection, and then through the Spirit-led work to which they would be called.”⁵⁶ Since Christ’s life, death, and resurrection is the source of Kingdom and the resurrection it brings, the events in the present age where that restoration is taking place are connected to the same Kingdom and thus to Christ’s resurrection. Therefore, finding evidence of the Kingdom extends the path of hope one step further from God to humanity.

As noted by Bandy earlier, though Christ inaugurated the Kingdom in the present age, there is a dualism present.⁵⁷ This age and the age to come exist as separate and distinct and yet they overlap in specific places in this world. When Christ makes his lordship known in the current age through his presence and continues the same sort of restoration that he began during his time on earth, the Kingdom is manifested and the future age shows itself in the present.

Since Christian hope has its origins in God’s Word of promise, looking for where that promise intersects the life of the church is a way to discover how it is given to the Christian. In the development of the promise-fulfillment paradigm and discussion of the ramifications of Christ’s resurrection presented previously in the chapter, Moltmann did well in pointing out how God’s Word drives creation on a grand scale. God’s Word molds the course of history and provides the means for restoring creation. Unfortunately, to understand how God’s promises concretely enter into the present world and are experienced, a fuller theology of the Word is necessary. Moltmann’s discussion of the Word and its relation to history is a starting point. His explanation of the Word has it operating in the high-level affairs of creation, but never describes

⁵⁶ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 203.

⁵⁷ Bandy, “Eschatology and Restoration,” 70.

how it manifests itself in concrete forms within the present world. He explains how it is active in shaping and guiding history, as well as how that movement of history provides hope to the people of God, but never describes how the Word becomes active in the life of the church or of individual Christians. This means that Moltmann's description of the Word is incomplete. He states, "What is true of the Spirit of God is true also of the word of God: it is an earnest of things to come, and binds us to itself in order to point and direct us to greater things."⁵⁸ Moltmann points out that Christians are bound to the Word and Spirit of God but never indicates how this occurs. Without knowing how this takes place, it can also be questioned how Christians are directed toward greater things. This can introduce uncertainty into hope and leave one wondering how they are connected to Christ's resurrection.

At the same time, N. T. Wright's theology, while making clear connections between the life of Christ and the coming Kingdom, does little to incorporate God's Word into the process. He does take up the topic of how the Kingdom, and the hope it offers, is brought out into the rest of creation by God's people, saying things like,

God builds God's kingdom. But God ordered his world in such a way that his own work within that world takes place not least through one of his creatures in particular, namely, the human beings who reflect his image. ... He has enlisted us to act as his stewards in the project of creation. And, following the disaster of rebellion and corruption, he has built into the gospel message the fact that through the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, he equips humans to help in the work of getting the project back on track.⁵⁹

This states that Christians are equipped, but does not say how they come to be equipped. How do the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit come to be theirs in the first place? If Christians are

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 326.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 207.

going to share a sure and certain hope with the rest of creation, they must be able to point to how they came to have it first. Wright is not interested in this question and does not seek to answer it.

This shortcoming renders both eschatological views inadequate for charting the unbroken course of hope from God to creation. For the certainty of hope to be found in this world, God's promise must enter into the world in a way that the Christian can experience it and know it to be true. This concrete realization of the promise becomes the next step in the economic procession of hope from God to creation. It is in this next step that God's Word of promise becomes more than a verbal utterance of God and begins to embody the experience of the future and brings the Christian into the promised future.

CHAPTER THREE

SACRAMENTS AND HOPE

Chapter Two detailed how God's promises alter the course of history to drive creation toward a fulfillment that he brings into being. The restoration that comes from the entry of the kingdom of God into the world is already at work and provides a glimpse of what God's promise is driving the world to meet. However, this restoration is not spontaneously manifesting itself throughout the world but is tied to the presence of Christ. Therefore the restoration is only found where Christ is entering the world in some way. This means that the only way to see the future Kingdom, and to receive the hope that comes from that experience, is to be in the presence of Christ. Though Wright and Moltmann have helped investigate the nature of hope, they do not concern themselves in any great detail with how that hope intersects the life of the Christian. To see how a Christian comes to be a part of the larger workings of hope, the theology of Alexander Schmemmann becomes helpful.

Alexander Schmemmann's theology picks up where Moltmann and N. T. Wright leave off in connecting eschatology to the sacraments. Schmemmann discusses the experiences that the Christian has of the Kingdom in participating in the sacraments and illustrates some of the effects that that experience has on him. Hope is not a major theme in Schmemmann's work. This means that there are few explicit statements that relate to hope in his theology. However, what Schmemmann does make clear is the connection between eschatology, Christ's Kingdom, the sacraments, and liturgy. By following the connections Schmemmann makes between these theological concepts, the groundwork is laid also for hope. There is a lacuna in the theological

study of hope regarding the connection between the eschatology of the Kingdom and the theology of the sacraments. This is the central issue this chapter seeks to address. Therefore, this chapter will examine the connections Schmemmann draws between eschatology and the sacraments and show how the theology of hope developed by Moltmann and Wright follows the very same progression.

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the promises of God given in the resurrection of Christ are in certain ways different than any promises he has given previously. The resurrection brings a degree of the fulfillment backward to the present day, which no other promise has done. However, the resurrection is also in continuity with previous promises in that it is driving history forward to the fulfillment as promises of the past had done. Though Christ's resurrection took place, it does not come in contact with humanity in an immediate fashion. God speaks his promises to the world and creates places where the Kingdom inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection break through into the present age. It is here that people not only hear God's promises but also are able to experience the future Kingdom. It is this experience of the Kingdom and God's promise that it is coming soon that gives hope to the Christian. The Christian is told that he should look to the future, and he is shown what the object of his hope is. Therefore, it will be shown here how the sacraments are bringing the Kingdom and the restoration into the present as well as how God's promised hope flows out of the sacramental activity and how that activity becomes the next step in the procession of hope from God to all of creation. It will then go on to discuss how this interaction with the kingdom of God begins to affect the church in the present day.

The Sacraments Bring the Present Day Church into the Kingdom

Neither Moltmann nor Wright provide the necessary connection between the Word and the present world; therefore, another view which takes God's Word into account must be examined.¹

In order to see what role hope plays in the sacraments, a foundation must first be laid that connects God's Word of promise to the function of the sacraments. The Lutheran Confessions, and in particular the Apology, give a definition for the sacraments that makes this connection between Word and sacrament:

If we define sacraments as "rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added," we can easily determine which are sacraments in the strict sense. ... The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence), for these rites have the commandment of God and the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament. ... Through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart to believe and take hold of faith, as Paul says (Rom. 10:17), "Faith comes from what is heard." As the Word enters through the ears to strike the heart, so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart.²

Here God's Word of promise is clearly connected to the activity of the church. Certain rites of the church, which can be defined as liturgical actions or activities of the gathered assembly of

¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 326. This is not to say that Moltmann completely disregards the sacraments as eschatologically meaningful. Rather, Moltmann gives baptism and the Eucharist a very brief discussion, stating that they are forward-oriented activities carried out by a congregation that waits expectantly for the Kingdom. While this is not wrong, it lacks any sort of depth and fails to develop how these activities fulfill this purpose. Christian hope must be clearly and explicitly found in these activities if they are to truly provide hope.

² Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959), 211. Ap XIII, 3–5. The word "promise" here is specifically tied to the concept of grace, rather than directly to hope. This grace relates to justification, which is a part of the overall structure of restoration and thus connects to hope in the larger sense. Grace is tied here to the creation of faith, which serves as the foundation for the further creation of hope. The promise associated with them indicates that there is a fulfillment, which also awaits the Christian, which further indicates that hope is brought into existence through the sacraments as well. See page 45 for the distinction between faith and hope. Luther and the reformers were largely focused on issues relating to justification and were not concerned with matters of eschatology to any great degree. This is evidenced by the extreme brevity of articles such as Ap XVII, on Christ's return, compared to expansive discourse contained in Ap IV on justification.

believers in worship, have a promise that God gives in and through them for the benefit of his people. This means that these three actions, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution, are in some way related to the mediated procession of hope from God down through the church and out into creation. By taking part in these rites, Christians are strengthened in their faith as well as given the ability to hold on to God's promises and continue looking forward to their fulfillment. By receiving faith through the sacraments and being brought into the workings of God's promises, hope is also created as the Christian looks forward to the fulfillment of the promise that is the object of his faith.

The connection between God's Word and the sacraments that is presented in Ap XIII is intentional and purposeful. It is God's Word that gives the sacraments the ability to do what they do. In their investigation of the sacramental controversies surrounding the Lutheran Confessions, Charles Arand *et al.* note the centrality of the Word to Luther's understanding of the sacraments. They state, "Luther held fast to his belief in the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacramental elements. He did so because he believed that Christ had placed his body and blood there through his almighty Word and that this presence provided deep comfort and assurance for fragile souls."³ They also note, "Luther gradually laid aside the Augustinian usage of 'sign' for the elements and closely connected the sacraments to the Word as a means by which God delivers forgiveness, life, and salvation...he did so because he believed that Christ had placed his body and blood there through his almighty Word and that this presence provided deep comfort

³ Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 228.

and assurance for fragile souls.”⁴ Luther and the Confessions are both stating unequivocally that the sacraments do not stand on their own. Rather, it is God’s Word and the presence of Christ that makes the sacraments effective. Though hope as a theme is not mentioned explicitly here, comfort and assurance both are connected to that concept and are seen by Luther as part of the benefits given by participation in the sacraments.⁵ Thus, the sacraments are extensions of God’s Word and provide assurance of where Christ’s presence may be found.

In his examination of the Confessions, Holsten Fagerberg expresses many of the same ideas as Arand and the other authors have said regarding the sacraments. In describing the Confessional understanding of the sacraments, he says, “They are sacred acts, through which God provides what he has promised us in his Word. What the sacraments are and what they accomplish cannot be separated, for with God word and deed are one and the same. . . . The sacraments are a form of the Gospel, the promise, in action.”⁶ He also notes specifically in the theology of the Apology, “But in Ap Melanchthon holds fast to the original Reformation concept which saw in the sacramental words first and foremost a Word of promise.”⁷ Again the sacraments are shown to be united with God’s Word, specifically in his promises. Through the sacraments God is both speaking his promise and doing what he promises.

⁴ Arand, Kolb, and Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 229.

⁵ Luther is relating Christ’s presence to the benefits that are received from his presence in a very similar way to what Wright did in chapter two. Wright attributed hope to the Christian’s encounter with the presence of Christ, which is where the kingdom of God is found. Comfort and assurance function as an indicator that a better future is possible, specifically when united with Christ. This will be explored a bit more in chapter five, which will discuss how a Christian brings hope to others by demonstrating that a better future is possible.

⁶ Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at The Lutheran Confessions (1529 – 1537)*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 162–63.

⁷ *Ibid.*

The connection between the sacraments and God's Word of promise that is present in the Confessions is also noted by Edmund Schlink, in his discourse on the Lutheran Confessions. His book focuses more narrowly on each sacrament individually and provides greater insight into what the Reformers saw as the sacraments' unique function. In his discussion of baptism, he interacts extensively with Article IV of the Large and Small Catechisms. While he makes some similar comments to the previous theologians, they have a greater application to the work of this dissertation.

In locating the Word of God in baptism, Schlink makes several points, one of which is pertinent to the nature of God's promises, "Finally, Christ's word, Mark 16:16, embraces the water as 'Word and *promise* of God' (S.C. IV, 6). The promise is intended for faith and awards salvation to it. According to the baptismal command of Christ this promise is intended for all nations and hence also for the children."⁸ This comment is helpful not only because it continues to reiterate the theme that God's promise is intended to go beyond the church, but also because it illustrates that the promise is not intended only for the church. That is to say, God intends for all humanity to be recipients of the promise. The work of God's Word does not end simply because there are a few who have come to faith, for he desires to offer the promise to those who do not yet believe. This point parallels the comments made by N. T. Wright in the previous chapter, who explained that God's promise intends to bring restoration to all of creation. Thus, the sacramental act of baptism is an essential element in the work of God's promise, but it is also only a step in the process to bring God's promise to the world outside the church.

⁸ Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 146.

In looking at how God's promise relates to baptism and what that means for the individual Christian, Schlink explains,

Baptism is liberation from death. Even though the baptized in their earthly life are still moving toward death, they are delivered from death. "Now, here in Baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men" (L.C. IV, 43). The baptized have already died and they are living with Christ in eternal life. This eternal life, however, is granted not only to the soul but also to the body. Because Baptism is Word and water, and the water affects the body while the Word strikes the soul, therefore "body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends Baptism in the only way it can. No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism, for through it we obtain perfect holiness and salvation, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire" (L.C. IV, 46). Just as Christ lives forever as the Risen One, so he gives his disciples eternal life in bodily resurrection from the dead, in "the resurrection of the body" (Apost.).⁹

Here, drawing on the Confessions, Schlink is putting baptism in an eschatological context.

Baptism is explicitly joined to the resurrection that accompanies the full revelation of the kingdom of God. This means that baptism carries implications not just for the present, but also for the future. One who is baptized receives salvation and forgiveness, which constitute a portion of the restoration that is promised. In addition to these things, he also receives hope, because his future is now united to the one God is creating. As Moltmann indicated in the previous chapter, God is moving history toward the fulfillment of his promise, the establishment of his Kingdom. By receiving the life of Christ as his own, the Christian is a part of the history that is moving toward the fulfillment and the establishment of the Kingdom. Therefore baptism marks him as one who will receive the "eternal life in bodily resurrection from the dead" that has been

⁹ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 149.

promised.¹⁰ Following baptism, the Christian's life is intertwined with Christ's and from that point on he becomes a testimony to God's future and the hope that this future offers.

The connection to resurrection continues in Schlink's examination of the Confession's understanding of the Eucharist. The Eucharist brings the very presence of Christ into the world and, through that presence, confers on believers Christ's own resurrected life, life in the Kingdom. In his discussion of the nature of the body of Christ that is present in the sacrament he states, "We dare not ignore the resurrection of the body given on the cross when today we receive Christ's body and blood. If the living Christ is present bodily in the Lord's Supper, then we must also believe that the glorified, resurrected body of the exalted Lord is given and received."¹¹ Though he is referring to Christ's resurrected body here, and not the general resurrection of the dead on the Last Day, he is nevertheless showing how Christ's resurrection is the driving force behind the Eucharist.

The eschatological focus of the Eucharist is also made explicit by Schlink.

When the Lord's Supper is called a "food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man" (L.C. V, 23), it is clear that this eschatological reality of the new man is recognized; and, indeed, all the Confessions know that the new man is the sinner rising from the dead. The resurrection from the dead is, however, not only forgiveness and new obedience but also the gift of a new body. Since this new body has been most definitely promised through Baptism, the baptized even now, in the midst of this world of sin and death, are such as have been born again and renewed to eternal life. Against this background we are to understand the teaching of the Large Catechism about the Lord's Supper that it is "a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also" (L.C. V, 68). These assertions say not only that the Christian receives Christ's body and blood in a bodily manner, with his mouth, but in addition that through Christ's body he receives eternal life for the body. Even though the believer is still walking in his terrestrial body

¹⁰ Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 149.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

he receives eternal life “in both body and soul.” After all, he is the same person who is now walking in his perishable body and who in the resurrection will one day be clothed with the imperishable eternal body. This relationship between our receiving terrestrial body and the eternal life of the new body follows from the fact that the crucified Christ as the exalted Lord in the sacrament gives us his glorified body which was offered on the cross.¹²

Here the resurrection theme that Schlink brought out in the context of baptism is drawn forth again. In receiving Christ’s body and blood, the Christian gains all of the benefits that go with it. His earthly body is given a future in Christ. Even in the midst of the brokenness of the world around him, he has the assurance that he has eternal life in both body and soul; that a brighter future has been given to him by God through his relationship to Christ.

Thus far in the examination of sacramental theology, the Confessions and the theologians who have provided commentary on them have demonstrated how God’s Word of promise is embedded within the sacraments. God’s promise unites the Christian with the life of the resurrected Christ through the sacraments. The sacraments indicate that the Christian will receive the full benefits of Christ’s Kingdom when he returns to establish it on earth. By receiving God’s promise and the life of Christ through the sacraments, the Christian also becomes a witness of what God will do in the future with the arrival of the Kingdom and he is able to testify regarding the life that he has received through Christ.

The exposition by these theologians on the theology of the Confessions is helpful in elaborating on the sacramental theology presented by the Confessions and showing how it draws on God’s Word of promise. However, it also outlines the lacuna in the Confessional understanding of the sacraments. Though the Confessional definition of the sacraments in Ap

¹² Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, 164–65.

XIII does connect the church to God's promises, it lacks a fuller awareness of restoration, particularly in regards to the rest of creation. Ap XIII does discuss themes that are situated within the realm of restoration, such as justification and salvation, but these themes are limited. Justification and salvation are aimed at the restoration of the Christian individual. The emphasis here is on restoring the Christian spiritually, but these are separated from other activities that are mentioned which are aimed at broader aspects of Christian life. Matrimony and prayer are also listed, but the specific emphasis sought by the writers is on the promise of grace and not in the various aspects of restoration beyond justification.¹³ The comments provided by Schlink and the other theologians on the theology of the Confessions shows that there is an eschatological awareness that pervades the Confessions in general, and the Confessional understanding of the sacraments in particular, yet their eschatology is nonetheless limited. The eschatological theme of the resurrection is explicitly mentioned, and while this is a centerpiece of the overall restoration that awaits creation, it is also only one aspect of it. The resurrection theme also does not adequately address what the restoration means for the present age of the church. Therefore, for hope to be connected to the rest of creation, a place must be found where the Kingdom and a broader sense of restoration are taking place within the church.

In order to determine where the Kingdom shows itself, it must first be identified where Christ is both present and effecting restoration of creation in some way. The Lutheran definition of the sacraments provides a starting point, but another point of view is necessary to complete the connection between promise and restoration.

¹³ Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 213, Ap XIII, 14-17.

In this case Schmemmann offers a solution to the problem: “A sacrament (*mysterion*) is a liturgical service in which the Holy Spirit performs a definite *change* or *transformation*, affecting the whole Church and recognized and accepted as such by the whole Church.”¹⁴ Schmemmann’s understanding of the nature of the sacraments is helpful because it looks for God’s transformative, and potentially restorative, effects on creation. This definition allows such things as marriage and anointing of the sick to be seen as sacraments.¹⁵ These activities do not fit neatly with the Lutheran definition, as they do not have the explicit promise of God’s grace attached to them. If the Kingdom, and thus the restoration of creation, is tied to the presence and work of Christ, then only those places where Christ is present and restoring his people can be considered as the presence of that Kingdom. However, this does not mean that aspects of Christian life, such as marriage and anointing, are devoid of hope entirely and have no place in the procession of hope from God to creation. Because they do not have the certainty that comes from the explicit promise of God, they may not fill this particular link in the chain of hope, but may find other roles related to hope.¹⁶

Thus far, this examination of the sacraments has looked at two different definitions. There is the Lutheran view, which indicates that God’s Word of promise is the driving force behind the sacraments, and Schmemmann’s view, which sees God effecting change in his church through the

¹⁴ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 25. Schmemmann offers a distinctly Orthodox view of the sacraments here. Though Lutherans typically view the sacraments differently and put the emphasis on the institution of Christ and the promise of grace attached to it (as Luther himself discusses in the Large Catechism), the Lutheran understanding is not so much at odds with the Orthodox view as it is more narrowly defined. This is not brought up to spark a debate as to which definition is correct. Rather, it shows how Schmemmann sees the sacraments as connected to eschatology.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

¹⁶ The purpose of some of the other sacraments listed by Schmemmann will be taken up in later chapters discussing the relationship between hope and daily life in creation.

sacraments. Taking these two definitions together, a fuller picture of the sacraments and their connection to hope presents itself. The Lutheran definition isolates certain specific events which carry a promise from God that brings about part of the restoration in the form of justification. Schmemmann's definition demonstrates that the sacraments are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are vehicles which carry God's promises and the hope that is associated with those promises to the people who receive them. His definition also suggests that there is more to the restoration brought by the sacraments than grace alone, as a typical Lutheran view might suggest.

Focusing this examination specifically on baptism, there is much about the baptismal rite that connects with the kingdom of God. As the first sacrament in which a Christian participates, baptism carries with it the theme of entrance. The new Christian is not just entering into the church, but also into the entire life of the church. This means an ongoing encounter with the Kingdom stems from this first sacramental action. As Schmemmann points out in his discussion of the Orthodox baptismal rite,

Each sacrament is, by its very nature and function, a real *passage* into that Kingdom; that the grace it bestows on us is indeed the power which transforms our life by making it both a participation in and a pilgrimage toward the Kingdom of God; that the miracle of grace is always to make our heart love, desire and hope for the new treasure planted in it. Thus the sacrament is a passage, a journey; and the initial doxology reveals and announces its final destination: the Kingdom of God.¹⁷

Schmemmann is showing that from its very outset, baptism is guiding and directing the new Christian toward God's Kingdom. In this way, baptism gives the Christian the first glimpse of where the hope in God's future is to be found.

¹⁷ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 41 [italics in original].

Baptism also relates to the theme of Christ's resurrection. As stated above, Christ's resurrection does not connect with individuals in an immediate fashion. Christ's resurrection and the kingdom of God both spring forth into the life of the Christian at the point of baptism, and thus this is where hope for the Christian begins. As Schmemmann puts it,

And it is the baptismal regeneration and the anointment with the Holy Spirit that *open* the door to that Kingdom, the door shut by sin and man's alienation from God. Being the gift and the experience of resurrection, Baptism is the *confirmation* of Christ's Resurrection, the only 'existential' *proof* that Christ is risen indeed and communicates His risen Life to those who believe in Him.¹⁸

This reaffirms that the Kingdom is not accessible just anywhere. It is only within this sacramental action that the Christian is introduced to the Kingdom and begins to receive the benefits that it offers. The Christian becomes tied to Christ's future as Christ offers his life to the new believer.

This means that baptism is what truly allows a Christian to have the greater experience of hope. Baptism allows the Christian to enter into the Kingdom and begin experiencing the restoration it offers. In baptism, Christ's resurrection is given to the Christian and he is now a recipient of God's promises for the future. By receiving God's promises and seeing the fulfillment of those promises already unfolding in his own life through the restoration of his relationship to God, his fellow Christians, and to the world, the Christian gains the hope that comes from all of these things being brought into his life. In his beginning comments on baptism, Schmemmann notes,

This means, first of all, the celebration of Baptism by the Church, i.e. with the participation of the people of God, as an event in which the whole Church acknowledges

¹⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 112 [italics in original].

herself as *passage—Pascha*—from “this world” into the Kingdom of God, as participation in the decisive events of Christ’s Death and Resurrection.¹⁹

The resurrection of Christ, which was once external to humanity, is connected to the church and the individual Christian through baptism. The certainty of the future God has created through his promises is revealed to the Christian as he is brought into the life of Christ. Conversely, this also means that one who is not baptized does not enter fully into the resurrected life of Christ and never experiences the Kingdom firsthand. Though he may hear God’s promises for the future, he is left without the same degree of assurance the Kingdom offers to the present age and his hope is left stunted and incomplete.

This is due in part to the fact that the sacraments themselves exemplify the forward-looking nature of God’s promises. In the quote by Schmemmann above, he notes that baptism joins one to the church. This allows them to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, and through that participation, to enter into the kingdom of God. In this way, baptism serves not only as a public reception of God’s promise, but also as the beginning of the restoration. Through statements of Scripture, like Romans 6:4, Christ’s death and resurrection, along with all of the benefits that come with them, are now expressly applied to the newly baptized. Eternal life and the joy of living that life in the presence of Christ in his Kingdom are now what the Christian has to look forward to and to give him hope. This gives greater assurance and hope to the newly baptized than God’s Word of promise does alone. They have not only heard God’s promise and

¹⁹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 37–38 [italics in original]. Schmemmann’s use of the concept of Pascha shows how the Christian comes to interact with God’s promised future. It is through Christ’s resurrection that God’s promises come to be fulfilled and the future Kingdom comes into the present world. The Pascha creates the connection between the present world and the future Kingdom. It is through God’s promises found in the sacraments that the Christian is joined to what Christ has done and is able to experience the future Kingdom that he brings.

believed it to be true, but they have also been given a physical sign of that promise and been told what that sign is accomplishing on their behalf. The Christian is now a demonstration of what is in store for all those who hold to God's promises. The sacraments point forward through the Christian's life to the restoration of the coming Kingdom.

In that baptism applies the death and resurrection of Christ to the Christian, it also is the first step in bringing restoration and hope to the rest of the world. Drawing on Paul's words in Romans 5–6, N. T. Wright states,

The revolutionary new world, which began in the resurrection of Jesus—the world where Jesus reigns as Lord, having won the victory over sin and death—has its frontline outposts in those who in baptism have shared his death and resurrection.²⁰

Since baptism applies Christ's resurrection to the Christian, a special event takes place. Christ's resurrection proved that eternal life can and does exist, as well as demonstrating what eternal life means. Paul's statement indicates that God has promised to take the eternal life that Christ brought into the world and give it to those who have been baptized. With Christ's resurrection, those who have been baptized can see what effect that resurrection has on the world, and have the assurance that the benefits of his resurrection have been applied to them. Schmemmann also adds in his discussion of the meaning of baptism,

As to the early Church she knew, and she knew it even before she could express and explain this knowledge in rational and consistent theories. She knew that in Baptism we truly die and truly rise again with Christ because she experienced this in her baptism mystery.²¹

²⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 249.

²¹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 60.

This experience is the very essence of the hope that Christians have. They have the realization that there truly is a better future waiting for them; a future given to them by the One for whom death already has no meaning. The resurrection that is found in God's future Kingdom is already applied to their lives now in the present through baptism. In the present reality of their baptism, the promise of the future in God's Kingdom is already theirs. Though the fulfillment of that promise awaits them in that promised future, they are given a glimpse of that fulfillment as their lives are bound by the rite of baptism to Christ and his resurrection, both a present and a future reality. Furthermore, as Wright's comment indicates, there are now people in the world for whom death is not the end. Christians have the baptismal experience of hope and are able to bring that hope to the rest of the world. They are able to share their firsthand account of the restoration they have received by being reunited with God and joining together as a Christian community. Their life in the Kingdom allows them to share a glimpse of the future Kingdom through their interaction with others.

The observation by Schmemmann regarding baptism in the paragraph above also has another function within the context of the church, and in the worship service in particular. Baptism does more than just allow Christians to be a part of the kingdom of God; it brings the restoration offered by the Kingdom into the world and has an effect on creation itself. Baptism, and the grace offered through it, restores things to their given role and allows them to carry out what they were designed to do. Schmemmann notes,

In the early Church *grace* meant above all that very victory over all dichotomies—"form" and "essence," "spirit" and "matter," "sign" and "reality"—which is made manifest in the sacrament and, indeed, in the whole life of the Church and which ultimately is the victory of Christ Himself, in whom and by whom the "forms" of this world can truly be, truly

communicate, truly fulfill that which they “represent”: the epiphany, in “this world” of the Kingdom of God and of its “new life.”²²

Baptism does not merely represent the joining of the Christian to the death and resurrection of Christ; it actually carries out this function.

Christ’s resurrection begins to restore the world to the role and purpose that it lost in its brokenness. Through the promise of God and the work of Christ, water is able to bring the life of Christ to the Christian. The physical and the spiritual are brought together in one action that renews both Christian and creation. Baptism restores the Christian’s role as king of creation, that is, its caretaker, protector, and benefactor.²³ This restoration of the role of the Christian comes nowhere else but through baptism. “How are we to fulfill this *kingship*? This question takes us to the other dimension, or, better to say, to the very depth of the baptismal mystery: to the central place in it of Christ’s Cross.”²⁴ For Schmemmann, the cross is the place where Christ is glorified as king. This is the point in which the old creation, the kingdom of sin begins retreating before the kingdom of God. Since it is the place where Christ seals his kingship, it is also through Christ on the cross that Christians receive their restored kingship within creation. By being bound to Christ’s life through baptism, Christians receive the benefits of what Christ did on the cross. This restoration of creation and of the role of the Christian brings hope to the Christian and to the church. The Christian is shown that such restoration is indeed possible. He is shown, in a small and incomplete way, what awaits him in the culmination of the Kingdom. He is shown that man and creation are not meant to be at odds, but instead work together in a harmony that brings joy

²² Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 57–58 [italics in original].

²³ *Ibid.*, 82.

to all and gives glory to its Creator. Schmemmann relates the connection between baptism and the world around by saying,

Baptism, by its very form and elements—the water of the baptismal font, the oil of christmation[*sic*]—refers us inescapably to “matter,” to the world, to the cosmos. In the early Church the celebration of baptism took place during the solemn Easter vigil, and in fact, the Easter liturgy grew out of the “Paschal mystery” of baptism. This means that baptism was understood as having a direct meaning for the “new time,” of which Easter is the celebration and the manifestation.²⁵

Schmemmann reiterates here that it is not just the Christian who benefits from baptism, but all of creation. Through this action, both Christian and creation are brought into Christ’s resurrection. They are brought into a time when death no longer has power or meaning. This indicates the outward direction of hope. God’s promises come to the Christian and show him the future that awaits him, but they do not stop there. God’s promises are directed through the Christian to all of creation, as God seeks to redeem and restore it all.

Baptism has one final purpose related to the forward-looking movement of promise and hope. Following the above quote, Schmemmann explains: “And finally, baptism and christmation were always fulfilled in the Eucharist—which is the sacrament of the Church’s ascension to the Kingdom, the sacrament of the ‘world to come.’”²⁶ Having been brought into Christ’s resurrection through baptism, the Christian can now look forward to ongoing participation in the Kingdom through the celebration of the Eucharist. Baptism enables the Christian to enter into the Kingdom and receive all that God offers him there.

²⁴ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 85.

²⁵ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

In the early tradition Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist “belong together,” form one liturgical sequence and “ordo,” because each sacrament within it is fulfilled in the other in such a way that it is impossible fully to understand the meaning of one in separation and isolation from the other two ... In baptism we are born again of Water and the Spirit, and it is this birth which makes us *open* to the gift of the Holy Spirit, to our personal Pentecost. And finally, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit that “opens” to us access to the Church, to Christ’s table in His Kingdom. We are baptized so that we may receive the Holy Spirit; we receive the Holy Spirit so that we may become living members of the Body of Christ, growing within the Church into the fullness of Christ’s stature.²⁷

Thus, baptism is not intended to be used alone, but leads the Christian to where further expressions of hope may be found in the Eucharist. The next section will examine the nature of the Eucharist and its relationship to the Kingdom.

The Sacraments Begin the Eschatological Restoration in the Present Day

As noted above, baptism focuses on bringing the Christian into the church and uniting him with God’s promises. However, the sacraments are not merely milestones marking a point in the life of the Christian. They are actively at work in his life giving him hope for the future, and through this hope, bringing a piece of the eschatological restoration to him today. In critiquing the modern church’s preoccupation with the elements of the Eucharist, Schmemmann states, “For the early Church the real question was: what happens to the *Church* in the Eucharist?”²⁸ He is pointing out here that the Eucharist is not just something the church does. The activity of the Eucharist works in both directions, with the church gathering together to celebrate it and the

²⁷ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 116 [italics in original]. Schmemmann’s Orthodox view has chrismation as a sacrament. Schmemmann sees chrismation as the rite in which the Holy Spirit is given to the new Christian. A typical Lutheran view holds that this is taking place within the baptismal rite and is not something that is done as a separate rite. Nevertheless, Schmemmann’s point regarding the unity of the sacraments and the need to maintain their connection is still valid.

²⁸ Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 19.

Eucharist having an impact on the church in the midst of the celebration. Therefore, understanding what the Eucharist has specifically to do with hope is important for seeing how God's promises continue to function in the life of the church in the present age.

Founded on the same Word of promise that defines baptism, the Eucharist continues the same eschatological theme of hope that was initiated by baptism. Where baptism is aligned closely with Christ's resurrection, bringing the Christian into a time where death already stands defeated, the Eucharist focuses on the ongoing participation in the Kingdom that is to come. The Eucharist offers the Christian a means by which he can gain a glimpse of what the final restoration will entail.²⁹ Like baptism, the Eucharist also functions as a sort of passage, leading the Christian to a place where, for a time, both the current, broken world and the restored world to come are superimposed on one another. Schmemmann offers this thought,

Each Communion is the end of our movement towards God but also the starting point of our renewed life, the beginning of a new journey through time in which we need Christ's presence to guide and sanctify our way.³⁰

The Eucharist is where the Christian encounters God, and thus forms the high point of the worship service. However, the encounter with God is only the beginning of what the Eucharist does. Schmemmann further explains,

For the Eucharist, we have said, is a *passage*, a procession leading the Church into "heaven," into her fulfillment as the Kingdom of God. And it is precisely the reality of this passage into the *Eschaton* that conditions the transformation of our offering — bread

²⁹ An example of what can be seen of the restoration through the Eucharist is the restoration of community, Christians coming together in peace and unity. Another is service to the neighbor, of sharing the life of the Kingdom with others. A further example is the praise of God as Lord. The example of community will be discussed later in this chapter. The examples of praising God and of serving one's neighbor will be dealt with in chapters four and six, respectively.

³⁰ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 67–68.

and wine — into the new food of the new creation, of our meal into the Messianic Banquet and the *Koinonia* of the Holy Spirit.³¹

The Eucharist draws the Christian into a setting where the fruits of Christ's resurrection are already being realized. Evidence of the restoration that is to come is already manifesting itself in the life of the church.

As Christ imparts his life to the Christian in baptism, he does so in the Eucharist through his Body and Blood. Like in baptism, creation is given a new, restored purpose as common bread and wine are united with God's promise in order to give life to his people. God's Word of promise brings eschatological significance to the events of baptism and the Eucharist as Christians are able to witness first-hand the restoration unfolding in their midst. N. T. Wright offers: "[Baptism] is one of the points, established by Jesus himself, where heaven and earth interlock, where new creation, resurrection life, appears within the midst of the old."³² He also offers a similar statement for the Eucharist,

To make any headway in understanding the Eucharist, we must see it as the arrival of God's future in the present, not just the extension of God's past (or of Jesus's past) into our present. We do not simply remember a long-since dead Jesus; we celebrate the presence of the living Lord. And he lives, through the resurrection, precisely as the one who has gone on ahead *into the new creation*, the transformed new world, as the one who is himself its prototype.³³

Wright's comments detail what it means for the new creation to intersect the old. Christians do not just hear what it is they should be looking forward to in the future. They are given the opportunity to see it, touch it, taste it, and rejoice in it for a time. In his discussion of the

³¹ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 82 [italics in original].

³² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 272.

³³ *Ibid.*, 274 [italics in original].

structure of the liturgy, Schmemmann points out, “According to the Fathers, *communion with the Word of God* precedes *communion with the Body and Blood of Christ*, both communions being the two means of our partaking of Christ.”³⁴ Both the Word and the sacraments are tied to a receiving of Christ and joining with him in his resurrected life. Thus the sacraments enable the Christian to experience the life of Christ himself, both his death and resurrection, as well as his future return.

The Eucharist is fundamentally an experience of Christ; therefore Moltmann’s thoughts relating God’s promises to the knowledge of Christ are also pertinent:

The knowledge of the future which is kindled by promise is therefore a knowledge in hope, is therefore prospective and anticipatory, but is therefore also provisional, fragmentary, open, straining beyond itself. It knows the future in striving to bring out the tendencies and latencies of the Christ event of the crucifixion and resurrection, and in seeking to estimate the possibilities opened up by this event. Here the Easter appearances of the crucified Christ are a constant incitement to the consciousness that hopes and anticipates, but on the other hand also suffers and is critical of existence. For these “appearances” make visible something of the eschatological future of the Christ event, and therefore cause us to seek and search for the future revelation of this event. Thus knowledge of Christ becomes anticipatory, provisional and fragmentary knowledge of his future, namely, of what he will be. All the titles of Christ point messianically forward in this sense. On the other hand, knowledge of the future has its stimulus nowhere else than in the riddle of Jesus of Nazareth. It will thus be knowledge of Christ in the urge to know who he is and what is hidden and prepared in him.³⁵

This experience and communion with Christ firmly fixes the hope for the future in the life of the Christian.

The promised Kingdom moves from an abstract concept toward a concrete reality; however it is a reality that is still incomplete. The restoration of the Christian in his relationship to God

³⁴ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 41.

³⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 203.

and the building of the community around him, the picture of joy that comes from a life of service to one's neighbor, as well as a life that is free from despair, all these things begin to take shape through the Christian's participation in the Eucharist. As Wright further adds,

We must remind ourselves yet once more that all Christian language about the future is a set of signposts pointing into a mist. Signposts don't normally provide you with advance photographs of what you'll find at the end of the road, but that doesn't mean they aren't pointing in the right direction. They are telling you the truth, the particular sort of truth that can be told about the future.³⁶

Even though the Kingdom is not yet fully realized, it still bleeds into the present because of the resurrection of Christ and his presence in the sacraments lifts the veil between the two for a time. The experience of the Kingdom is incomplete, and the participants are still tainted by the brokenness of the world, but nevertheless what the Christian sees and hears is real. The Eucharist orients the Christian to the life of Christ and his Kingdom and focuses him on the Kingdom's ultimate eschatological purpose. Schmemmann states,

For eucharist—thanksgiving and praise—is the very form and content of the new life that God granted us when in Christ He reconciled us with Himself. The reconciliation, the forgiveness, the power of life—all this has its purpose and fulfillment in this new state of being, this new style of life which is Eucharist, the only real life of creation with God and in God, the only true relationship between God and the world.

It is indeed the *preface* to the world to come, the door into the Kingdom: and this we confess and proclaim when, speaking of the Kingdom *which is to come*, we affirm that God *has already endowed us with it*. This future has been given to us in the past that it may constitute the very *present*, the life itself, now, of the Church.³⁷

³⁶ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 132.

³⁷ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 39 [italics in original].

This experience grounds the Christian's hope ever more firmly in the future that God promises. It begins the restoration of the Kingdom by bringing the Christian into the life of the Kingdom and giving him again the purpose all creation was meant to have, to give praise and thanks to God.

In addition, the Christian does not experience the Kingdom in isolation. As Schmemmann describes in the above quotes, the church comes together to celebrate this event. The Messianic Banquet and the *Koinonia*, the celebration of Christ's triumphant resurrection and his eventual return, are all facets of the event that takes place within the midst of the church as God allows the Kingdom to spill forth into the broken world. This celebration becomes another way in which the Christian sees the future Kingdom and what it will entail. The new life that comes through baptism is not just given to the individual, but the church as a whole. The church itself becomes a sign of hope; a sign of Christ's Kingdom and joins together in this celebration. Schmemmann explains,

The fruit of Baptism, its true fulfillment, is a new life; not simply a better, more moral or even more pious life, but a life *ontologically* different from the "old" one. And this difference, this very content of this "newness," is that it is *life with Christ*: '...if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him' (Rom. 6:8). It is *His Risen Life 'unto God'* that is given to us and becomes our life and our resurrection. But His Life in us, our life in Him is precisely the Church, for she has no other being, no other purpose and no other life but to be Christ in us and we in Christ. "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20): this *is* the Church; and this is why the sacrament of Christ's *parousia*, of His coming and presence, the sacrament of His sharing His Risen Life with us, is truly the sacrament of the Church and truly the fulfillment of Baptism.³⁸

This experience of the Kingdom offers the gathered assembly a hope that cannot be found anywhere else. The sacraments take the congregation and transform them from a group of

³⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 120–21 [italics in original].

individuals into the people who live in the presence of God, into a community that clings to the hope of new life in the Kingdom. The sacramental rite gives the church a foretaste of God and man restored, as well as man to fellow man and to creation.

This unity is also found as a theme of restoration in the Eucharist. Schmemmann notes, “In the holy gifts we recognize the holy body and blood of Christ, the sacrifice offered by Christ ‘on behalf of all and for all’; in communion we receive it with faith, hope and love in unity with Christ, with his life, with his kingdom.”³⁹ Here he is drawing on the communal aspect to the Eucharist, pointing out that it is as a community that the church shares in the Eucharist and receives the benefits of hope, the life of Christ, and inclusion in his Kingdom. Schmemmann builds on this idea by including the prayer of intercession, which is one of the last parts of the Eucharistic rite in the Liturgy of St. Basil. He says, “It would be more precise to define this prayer as the prayer of *the gathering of the Church, the body of Christ*, her manifestation in all fulness: And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the prayer, he comments on it by saying,

As I have already said above, this prayer gathers and unites the entire cosmic, ecclesiological and eschatological content of the eucharist, and thus also manifests and grants to us the very essence of communion, the essence of the body of Christ and the new life in Christ. Yet is not accidental, not from a love of repetition, that we are not

³⁹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 234–35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 235–38. Schmemmann includes the entirety of this prayer here, which roughly corresponds to what is often referred to as the “Prayers of the Church” in Western liturgies. Much of the prayer has implications for the relationship between God, the church, and the world. Only the first part is included here following Schmemmann’s introductory note. Though it is not, in the strictest sense, part of the Eucharist, Schmemmann discusses it here both to demonstrate his, somewhat broader, understanding of the sacraments as well as his desire to see the sacraments and the liturgy more closely connected. The liturgical aspect of the Prayers of the Church will be investigated in the next chapter.

immediately summoned to approach the chalice, that we delay it by this wonderful prayer, which seemingly slows down the rhythm of the eucharist. The reason of this delay is not that we once again confess our sins and prepare ourselves for receiving the holy things, but rather that the Church may fulfil herself in all fulness as the sacrament of the kingdom, as the *reality* of the new time and the new life.⁴¹

Here Schmemmann is showing that the Eucharist is completed in drawing together the gathered assembly and making them into the church, the body of Christ. This shows that it is not just that the Eucharist joins people together into the church, but that this joining and this community is integral to the kingdom of God. This also means that, since this restoration into a community is only experienced in the sacraments, the sacraments are essential to the fuller gift of hope that God offers because it is only here that Christians witness what the Kingdom has in store for them as a unified people.

It is important to note that, because the Kingdom has not yet arrived in its fullness, the eschatological experience brought on by the sacraments is incomplete. Even though the church experiences the Kingdom for a time, it is still mired in the sinful and broken world. The sacramental event makes the church even more aware of the fallen state of the present world and directs it to continue looking forward to the coming of the Kingdom, to the creation that will be restored. Wright echoes the sentiment of Moltmann in the previous chapter when he says,

Transience acts as a God-given signpost pointing not from the material world to a non-material world but from the world *as it is* to the world *as it is meant one day to be*—pointing, in other words, from the present to the future that God has in store.⁴²

The sacraments enable the assembly to see the contrast between the present world and the world to come. The church can use the experience of the Kingdom within the sacraments as a guide to

⁴¹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 239 [italics in original].

⁴² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 95 [italics in original].

recognize that their hope must always be fixed on the future it has witnessed. The present world does not even resemble the incomplete picture of the Kingdom seen in the sacraments, much less the restored creation that is hoped for and promised by God.

The church is made sharply aware of the ongoing brokenness of the world, and as a result, the church becomes aware of its role and mission in bringing hope to the world around it. Schmemmann continues in his discussion of the Eucharist,

It is there, finally, that we partake of the food of immortality, are made participants of the Messianic Banquet of the New Pascha; it is from there, "having seen the true light, having received the heavenly Spirit," that we return into "this world" ("let us depart in peace") as witnesses of the Kingdom which is "to come."⁴³

The sacraments bring Christians into the Kingdom and give them an anchor for their hope in the promise of the future it offers. This means that Christian hope is directed forward to that future. The brokenness of the present world and the dearth of hope that is found beyond the walls of the church also direct that hope outwards into creation. This outward direction of hope begins in the sacramental event, is enhanced by the liturgy surrounding it, and moves from the church out into the world as the congregation carries it in their daily lives. How the liturgy accomplishes this and how Christians carry hope into the world will be explored in subsequent chapters. At this point it is important to realize that the sacraments are the foundation for how Christians interact with God's Kingdom and the hope it brings. The liturgy is building on the church's experience of the Kingdom and shaping the hope found there. Without that hope, the liturgy is unable to complete the tasks it is designed to carry out. Without the liturgy, the church is not properly molded into its vocation and is unable to realize its role in bringing hope to the world around it. Thus, the

⁴³ Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 83.

sacraments are the vital point God utilizes to give hope not only to his people, but also to the rest of the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITURGY AND HOPE

Thus far the path of Christian hope has been charted from its genesis in the promises of God, through its connection to the current promise of the coming Kingdom, to the presence of that Kingdom in the sacraments. However, the path of hope does not end here. The activity engendered by Christian hope is not confined solely to the act of pouring water over the head of a new Christian or of the eating and drinking of Christ's Body and Blood at the altar. These acts are situated within a series of rites and rituals, and though it is the sacraments that give these rites their meaning, the function and purpose of the rites is somewhat different. This chapter will demonstrate that the liturgy surrounding the sacraments prepares the congregation to receive the sacraments and gives them the tools necessary to understand, express, and live out the hope that is given to them in the sacraments in the rest of their lives. It will first show how the liturgy surrounds and supports the message of hope that stems from the sacraments. The liturgy provides context for the sacraments and shows how they are founded on God's Word of promise and how they are eschatologically focused. The chapter will then show how the liturgy directs the attention of the church outward into the world. The church becomes aware of creation's need for the hope that has been given to Christians. The liturgy begins to form the church into a people who carry that hope into the hope-less world and become God's agents for beginning the restoration of the Kingdom.

Unfortunately, in the modern church, liturgy and the sacraments have been divorced from one another. Liturgy is no longer focused on the sacraments, but instead all manner of other

themes, such as strict rubricism or abstract symbolism, become the major focal points for liturgical activity.¹ This leads to an inability to perceive and experience the theology offered by the sacraments, including the Christian hope and the broader field of eschatology.² Only by seeing how liturgy functions as an extension of the sacraments and utilizing it in this manner can the full scope of Christian hope be perceived, experienced, and lived. When the liturgy is kept in a cohesive whole with the sacraments, the restoration that has begun in the sacraments continues on into the rest of the life of the church. The activity of the Kingdom begins to spread to the rest of creation as the church begins living as a restored people. The experience of hope found in the sacramental connection to the Kingdom becomes a liturgical life of hope shared first with the rest of the church and then the rest of the world.

This chapter will take the thread of hope that extends through eschatology and the presence of the Kingdom within the sacraments and demonstrate how that hope flows into the life of the church outside of the sacramental rites. It will then show how that hope continues on into the rest of the world because the church has learned what it means to be a people of hope. This is possible because the liturgical actions of the worship service have molded them into a people who are able to carry that hope to the world. Because Christians are given hope through the

¹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 29–31. Schmemmann argues that oftentimes explanations are given to an existing rite that run contrary to the purpose of that rite's development. He describes in the Orthodox ordo how the rite known as the "Little Entrance," where the Bible is brought up to the altar, is now said to represent Christ going out to preach the gospel amongst the people. Not only is the direction of the movement incorrect, the rite itself was designed with a different purpose. This sort of confusion can also happen on a larger scale, where an entire rite is added to the ordo that either does not fit with the liturgical context or does not mesh with the liturgical theme of that particular Sunday. Any of these will present a confusing message to those who are participating and will muddy the liturgical theology of the worship service.

² Fisch, *Liturgy and Tradition*, 44–45.

sacraments, the thread of hope is able to flow out from them into the rest of the world that does not yet have that hope.

Liturgy Reveals the Reality of God and of the Kingdom

The previous chapter discussed how the sacraments bring the Christian into participation with the Kingdom and, through that experience, reveal the brokenness of the world around him. While the sacraments focus on the future Kingdom and emphasize life within it, one of the main roles of the liturgy is to focus the Christian's attention on the present world and its need for hope. This shows the Christian that there are two distinct facets to his life. As a creature in the fallen creation, he needs the hope that God's promises provide and looks forward to the fulfillment of those promises. As a participant in the Kingdom, he is already living a life redeemed and restored, having already received the fulfillment promised. Thus, the Christian lives in a dual state where both are true. Because the Christian has already received the restoration and, at the same time, is hopefully looking forward to it, both of these states must be maintained. Therefore, it is necessary for the liturgy to emphasize the realities of the present life of the Christian so that he is made aware that he has received hope in the Kingdom and can then bring that hope to the rest of creation. In this way also, the liturgy serves to prepare the Christian. He is made aware of his brokenness and thus is aware of what the Kingdom is restoring within him. Schmemmann speaks to these functions of the liturgy, saying,

It is in and through liturgy that this double nature of the Church is revealed and communicated to us. It is the proper function of the liturgy to "make" the Church preparation and to reveal her as fulfillment. Every day, every week, every year is thus transformed and made into this double reality, into a correlation between the "already" and the "not yet." We could not have prepared ourselves for the Kingdom of God which is "yet to come" if the Kingdom were not "already" given to us. We could never have made the *end* an object of love, hope and desire if it were not revealed to us as a glorious and radiant *beginning*. We could never have prayed "Thy

Kingdom come!” if we did not have the taste of that Kingdom already communicated to us.³

In this way, the liturgy both prepares Christians for participation in the Kingdom, as people who have already experienced it, and prepares them for the work of the Kingdom in the world.

The liturgy is capable of preparing Christians for the sacramental experience of the Kingdom because it draws on the meaning and purpose of the sacraments themselves. The liturgy focuses the attention of the congregation on the sacraments, expanding on the meaning and experience found within them. The liturgy then helps the congregation to integrate that experience with their present life in the world and in the church. As Schmemmann adds: “But throughout our study the main point has been that the whole liturgy is *sacramental*, that is, one transforming act and one ascending movement.”⁴ The liturgy is part of the sacramental process. It may not connect the Christian with the Kingdom in the way the sacraments themselves do, but it guides him toward that experience and is united to it. This interaction with the sacraments is one of the fundamental features of the liturgy. Schmemmann further explains,

The fundamental rule of liturgical theology, a rule seldom applied in artificial “symbolic” explanations of worship, is that the true meaning of each liturgical act is revealed through context, i.e. by its place within the *ordo*, the sequence of acts constituting the *leitourgia*—that, in other terms each rite receives its meaning and also its “power” from that which precedes it and that which follows.⁵

The liturgy does not create meaning, nor does it have a meaning that can be dissociated from the sacraments. The liturgy forms the context of the sacraments and draws upon their meaning precisely because they form the focal point of the liturgy.

³ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 17.

⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 42.

⁵ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 74.

The intimate connection between the sacraments and the liturgy exists because of their common foundation on the Word of God. God's Word provides continuity and direction between the sacraments and liturgical activities that surround them. Schmemmann notes,

Only in this unbreakable unity of word and sacrament can we truly understand the meaning of the affirmation that the Church alone preserves the true meaning of scripture. That is why the necessary *beginning* of the Eucharistic ceremony is the first part of the liturgy—the *sacrament of the word*, which finds its fulfillment and completion in the offering, consecration and distribution to the faithful of the eucharistic gifts.⁶

Thus, the Service of the Word that constitutes the first half of the traditional service of worship is not an end unto itself, but rather is part of a greater whole. One of the things that the Scripture readings, the sermon, and all of the smaller aspects of the liturgy that surround them do is immerse the Christian in God's promises. They inform him again and again what God is promising to him and what that promise means for him as an individual, for the church around him, and for the world as a whole. The Service of the Word finds its fulfillment in the Eucharist because it is there in the sacrament that the promises begin to be fulfilled. The Christian hears the stories from Scripture and is brought into the lives of the people of God from the past. He hears God's promises to those people and experiences the fulfillment that God gave to them by seeing them in the context of his own life. He shares this experience with the rest of the church as they are gathered together as God's people. God's Word invites the church into the Kingdom, which is then found in the very presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In this way, the liturgy functions as

⁶ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 68–69 [italics in original]. Schmemmann's argument in this section is one of ecclesiology. He is making the claim that it is the church, rather than some outside authority, that is given the ability to understand Scripture. Only the church hears the proclaimed word of God in the worship service and participates in the sacraments. This is what gives it the authority to explore the meaning of Scripture. While Schmemmann is not really trying to make a liturgical point, the assertion he makes is still very relevant to the realm of liturgical theology and supports the argument for continuity that is made here.

a conduit for hope. Through the Word, the liturgy gives the Christian a promise from God to cling to and then directs him to where he can see the ultimate outcome of that promise. In this liturgical process, hope is both given to the Christian through God's promises as well as strengthened as he sees those promises at work in the very midst of the assembly.

Through the interaction between the liturgy and the sacraments, the eschatological orientation of the sacraments comes into focus.

The place of worship is called *church* ("naos," "khram" — temple). ... the central idea is that of the temple as "heaven on earth," the place where through our participation in the liturgy of the Church, we enter into communion with the *age to come*, the Kingdom of God.⁷

It is within the liturgy that the church comes to realize the sacramental connection it has with God, and begins to realize, to live out, that connection.

Christian worship is symbolic not because it contains various "symbolical" depictions. It may indeed include them, but chiefly in the imagination of various "commentators" and not in its own *ordo* and rites. Christian worship is symbolic because, first of all, the world itself, God's own creation, is symbolic, is *sacramental*; and second of all, because it is the Church's nature, her task in "this world," to fulfil this symbol, to realize it as the "most real of realities."⁸

The gathering of the church in the worship service is not simply a time of reflection on God, a time to celebrate what God has done for his people, or even a time to receive forgiveness of sins.

The worship service contains all of these things, but it has an even greater goal: to live out the kingdom of God in the present world. As Christ's resurrection brought eternal life into the present, and as the sacraments take the eternal life found in Christ and manifest it, the church acts sacramentally to bring the future kingdom of God into the present.

⁷ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 34–35 [italics in original].

⁸ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 40 [italics in original].

As has been said, the liturgy guides the church in understanding, encountering, and living out the sacramental and eschatological reality. In order to do this, the liturgy is structured in such a way as to facilitate this process, guiding the church away from the present life into the communion with God in the future Kingdom, and then guiding it back to the present. The church is not fully transformed and restored, because Christ has not yet come into the world. However, the church has an experience of the Kingdom and witnesses the hope-filled future it brings, which it then carries back with it to the present.

This guiding function of the liturgy is described by Schmemmann as an ascending and descending movement, leading the church from this world to the next and back again. This ascending movement reaches its pinnacle with the Eucharist, where the church actually enters into the presence of God. Thus the whole liturgy centers on this one point. It prepares the congregation for entering into God's presence, and then guides it back into the present world where it can process the experience that it has had and begin to apply it. Though the liturgical *dénouement* that follows the Eucharist in the ordo is rather short, it nonetheless begins the process of reorienting the Christian to the present world.⁹ Schmemmann begins unpacking what this means by saying,

But throughout our study the main point has been that the whole liturgy is *sacramental*, that is, one transforming act and one ascending movement. And the very goal of this movement of ascension is to take us out of "this world" and to make us partakers of the *world to come*. In *this world*—the one that condemned Christ and by doing so has condemned itself—no bread, no wine can become the body and blood of Christ. Nothing which is a *part* of it can be "sacralized." But the liturgy of the

⁹ A couple of examples can be given to help see this at work. The collect that traditionally comes after the Eucharist typically reflects on the sacramental experience and relates it to the Christian's life as he prepares to go back out into the world. The benediction that closes out the service is a blessing that is given precisely because of what the church has just participated in by celebrating the Eucharist.

Church is always an *anaphora*, a lifting up, an ascension. The Church fulfills itself in heaven in that *new eon* which Christ has inaugurated in His death, resurrection and ascension, and which was given to the Church on the day of Pentecost as its life, as the “end” toward which it moves. In this world Christ is crucified, His body broken, and His blood shed. And we must go out of this world, we must ascend to heaven in Christ in order to become partakers of the world to come.¹⁰

It is only because of the Kingdom and the promise associated with it that Christians have hope in the future. For this hope to become fully realized, Christians are taken out of this world to experience that future and to see briefly what the object of their hope is. Thus, as Schmemmann says, the liturgy is an ascension, a travelling upward, akin to going up the heights of Zion to be in the Temple and the presence of God. Christians do not become permanent residents of the Kingdom through this liturgical ascension. They receive an experience of what is to come in the future of the Kingdom, which they then bring back to the present with them to bring hope to their lives and the lives of those around them

This ascension is not to be confused with leaving the physical world for a spiritual one.

Schmemmann continues,

But this is not an “other” world, different from the one God has created and given to us. It is our same world, *already* perfected in Christ, but *not yet* in us. It is our same world, redeemed and restored, in which Christ “fills all things with Himself.” And since God has created the world as food for us and has given us food as means of communion with Him, of life in Him, the new food of the new life which we receive from God in His Kingdom *is Christ Himself*.¹¹

The church is drawn for a time, not into a new existence in a spiritual realm, but into the physical world as God has restored it. The church gets to live in this world, experience this world, just for a short while, and returns to the present world. The church does not enter the Kingdom in order

¹⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 42 [italics in original].

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42–43 [italics in original].

to leave the present world behind, but specifically so that it may return to that world bearing the life of Christ and the hope that he offers with it.

He became man and lived in this world. He ate and drank, and this means that the world of which he partook, the very food of our world became His body, His life. But His life was totally, absolutely *eucharistic*—all of it was transformed into communion with God and all of it ascended into heaven. And now He shares this glorified life with us. “What I have done alone—I give it now to you: take, eat.”¹²

This reiterates Schmemmann’s point from the first chapter. Christ came into this world and is the savior and redeemer of this world. Christians are not taken out of the world because creation itself is evil, nor are they made perfect by their experience of the Kingdom. Rather, their brief encounter with the Kingdom is where they are given the resurrected life of Christ, which they then take back with them to share with the world around them.

The rites of the liturgy work together to provide this ascending motion. A discussion of some of the individual elements of the liturgy will help to illustrate how the liturgy interacts with the sacraments. The first example is the reading of Scripture within the worship service. Scripture, by its very nature, is God’s Word spoken to his people. Thus, it contains everything he wishes for his people to know. In regards to hope, the promises of God are of primary importance. The promises of God, given in Scripture, are about the future Kingdom and tell the church of the coming of that Kingdom, as well as where that Kingdom is found in the present in the Eucharist. The reading of Scripture re-presents the promises of God to his people and invites them once again to join him in his Kingdom. Schmemmann argues,

Yet in the liturgical and spiritual tradition of the Church, the Church’s essence as the incarnation of the Word, as the fulfillment in time and space of the divine incarnation, is realized precisely in the unbreakable link between the word and the sacrament.

¹² Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 43 [italics in original].

Thus the book of Acts can say of the *Church*: “the word...grew and multiplied” (12:24). In the sacrament we partake of him who comes and abides with us in the word, and the mission of the Church consists precisely in announcing this good news. The word presupposes the sacrament as its fulfilment, for in the sacrament Christ the Word becomes our life. The Word assembles the Church for his incarnation in her. ... it is precisely through the sacrament that the word is interpreted, for the interpretation of the word is always witness to the fact that the Word has become our life. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.” (Jn 1:14). The sacrament is his witness, and therefore in it lies the source, the beginning and the foundation of the exposition and comprehension of the word, the source and criterion of theology. Only in this unbreakable unity of word and sacrament can we truly understand the meaning of the affirmation that the Church alone preserves the true meaning of scripture. That is why the necessary *beginning* of the eucharistic ceremony is the first part of the liturgy—the *sacrament of the word*, which finds its fulfilment and completion in the offering, consecration and distribution to the faithful of the eucharistic gifts.¹³

This reading of God’s Word within the liturgy not only re-presents the promises of God to his people once again, it roots the life of the church within the historic progression of promise and fulfillment that fills the pages of Scripture. The church comes to know that the promises made by God in Scripture, such as eternal life and of dwelling in the Kingdom in the presence of God, are meant for it and for all people. With this awareness, the church looks in hope-filled expectation to the fulfillment promised, a fulfillment that begins in the Eucharist.

The reading of God’s Word is a foundation of hope within the liturgy, but it is not the only expression of hope that can be found there. The liturgical event that Schmemmann calls the “eucharistic offering” is one that is so subtle that it can be easily overlooked.¹⁴ The eucharistic offering is the presentation of the bread and wine for use by the church in communion. While it

¹³ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 68–69 [italics in original]. In this book, Schmemmann illustrates in broad strokes how the different liturgical elements are extensions of the Eucharist. To help make his point, he refers to them as sacraments, in this case the sacrament of the word. It is not that he sees it as a sacrament that stands on its own. Rather, that the reading of Scripture is an extension of the true sacrament; one piece of the larger whole that makes up the Eucharist.

is a fixture in Eastern rites, the Western rites do not always include it during the liturgy proper.

Nonetheless, it is an exercise of hope.

Bread and wine. By bringing these humble human gifts—our earthly food and drink—and placing them on the altar, we perform, often without thinking of it, that most ancient, primordial rite that from the first day of human history constituted the core of every religion: we offer a sacrifice to God.¹⁵

Whether it takes place in the midst of the service or whether the bread and wine are prepared on the altar prior to the start of service, the offering of the bread and wine for the Eucharist is full of anticipation and hope. Christ took plain bread and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me,” and took everyday wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”¹⁶ In this act, Christ turned ordinary things into the vehicles of mercy and salvation. The offering of bread and wine by the church for use in the Eucharist is an act of anticipation, anticipation that the event that took place with Christ and the disciples in the upper room will take place again in the church. It is a response to Christ’s promise that he will again be present in the midst of his people through his body and blood and that his people will again experience all that his presence brings with it.

In relation to Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist is something even more fundamental and basic: the gathering itself. The congregation gathers precisely because it has been given promises by God, a promise of his presence in the midst of the assembly and a promise that the congregation is something more than just a group of people, it is the body of Christ.

¹⁴ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 105.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

When I say that I am going to church, it means I am going into the assembly of the faithful in order, together with them, to *constitute the Church*, in order to be what I became on the day of my baptism—a *member*, in the fullest, absolute meaning of the term, of the body of Christ. “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it,” says the apostle (1 Co 12:27). I go to manifest and realize my membership, to manifest and witness before God and the world the mystery of the kingdom of God, which already “has come in power.”

It has come and is coming in power—in the Church. This is the mystery of the Church, the mystery of the body of Christ: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). The miracle of the church assembly lies in that it is not the “sum” of the sinful and unworthy people who comprise it, but the body of Christ.¹⁷

The church gathers together in light of this dual promise. It has the hopeful expectation that Christ will be present in the assembly, and through his presence, that the kingdom of God is not far off. The promise of Christ’s presence becomes the basis for hope in the liturgy, as the congregation is prepared by gathering in the name of Christ to look forward to the coming of the Kingdom in the Eucharistic celebration. This hope is also realized in the gathering as Christians come together to become what they have been made through faith in God’s promise. Christ’s life is in the church because it is the body of Christ.

The entrance rite of the *ordo* embodies this understanding and prepares the congregation for the sacramental reality it will be encountering in the service. It announces through the invocation what the purpose of the gathering is, to enter into the presence of God. This presents the theme for the entire service and calls the congregation to look ahead to the event that accomplishes this goal: the entrance into the presence of God in his Kingdom through the Eucharist. Thus, hope in the coming Kingdom is expressed in the church’s gathering, to live in

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 ESV.

¹⁷ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23 [italics in original].

the life of Christ. “We forget, meanwhile, that we are the Church, we make it up, that Christ abides in his members and that the Church does not exist outside us or above us, but *we are in Christ and Christ is in us.*”¹⁸

Liturgy is the Church Living the Restoration of the Kingdom

As stated above, the liturgy extends the meaning and activity of the restoration presented in the sacraments. It may be asked why it is necessary to expand the restoration beyond the sacramental rite itself. If the sacraments usher the Christian into the kingdom of God and offer the restoration God provides, what further purpose could there be? To answer this, the discussion of God’s promises that was offered in chapter two must be recalled. God’s promises drive the world forward through history toward the fulfillment. In this case, God’s promise of the Kingdom, given through the sacraments, is driving the world to look for the return of Christ and the permanent establishment of the Kingdom on earth that will accompany him. God’s restoration does not end with the Christian, but rather through the liturgy restores the Christian community and uses it as a vehicle to bring the restoration to the rest of creation. In order to see this restoration in action, several rites will be drawn from the liturgy and examined for their connection to the Kingdom and to themes of hope.

Part of the restoration relates to the Christian’s connection to other people and to creation as a whole. This restoration is therefore a restoration of vocation. Through the experience of the Kingdom, the Christian is enabled to live out his vocation as caretaker of creation. Having had the experience of the Kingdom and the vision of a world restored, the liturgy turns the attention

¹⁸ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23.

of the Christian to the world around him that is in need of that restoration. The Christian begins his work by acting on its behalf as a mediator before God. Christians see the model for this priestly activity in the work of Christ in the sacraments. Schmemmann notes that the ability to act in this fashion comes “from [the church’s] experience both of Christ and of His unique priesthood.”¹⁹ Through the sacraments, Christians are restored to their original purpose and vocation, as well as restored to the church, the Body of Christ. As the collective Body of Christ, the church stands as priest before the world and offers prayers and sacrifices on its behalf. In this activity, the church begins fulfilling its sacramentally restored vocation. The prayers, sacrifices, and other actions it performs on behalf of the world manifest the first steps of Christian hope into the rest of creation. It is the point at which the joys and struggles of the world as a whole are lifted up to God and carried by the church into his presence in the Kingdom. In this vocation as priest both the church and the world are restored. As Schmemmann puts it,

This calling is to sanctify and to transform ourselves and our lives, as well as the world given to each of us as our kingdom: *Ourselves*—by constantly offering our life, our work; our joys as well as our sufferings to God; by making them always open to God’s will and grace; by being that which we have become in Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit; by transforming our life into that which the Holy Spirit has made it: a “liturgy,” a service to God and communion with Him. *The world*—by being truly “men for the others,” not in the sense of constant involvement in social or political affairs, to which one so often reduces Christianity today, but by being always, everywhere and in all things *witnesses* to Christ’s Truth, which is the only true life and bearers of that sacrificial love which is the ultimate essence and content of man’s priesthood.²⁰

¹⁹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 94–95.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97–98 [italics in original].

As a priest, the church as a whole acknowledges that creation does not belong to it, but to God. The church returns to God what is his as a eucharistic thank offering and enables them to again serve their Creator, as the water, bread, and wine of the sacraments already do.

The second way in which Christians embody the restoration is in the act of praise. As witnesses of Christ and his work, Christians are enabled to witness to the already-existing presence of Christ and the promises he will fulfill. Through the liturgy, the congregation is shown what it means to be a part of the Kingdom and it takes the first step in bringing that Kingdom into the rest of the world. As the congregation sings its praises to God, it finds itself restored to its created order. Here Christians again know what it means to know God and to be recipients of his promises.

In praising God and offering to God its very being, the church comes to know the full breadth of what it has experienced within the sacraments. It sees itself as God's servant, as citizens and heirs of the Kingdom. It acknowledges Christ as King and awaits the time of the fulfillment, when he will take possession of the world and establish his Kingdom on earth forever.

The third way in which the restoration is embodied is through the understanding of time. With the awareness of Christ and the participation in his Kingdom, the Christian understanding of time changes. Since Christ's resurrection has brought part of the future back into the present, the old order of things is already passing away. Christ's resurrection demonstrates this transcendence. The world, formed in the seven days of creation, endures in a fallen and broken state. Christ, rising to life on the day after the Sabbath rest, ushers in a new time, a time that moves beyond the broken creation into the eternity of the Kingdom. "Christ rose from the dead on the *first day* after Sabbath. The life that shone forth from the grave was beyond the

inescapable limitations of ‘seven,’ of time that leads to death. It was thus the beginning of a new life and of a new time.”²¹ As Christians gather together and commemorate the Lord’s Day and recall Christ’s resurrection, they bring into their own lives an awareness that this resurrection has brought them into new life in the kingdom of God as well.

Earlier in the chapter it was discussed how the liturgy prepares the church for the sacraments. In a similar fashion, the liturgy prepares the church to carry the hope found in the sacrament out into the world.²² This function of liturgy is carried out, in part, through living out the life of Christ within the context of the worship service. By walking through the life of Christ, the church is immersed again in the promises of God and shown how he is already in the process of fulfilling them. The experience of Christ’s resurrection and goal of the Kingdom is again expressed in Word and sacrament. The various holy days of the liturgical year are the primary way in which the life of Christ is experienced in the church. Schmemmann explains the purpose of the liturgical year,

The life and the teaching of Christ also must constantly be “referred” to worship. A good example here is the study of holidays and the calendar. Our liturgical year is built on the *remembrance* of Christ. The church calendar fills time with the memory of Christ and makes time itself an image of salvation and new life. For someone to whom worship is a living experience, the frequently used *Today* (as for instance, “Today He is lying in His tomb,” on Holy Saturday) is not merely a rhetorical “figure of speech.” For it is indeed the proper function of liturgy that in and through it everything that Christ accomplished *once* always returns to life, is made *present* again, actualized in its relation to us and our salvation. A feast thus is an entrance

²¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 51.

²² The details of how this takes place will be explored more fully in chapter five as it addresses the topic of Christian vocation.

into, and communion with the eternal meaning of an event of the past, through which we taste of the Kingdom of God.²³

Though in essence they are commemorations of important events, since they are a remembrance of God's activity in the world, they also are a preparation for the restoration found in the Kingdom. These holy days are both a commemoration and a feast, a celebration of what God has done and what God will do. Schmemmann gives an example as he speaks at length on the significance of Christmas,

Within the framework of Pascha and the fifty-two Sundays—the fifty-two “Paschas”—within the fundamental paschal joy, the Church fills the natural time of the year with certain special *commemorations*, whose cycle begins in the fall. The first great theme of the year is the *coming of Christ* into the world. We shall call this the cycle of *Christmas and Epiphany*. It begins forty days before Christmas with “Advent” or Christmas Lent. The coming of Christmas is the beginning of Christianity. Who are the Christians? Those who know that Christ has come and who expect His return. What then gives meaning to a particular day, to the *today* we live in? Is it not simply one day out of a long sequence of days that each one of us has to live through? Yet for me, as a Christian, its new and deep meaning comes from the past. It is a day related to Christ's coming into the world, a day *after* His coming, And thus a Christian is the one who, first of all, *remembers*. He can forget Christ; he can wake up in the morning and think only of the petty concerns of that particular day. Yet, on a deeper level, even these minor concerns become a very different experience if he remembers that he is not simply John Smith who has to do this or that, but the one to whom Christ has come, whose life Christ has assumed and has given new meaning. “Today,” however, has a second meaning, because it is also a day *before* Christ's return. Thus I am always living between the two comings of Christ: the one in the past, the other in the future. And finally, the meaning of *today* comes to me from the words of Christ, who says that He is *always* with me. “And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 27:20). Past, present, future—we see that the time in which we live is not only the time of the calendar, but the time that is shaped from inside and transformed by faith, by Christian experience.²⁴

²³ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 19 [italics in original].

²⁴ *Ibid*, 79–80 [italics in original].

The commemoration of Christ's birth at Christmas thus sets the tone for Christian life. It serves as a reminder that every moment of a Christian's life is one that takes place after Christ has come into the world. The Christian's life is now marked as one who looks forward to the return of Christ, as well as the awareness that he continues to be present with his people prior to that return.

Both on the specific holy days and in the regular weekly services, the church gathers together to celebrate life lived in the Kingdom. This celebration gives structure and meaning to the life of the church and of the individual Christian by relating it to God's promises made by and through Christ. It directs the Christian to look ahead to the arrival of the Kingdom that is already present in the midst of the gathered assembly.²⁵ In singing together the Sanctus,

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!²⁶

The congregation joins together with the words of Isaiah in standing in the presence of the Lord and proclaiming him Lord over all of creation. This act of praise acknowledges his presence in the midst of the assembly, already ruling as Lord. It is a celebration of Christ's return and of the establishment of the Kingdom. Though this is normally the focus of the last weeks of the liturgical year, the promise of Christ's return is the one promise that still awaits fulfillment. Thus, even in the midst of the other festival days that center on other parts of Christ's life, the promise of Christ's return stands above them and calls the congregation not to fixate on these

²⁵ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 53–54.

²⁶ There are many ways in which different liturgical rites may display themes of hope. These may vary depending on the nuances of performance in a particular parish and by different church traditions. The examples chosen here are not intended to provide an exhaustive list of hope-filled rites. These examples are the one the author believes most clearly display themes of hope in their traditional wording or in their typical performance.

other festivals too long, because God still has more in store for them. As Schmemmann adds, “What are these words of the royal greeting if not an *icon*: the gift, vision, revelation of the kingdom of glory; if not meeting with God, fulfilled through thanksgiving, at his table, in his kingdom?”²⁷ It also joins together with the words of Matthew in proclaiming the Lord as coming into the world to reign forever. Luther Reed, in his examination of Lutheran liturgical rites notes in his discussion of the Sanctus that “the early church gave eschatological meaning to the words, Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord,’ by placing them after the Communion in a closing prayer which carried the thought forward to the return of our Lord (the Parousia).”²⁸

As Christians who have experienced the Kingdom and are being brought into the midst of it, the Sanctus is an affirmation of who God has already revealed himself to be in the event of the resurrection. They, as those restored in the presence of God in his Kingdom, affirm him as the revealed Lord. They also acknowledge the hope that they have, which they find in the presence of God, as they await his eventual return and the establishment of the Kingdom in the perpetual presence of God. Though the congregation is joining with the angels in the singing of this hymn when it gathers in worship, there is also the hopeful expectation of singing it together with the saints who have gone before and with the faithful around the world when Christ returns and the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord. The Sanctus is then a hymn of the order between God and man which has been and continues to be restored by his Word of promise.

²⁷ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 190.

²⁸ Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947), 331.

In a similar fashion the hymn of praise, whether the Gloria in Excelsis or the more recent Lutheran addition “This is the Feast,” is the exultant cry of the restored order and expresses the hopeful expectation of the future Kingdom to come. The Gloria is a recognition of the mercy and lordship of God. It acknowledges him as one who continues to fulfill his promises through his redemptive activity. Luther Reed notes regarding the Gloria: “Its outburst of joy and praise to the Holy Trinity lifts the worshipers from thought of human need to glorification of God’s majesty, power, and holiness. . . . The Gloria in Excelsis is not merely a hymn of praise to the Father, but a ‘jubilant anthem of redemption.’”²⁹ Peter Brunner also adds: “As the congregation sings the hymn of praise in worship, it participates in the ‘new’ song of the saints of God. It is particularly the hymn of praise in which the glorifying voice of the church on earth harmonizes ‘with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven. Thus the hymn of praise is an end-time sign, indicating that God will one day be all in all.’”³⁰

The comments from Brunner and Reed illuminate the character of the hymn of praise. The Gloria’s ascending direction highlights how the church is drawn upward into the presence of God. It is even more evident in *This is the Feast*, as the congregation looks forward to its participation in the victory feast of God that takes place in the Eucharist as well as awaiting with hope and joy the final feast that comes with Christ’s triumphal return. In this way, both hymns emphasize the promise made by God to bring a complete restoration. They offer praise to the God who has thus far kept his promises and they allude to the fulfillment that all of creation waits for. Thus, the congregation is lifting up the praises of all creation as it carries out the

²⁹ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 273.

³⁰ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 210–11.

priestly role that has been restored to it. As Schmemmann summarizes, “[The Church] is priestly in her relationship to herself, for her life is to offer herself to God, and she is priestly in her relationship to the world, for her mission is to offer the world to God and thus to sanctify it.”³¹

This action of offering the world to God is not restricted to thanks and praise, but also the prayers and concerns of the world as well. All of creation is caught up in the course of history that God has appropriated and redirected through his promise. Thus, with the exception of those who reject God’s promises, all of creation looks forward to the fulfillment promised. As Moltmann described previously, this also means that all of creation also lives in a state that is visibly inferior to the one promised. All of creation awaits the fulfillment and in the meantime it struggles with the evils and brokenness that pervades it. In response to this, the hope that creation has is manifested in the prayers that the church offers up to God on its behalf.

The foremost example of prayer in the liturgy is the Lord’s Prayer. Luther Reed describes its relationship to the Eucharist,

The Lord’s Prayer is found in every liturgy in close connection with the Holy Communion. . . . It is the distinctive prayer of the children of God, who, conscious of their fellowship and unity as brethren and of their part in the communion of saints, are about to come to the table of the Lord. As such we may think of it as consecratory of believers.³²

The Lord’s Prayer is intimately connected to the Christian understanding of hope. The church not only prays for itself, that God would sustain and protect it, but on behalf of all creation. It is a prayer that looks at the state of the present world and its brokenness and calls upon God for

³¹ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, 97.

³² Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 364.

restoration. It is a prayer that also looks to the future and the arrival of God's Kingdom to end the suffering of creation. In looking at the second petition, Schmemmann says this,

On the one hand it seems to refer to the future, to the end, to the beyond; it seems to refer to that for which its opponents, the atheists, have always chided Christianity—that Christianity seems to have its center of gravity in some other invisible world beyond the grave, and therefore remains unmoved by the evil and injustice of this world, that Christianity is simply a religion of another world. If that's the case, then the petition "Thy kingdom come," is a prayer for the end of the world, of its disappearance, a prayer specifically for the hastening of precisely this remote world beyond the grave.³³

Though the Lord's Prayer calls for God's blessings in aspects of Christian daily life, it is also a fervent cry for God to return and establish his Kingdom and bring an end to the brokenness of the world. It is a prayer that calls for God to fulfill his promise to his people and thus is a prayer that embodies the hope Christians have received. Having participated in the Kingdom through the sacraments, Christians call for that Kingdom to come into the whole world. Brunner also notes that it is this eschatological event that drives Christian prayer, "It is especially our recognition of the end-time crisis, ushered in for us by the Word and the Lord's Supper, that compels our prayer."³⁴ N. T. Wright follows up with his comments on the second petition, "As I see it, the prayer was powerfully answered at the first Easter and will finally be answered fully when heaven and earth are joined in the new Jerusalem. Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present."³⁵

³³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Our Father*, trans. Alexis Vinogradov (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 37–38.

³⁴ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 201.

³⁵ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 29.

The Lord's Prayer also contains further petitions, acknowledging God's power over creation and Christ's triumph through his life, death, and resurrection. The doxological conclusion to the prayer puts all of these petitions in context and addresses God as the one who is truly capable of bringing all of them to fruition. He is the one who brings the Kingdom. He is the one who rules there. He is the one who has the power to extend that Kingdom and the restoration it brings to all the earth. Schmemmann comments,

And the Lord's Prayer ends with and is crowned with the solemn exclamation: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever": three key words and biblical meanings, three main symbols of the Christian faith. The *kingdom*: "The kingdom of God is near" (Mt 4:17), "the kingdom of heaven is in the midst of you" (Lk 17:21), 'Thy kingdom come'—is near, has come, is revealed—how?—in the life, in the words, in the teaching, in the death, and finally, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; in that life which is filled with such light and such power, in these words which lead us so high, in this teaching which answers all our questions, and finally, in that end with which everything started anew and which for us becomes the beginning of new life.³⁶

The Lord's Prayer is not a blind wish for someone to come and care for the church. It is a confident and hope-filled call to the God who has and will continue to provide for his people. It is the awareness that God's name will be hallowed, that his Kingdom will come, that he will provide for the needs of his people, that he will forgive them and deliver them from evil. This is the future that God is already bringing into the present through his sacramental presence in the Kingdom.

Much of what has been noted about the Lord's Prayer also applies in a more general sense to the Prayers of the Church. Here the congregation lifts up specific petitions on behalf of members of the congregation, the church as a whole, or for issues facing the world. The

³⁶ Schmemmann, *Our Father*, 88–89 [italics in original].

congregation is able to ask God for help and assistance in the various trials it deals with or on behalf of the world because of the hope that it has. The church can petition God with confidence that he can grant healing and restoration in these matters because they have already seen him do so in their own lives. In fact, it is because they have already received restoration that they are given the ability to petition God on behalf of others. Luther Reed illustrates the scope of these prayers,

Like the Creed it lifts the individual and the local congregation out of personal and parochial consideration. It is a “prayer for all sorts and conditions of men.” Understandingly and unselfishly it reveals true concern for the church in all its operation, the state and its governance, and the home and all its welfare, while it remembers before God all men in their several callings and necessities. It is one of the outstanding elements in the liturgy and probably the one above all others which illustrates the congregation’s active exercise of its functions as a priesthood of believers.³⁷

As Schmemmann has described earlier, the priestly role of Christians is one facet of the restoration given through participation in the Kingdom. Here in the Prayers of the Church, the congregation recognizes the concerns of the world and lifts them up before God in hope-full expectation.

That prayer is a natural outgrowth of hope and of restoration is noted by Brunner,

This prayer is the greatest prerogative of Christians, which God conferred on them as He placed them, justified by faith, into their filial relationship. ... Prayer is the permission which God accords His sons to join their voices in the discussion of His affairs. This permission of prayer is the form in which God lets His sons already participate in the reign of the one Son. That the church is composed of a royal people of God is demonstrated especially by the fact that it is permitted to pray and that it avails itself of this permission. As the church executes its conferred authority and the power of sonship in prayer, it may already, as the praying, petitioning, thanking, and praising church, share in the royal authority and the power of its Head.

As well as:

³⁷ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 315.

It is consistent with the filial position of the believers collected in a congregation that their petition be, above all else, a prayer for the kingdom of God. The church prays as the family of the sons of God. It prays as the body of Christ in articulate association with its Head. Therefore its prayer revolves, in the main, about the affairs of God, that His name be hallowed, that His kingdom come, that His will be done. But, simultaneously, in its supplication every need which oppresses the church on its pilgrimage may be voiced. ... But also sin and guilt, trial and temptation, tribulation and distress, come into the confines of the coming kingdom and may therefore be revealed before God in the congregation's kingdom-prayer down to their very depths, so that He may pour His power, His forgiveness, His life, His salvation into their wretchedness.³⁸

As Moltmann pointed out earlier, the promises of God highlight the shortfall of the present reality when faced with the coming fulfillment. The function of prayer that Brunner describes here is one that joins the priestly vocation that Schmemmann depicted to the promise-fulfillment paradigm of Moltmann. As a people who have received God's promises and have glimpsed the future through participation in the coming Kingdom, Christians can now call upon God to fulfill that promise and to extend that restoration to the entire world. Christians are only capable of doing this because they have hope, that is, the expectation that God will actually fulfill all of the promises he has made. Thus, prayer is also a declaration of hope before the world, a statement to all creation of what God will soon do.

Prayer, as a call and supplication before God on behalf of the church and world, is only one sort of offering that the church can make. The offering of material possessions is also a tangible expression of hope by the church. This offering differs from the eucharistic offering discussed above. The eucharistic offering focuses the attention of the church on the presence of Christ in the midst of the congregation. The general offering of possessions is aimed at life outside the worship service. Schmemmann states,

³⁸ Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus*, 202–3.

Each person who came into the gathering of the Church brought with him everything that, “as he has made up his mind” (2 Co 9:7), he could spare for the needs of the Church, and this meant for the sustenance of the clergy, widows and orphans, for helping the poor, for all the ‘good works’ in which the Church realizes herself as the love of Christ, as concern of all for all and service of all to all.³⁹

This general offering looks to the needs of others, both within the church and out in the community. It represents an awareness that God is capable of taking the humble gifts offered by the church and using them to bring a better life to those who have need. The clergy who serve the church and announce God’s promises to it are sustained by this offering. The widows, orphans, and others who have no way to provide for themselves have their needs addressed. Missionaries are supported so that God’s promises can be proclaimed to those who have not yet heard it. God’s people are cared for and God’s creation is tended. This offering by the church would be impossible if not for God’s promise to bring about a better life for his people and for the world. This very act is an offering of hope to those who need it. The offerings of the congregation are gathered together and brought before the altar where they are lifted up before God. They are presented to God in the worship service with the knowledge that they will be a part of the future God is creating and used in the service of his Kingdom.

Finally, as the service draws to a close, the benediction provides the final declaration of hope. Whether it is the Aaronic benediction, as the Lutheran tradition is known to use, or a blessing of peace and joy, it is a statement that reflects everything that the congregation has just been a part of and everything they have just received through the Word and sacraments. The congregation has come back from its experience of the Kingdom renewed and restored. It has seen the object for which it hopes. The benediction is a confirmation that the congregation has

³⁹ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 107.

truly been in the presence of God and now carries the hope that it has found there. Schmemmann expresses the sentiment of the benediction as he comments on the closing part of the service,

And after that, “Let us depart in peace!”

All is clear. All is simple and bright. Such fullness fills everything. Such joy permeates everything. Such love radiates through everything. We are again in the *beginning*, where our ascent to the table of Christ, in his kingdom, began.

We depart into life, in order to witness and to fulfill our calling. Each has his own, but it is also our common ministry, common liturgy—“in the communion of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰

The congregation leaves the liturgy having witnessed the Kingdom. Now the congregation goes about its life as a people whose lives are governed by that hope and who can now convey that hope to others. The congregation is now able to fulfill its purpose and calling by carrying that hope into a world that needs it. The pastor blesses the people as a confirmation that, even outside the liturgy, God’s work continues. The influence of hope extends beyond the church and becomes part of the daily activities of Christians throughout their lives.

Taken as a whole, these examples illustrate how the liturgy is the kingdom of God beginning to move outwards. The church has received the hope that comes from God’s promises by encountering the fulfillment in the sacraments and now, having received that hope their attention is turned to the rest of the world that has not yet been restored by the Kingdom in its fullness. The church lifts up the praises of the entire world for the promises that God has given and for the work he has already done in restoring the world. It lifts up the prayers of the world, sharing the needs of the church and the rest of the world with him and calling on him to come and fulfill the promises he has made. These activities continuously keep God’s promises in the

⁴⁰ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 245–46 [italics in original].

minds of the faithful, so that they are always looking to the future fulfillment and cling to the hope that is guiding them toward it.

The liturgy's action of directing the attention of the church outward makes it a necessary step in the chain of hope from God to the world. The church has come to possess the hope God has given them through the sacramental rites. If the church were not directed outward to all of the places that still need hope, that hope would never leave the bounds of the church and be given to those that do not yet have it. Thus, the liturgy is an essential element in the life of the church and is necessary for shaping and molding the faithful into the bearers of God's hope to the world. Schmemmann summarizes the outward focus of the liturgy and the hope within it by saying, "Thus the Church itself is a *leitourgia*, a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to him and His kingdom."⁴¹

⁴¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 25.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESTORATION AND CHRISTIAN LIFE

The previous chapters have illustrated how God's Word of promise relates to hope. They have shown how God's promises bring about a better future and how he tells the world about the future he is creating so that they may have hope. They also showed how God strengthens hope by providing those who believe in his promises ways of experiencing the promised future via the sacraments prior to its arrival. Finally, they have shown how the liturgy helps believers to take hold of the promise of the Kingdom more fully and to realize what life in the Kingdom means for them in the world. Chapter Four began to illustrate how God's promises are not intended merely for Christians, but for all of his creation. As recipients of the promise, Christians are tasked with carrying hope to the world around them. This chapter focuses on the life of Christians as they manifest hope to the world.

The path of hope ultimately begins with God through his promises, thus the restoration also begins with God as well. The beginning of the restoration and the *telos* of hope takes place in God's destruction of everything that is inimical to him. There is much that can be said of the triumph of God over his enemies. This dissertation will focus primarily on one of the chief signs of the world's brokenness: death.¹

¹ Though there are a number of things that could potentially fall into the category of enemies of God, the only one that is dealt with by the primary sources for this dissertation is death. Thus, it will be used as the primary example, with others being touched on in passing.

In terms of human activity, God's hope pours forth from the church in a number of ways. First and foremost among these ways is the simple relating of God's promises in the Gospel to those who have not yet heard. Beyond this, there are other rites of the church that exist in the liturgical space outside of the divine service. These rites, such as marriage and reconciliation, embody some of the reality of hope in God's future and are ways in which the church conveys hope to others. God's triumph over his enemies, the destruction of those things that seek to end life and corrupt creation, is what allows hope to manifest in the world. The hope that Christians carry into creation is a testimony to what God has done through his reign over creation.

Finally, creation itself is the recipient of hope through the actions of the faithful on its behalf. As Christians work to restore the world through stewardship and care for creation, they demonstrate a belief that God has a future in store for the world as well. By caring for the world and healing a little of its brokenness, they ease the suffering of the other created beings in the world and even the land itself. In this way, stewardship is a declaration that hope is not intended to take the church out of the world, but to restore and remake all of creation together. Through the actions of Christians, a small glimpse of the new, restored creation can be seen. The work of the church in creation is therefore a beacon, illuminating the world with the hope in the future of God's Kingdom.

This chapter will first investigate how God begins the restoration by conquering everything that is an enemy of his. This section will focus primarily on death as the enemy that seeks to thwart God's life-giving activity but which is itself destroyed by him. The chapter will then look at how the church brings hope to people outside it. It will discuss how the destruction of God's enemies allows the rest of the work of the church to have meaning and purpose. The chapter will then show how the simple verbal pronouncement of God's promises is the first concrete way

those outside the church encounter the hope God offers. The pronouncement is based on the destruction of God's enemies and his promise for the future Kingdom. This begins their journey into the church and the realization of that hope in the Eucharist where they encounter the restoration brought by the kingdom of God. Then the chapter will examine how other liturgical activities carry a statement and confession of hope and how this hope permeates the lives of Christians in the time outside of the divine service. It will then show the daily life of a Christian in the various vocations he has been given is a place where hope shines forth in the world. After this, the chapter will show that the care of Christians for the world itself is a statement of hope and an awareness that the kingdom of God brings with it not just new life for the faithful, but for all of creation. Finally, the chapter will draw on the previous discussion of faith in chapter two and connect it to the vocation theology presented here to show how hope resonates with a particular ethical framework.

In order to follow the purpose of this chapter, a brief discussion on the nature of restoration is in order. As has been alluded to in previous chapters, the restoration is what is taking place when things are brought back from their sinful, broken state, to a state of perfection and holiness. This restoration is the primary focus of the coming kingdom of God and this restoration is already begun in the present church.² The hearing of God's Word of promise and the celebration of the sacraments bring the Kingdom into the present world and allow the restoration to commence to a certain degree. This restoration begins with bringing people back into the presence of God as well as connecting them to one another. However, the restoration has a much

² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 201.

broader goal: the restoration of all creation.³ This restoration manifests itself in a number of ways, as this chapter will explore. The hope that a Christian has in the future Kingdom begins to shape the way he lives his life today. It affects his thought process and the way he approaches difficulties and problems. The liturgy has begun to instill in him this change in thought and action, and now in the outside world this change bears fruit as the Christian begins restoring the world and thereby gives it hope in the Kingdom.

The Divine Origin of Hope

God is the origin of hope. As the one who gives hope to the faithful through his promises, all hope in the future of the Kingdom must begin with God's activity. As discussed in chapter two, humans are incapable of bringing about the fulfillment of those promises under their own power. It is God's Word that creates the possibility of a better future, a future in the Kingdom, and guides history toward that fulfillment. This means that the fulfillment, and thus the restoration it brings, is also under the control of God. The entire spectrum of hope from promise to fulfillment is ultimately in the hands of God and him alone. While this does not mean that Christians have no role to play, it does mean there are many aspects of the restoration that lie outside of their control.

The restoration, in its most basic essence, is a re-creation of the world with everything antithetical to God removed.⁴ Satan is opposed to God. Thus, one of the major aspects of the

³ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 209.

⁴ This dissertation does not seek to enter the debate as to what the restored creation will actually look like. The descriptions of the new creation given in Biblical apocalyptic literature are helpful for getting a sense of how hope directs the church to the new life in Christ that awaits it, but the particulars of daily life in the new creation lay outside the scope of this dissertation.

restoration will be Satan's final and complete incarceration. Sin, as the act of rebellion against God, also cannot be allowed to stand. Thus, sin will be wiped away through the judgment and exile of the rebellious and the redemption and reconciliation of the faithful. Finally, death, in the face of the creator and giver of life, must also come to an end.⁵

Death is one of the most feared enemies of God and stands in direct opposition to hope. "All of civilization seems to be permeated with a passionate obsession to stifle this fear of death and the sense of the meaninglessness of life that oozes out of it like a slow-dripping poison."⁶ Due to the human inability to peer beyond the boundary of death to see what is on the other side, the Christian must rely completely on God's promise of eternal life in the Kingdom.

Those who have not yet heard of God's promise of the Kingdom have a much bleaker outlook and have a future bereft of hope. Since hope is the belief in a brighter future, a non-Christian may have moments in life where the immediate future looks brighter than what has come before. However, death is an event that faces every person. When a person has no expectation of life beyond death, death becomes the point that dominates their future. No momentary brightness, no short-term hope can last because death will ultimately destroy everything they value and will bring their future to a dark and permanent end.

Therefore, the most important and most profound question of the Christian faith must be, How and from where did death arise, and why has it become stronger than life? Why has it become so powerful that the world itself has become a kind of cosmic cemetery, a place where a collection of people condemned to death live either in fear

⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *O Death, Where is Thy Sting?* trans. Alexis Vinogradov (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 99–100.

⁶*Ibid.*, 24–25.

or terror, or in their efforts to forget about death find themselves rushing around one great big burial plot?⁷

In the face of the inescapable and implacable nature of death, a Christian at life's end can only call out to God to remember his promises to his people and fulfill them.

Man's inability to master death is a direct result of his own actions. He sought life outside the one who gives life to all creation, and thus became subject to death.

But the tragedy—and herein lies the heart of the Christian teaching about sin—is that man did not desire this life with God and for God. He desired life *for himself*, and in himself he found the purpose, the goal, and the content of life. And in this free choice of himself, and not of God, in his preference for himself over God...

“God did not create death.” It is man who introduced death into the world, freely desiring life only for himself and in himself, cutting himself off from the source, the goal, and the content of life—from God. And this is why death—as disintegration, as separation, as temporality, transitoriness—has become the supreme law of life, revealing the illusory nature of everything on earth.⁸

Having separated himself from that which gives life, man no longer has life within him. Since man has no life within him, that life must come from outside. Thus, God's triumph over death is ultimately a restoration of humanity to the life he once had. God's triumph over death is proof that this restoration is possible, that humanity need not be subject to it forever. Christ's resurrection then is the first hope-filled act, the first time a man is fully restored to the life he was created to have. The resurrection is a testimony to humanity that the further restoration of creation is possible because the things that afflict it can and will be destroyed. The Christian hope is powered by this event. Death is no longer the end of the future. Life beyond death exists because Christ has triumphed over death. The proclamation by Christians to those who have not

⁷ Schmemmann, *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 35–36 [italics in original].

yet heard God's promise of the Kingdom is a declaration that death is not the end of life.⁹ Eternal life is now here, and thus there is a reason to hope for a future beyond death.

Restoration Living in the Church

The liturgy of the worship service has already begun to turn the attention of the congregation outward toward the needs of those outside the church and to the creation that is bearing the brokenness of sin. The prayers and other liturgical activities make the church aware that there is a need for hope beyond the context of the worship service, but does not yet make that hope available to the world. For that to happen, hope must be embodied in the life of the congregation outside the worship service. Both in daily life and in special events that mark milestones in the lives of Christians, hope is expressed and carried outside the physical boundaries of the church and the temporal limits of the worship service and offered to the world that has not yet found it. God's triumph over death shapes the reality in which all Christians live. Their lives and actions all reflect on this event in some way and speak to the experience Christians have as they witness this event unfolding in history as the promise moves toward fulfillment. This section will examine how hope is shared with the world outside of the church. It will first look at the direct proclamation of God's promises as the most fundamental message of hope. It will then look at major events in life that can serve as powerful testimonies to Christian hope. After this the examination will broaden in scope to see how roles in everyday Christian life serve as a further witness to hope. It will finally look at how Christian thinking is shaped by

⁹ Schmemmann, *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 25–26.

hope, such that the way the Christian approaches the different circumstances of life are colored by that hope.

The primary expression of hope to the world outside the church is found in the proclamation of the Gospel. In his examination of the significance of Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 15, N. T. Wright explains,

He is battling to get it into the heads of the ex-pagan Corinthians, many of whom clearly didn't fully grasp that the gospel meant what it said about Jesus's resurrection. The crunch comes in verse 17: if the Messiah isn't raised, then your faith is futile *and you are still in your sins*. In other words, with the resurrection of Jesus a new world has dawned in which forgiveness of sins is not simply a private experience; it is a fact about the cosmos. Sin is the root cause of death; if death has been defeated, it must mean that sin has been dealt with.¹⁰

Wright is pointing out that Paul is engaged in this primary act of proclamation. There are those who have not heard of the promises of Christ, the resurrection, and the coming Kingdom. There are those, like the Corinthians Wright is describing, who have heard but do not understand the ramifications of what Christ has done. Without hearing of the promises Christ makes regarding the resurrection and the Kingdom, there can be no hope for the future Christ offers. Without understanding what it is Christ has done through the resurrection, the hope offered to Christians never comes to fruition, because the Christian is never aware that his own future is joined to Christ's and to the Kingdom.

Wright goes on to explain that Paul's statement, and the resurrection of Christ, are not just signs pointing to the future, but also have an immediate impact on the present world.

But notice verse 25a: *he must reign until...* ; in other words, he is already reigning even though we do not yet see the full result of that reign. And if we ask what on

¹⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 247 [italics in original].

earth can possibly justify such an outrageous statement—that Jesus is already king of the world even though Caesar seems to be and death is still rampant—there can be only one answer: the resurrection.

Paul is thus firmly on the same page as the gospel writers. The main meaning of the resurrection of Jesus for him is that God's new world has been brought into being through this event, the long-promised new world in which the covenant will be renewed, sins will be forgiven, and death itself will be done away with. The resurrection is neither an isolated and out-of-character divine miracle nor simply the promise of eternal life beyond the grave. It is, rather, the decisive start of the worldwide rule of the Jewish Messiah, in which sins are already forgiven and the promise of the eventual new world of justice and incorruptible life are assured.¹¹

This statement has important significance for hope in the present world. It is not simply that God has promised to bring the Kingdom or even that Christians will be a part of the Kingdom.

Because of the resurrection, Christ is already ruling over the world. The world is subject to his rule and is already seeing some of the benefits of what he accomplished, forgiveness of sins in particular. Those who live in the present world suffer from various evils such as pain and death. However, when the resurrection is seen as the establishment of Christ's reign, then assurance and hope can be found. Christ is king over creation and thus creation is subject to his desires. The enemies of God must ultimately be destroyed because creation cannot do otherwise when Christ reigns over all things.

In this way, God's Word of promise as described by Moltmann, is reinforced by Christ's reign. God is always ruling over his creation and his Word is always active in directing it. However, here God's Word is seen at work in Christ's reign as the future Kingdom is already being found breaking into the present through the sacramental activity of the church. Though Christ has overcome death, there is still death in the world. This shows that the promise has not

¹¹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 247–248 [italics in original].

yet found the fulfillment. The world as a whole, and Christians in particular, are still called to look forward to the day when that discrepancy is no longer the case. They can be assured that this will take place precisely because Christ has already overcome death and is already establishing his reign on earth.

The circumstances of Christ's reign then become part of the proclamation to the world. In the midst of suffering, the promise of the future Kingdom can be given by Christians to those who have not heard it. In addition to this, places where Christ's reign is already visible and where the promise is already starting to be fulfilled can be pointed to as an example of how the promise is being fulfilled. God is already at work restoring creation and restoring his creatures. The promised future Kingdom and the destruction of God's enemies must take place because creation cannot go against the rule of its king.

The liturgy has directed the attention of the church outward into the world. The prayers, acclamations of praise, and other liturgical rites directly help Christians begin to extend that hope outside of the gathered assembly. The liturgy instructs the church on carrying the restoration brought by the sacraments into all of creation. The sacraments express the realities of Christ's reign over creation through his resurrection and the further reality of the coming Kingdom through the restoration that is experienced by the Christian's participation in it. The hope engendered by Christ's reign is experienced as the promises of God find their object in the sacramental connection to the Kingdom. Christians are strengthened in their faith and hope through this experience. However, Christians are also subject to doubt and despair in the face of tragedy and temptation. Since Christians are not yet perfected, as they will be with the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth, God's promises can be forgotten or reinterpreted based on events in an individual's life. Financial hardship, death of loved ones, ennui, spiritual

malaise, and other problems may lead one to question God's promises and lose hope in the future indicated by those promises. When situations like this arise in the church, the sacramental experience of the Kingdom, the new life that it brings, as well as the restoration of community and the vision of the future, provides a way of reintroducing hope into the life of one caught in despair and apathy.

The experience of the Kingdom, combined with the Biblical history marked by the promise-fulfillment paradigm allows fellow Christians to speak to the one despairing and put their struggles in the context of God's promises once again. The proclamation of God's promises is not intended only for those outside the church. Anyone who has suffered the loss of hope, whether in or out of the church, can hear again God's Word of promise. By sharing Biblical history again with one who is in despair, a fellow Christian can remind the one despairing of God's continual fulfillment of promises. He can recount the wonder of the resurrection and the effect that it had on the world. Finally, Christ's reign can also be described. As the one who, "is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity," Christ conquers death and everything else that is opposed to him.¹² With this awareness, all of the catastrophes of life can be kept in perspective. Having already overcome death, there is no calamity that Christ cannot also overcome. When this is proclaimed again to a Christian caught in despair, and is again immersed in the sacramental and liturgical life of the church, hope can again be restored and his struggles can be placed in the context of Christ's reign over all things, including pain and death.

¹² Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 345.

For those outside the church, the proclamation of God's promises becomes the stepping stone. God's Word of promise is where hope is first communicated to creation and thus is the first and most basic way hope can be shared with others. However, as the Word does not operate in isolation, but works through the sacraments and liturgy, the Word also utilizes further means to express hope in the outside world. The major social events of Christian life, such as weddings and funerals, become powerful statements as to the hope held by the newly wedded or newly sainted. Those who participate are given a glimpse of the hope that they cling to and the fulfillment that they await. However, even the everyday life of a Christian also conveys this message of hope, though often in more subtle ways. The roles and vocations given to a Christian speak to God's promise of the Kingdom by their very performance. The Christian lives out his vocation, not in despair, but in hopeful expectation that his work both on behalf of others and for creation itself will be incorporated into God's Kingdom. All of these circumstances then play a role in shaping how the Christian approaches life. It is not just his actions that are affected by the hope that he has, but his whole thought process. His ethical outlook necessarily carries the experience he has of the Kingdom with it and shapes him as a hope-filled Christian both inside and out. The proclaimed Word of promise directs the non-believer to where he can find what this promise entails and where he can see this promise fulfilled. To this end, the non-believer is led into the church to take part in the liturgy, so that he is able to see the sacraments at work in those around him as they gather together as the restored body of Christ. This further encourages the newcomer to participate in the Eucharist, where they may see firsthand God's restoration at work by experiencing the future Kingdom for themselves and gaining a hope for that future to which they are now joined.

This proclamation is not simply a message of what God has already done through Christ, but also of what God will do in the future. The full expression of the message is one that indicates that there is more that God has in store for the world. Moltmann expands upon his earlier discussion of God's promises.

The Church lives by the word of God, the word that is proclaimed, that pronounces and sends. This word has no magical quality in itself. 'The proclaimed word is directed towards that which in every respect *lies ahead of it*. It is open for the "future" which comes to pass *in it*, yet which in its *coming to pass* is recognized to be still *outstanding*.' The word which creates life and calls to faith is *pro*-clamation and *pro*-nouncement. ... As the promise of an eschatological and universal future, the word points beyond itself, forwards to coming events and outwards into the breadth of the world to which the promised coming events are coming. This is why all proclamation stands in the eschatological tension of which we have spoken. It is valid to the extent that it is *made* valid. It is true to the extent that it announces the future of the truth. It communicates this truth in such a way that we can *have* it only by confidently *waiting* for it and wholeheartedly *seeking* it. Thus the word has an inner transcendence in regard to its future. The word of God is itself an eschatological gift. In it the hidden future of God for the world is already present. But it is present in the form of promise and of awakened hope. The word is not itself the eschatological salvation, but acquires its eschatological relevance from the coming salvation. What is true of the Spirit of God is true also of the word of God: it is an earnest of things to come, and binds us to itself in order to point and direct us to greater things.¹³

The proclamation of God's Word involves more than a simple assurance of forgiveness of sins through Christ. It is more than establishing a relationship with God. Though God's future will come regardless of what humanity does, only those who are actively waiting for it and seeking it will receive the benefits that God offers. Only those who are looking forward to the arrival of the Kingdom will be a part of the Kingdom when it comes. Thus the proclamation is an eschatological gift to those who hear it. It is both a promise to the hearer of what is to come, as well as the assurance that by waiting for it to arrive he is already connected to that future in the

¹³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325–26 [italics in original].

present. The proclamation of God's Word is never simply a statement of past or present events, but rather takes the past and present and shows how God is focusing the attention of his hearers on the greater events that await them in the future.

The proclamation of God's promises can be applied to specific concerns that arise in the lives of people, whether Christian or non-Christian. All of Christian life is situated within the promises and fulfillments made by God and the forward motion of history that connects them. The awareness that the forward movement of time is part of restoration, as it moves toward the inevitable fulfillment of God's promise, is necessary. It allows the Christian to maintain hope in spite of the fact that the conditions of life and the world do not always appear to change or respond to God's promises. History itself keeps moving forward and the fulfillment draws ever nearer. Schmemmann concludes in his discussion of Christ's resurrection and its effect on the experience and understanding of the passage of time within the world by saying,

The experience of time as *end* gives an absolute importance to whatever we do *now*, makes it final, decisive. The experience of time as *beginning* fills all our time with joy, for it adds to it the "coefficient" of eternity: "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord." We are at work in the world, and this work—in fact, any work—if analyzed in terms of the world in itself, becomes meaningless, futile, irrelevant. In every city in the world there is each morning a rush of clean and shaven people getting to work. And every evening there is a rush of the same people, now tired and dirty, going in the opposite direction. But long, long ago a wise man looked at this rush (its forms change, but not its meaninglessness) and said:

Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.

What profit hath man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?

One generation passeth away and another generation cometh;

But the earth abideth forever.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

There is no new thing under the sun. ... (Eccl. 1)

And this remains true of the *fallen* world. But we Christians have too often forgotten God has redeemed the world. For centuries we have preached to the hurrying people: your daily rush has no meaning, yet accept it—and you will be rewarded in *another* world by an eternal rest. But God revealed and offers us eternal Life and not eternal rest. And God revealed this eternal Life in the midst of time—

and of its *rush*—as its secret meaning and goal. And thus he made time, and our work in it, into the *sacrament of the world to come*, the liturgy of fulfillment and ascension. It is when we have reached the very end of the world's self-sufficiency that it *begins* again for us as the material of the sacrament that we are to fulfill in Christ.

“There is no new thing under the sun.” Yet every day, every minute resounds now with the victorious affirmation: “Behold, I make all things new. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end...” (Rev. 21:5–6).¹⁴

Schmemmann shares a further aspect of despair that infiltrates the world, the idea of meaninglessness. Whether Christian or non-Christian, the repetitive nature of daily work can lead one to believe that life will never change, that the same drudgery of everyday activity will continue in unending progression until the grave takes them. Through Christ's resurrection, God is telling the world that there is hope, because things will change and have already changed. Time is not an endless string of days, weeks, and years all bearing the same homogenized, invariable quality. It is not a monotonous continuity of daily toil that bears no lasting fruit and has no visible effect. God has introduced something new into history that did not exist before, something that changes the whole purpose of time. The despair that can arise from viewing the apparent changelessness and meaninglessness of daily life can be addressed by seeing again the resurrection of Christ and its effect on history. That history has already changed and will change again with the coming of Christ puts a boundary on time. As Schmemmann says, “We are always *between* morning and evening, *between* Sunday and Sunday, *between* Easter and Easter, *between* the two comings of Christ.”¹⁵ The despair of daily life can be confronted with the knowledge that it is temporary. Christ's return brings all of the work of this life to an end and to its fulfillment.

¹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 64–65 [italics in original].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Hope exists in the midst of daily toil with Christ's declaration that his return is certain and that it is coming quickly.

The procession of hope from the church to the world outside does not end with the proclamation of God's promises to unbelievers or to those in despair. As Christians live within the renewed understanding of time that Christ's resurrection brings, hope is now manifested in the daily lives of Christians. Those who have hope are able to live and act in light of that hope. God's promises have implications for the future and thus affect how Christians live in light of those promises. One of the places where hope becomes most apparent is in the most fundamental human relationship: marriage.

Marriage has been around since the beginning of creation. As a part of creation, it is as flawed and broken as everything else. As Schmemmann notes, "We do not even remember today that marriage is, as everything else in 'this world,' a fallen and distorted marriage, and that it needs not to be blessed and 'solemnized'—after a rehearsal and with the help of the photographer—but *restored*."¹⁶ As the closest relationship between two human beings that exists, marriage can be the place where hope is most visible to others. An echo of God's promise-fulfillment paradigm is visible in marriage. The promise made by the husband and wife is one that looks to the future, toward a life lived together. Their life and relationship is one of clinging to the promise they have made through the struggles of their life and even through death, knowing that, because of God's promise to them of the Kingdom, God will reunite them in his Kingdom along with all of the faithful. Schmemmann explains why marriage holds such a

¹⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 82.

prominent position in human relationships and thus why it can be the foremost example of hope displayed in Christian life,

We can now understand that [the sacrament of matrimony's] true meaning is not that it merely gives a religious "sanction" to marriage and family life, reinforces with supernatural grace the natural family virtues. Its meaning is that by taking the "natural" marriages into "the great mystery of Christ and the Church," the sacrament of matrimony gives marriage a *new meaning*; it transforms, in fact, not only marriage as such but all human love.¹⁷

Schemmann's point here elucidates how important marriage is. Marriage is the focal point for love between human beings. Though love and hope are not identical, since hope involves the specific act of looking forward to the future, the act of love has important implications for hope. The idea that marriage can be transformed and given a new meaning and purpose gives hope that all loving relationships can be renewed and restored. With the prevalence of broken relationships of all varieties, whether divorce between spouses, enmity between friends or family, or any other sundered relationship, the fact that these relationships are in some way bound up with the relationship between Christ and the church means they are never beyond restoration. Though there is no specific promise by God that relationships such as marriage and others will be mended in the present age, their connection to Christ and to the Kingdom indicates that they will be in some way transformed and brought back into wholeness. This restoration is alluded to already in the Eucharist, as was seen in chapter 3. The Eucharist gives the church a view of a restored community. It shows them the interpersonal connections, the joy, and peace that come as God joins people to one another and to himself, which will exist in Christ's Kingdom.

¹⁷ Schemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 88 [italics in original]. As was mentioned previously, Schemmann is operating with an Orthodox definition of sacraments, which is at variance with the Lutheran understanding. The goal here is not to explore the differences in definition as it is to see the connection marriage has with Christ and the

Marriage, like every other part of Christian life, has its own connection to the Eucharist, as Schmemmann states,

It is worth mentioning that the early Church apparently did not know of any separate marriage service. The “fulfillment” of marriage by two Christians was their partaking together of the Eucharist. As every aspect of life was gathered into the Eucharist, so matrimony received its seal by inclusion into this central act of the community. And this means that, since marriage has always had sociological and legal dimensions, these were simply accepted by the Church. Yet, like the whole “natural” life of man, marriage had to be *taken into the Church*, that is, judged, redeemed and transformed in the sacrament of the Kingdom.¹⁸

Marriage draws on the same source of Christian life and hope as does the rest of Christian life: the Eucharist. However, as Schmemmann said above, marriage also relates to the mystery of Christ and the church. This connection is true in multiple senses.

In the first sense, marriage echoes the realities of the Kingdom in the life of the Christian in a manner similar to how the Eucharist brings the Kingdom into the life of the church. In the Orthodox tradition, the wedding ceremony involves a giving of crowns to the bride and groom. The crowns have a special significance in the Eastern tradition, and though the Western tradition does not make use of crowns in the service, the theological underpinnings that Schmemmann brings up are still valid. They serve as a visible sign and representation of the promise made by the husband and wife. They are a reminder that the two have bound themselves together in life and are joined by that promise.

“O Lord and God, crown them with glory and honor!” says the priest after he has put crowns on the heads of the bridal pair. This is, first, the glory and honor of man as king of creation: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue and have dominion...” (Gn. 1:25). Each family is indeed a kingdom, a little church, and

Kingdom.

¹⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 88, . [italics in original].

therefore a sacrament of and a way to the Kingdom. Somewhere, even if it is only in a single room, every man at some point in his life has his own small kingdom. It may be hell, and a place of betrayal, or it may not. Behind each window there is a little world going on. How evident this becomes when one is riding on a train at night and passing innumerable lighted windows: behind each one of them the fullness of life is a “given possibility,” a promise, a vision. This is what the marriage crowns express: that here is the beginning of a small kingdom which *can* be something like the true Kingdom. The chance will be lost, perhaps even in one night; but at this moment it is still an open possibility. Yet even when it has been lost, and lost again a thousand times, still if two people stay together, they are in a real sense king and queen to each other. And after forty odd years, Adam can still turn and see Eve standing beside him, in a unity with himself which in some small way at least proclaims the love of God’s Kingdom.¹⁹

As Schmemmann indicates, through marriage the bride and groom are established as the rulers of their own household kingdom. Everything that they have received in their connection to the church, and in particular to the Eucharist, can be first brought to fruition here. Through their connection to the Eucharist, the bride and groom are part of the restoration and salvation that comes through their participation in the sacrament. With the awareness that Christ is already at work in the world bringing the restoration of the Kingdom to light in the present world, the couple is able to begin living out the hope and the restoration that they have received. The combination of hope and forgiveness means that nothing that occurs between the couple throughout the life of their marriage will put the relationship beyond redemption. Every time of sadness or tragedy, every moment of anger, every spiteful remark or hurtful comment need not be the end. In the midst of all of this, the couple is still bound together by their participation in the Eucharist and in God’s Kingdom. That participation permeates the rest of their lives, so that they are not just restored individually, but also restored to one another. By forgiving one another

¹⁹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 89–90.

and calling to mind God's promises, they are able to renew their relationship. Their connection to one another, once broken, is restored once again. As Schmemmann points out, their relationship may suffer numerous times, but in each case the hope in God's Kingdom still holds. The relationship may be restored and the couple may again enjoy a measure of the peace and happiness that will be complete at the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

Marriage also connects to the Kingdom in another sense: that of anticipation. "Receive their crowns in Thy Kingdom," says the priest, as he removes them from the heads of the newlyweds, and this means: make this marriage a growth in that perfected love of which God alone is the end and fullness."²⁰ The love that can exist in a marriage, that is intended to exist in a marriage, is a representation of the love Christ has for the church. In that capacity, it serves as a beacon of hope shining into the future, giving the world around, and the married couple in particular, a vision of what life in Christ's Kingdom will be like. The joy and peace that will be found in the future can already be found in part in the husband and wife living out their given roles within marriage. As the Eucharist points beyond itself to a vision of community that will exist in the Kingdom, marriage also points to a vision of love and relationship, both between individuals and between God and humanity, which will be found in the Kingdom.

Marriage, as an aspect of Christian life that brings hope to the world through the love that is displayed within it, is a primary example of how Christians display hope outside the liturgical setting. However, it is not the only place where this occurs. Just as marriage focuses on hope through new life and a new relationship, Christian funerals focus on hope for the life to come.

²⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 91.

The entire period of a Christian's life from the dying process to eventual death features a particular form of Christian hope, where the present is no longer the concern. The Christian is always looking toward the future, but now his attention is fixed squarely on the Kingdom to come. The immediacy of the need for hope for the departing Christian pushes other issues of Christian life to the periphery.

This form of hope comes at the very beginning of the church's contact with the departing Christian. Schmemmann describes healing and anointing with oil in the context of dying,

The Church considers *healing* as a sacrament. But such was its misunderstanding during the long centuries of the total identification of the Church with "religion" (a misunderstanding from which all sacraments suffered, and the whole doctrine of sacraments) that the *sacrament of oil* became in fact the sacrament of death, one of the "last rites," opening to man a more or less safe passage into eternity. There is a danger that today, with the growing interest in healing among Christians, it will be understood as a sacrament of health, a useful "complement" to secular medicine. And both views are wrong, because both miss precisely the sacramental nature of this act.

A sacrament—as we already know—is always a *passage*, a *transformation*. Yet it is not a "passage" into "supernature," but into the kingdom of God, the world to come, into the very reality of this world and its life as redeemed and restored by Christ. It is the transformation not of "nature" into "supernature," but of the *old* into the *new*. A sacrament therefore is not a "miracle" by which God breaks, so to speak, the "laws of nature," but the manifestation of the ultimate Truth about the world and life, man and nature, the Truth which is Christ.²¹

Though healing can still be hoped and prayed for, the transition that awaits the Christian is still ever-present. The theme of hope here is in contrast with marriage. In marriage, the future and the new creation do not bear the same immediacy. They are coming, yet they are still remote. With death, the transition from this life to the next carries a weight that cannot be set aside and

²¹ Schmemmann, *O Death, Where is Thy Sting?* 105–6 [italics in original]. Though not all Western traditions tend to use anointing with oil, the proclamation of the promises of God through Scripture and prayer, focusing on passages such as 1 Corinthians 15, can help bring about an awareness of the change that awaits the departing Christian.

demands to be addressed. Here, the promises of God are also impossible to ignore. The promises of God regarding new life in the Kingdom stand in sharp contrast to the death that is consuming the life of the departing Christian. The Christian is not looking forward to some spiritualized, transcendent existence, but rather a new, restored life that is free from the travails of the old. This calls to mind Moltmann's statement from chapter two regarding the sense of deficiency.²² The Christian is aware that he has not yet attained the promise of new life that God has made. His dying body is a constant reminder to look to the future, to the fulfillment of the promise and to know that he will live again.

The sense of loss and trepidation that the dying face as they confront the unknown is also the domain of hope. Christian hope addresses itself specifically to these concerns, to the suffering and the struggles that accompany this transition. Hope is found in the promises that connect the Christian to death and the resurrection of Christ, the new life that comes from him.

Here is a man suffering on his bed of pain and the Church comes to him to perform the sacrament of healing. For this man, as for every man in the whole world, suffering can be defeat, the way of complete surrender to darkness, despair and solitude. It can be *dying* in the very real sense of the world. And yet it can be also the ultimate victory of Man and the Life in him. The Church does not come to restore *health* in this man, simply to replace medicine when medicine has exhausted its own possibilities. The Church comes to take this man into the Love, the Light, and the Life of Christ. It comes not merely to "comfort" him in his sufferings, not to "help" him, but to make him a *martyr*, a *witness* to Christ in his very sufferings. A martyr is one who beholds "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). A martyr is one for whom God is not another—and the last—chance to stop the awful pain; God is his very life, and thus everything in his life comes to God, and ascends to the fulness of Love.²³

²² See page 50.

²³ Schmemmann, *O Death, Where is Thy Sting?*, 107–8 [italics in original].

In the process of dying, the Christian clings to the promise of the resurrection as his hope and his future. In the midst of his suffering and fear, the Christian becomes a witness to the hope that he has in the resurrection. The Christian, having participated in the Eucharist and having received a glimpse of what awaits him, looks ahead to the fulfillment of the promise he has been given. He has heard the promise in God's Word and seen it active through the Eucharist. He now has hope in this trying time, because he has already been joined to the new life of Christ, that he will receive that life again.

The funeral itself also extends the witness of the Christian to the church and community. His new life in Christ is proclaimed because of his faith in Christ. He has been joined to that new life since he came to faith and now that new life is confirmed in him.

The beginning of this victory is Christ's death. Such is the eternal gospel, and it remains "foolishness" not only for *this world*, but also for *religion* as long as it is the religion of this world ("lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect"—1 Cor 1:17). The liturgy of Christian death does not begin when a man has come to the inescapable end and his corpse lies in church for the last rites while we stand around, the sad yet resigned witnesses of the dignified removal of a man from the world of the living. It begins every Sunday as the Church, ascending into heaven, "puts aside all earthly care"; it begins every feast day; it begins especially in the joy of Easter. The whole life of the Church is in a way the sacrament of our death, because all of it is the proclamation of the Lord's death, the confession of his resurrection.²⁴

The Christian, confirmed in his faith and in the hope that he has in the resurrection, puts that hope on display for all to see. It has been the hope of his life in Christ and now that hope carries him into the Kingdom. He is victorious over death because of Christ's death and is made a citizen of the Kingdom; experiencing the fullness of what he had only seen in part through the sacraments of the church.

²⁴ Schmemmann, *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 109–10 [italics in original].

Living Out Hope through Christian Vocation

In addition to major life events such as marriages and funerals, there are ongoing aspects of Christian life that lend themselves to the service of hope. Here, Luther's vocational theology plays a role in establishing the connection between hope and everyday life for the Christian. In his examination of Luther's distinction between God-given righteousness and the righteousness that is earned through earthly work, Wingren says,

One righteousness is righteousness for the world, not for eternal life, and is rewarded with *zeitlich gut* (the things of this world). Here we see again the earthly kingdom, to which our vocation is relevant, and in which God ever produces external benefits for the maintenance of life. Accordingly all this belongs under earthly government. Its work is a kind of righteousness, a righteousness of God, and yet a transitory righteousness which does not reach life eternal ...

In the domestic economy one is father, mother, boy or girl. Here again we come across certain of the vocations about which the *Kirchenpostille* spoke. The list is completed in the political economy, represented in all the down-reaching ramifications of rulers, from the prince to him who handles the sword, the soldier or the executioner. Over all of this wide field God's government is carried on against the devil, against all evil which emerges among men and aims to bring forth evil deeds. Beside the sword of government is the rod in the fatherly hand for the correction of the child.²⁵

The vocation of the Christian is one that faces down the evils of the world and works to instill godly virtues in those who have been given into his care and in the society in which he has been placed. The Christian becomes a declaration of God's providence and lordship, demonstrating that evil forces and chaotic tendencies do not rule the world. The better future that the Christian works toward shows, even if only in small ways, that God can and does overcome all things that are opposed to him. Thus, hope in God and in his promises is not misplaced. The Christian

²⁵ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg, 1957), 24–25.

becomes an example, however imperfect, of who God is and what will eventually be accomplished with the establishment of his Kingdom.

In his vocations, whether as a parent, a citizen, a worker, or any other role a Christian may fill in his life, he is caught up in service to his neighbor. As a parent or a spouse, he lives to better the life of his family. As a citizen, he works for the common good of his countrymen to create a God-pleasing society. As a worker in whatever employment in which he finds himself, he works so that he may earn a living and benefit others through his labors. Wingren comments,

In one's vocation there is a cross—for prince, husband, father, daughter, for everyone—and on this cross the old human nature is to be crucified. Here the side of baptism which is concerned with death is fulfilled. Christ died on the cross, and one who is baptized unto death with Christ must be put to death by the cross. To understand what is meant by the cross of vocation we need only remember that vocation is ordained by God to benefit, not him who fulfils the vocation, but the neighbor who, standing alongside, bears his own cross for the sake of others.²⁶

In this way, the Christian's vocation and subsequent service to their neighbor becomes an act of hope. Their vocation is oriented around bettering the life of those around them, and thus is an attempt to lift them out of whatever travails afflict them. This illustrates how God cares for his creation and seeks to give it a better life and better future.

To further examine the nature of hope in the living of Christian vocations, Luther can be consulted directly. In his discussion of authority and government, Luther himself notes,

What can be the meaning of the phrase, "It is God's servant," except that governing authority is by its very nature such that through it one may serve God? Now it would be quite un-Christian to say that there is any service of God in which a Christian should not or must not take part, when service of God is actually more characteristic of Christians than of anyone else. It would even be fine and fitting if all princes were good, true Christians. For the sword and authority, as a particular service of God,

²⁶ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 29.

belong more appropriately to Christians than to any other men on earth. Therefore, you should esteem the sword or governmental authority as highly as the estate of marriage, or husbandry, or any other calling which God has instituted. Just as one can serve God in the estate of marriage, or in farming or a trade, for the benefit of others—and must so serve if his neighbor needs it—so one can serve God in government, and should there serve if the needs of his neighbor demand it. For those who punish evil and protect the good are God’s servants and workmen.²⁷

Here again is reiterated the theme of service to neighbor. Luther explains that the vocation of government and authority is one of service and protection. The Christian who serves in a governmental office and those who assist in the work of government both serve God through their work and serve the needs of their neighbor. Through the service of government, the lives and wellbeing of others are protected and they receive the benefits of a safer and more prosperous future. By the same token, government also serves as an agent of God’s justice within creation. As God triumphs over his enemies, such as death, he also operates in the civil realm through government to strike down those who would afflict his people. In both cases, the sense of hope is strengthened as peoples’ lives are improved.

Like the proclamation of the gospel, Christian vocation is a testament to the faith and hope held by the Christian and is drawn from and incorporated into his sacramental life.

The crucifixion of Christ was followed by his resurrection on the third day. One is baptized not only that he may die with Christ; but also that he may arise with Christ; not only unto the crucifixion of the old nature in vocation, but also to the resurrection of the new—through faith in the gospel, by which the life-giving Spirit is given ... The Christian is crucified by the law in his vocation, under the earthly government; and he arises through the gospel, in the church under the spiritual government. Both of these take place on earth; but both are directed toward heaven. Through both the individual is incorporated into Christ; through vocation, into his cross, and through

²⁷ Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society II*, vol. 45 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 100.

the church, into his resurrection. Christ is king in heaven, in the kingdom beyond death. That is the destination toward which a Christian is to be carried along.²⁸

All of the myriad different Christian vocations draw their meaning from the sacramental reality of the Kingdom. Though the Christian lives in a world subject to death, he lives as one who has new life. He lives a life that points to where that new life has come from, the sacramental life of the kingdom of which he is a part.

That Christian vocation is an extension or an outgrowth of the kingdom of God is made clear as he expresses his hope in the Kingdom through his activity on behalf of his neighbor and the world as a whole.

Love born of faith and the Spirit effects a complete breakthrough of the boundary between the two kingdoms, the wall of partition between heaven and earth, as did God's incarnation in Christ. Man "descends from heaven like rain that makes the earth fruitful." Indeed it is expressly said that he "steps forth into another kingdom (*aliud regnum*) and does the good works his hands find to do." This kingdom is the kingdom of vocation and earthly government, where now as a new man he works "with willing spirit and joy in his vocation," submitting himself in love to stern authority. This is not really a new kingdom; as an "old" man he has always lived in it, governed by law. Law, as it is embodied in the many offices, had the function, in the hand of God, to compel man to serve others, whether or not he wished to do so. His station, his vocation, operates with coercion, without his heart. But now, in faith and the gospel, the heart has been made new. Our neighbor with his need does not press upon us against our will; rather he fills us with gladness, for it is our joy to serve him. What earthly government would come we now do freely. So love works on earth, in the realm of the law, yet it is not aware of any law. Heaven is on earth. The boundary between heaven and earth has been bridged in this descent.²⁹

Having seen the Kingdom, the Christian carries that experience and the gifts he has received from God out into the world in service to his neighbor. In whatever role or service he finds himself doing, he is connecting people to the hope found in the Kingdom and bringing the gifts

²⁸ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 30–31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

of God to fruition in the present world. The restoration that has come through the Eucharist has begun to reunite the Christian with those with whom those he has shared the sacrament. He has also served God through his offering of prayer and praise within the liturgy. In both ways, the Christian is restored to his role and purpose within creation. By living out his vocation in the world, the Christian carries the restoration he has been given out into the world. The Christian is beginning to reclaim the world for Christ's Kingdom.

The living out of Christian life also becomes a proclamation of what the Christian awaits in the Kingdom. Through his service to his neighbor, the Christian puts to death his sinful nature and offers a glimpse, albeit imperfect and incomplete, of who they will be at the resurrection.

From the roughness of earthly life there opens up a vista of life and freedom in the coming kingdom, and only one way leads to it—subjection to the cross here. Through the cross Jesus came to Easter, and only in him are life and resurrection to be found. So Luther can connect the commonplace hardships of marriage, for example, with our certainty of eternal life after death. Since the body is to be raised, we live in our vocation, in which, by bearing the cross, the body is carried forward on the way whose end is the resurrection. Since man is at the same time both old nature and new, both crucifixion and resurrection are already on the way to realization ... Living the purely earthly life, as man does, means to face a life with eschatological reference. Man's ordinary life is, in its very ordinariness, a life that reaches out beyond earth when the church's message of heaven is proclaimed through the labor of vocation.³⁰

The Christian's life is not just a testimony of what he believes, but also a picture of what he will become in the Kingdom. Though still sinful, Christ is already at work restoring him and this restoration is evident in the actions of the Christian in his everyday life of service and vocation. This ordinary, everyday life points to the fulfillment of the restoration that comes when Christ returns, of a life no longer tainted by the effects of sin. This is another element in the

³⁰ Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 58–59.

proclamation of hope to the world. Just as Christians see a glimpse of the future through the Eucharist, they show a glimpse of the future to those outside the church by demonstrating and living out life in the future Kingdom.

Luther reinforces the connection between vocation and the Kingdom when he states,

Wherever there is such faith and assurance of grace in Christ, you can also confidently conclude with regard to your vocation and works that these are pleasing to God and are true and good Christian fruits. Furthermore, such temporal and physical works as governing a land and people, managing a house, rearing and teaching children, serving, toiling, etc., also develop into fruit that endures unto life everlasting. Thus the holy patriarch Abraham and our holy ancestress Sarah will be commended and praised on Judgment Day for their marital life. Although the married estate will come to an end and be no more, as will all the life and activity of this world, yet this holy Sarah, and others with her, will receive their little crowns because they were pious spouses and mothers, not by reason of their works per se—for these had to cease—but because they did these works in faith. In like manner, the works of all Christians are performed to God's everlasting pleasure; they will not be despised, as will those of non-Christians, but will have their eternal reward also in yonder life, because they are works done in Christ and grow from the Vine.³¹

Here Luther brings together all aspects of daily Christian life: governing, raising children, household duties, married life, and the labor of employment. All of these are linked to good and pious living and Luther notes that they are all pleasing to God. He shows that the work of Christians in their given vocation is work that will in some way carry over into eternity, into life in the Kingdom. This shows to a greater extent how the Kingdom is not confined to the future, but is active in the life of the church even in the present day. It is not just the specific works of a Christian that demonstrate life in the Kingdom; rather it is his whole life that is an active witness to the future in Christ's Kingdom. Christian life, through the work of vocations, illustrates in

³¹ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16*, vol. 24 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1999), 220–21.

some small way what can be expected of life in the Kingdom. Thus, hope is active in Christian vocation because the Kingdom is visible through Christian life.

The Restoration of All Creation.

The proclamation of hope through Word and vocation to those outside the church is just part of the goal. When the Christian is manifesting to the world the nature of the Kingdom, they are leading the world to perceive that all of the effects of the Kingdom's restoration are intended for all creation. This means that hope is intended for the entire world and everything in it. As Wright describes how the church begins to reclaim the world through the work of hope that flows from Christ's resurrection he says,

If, then, the church is to be renewed in its mission precisely in and for the world of space, time, and matter, we cannot ignore or marginalize that same world. We must, rather, claim it for the kingdom of God, for the lordship of Jesus, and in the power of the Spirit *so that we can then go out and work for that kingdom, announce, that lordship, and effect change through that power.*³²

Christ's reign and authority is over all creation. Christ's resurrection and its gift of new life, Christ's reign and the destruction of his enemies, and Christ's promise of the coming Kingdom are as much for humanity as they are for everything else in creation. Wright continues,

And the church that is renewed by the message of Jesus's resurrection must be the church that goes to work precisely in that space, time, and matter and claims it in advance as the place of God's kingdom, of Jesus's lordship, of the power of the Spirit.³³

Moltmann also connects with the concept that God's work extends beyond the confines of the church into all creation by saying,

³² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 264 [italics in original].

³³ Ibid., 265.

Yahweh's righteousness is his faithfulness to the covenant. That is why his righteousness 'happens', and why one can 'tell' it and trust in it for the future and expect 'salvation' from this righteousness. In trusting in God's faithfulness to this covenant and in living in accordance with his covenant in promise and statute, men do right by God and are set right. They are set right not only in relation to God, but also in their mutual relationships and in relation to things ... Hence God's righteousness is universal. It is concerned with the justification of life and with the ground of the existence of all things. If we expect the righteousness of God to set man right with himself, with his fellows and with the whole of creation, then it can become the summary expression for a universal, all-inclusive eschatology which expects from the future of righteousness a new being for all things. The righteousness of God then refers not merely to a new order for the existing world, but provides creation as a whole with a new ground of existence and a new right to life. Hence with the coming of the righteousness of God we can expect also a new creation.³⁴

Humanity is not the only beneficiary of the coming Kingdom. Humanity will be remade, re-created, at the resurrection. At the same time, all of creation will receive new life and be restored to wholeness.

Through the liturgy, the purpose of hope and the scope of the Kingdom are impressed on the minds and hearts of those in the congregation. They are made aware of the need for hope in the world outside the church. Through liturgical activity, such as prayer, they begin to extend that hope to the world. Wright finds this idea presented in Revelation 4 and 5,

The great heavenly scene of Revelation 4 and 5 stands out as a moment when the church is gathering up the praises of all creation and presenting them before God's throne. But within these chapters, again, the central problem of nature mysticism is named and dealt with. The world is out of joint. If we bring ourselves simply into harmony with the created order as it is at present, we are embracing death: not only nature red in tooth and claw but also the cosmos running down into the cold night of entropy. Yes, says Revelation 5: the problem with the good creation is, how can God's purposes for it be fulfilled? How can the scroll of God's will be unrolled and read so that it comes to pass? No one is worthy to do it. The answer, through which the prayer and worship of the church and creation are taken through into a new dimension, is that the Lion who is also the Lamb has conquered, and through him

³⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 204–5.

God's purposes are going forward. And, with that, prayer and worship break out in a new way. Heaven and earth come together in new way. Future and present are joined in a new way. In the death and resurrection of Jesus the new creation has begun, and with it the new song, "Worthy is the Lamb," the song that lies at the heart of Christian adoration.³⁵

Chapter Four demonstrated that in places like the Prayers of the Church, the church offers up prayer and praise on behalf of its members, it also offers them up on behalf of the world. This shows a continuity between the church and the creation within which it resides. The work of God, and in particular hope, flows through the church to creation. However, prayer is merely the beginning of hope for creation. The church is given many other ways to express that hope out in the midst of the created world.

This work takes Christians outside of the liturgical context and outside the gathered assembly. It has them engaging with creation itself wherever there is brokenness and thus a need for hope. Wright explains,

Let's be quite clear on two points. First, God builds God's kingdom. But God ordered his world in such a way that his own work within that world takes place not least through one of his creatures in particular, namely, the human beings who reflect his image. That, I believe, is central to the notion of being made in God's image. God intends his wise, creative, loving presence and power to be *reflected*—imaged, if you like—into his world *through* his human creatures. He has enlisted us to act as his stewards in the project of creation. And, following the disaster of rebellion and corruption, he has built into the gospel message the fact that through the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, he equips humans to help in the work of getting the project back on track.³⁶

Christians are given the goal and the means to carry the Kingdom with which they have been joined through the Eucharist out into the world. This is done not so much with proclamation as it

³⁵ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 279.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 207 [italics in original].

is through the human position of steward and caretaker of creation. As Christians are restored in their connection to the Kingdom they are also restored in their role as steward and so their carrying out of this position becomes an act of hope in the world.

As stewards of creation, Christians are tasked with caring for the world and everything in it. Each act of care and kindness in the world makes life and the world a little bit better. This work indicates a hope for the future, a hope that recognizes that the work done will not be fruitless nor will it be forgotten. Wright explains the basis for this assertion,

But what we can and must do in the present, if we are obedient to the gospel, if we are following Jesus, and if we are indwelt, energized, and directed by the Spirit, is to build *for* the kingdom. This brings us back to 1 Corinthians 15:58 once more: what you do in the Lord *is not in vain*. . . . You are—strange though it may seem, almost as hard to believe as the resurrection itself—accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God’s new world. Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one’s fellow human beings and for that matter one’s fellow nonhuman creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world—all of this will find its way, through the resurrection power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make. That is the logic of the mission of God. God’s recreation of his wonderful world, which began with the resurrection of Jesus and continues mysteriously as God’s people live in the risen Christ and in the power of his Spirit, means that what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last all the way into God’s new world. In fact, it will be enhanced there.³⁷

Here, Wright echoes the thought of Luther above. Where Luther connected Christian vocation to the Kingdom, Wright now extends that to Christian work in creation as a whole. God gives a task to his people that has meaning and has an impact on the future of creation. The exact nature of

³⁷ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 208–9 [italics in original]. Wright’s argument here presumes all of Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 15:50–58.

how this work will be incorporated into the coming Kingdom and what form it will take is not revealed. That the full restoration of creation is only brought about by the return of Christ is clear. However, the daily activity of Christian life brings a portion of that restoration to creation in the present. This extends the Christian experience of hope into the creation that also desires the future promised by God.

Reclaiming the World for Christ's Kingdom

The ways in which hope can be spread to the world are nearly limitless. Each different kind of suffering or need in the world is another possible point of hope-filled Christian activity. Healing, as Schmemmann discussed earlier in connection to funerals, is a demonstration of hope. That illnesses can be cured, injuries mended, and people brought back to health indicates not only that God has power over these aspects of creation, but also that God desires a better future for people. Healing is one of the most obvious applications of hope in activity outside the church, but it is by no means the only one.

N. T. Wright lists several other examples of how hope is spread through the work of Christians for the Kingdom. Another hope-filled activity that he brings forward is that of justice. Wright himself defines justice by saying,

I use this word as a shorthand for the intention of God, expressed from Genesis to Revelation, to set the whole world right—a plan gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ, supremely in his resurrection (following his victory over the powers of evil and death on the cross), and now to be implemented in the world.³⁸

³⁸ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 213.

Rectifying abuses and defending the less fortunate is another way in which hope is displayed and a brighter future is revealed. Justice is not the expectation that the full scope of God's Kingdom can be established by human work. As has been stated previously, only Christ's return will bring about the fulfillment of the Kingdom. However, Christian work in bringing about justice can be done and, when carried out in the context of God's promises to the world, stands as a sign of what the world can expect when Christ does return. Wright argues that Christians occupy a midpoint between the view that the Kingdom can be established on earth by human means and the view that, because God must ultimately establish the Kingdom, there is no reason for Christians to do anything at all.

Neither of these views begins to do justice—in any sense—to Paul's injunction to be steadfast and immovable in doing the work of the Lord because in the Lord our labor is not in vain. The universal early Christian belief was that Jesus had already been demonstrated publicly to be Israel's Messiah and the world's true Lord through his resurrection. That, as we've seen, is part of the whole point of the Christian story. And if we believe it and pray, as he taught us, for God's kingdom to come on earth as in heaven, there is no way we can rest content with major injustice in the world.³⁹

The whole concept of providing justice is that it declares what God is doing and will do in creation, both now and, more importantly, in the future.

[The Sadducees] knew [the doctrine of the resurrection] meant that God was turning the world upside down. And people who believe that God will turn the world upside down—people like Mary with her Magnificat, pulling down the mighty from their thrones and exalting the humble and meek—are not going to be backward in getting on with some world-changing activities in the present. It isn't that, like suicide bombers, people who believe in the resurrection are more cheerful about dying for the cause because they are happy to leave this present world and escape into a glorious future. It is, rather, that people who believe in the resurrection, in God making a

³⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 216.

whole new world in which everything will be set right at last, are unstoppably motivated to work for that new world in the present.⁴⁰

Providing justice, whether for people or for the rest of creation, is not just about helping to bring a better life to the world, but stands as a sign of what is to come in God's future. Thus, bringing justice to the world is also a means to bring hope; a hope in the future that God will one day bring.

The idea of Christian activity declaring God's future can take other forms as well. Three broad categories of this activity can be discussed as a way of demonstrating how this takes place. These three categories have already been alluded to by N. T. Wright in the quotes above: space, time, and matter. In each of these categories, the simple practice of doing a certain activity or the manner in which that activity is carried out becomes a proclamation regarding the future. It acts as a statement of belief that is held by the Christian and the church about not only who they are and what their role in the world is, but also what God has in store for the world in the future.

The Christian approach to time reflects this hope for the future in a couple of ways. How Christians view the passage of time in creation is a demonstration of what they believe God has done in history and what he has promised he will do. As one example of this demonstration:

It was dramatically symbolized in the fourth century when Dionysus the Insignificant constructed a dating scheme for the whole world based on the (supposed) birth date of Jesus. The fact that this scheme is still in use more or less worldwide despite abortive attempts such as that of the French Revolutionaries to supplant it came briefly to notice a few years ago at the time of the millennium but is largely ignored. Like a great church bell ringing out over a sleepy town, every time someone puts a date on something it speaks of the lordship of Jesus, whether people listen or not.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 214.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 260–61.

The life and resurrection of Christ ushered in a new age of hope and brought the world in touch with the kingdom of God. The world is still governed by the resurrection and the effect it had on creation. By utilizing a dating system such as this, Christians declare God to be the one in control of history and its course; for he is the only one who does things that are worth changing the dating system.

Another example of this is in the ordering of the week. Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Christ, is made the first day of the week. In this way, the beginning of the week symbolizes the beginning of the new era of history that was brought about by Christ's resurrection.

In particular, the gospels (especially John) and the early practice of the church (as in Paul) reflect the very early understanding of the church that *the first day of the week*, the day of Easter, has become a sign within the present world and its temporal sequence that the life of the age to come has already broken in. Sunday, kept as a commemoration of Easter ever since that event itself (a quite remarkable phenomenon when you come to think about it), is not simply a legacy of Victorian values but a perpetual sign, joyfully renewed week by week, that all time belongs to God and stands under the renewing lordship of Jesus Christ.⁴²

That the week begins with the celebration of the resurrection is a declaration that the world is under the aegis of Christ and the Kingdom. For the church, the rest of the week is a reflection of what has taken place on Sunday and a looking forward to the next Sunday, the next resurrection. This becomes a declaration of hope because it states that all of life in the present age is bounded by these two events. Schmemmann also comments by saying,

In the late Jewish apocalyptic writings there emerges the idea of a new day which is both the *eighth*—because it is beyond the frustrations and limitations of “seven,” the time of *this world*—and the *first*, because with it begins the new time, that of the Kingdom. It is from this idea that grew the Christian Sunday.⁴³

⁴² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 261–262 [italics in original].

⁴³ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 51 [italics in original].

As the Kingdom enters into the present age through the Eucharist celebration in Sunday morning worship, it becomes the event around which the rest of Christian life is oriented. Sunday as the beginning of the week informs the world what it is that drives the Christian forward through the rest of the week and through the rest of life.

This particular example shows how Christian hope extends from the Eucharistic participation in the Kingdom, through the liturgy, and outward into Christian life. The Eucharist forms the focal point for Christian life, by joining together with the rest of the church in the experience of the Kingdom. As the day of Christ's resurrection, the church centers its worship on this day and its liturgy reflects the centrality of Christ's resurrection. The rest of Christian life is thus governed by the church's focus on the resurrection. Schmemmann continues,

Christ rose from the dead on the *first day* after the Sabbath. The life that shone forth from the grave was beyond the inescapable limitations of "seven," of time that leads to death. It was thus the beginning of a new life and of a new time. It was truly the eighth and the first day and it became the day of the Church. The risen Christ, according to the fourth Gospel, appeared to His disciples on the first day (Jn. 20:19) and then "after eight days" (20:26). This is the day on which the Church celebrates the Eucharist—the sacrament of its ascension to the Kingdom and of its participation at the messianic banquet in the "age to come," the day on which the Church fulfills itself as new life. The earliest documents mention that Christians meet *statu die*—on a fixed day—and nothing in the long history of Christianity could alter the importance of this fixed day.⁴⁴

The use of Sunday is a testimony to the world regarding the history-altering power of Christ's resurrection. It is a statement of what the church is looking forward to and what the focus of its hope is. Sunday, the Lord's Day, speaks to who it is that governs creation, to who guides its future.

⁴⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 51 [italics in original].

The sacramental connection is also visible in the category of matter. Here the idea is that Christ's promise to all of creation is an indication that creation itself is a part of the Kingdom. This means that creation can be repurposed to uses that glorify God and testify to the coming Kingdom.

Yet again, however, if we are not to collapse into Platonism, denying the goodness of creation itself, it is crucial to recapture both the bodily incarnation and resurrection of Jesus and the promise that creation itself will be renewed, liberated from death and decay (and therefore presumably, as in C. S. Lewis's remarkable imaginative world in *The Great Divorce*, more solid, more real, than the present one). It is within this framework of thought that the classic Christian sacraments of baptism and Eucharist make sense.⁴⁵

The sacraments make sense in the context of renewed creation because God makes use of creation to make the sacraments work. Bread, wine, and water all become repurposed in sharing the grace of God and the glory of the coming Kingdom.

The offering of bread, wine, and water to God for his purposes is a recognition that they are the firstfruits of a renewed creation. God intends to remake the entire world, but for now the Kingdom is brought into creation a little at a time. "And thus this offering to God of bread and wine, of the food that we must eat in order to live, is our offering to Him of ourselves, of our life and of the whole world."⁴⁶ Offering to God the things that are important for human life is a demonstration that all things come from God and are provided by him. God gives new life and new purpose; restoring them to his service.

Hope is found in this activity through the repurposing or re-appropriating of creation for God. The offering of bread and wine for the Eucharist is distinct from the Eucharist itself. The

⁴⁵ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 262.

⁴⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 35.

offering is possible because of what God promises to do through the Eucharist in bringing his Kingdom. In discussing the theological meaning of offering of the elements to be used in the Eucharist, Schmemmann says

This meaning consists in that, first of all, by whomever and however the “matter,” i.e., the bread and cup, of the eucharistic mystery is offered, from the very beginning we foresee and anticipate in them Christ’s sacrifice of love, Christ himself, offered by us and in himself offering us to the God and Father. And this foreknowledge, our knowing *before the liturgy* and therefore “signifying” the predestination of the bread to be changed into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ, constitutes in essence the basis and condition of the very *possibility* of the eucharistic offering.⁴⁷

The fact that God has promised to make this mundane bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ proves that creation can and will be redeemed. The commonness of creation does not exclude it from God’s providence.

As Christians look out into the world and see pollution, ruin, and devastation, there is a desire to bring hope and healing to these places, to bring life and beauty to them again. Sometimes Christians are successful in bringing a measure of the Kingdom’s restoration to these places. Charles Arand and Erik Herrmann note that the work of Christians to restore and beautify creation is an expression of hope,

In the first article of the creed, our challenge is to see that all of it—in its order, provision, and harmony—is the beautiful work of God. But as we turn to the second and third articles, we encounter a deeper problem, namely, the diminishment of creation brought about by the fallenness of God’s human creatures. Here we move away from the need to find beauty in the “non-scenic” of creation to finding beauty in the midst of creation’s bondage to decay. In this context, beauty again plays an important role. Whereas beauty in the first article attracts us to creation, arouses appreciation for creation, and thus serves the cause of conservation so beauty in the

⁴⁷ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 109–10 [italics in original].

second and third articles can serve to arouse and foster hope for the renewal of creation.⁴⁸

Regardless of whether they are successful or not, God will remove all of this corruption and restore all of creation when he brings the Kingdom in its fullness. However, until that time arrives, Christians give creation an indication of what it will look like in the Kingdom by restoring life and beauty to it. This shares a little of the work of the Eucharist, as creation is given back to God and restored to his purposes.

The perfect and beautiful creation is there, hidden under the brokenness and corruption that currently plagues it. This restored creation is only visible through the knowledge and experience of Christ's Kingdom. It is there that creation's restoration is made complete. As N. T. Wright pointed out previously, the work of the Christian will be incorporated into the Kingdom and so his work points forward to that time. "In light of the life to come beauty can act as a testimony to that hope, filling others with hope and purpose that no amount of pragmatics can accomplish."⁴⁹

The restoration of creation is thus an extension of the vocation that Christians themselves have had restored. Their work in creation is both a demonstration of what they hope for, as well as role they have been given in relation to the world around them.

Yet as Christians, we do not stop with rediscovering or taking comfort in the remnants or glimpses of beauty that remain within the present creation in the midst of its corruption. Christian care seeks the flourishing of life and the blossoming of beauty. It is not that we can bring it about now (ala post-millennialism). Instead, Christian faith in the eschatological promises of God (renewing the beauty of creation) prompts us to engage in acts of beauty as confession of the hope that we've

⁴⁸ Charles P. Arand and Erik Herrmann, "Attending to the Beauty of the Creation and the New Creation," *Concordia Journal* 38 (2012), 320.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

been given. Such acts speak to both the restoration of proper dominion and creation's future renewal.⁵⁰

The Christian's work to bring life and beauty to the world is a sign that he himself has been restored. He is able to share his hope with creation because he has received it from God through God's Word of promise and the experience of the Kingdom in the Eucharist.

This desire to bring restoration to creation also supports the evangelistic mission. When Christians share their hope by caring for others and restoring creation, it is also a display of their beliefs in God and in his Kingdom. It demonstrates that the hope a Christian has is not imagined and encourages those who see the Christian at work to also look for the source of the hope he has. N. T. Wright points this out,

It should be clear that this way of coming at the tasks of the church in terms of space, time, and matter plays straight into the categories I used before, of justice and beauty. But it also leads directly into evangelism. When the church is seen to move straight from worship of the God we see in Jesus to making a difference and effecting much-needed change in the real world; when it becomes clear that the people who feast at Jesus's table are the ones in the forefront of work to eliminate hunger and famine; when the people realize that those who pray for the Spirit to work in and through them are the people who seem to have extra resources of love and patience in caring for those whose lives are damaged, bruised, and shamed, then it is not only natural to speak of Jesus himself and to encourage others to worship him for themselves and find out what belonging to his family is all about but it is also natural for people, however irreligious they may think of themselves as being, to recognize that something is going on that they want to be part of. In terms that the author of Acts might have used, when the church is living out the kingdom of God, the word of God will spread powerfully and do its own work.⁵¹

Since God's Word is the source for hope, the work that the church does in support of hope is also permeated by God's Word. All of the work of hope naturally leads back to the source and draws

⁵⁰ Arand and Herrmann, 324.

⁵¹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 267.

those outside into the sacramental and liturgical context where the Word of God may be encountered in its fullness. Thus, even in activities where the Word is not being explicitly proclaimed, it is nonetheless present and active. The work of hope will lead others to ask the Christian how he came to have the hope that he has and what has directed him to share it with others.

The fact that hope is interwoven through so much of Christian life can be seen from all that has been discussed so far. However, hope in the future does not stop at how a Christian acts in the world; it affects how he thinks and how he approaches the problems he faces in life. In looking at all that has been said regarding vocation and work in creation, an ethical framework begins to take shape that is molded by the hope that a Christian has in the Kingdom. Recalling the discussion from chapter two, regarding how faith is that which trusts in God's promises, Luther's vocational theology can be extended further, forming the basis for an ethical framework that draws upon the hope a Christian has in the coming kingdom of God. This ethical framework is shaped not by the immediate concerns of the present, but by an awareness of God's future and the Kingdom.

To see how hope provides a foundation for ethics, some further points must be said regarding vocation. Paul Althaus, in his examination of Luther's ethics, provides a connection between faith and Christian life,

Faith needs works—that is, concrete specific acts of life—in order to be itself at any point. Faith always needs secular life—just as secular life in turn always needs faith. Believing is not something I do *alongside* my life in this world but rather in it—in each and every act of living. Faith expresses itself in the form of works. Faith lives *in* works, just as works are done *in* faith.

Only by thus exercising our faith can we begin to recognize what faith is and what it means to believe. This happens when we have to risk or bear something in

faith or when we encounter our neighbor or our enemy in faith. Then we really begin to learn what it means to say that we place all our trust in God alone.⁵²

Here the integration of faith and daily life is demonstrated. Christian living, even outside the worship service, is still an expression of the faith held by the Christian. The works that a Christian does in his life outside the worship service are a statement of that in which he believes, and thus the hope that he has of the future. The reason a Christian does a particular thing is therefore because it properly expresses his faith and demonstrates what he believes will be the ultimate outcome of his actions.

Althaus gives examples of how the connection between faith and life comes to be expressed. In his discussion of the trust that Christians have in God that forms the foundation for the First Commandment and how that trust flows into subsequent commandments, Althaus says,

Luther refers to this in connection with each commandment. For example, in speaking of the fifth commandment he says: "This lofty, noble, satisfying work may be learned very easily, if we do it in faith and bring faith to bear upon it. For if faith does not doubt the favor of God, and a man has no doubt that he has a gracious God, it will be quite easy for him to be gracious and favorable to his neighbor, however much the neighbor may have sinned against him." In speaking of the command to be chaste, Luther says: "In the matter of chastity a good strong faith is a great help—more noticeably so than in almost any other work. Faith is a guard of chastity." In speaking of the seventh commandment he says: "Faith teaches this work [of not worrying and not being greedy] of itself. If the heart expects and puts its trust in divine favor, how can a man be greedy and anxious? Such a man is absolutely certain that he is acceptable to God: therefore he does not cling to money; he uses his money cheerfully and freely for the benefit of his neighbor. He knows full well that he will have enough no matter how much he gives away. His God, whom he trusts, will neither lie to him nor forsake him."⁵³

⁵² Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schulze (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 17 [italics in original].

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

Here Luther, via Althaus, is showing how the trust that a Christian has in God allows him to act in accordance with the commandments God has given. The assurance the Christian has in God's providence allows him to live with a confidence in the future.

The trust that God is in control and is providing for the needs of the Christian means that he never needs to worry about the intermediate result. A Christian can always be gracious and favorable to his neighbor, no matter what sort of reaction he receives from that neighbor, because the Christian is still ensured of his place in the coming Kingdom. The Christian also can afford to help and support his neighbor financially and in other ways because he also is assured of his ultimate future. Althaus notes in his discussion of the relationship between works and salvation,

Since obedience is required of us, our works are—and are intended to be—nothing more than simple compliance with God's command. We add nothing beyond what he requires, nothing upon which salvation could be based. What we do for God can be described only in terms of obedience, and of thanks and praise to God. Understood teleologically, however—that is, in terms of their purpose—our deeds are done not for God but for our neighbor and for him alone. Whatever we do, we are to concern ourselves only with our neighbor's need and not worry about our own salvation. We are to care for our neighbor and him alone. The man who does something to gain his own salvation really cares only for himself. However, God has already provided for my needs—therefore I do not need to be concerned about myself. Indeed, God gives me what I need in advance when I, through faith, receive his grace and favor. Beyond that, nothing more is needed.⁵⁴

The Christian has seen the Kingdom. He knows that he will be a part of that Kingdom when Christ comes because of the promise God has made to him. He knows also that his service to his neighbor will be incorporated into the Kingdom in some way. His future is assured through the promise of God of the Kingdom. His thanks and praise of God within the liturgy have already

⁵⁴ Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 5.

demonstrated the restoration that is at work in his life. As N. T. Wright noted above, “God builds God’s kingdom.”⁵⁵ It is not up to the Christian to bring himself into God’s future; that is already seen to through his connection to God’s promise. Thus, what is left is service to his neighbor through the carrying out of his vocation and bringing his hope-filled work to the world. This underscores not only what a Christian does as part of his vocation, but also explains why he does it. “The true Christian ethos is distinguished from every other ethos because the Christian acts on the basic presupposition of his certainty that he is saved.”⁵⁶

Being in the presence of God within the celebration of the Eucharist, and receiving the restoration that comes through the Kingdom, the Christian is not only changed in his actions but also in his attitude. The emphasis thus far in the chapter is on how hope goes out into the world through the actions of the Christian. The point made here by Luther and Althaus is that all of this activity done by Christians to spread hope is only possible because of the change that has taken place in the heart and mind of the Christian.

Because the Christian’s activity flows out of his experience of God’s love and since this activity is itself love, it shares all the characteristics of God’s own love. God wants people to act spontaneously, freely and voluntarily, happily and eagerly. Where the Spirit and faith do their work, the Christian does not respond compulsively or artificially to his neighbor; rather, he acts with an inner necessity comparable to the natural processes by which trees bear fruit. This spontaneity changes the “thou shalt” to an inner “I must.” Here the imperative is set aside through the indicative worked by God’s Holy Spirit: Christians spontaneously do the good works which they ought to do.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 207.

⁵⁶ Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

The restoration that is begun through the experience of the Kingdom is one that affects the whole person. As the Christian has been restored in the presence of God both to God and to his fellow Christians, the hope that is given to him also restores internally, body, mind, and soul. It is precisely because this is the case that all of his work out in the world is possible and effective. His outlook on life and his reason for doing things is changed. Schmemmann makes the sacramental connection explicit,

And the experience of holiness in the Church, of those men whom we call saints, is an experience precisely of such inner transformation. The ultimate destiny of all that exists is summed up in the words of the Liturgy of St. Basil: "that Christ might fill all things with Himself." These words are the starting point for the proper understanding of sacraments. Sacraments are those acts of the Church by which she transforms our life.⁵⁸

With Christians bringing the Kingdom to all of creation, hope has completed its journey from God to the world. As the creator of all things, God has sent his Christians as his representatives into the world to begin the restoration that he will one day complete.⁵⁹ Through Christ's death and resurrection, God has brought about the downfall of death and Satan. This event sets in motion the restoration of all creation. By bringing Christians into connection with Christ's resurrection, they are given the ability to carry the message of the resurrection with them. Christians are able to proclaim the resurrection and thereby give hope to those around them through major life events such as weddings and funerals. Their daily lives are also a source of hope for those both in and out of the church. Through the direct proclamation of God's promises, they are able to draw despairing Christians back to God and direct non-Christians to

⁵⁸ Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 90.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 207.

the hope they have of the coming kingdom of God. Through their vocations as spouses, parents, workers, and in other roles, Christians serve their neighbors and work to bring a better life to those in need. Through this work, they demonstrate that the future can indeed be made better and, in connection with the proclamation of God's promises, they give an indication of what will await them in the coming Kingdom as well.

The daily life of the Christian also means caring for creation itself. As stewards of the world that God has made, Christians have the opportunity to share a bit of the restoration of the Kingdom with creation as well. Helping plants and animals to live and grow, bringing beauty to the world, and healing the brokenness that afflicts it are all ways in which Christians bring restoration and hope to the world. In this way, hope comes to everything that God has made. All of creation is made to have a share in the Kingdom and to experience the restoration that comes at Christ's return.

CHAPTER SIX

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

With this in-depth investigation into the nature of hope now complete, the opportunity arises for a discussion of the applications for this thesis and argument. By using the information presented in this thesis, a number of places within the life of the church and of individual Christians may be reexamined. Hope is a theme found in many of the fundamental aspects of life for Christians and, knowing this, questions can be asked as to how that hope is being portrayed. Some of the questions that arise out of the whole development of the argument are: is hope being taught properly? Is it shown in connection with the different aspects of church life? Are Christians being connected to hope to the degree they should be? These broad questions can help give Christians a starting point for investigating their own lives and the lives of their church to see if the theme can be brought out to the extent that God offers it. To conclude this dissertation, a number of examples will be discussed where the theme of hope may be applied in greater ways in an effort to benefit the lives of Christians and of the church as a whole.

First, the concern raised by N. T. Wright previously in his discussion of eschatology must not be overlooked. His observations regarding many Christians' incomplete understanding of eschatology, that substitutes a nebulous spiritual existence for the actual promise of the resurrection, highlights a notable failure in the modern church. A proper understanding of the bodily resurrection that is associated with Christ's return, as well as the attendant restoration of all creation, is an integral aspect of hope. Christians are called by God to serve their neighbors

and to act as stewards of creation. Though this activity can take place solely because God commanded it, the force of hope that undergirds this activity becomes lost.

When the resurrection and restoration of creation are not taken seriously, Christian work in the world can be dismissed as unimportant to long term goals. The church may be reduced to an organization that does nothing more than speak the gospel to others because they view this as the only thing important for eternity. While the proclamation of the gospel is certainly an important work, even the most important, it is not the only work Christians are given to do and certainly not the only work with eternal implications. Christian work in caring for neighbors and for creation reinforces the hope-filled message of God's Word of promise. It demonstrates to others that God truly cares about their future and that, no matter what physical or spiritual state they are in, they too can be a part of God's Kingdom. A Christian's work in restoring creation is also a demonstration that God, as king of creation, cares for everything he created.

With this in mind, hope has important implications for much of what the church does in the world, particularly in regards to evangelism. By helping those outside the church who are in need, they exhibit a small portion of Christ's restoration on their behalf. They touch on the outermost border of the Kingdom and are drawn inward where they might find more of that restoration, and thus a stronger hope for the future. Hope, as part of the overall message that God gives to his people, is an integral part of evangelism. It declares to the world that a better future truly does await all those who trust in that promise of God.

The second example of where hope can find a greater application is in the sacramental rituals of the church. The sacraments are indeed means of grace. They convey God's forgiveness and are connected to the various related themes of redemption, atonement, and so forth.

However, hope is also a theme that is found within the sacraments and is part of their overall purpose.

God's promises and the hope that connects Christians with them is what helps the grace received through the sacraments take shape. The sacraments give a glimpse of the Kingdom and, to that effect, the ritual practices of a congregation can be examined for ways to emphasize the breadth of what is taking place. Working to highlight the communal aspect of the sacraments is an important way for the Kingdom to become more visible through them. Since baptism is a reception of God's promises and marks the baptized as a new member of the body of Christ, conducting the baptism within the assembled body of Christ is an important way to help new and old Christians to understand what is taking place. There are reasons why some baptisms must be conducted privately; however the preference for the building of hope should be in the public setting. Not only should baptism be conducted within the gathered assembly, but especially within the worship service, and more specifically in connection with the service of the Word. As baptism is the reception of God's Word of promise, placing the rite within the context of the gospel reading helps the baptized, as well as the church, to recognize what it is that is the source of his hope. God's Word, spoken to him through the reading of Scripture, tells the baptized about what Christ did through his death and resurrection and what Christ will do for him in the Kingdom. This reading of Scripture tells him what he has received; a hope for the future in God's Kingdom.

The Eucharist also has aspects that can be brought out more fully to connect the church to the Kingdom. To begin with, the communal aspect of the rite is one that is important and should be fostered. The binding together of brothers and sisters into the body of Christ is a facet of the Kingdom that shines through participation in the Eucharist. As the beginning of the restored

relationship not only between God and man, but also of Christian to Christian, Eucharistic practices that de-emphasize the church coming together and sharing the common table also restrict the vision that Christians receive of the Kingdom. Distribution practices that make the reception of Christ's body and blood an individualized affair, such as the exclusive use of individual cups, are thus detrimental to the overall experience of hope within the Eucharist.

This restriction of vision enters in anywhere that convenience and expedience are given precedence over the theology expressed by the Eucharistic rite. When the Eucharist becomes a hurried affair, it limits the celebratory aspect of the rite and prevents the Christian from seeing the connection to the Kingdom that the Eucharist offers. This also occurs in the selection of the elements for use in the rite. Christ's return is not just an event; it is the establishment of the physical kingdom of God on earth. When bland wine or flavorless bread is used, there is little to link the elements with the grand, bodily celebration that comes with the Kingdom. When the elements do not reflect the physicality of Christ and the Kingdom, the rite focuses purely on the performance of the rite and not on the hope-oriented aspects of it. The reality that the rite points toward a future, where the celebration with God and his people will take place within a restored and physical creation, becomes lost. The physical nature of the Eucharist helps Christians to recognize the physical nature of the Kingdom and to see their place as physical creatures within that Kingdom. Hope, through the Eucharist, connects them both to the future in the physical Kingdom, as well as to the physical creation around them that will also be taken up into the Kingdom at Christ's return.

When extending the investigation of hope beyond the sacraments, items within the surrounding liturgy can also assist the expression of hope if used properly. The first item of note is the structure of the divine service liturgy itself. The liturgy is organized around the two

sources of hope that are found within it: the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist. The experience of the Kingdom that comes through the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be properly understood without the gospel promise setting the stage for it. In order to see their connection to the Kingdom, a Christian needs to know that the promise of the Kingdom is theirs and that, consequently, they will be a part of the future they are seeing within the Eucharist. Thus, a proper liturgical structure that builds on that necessity should be maintained. The standard form of the Western rite prepares them for the reception of God's Word, proclaims God's Word, and then prepares them for the reception of the Eucharist and, after the celebration of the Eucharist, the subsequent return to everyday life. The individual rites surrounding the Word and sacraments are designed to reinforce and explicate their message. Thus, attempts to make major changes to the basic structure of the liturgy risk obscuring the message of hope and preventing it from having the desired effect in the lives of Christians.

In addition to the basic structure of the liturgy, individual rites allow for the inculcation of hope in the worshipping assembly. While certain rites, such as the Sanctus and the Introit, have a forward-looking emphasis and thus convey a message of hope, proper catechesis is necessary to instruct the congregation on what to look for in the performance of the rites. This can take place outside the liturgy, in the form of instruction by the pastor, but may also take place within the liturgy. Certain rites, such as the sermon and the prayers of the church, allow considerable leeway in their content and can be used to help the congregation to better understand what is taking place when they participate in the various individual rites within the liturgy. The prayers themselves have an aspect of hope to them, which directs the Christian to help bring hope to the world around him. Thus, the prayers can be used as an example of how hope permeates the liturgy. The language of the other rites can be expressed again in both sermon and prayer in

connection to God's promises and wider themes of hope to help the congregation understand the purpose of hope and their place in God's hope-filled activity.

The message of hope in the liturgy as a whole can be strengthened even more through the careful use of hymnody. Luther saw hymnody as a vehicle for the Word of God and assigned it due importance. Luther vowed that "following the example of the prophets and fathers of the church, I intend to make German Psalms for the people, i.e., spiritual songs so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people."¹ As an expression of God's Word, hymns may carry the same messages and themes that the plain, spoken Word of God can. Thus, hymns may be used to help a congregation see how hope is connected to virtually any aspect of church and Christian life.

The most basic way to use hymnody to strengthen the theme of hope is to examine the eschatology it presents. As N. T. Wright decries, many Christian hymns, even ones with a long and venerable tradition, actually present a muddled if not outright wrong view of Christian eschatology.² As an example, he notes: "While we're on Christmas carols, consider 'Away in a Manger,' which prays, 'and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.' No resurrection, no new creation, no marriage of heaven and earth."³ Hymns, when used improperly, can work against the message of hope in the coming Kingdom and confuse the church as to what its role in the present world is. With an emphasis on heaven and no clear discussion of the bodily resurrection and life

¹ Martin Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns*, vol. 53 of *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 221.

² Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 20–25.

³ *Ibid.*, 22.

in the Kingdom, the church can lose focus on its work in the world and fail to live out the vocation that has been given to it.

Aside from hymns that specifically discuss the theme of hope, there are also others that draw upon God's promises and point toward a fulfillment. In order to demonstrate how some hymns can be utilized, even when they do not have an overt reference to hope, a few examples will be discussed. To begin with, the ancient hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten," has two stanzas that bring out a more nuanced picture of hope:

3. This is He whom seers in old time
Chanted of with one accord,
Whom the voices of the prophets
Promised in their faithful word.
Now He shines, the long expected;
Let creation praise its Lord.
Evermore and evermore.

4. O ye heights of heav'n, adore him;
Angel hosts, His praises sing.
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him
And extol our God and King.
Let no tongue on earth be silent,
Ev'ry voice in concert ring.
Evermore and evermore.⁴

In both of these stanzas are elements that have been developed in this examination of hope. Stanza three relates the promise-fulfillment theme, showing Christ as the one who fulfills the promise of the Old Testament prophets. This can be related to hope by showing how it illustrates that God fulfilled this particular promise and now the church looks forward to the fulfillment of the final promise of Christ's return. The stanza also shows the goodness of creation. It is not just

⁴ Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, *Of the Father's Love Begotten* (Stanzas 3-4), trans. John Mason Neale in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), 384.

humanity that praises God, but all creation that joins together as one. This lends itself to a proper Christian eschatology and the presence of Christ's Kingdom on earth. The fourth stanza also has a theme that supports hope. God triumphs over all of his enemies and shows himself to be king over all things. Every creature must eventually acknowledge him to be God and the one who is in control of all creation.

Moving away from Christmas hymns, another example of hope imagery comes from a Eucharistic hymn, "At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing."

5. Mighty Victim from the sky
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath You lie;
You have conquered in the fight,
You have brought us life and light. Alleluia!

6. Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And Your saints in You shall rise. Alleluia!⁵

Here again in stanza five, the picture of Christ as the conqueror that stands triumphant over his enemies comes forth. Hope is assured here in Christ because he has already conquered and now brings life to Christians who were previously in the domain of death. Stanza six reinforces this message, noting that death is no longer a threat. This stanza also confirms the outcome that is hoped for by Christians. It is not a spiritual existence that is sought, but a life beyond death, a resurrection.

For one final example, a stanza from "Only-Begotten, Word of God Eternal" shows yet another theme of hope:

⁵ *At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing* (Stanzas 5-6), trans. Robert Campbell in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 633.

2. Holy this temple where our Lord is dwelling;
This is none other than the gate of heaven.
Ever Your children, year by year rejoicing,
Chant in Your temple.⁶

The theme here is not victory or the resurrection, but rather the connection between the present world and the future Kingdom. The people come into church, the dwelling place of God in the temple, and worship him. The gate of heaven opens and the Kingdom pours forth as God makes himself known through his presence in their midst.

These hymns show ways in which the various aspects of hope can be communicated through the hymnody of the church. By singing these hymns, Christians are hearing the message of hope and see it in the context of other themes present in the hymns. This allows them to connect hope both to the life of the church, as well as to the larger corpus of Christian doctrine.

As the sermon, hymns, and prayers help direct the attention of Christians out into the world, the stage is set for work outside the church. Since the ultimate goal of hope is to connect all of the world to God's promises, it is important to follow through on what has begun in the liturgy through the sermon, prayers, and other outwardly-directed rites. It is not enough to simply indicate the need for hope in the world; the church must act to bring that hope to where it is needed. The simple proclamation of the gospel is important, but telling the world about the death and resurrection of Christ as a salvation event is only part of the message. Uniting that message to Christian eschatology provides a source for hope for those that hear the message. It enables the hearers to see themselves in that event and joined to what Christ has done on their behalf.

⁶ *Only-Begotten, Word of God Eternal* (Stanza 2), trans. Maxwell J. Blacker in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 916.

Hope expands on the message of forgiveness and gives it another dimension that allows it to reach those who are struggling with particular issues in their lives such as death. Though death certainly relates to sin, sin is not always a topic with which a non-Christian understands or resonates. The theme of hope gives a Christian another way of expressing what it is that Christ has done for them and how faith puts death and other tragedies in perspective through God's promises of the Kingdom. The message of the forgiveness of sins means little if it is not placed in the context of hope for a future that is free from sin altogether. Thus, the gospel message is one of both forgiveness and hope, with one pertaining to God's restoration in the present and the other to the fuller restoration that comes in the future. In order for the gospel message to function to its fullest extent, the theme of hope must be communicated together with the message of forgiveness, so that God's promises reach the largest audience possible and are able to connect the hearer to the life and future of Christ and the Kingdom.

In addition to hope within the gospel message, the church also needs to support the work of hope within creation itself. If the church isolates itself from the world around it and does not involve itself in the stewardship of creation, a message is communicated about the future God intends for the world and what interests him. When Christians speak to others about forgiveness, grace, salvation, and similar themes, it can appear that God is only concerned with humanity and even there it may only be the soul that concerns him. When the church does not involve itself in caring for the outside world, this message is amplified. Thus, caring for the physical needs of others and working to properly care for the world as a whole reveals the physical nature of the Kingdom and the bodily resurrection that awaits those who will be a part of it. The church must be active in the world as a whole if it is properly to convey the hope that it has in the future. Christian activity is a message of Christian eschatology, and thus also of Christian hope.

The high points of Christian life also can be attended to in ways that emphasize the hope the Christian has for the future. Unlike the details of the Orthodox marriage rite that Schmemmann provided, the Western tradition often does not place much emphasis on hope for the future.⁷ The rite tends to focus on the present couple and concerns itself with the details of joining them together as one. To be sure, God's blessings are invoked over the couple, and their future happiness is part of the prayers, however, there is little mention of how these two are now living representations of God's love to one another. God has given these two people to each other so that they might care for one another and exemplify, even imperfectly, the life of the Kingdom. He gives them as a gift to one another as a sign of his own love for them, which itself is a sign of his desire that they have a better future.⁸ This awareness of the relationship that God is restoring between them and how the Kingdom is coming to life in their midst is often overlooked in favor of the immediate change that is occurring in the present. Thus, an opportunity to speak to the hope the couple has of the future is lost.

At the same time, funerals have a tendency to focus on the past, examining the life of the deceased and the high points that are remembered. An opportunity exists here to focus instead on the promise that was held by the deceased in faith and the fulfillment they are now and ultimately will be receiving. A funeral that only focuses on the past, fails to attend to what is happening for that person now in the Kingdom and does not acknowledge that this person still

⁷ This discussion can be found back in chapter four, pg. 161.

⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 178–81.

has a future and a life to look forward to in that Kingdom. It negates the message of Christ as the conqueror of death, along with the restored life that comes as the result of Christ's triumph.

The final area of application of hope is the general realm of catechesis. As mentioned regarding Christian eschatology however, Christians will never understand what awaits them without being shown the connections between Christ, the Kingdom, and their lives. By the same token, the hope-filled themes within the rest of the church's activity cannot be properly expressed if the congregation does not grasp the purpose of the rites and other practices of the life of the church.

God's Word, as the beginning of hope, is also the clearest. God states through Scripture what it is that Christians and the world as a whole can look forward to at his coming. The sacraments, though permeated with this forward-looking imagery and connections to the Kingdom, are still not clear simply in the expression of hope. As was noted in chapter three, if the sacraments are only discussed as means of grace, the theme of hope is muted. The connection with the Eucharist and the marriage feast of the Lamb that is described in Revelation is easily visible when it is pointed out. However, the way in which the feast in the Kingdom is being expressed in the activity of the church in the Eucharist is not always so clear. The Kingdom's presence in the midst of the Eucharistic rite, the unity of Christians in the body of Christ, and the triumph of God over his enemies are all part of this connection and are all themes of hope. These themes of hope only find their fullest expression when Christians are shown that what they are doing within the Eucharist is a reflection of what is to come and the way in which it brings a part of the feast of the Kingdom into their midst in the present.

Baptism also has similar concerns. The fact that Christ died and rose again is clearly found in Scripture. The significance of that resurrection, that it brings eternal life into the present,

broken world, is not so readily apparent. That a general resurrection is possible precisely because Christ rose from the dead is the theme of hope that is expressed in the context of baptism. However, this is not always communicated. Often baptism focuses on forgiveness and a right standing before God. While these are not incorrect or undesirable themes, they are not the full extent of what baptism communicates. Baptism allows one to stand in the presence of God, which in turn means access to the Kingdom, which is found within the life of the church in the Eucharist. The purpose of baptism as precursor to the Eucharist also should be shared. This gives Christians not only the rationale for administering the sacraments in that order, but helps them to see that God is continuously calling their attention to the future and to the ever-greater promises he has in store for them.

The liturgy also is in need of catechetical exploration. The liturgy's connections to baptism and the Eucharist can be seen easily. However, the reasoning behind other aspects of it is not so obvious. In prayers for example, one can say that a congregation ought to pray for the government because Scripture simply says so. While this is true, it does not express how Christian prayer is actively seeking a better future for those who are the beneficiaries of those prayers. The Christian prays for others because he believes God can help them and make their lives conform to the vision of human life God intends. Thus, the Christian is not just looking for a specific result for the beneficiary, but also looking for hope to be given regarding that person's future and the power of God to bring about that future.

Moving beyond the prayers to catechesis regarding the structure of the liturgy as a whole is also important for Christians as a way of seeing hope in the life of the church. That the received Western form of the liturgy leads the congregation to God's promises in the hearing of the Word and then to the beginning of the fulfillment of those promises in the Eucharist can only be

grasped if Christians understand the broader function of the Eucharist in this regard. The rites following the Eucharist and their role in directing the congregation to take what they have experienced and carry it out into their lives is also something that can be overlooked by Christians. As just a means of grace, the Eucharist can be treated as an isolated event. The Christian comes to the table, receives forgiveness, and then goes about his own business the rest of the week. As an experience of the Kingdom, the Eucharist is something that shapes everything he does and gives him a reason to live out his life as a Christian in the world. As a source of hope, the Eucharist becomes the reason for doing Christian work in the world. The function of the liturgy in making that connection needs to be expressed so that Christians can recognize the organic link between the sacraments and the ongoing work that occupies their time throughout the rest of the week.

The last point for catechesis is the need for expressing why the church involves itself in work in the world outside. Sharing the gospel message is an activity that is readily grasped by Christians. Charity work, on the other hand, is often misunderstood, particularly where there is no obvious proclamation associated with it. Identifying charity work as a source of hope and sharing gives greater meaning to this sort of work. Helping Christians to see that they are giving a better future, and thus a small experience of the Kingdom, is a way of telling people what God has in store for the world. This work then supports the overall message of the gospel as it begins to fulfill God's promises for restoration in the world. Hope is shared through this work and people are thus encouraged to seek out the source of that hope in the Word and sacraments.

Conclusion

This section will provide a summary of the argument presented by this dissertation as well as a summary of the interaction provided by the three main sources used for it: Moltmann, Wright, and Schmemmann. It will present this summary concisely, so that the progression of hope from God to creation may be seen clearly.

Jürgen Moltmann's theological contributions provided the initial point of discourse for this dissertation. His presentation of the promise-fulfillment paradigm and the power of God's Word to create the future it proclaims demonstrated how hope begins to interact with the world. That the present and future are joined through God's promises and their fulfillment indicates that eschatology forms the basis for all discussions of hope. He illustrates that it is this connection between the current promise and its future fulfillment, which continuously calls Christians to look forward, to look for the future God is creating and how they will be a part of that future.

Though Moltmann sets the stage for the argument this dissertation undertakes, he is also the first to demonstrate the shortcomings in his presentation. For Moltmann, God's Word is the only real point of consideration. Any other work done by God that might impact how hope is received or how it affects what it does in the world is omitted. His treatment of the sacraments is brief and lacking in substance and his discussion of the liturgy and the effects of hope on creation as a whole is nearly non-existent. This means that, in order to explore the work of hope more fully, other sources must be consulted.

Alexander Schmemmann provides the bulk of the material that covers how God works through the sacraments and the liturgy. His analysis of the interconnected nature of the sacraments, liturgy, and eschatology indicates that eschatology is an inextricable part of both. Given the foundation for hope and eschatology laid by Moltmann's argument, the hope that

arises from Christian eschatology is then woven through Schmemmann's liturgical and sacramental theology. Schmemmann explains how the sacraments connect to God's Kingdom, and thus also to the eschatological hope that God's promises of the Kingdom provide. The liturgy then expands on the hope found within the sacraments and helps the church to both internalize its message and to put that hope into practice.

Schmemmann's primary shortcomings are two-fold. First, his discussion of hope itself is quite minimal. Though he creates the eschatological connections necessary for hope to enter into the life of the church, the actual starting point for the work of hope must come from outside. At the same time, Schmemmann does not draw out his argument to the point where hope can be seen in the world outside the church to any great degree. It describes how the church can live with an eschatological awareness of the Kingdom, but what that means to the outside world is left largely unexplored. This means that, in order to see where hope will ultimately conclude its work, another source is necessary.

Finally, N. T. Wright's discussion of hope allows one to see the full scope of what God is accomplishing through his promise of the Kingdom. Wright provides a Biblical basis for the connection between God's promise for the future and the eternal life that Christ brought into existence through his resurrection. Wright then explores how this impacts Christians and their hope for the future, as they come to see in Christ the same life they too will have. He also shares what this means for creation as a whole, as all of creation looks forward to the restoration that is already at work in the church.

Wright's primary shortcoming is that he discusses the beginning of hope, stemming from Christ's resurrection, and he discusses the final goal of hope in creation, but skips over the intervening territory that connects the two. Without the sacramental and liturgical life of the

church, Christians have little experience of what the Kingdom is doing and how they are to apply it in their lives and in the world around them. There is little to indicate how Christians should live out that hope and how they should share it with the rest of creation. This means that, in order to see the complete path of hope from God to creation, other sources are necessary. Therefore, this dissertation has taken the material presented by these three sources and pulled them into a coherent whole, so that the path of hope from its divine origins to the world as a whole may be clearly seen and appreciated.

God's hope has a major impact on Christian life. It forms a bond between God, the church, and all of creation. This dissertation has charted the course of hope from God, through the church, to the world. Through the connection of hope, creation is drawn up into the kingdom of God and experiences the future that awaits it. Thus, the entire progression of hope from God's promises, through the sacraments, to the liturgy and onward into Christian life and creation, is eschatologically focused.

All of the concepts that fall into the category of Christian eschatology, such as resurrection and the return of Christ, are each aspects of the fulfillment of God's promises to humanity and to creation. In this way, Christian eschatology is an extension of God's ongoing work in history; the final act of God's salvific activity in creation. The final, eschatological event of Christ's return, along with everything that entails, is what history has been moving toward since Christ's resurrection. The promise that God extends to Christians that they will be a part of the Kingdom upon Christ's return is what creates hope. This is the future that they look forward to and this is the goal upon which they have set their sights.

This future event that God has promised is one that is beyond human ability to achieve. It is God and God alone who is capable of bringing about the renewal and restoration that will take

place when Christ returns. God's future transcends all human ability, and is therefore also greater than any event in history, good or bad. It is more glorious and perfect than the greatest human achievements and is powerful enough to provide healing in the midst of the greatest human disasters. Thus, until it arrives, it is always the point on the chronological horizon which those who wait for it truly believe will come.

However, the eschatological event of Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom on earth are not entirely bound to the future. Christ's resurrection brought about eternal life and, in so doing, brought the reality of the promised future into the present. It is only by holding to the promises of God that humanity becomes a part of this future event. Believing in Christ's promises grants the believer the renewed life that Christ has achieved in the resurrection. The resurrection comes to the Christian through Christ and the Christian's life is thus bound to Christ.

The binding of the Christian to Christ and to the promise of the Kingdom takes place in the sacraments. Through baptism the Christian is made a part of the church and is confirmed in the promise of God of the future Kingdom. This washing of regeneration begins the restoration that is ultimately fulfilled in the Kingdom. The eternal life found in the Kingdom through Christ is conferred upon the new Christian. They are united to the body of Christ and brought into the assembly of Christians.

This inclusion in the body of Christ directs the Christian toward a greater connection with the Kingdom and the promises of God. This greater connection is found in the Eucharist. As the life of Christ and his presence within creation is what brings about the restoration of the Kingdom, the Eucharist is a rite given by God to the church wherein they can experience part of the restoration in the present day. Christ's resurrection established the future restoration in the present and, through the Eucharist, the church becomes a part of that same future. Christians

partaking in the Eucharist are united both with God and with one another and receive a glimpse at what life in the Kingdom is like. They celebrate together the victory of Christ over his enemies. Through this rite, they are given a greater sense of hope; because they have not only heard God's promises but now they also have seen what God has in store for them in the future. Christians have had the opportunity to experience a bit of what awaits them and are strengthened in their hope for the future that is promised them.

The physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist is what brings the future Kingdom into the midst of the church. This means that the experience of the Kingdom found within the Eucharist can itself only be found within the church. The congregation gathers to celebrate the risen Christ and to participate in the feast of Christ's body and blood. Because this event is where Christ's physical presence is found, if anyone wishes to receive the full expression of hope that God offers, it must be in the gathered assembly of believers in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Though God and his promises give hope to those who believe in them, the sacraments take that basis of hope and expand upon it. With the experience they receive of the restoration brought by the Kingdom, the fulfillment of God's promises becomes a concrete reality in the life of those who are a part of it. The hope given by God goes beyond hearing, through his Word of promise, to living. The Christian sees and lives out the reality of the Kingdom in the midst of the sacramental rite. The Eucharist, in particular, demonstrates the Kingdom by bringing the faithful back into the presence of God and reestablishing a unity in the body of Christ represented by the church. The unity of the body of Christ manifests the church living out the restored life and relationships it will have in the God's Kingdom.

This role in connecting the Christian directly with the Kingdom and building upon God's promises is unique to the sacraments. Though Christ delineates other ways in which a Christian

may be in the presence of God, the sacraments are established by God as the unique place in which the restoration of the Kingdom is begun.⁹ Though as integral to Christian hope as the sacraments are, they do not encompass all of hope's purpose.

The sacraments that connect the Christian to the Kingdom are themselves situated within the greater context of the liturgy. The liturgy serves the dual purpose of allowing the work of the sacraments to come to its fullest expression within the life of the church and directing the church toward the task of bringing hope to the rest of creation that lies outside the community of the faithful. This first purpose centers on helping the church live out the hope they have been given from the sacramental experience. The rites of the liturgy focus on the sacramental experience and draw the church's attention to what has taken place there. The rites that surround the sacraments direct the Christian to give glory to God for his hope-oriented gifts of salvation and eternal life. The rites also involve prayers to God, calling upon him to fulfill what he promised to creation. This helps to situate the Christian in an on-going life of prayer that continually remembers God's promises and the experience of the Kingdom.

Prayers, along with other liturgical rites, also accomplish the second purpose of the liturgy: bringing hope to creation. The liturgy informs Christians about the need for hope in the rest of creation. God's restoration of the creation that lies outside the gathered assembly begins within the liturgy. Christians call upon God to fulfill his promises not only for his church but also for the people who are not yet a part of the church and for the restoration of creation as a whole. The liturgy also contains rites that offer praises to God for his restorative activity. It also gives

⁹ To reiterate the previous discussion on this, a Christian may find himself in the presence of God as he gathers with others in God's name, through prayer to God, through God's omnipresent providence, or in other ways.

Christians the opportunity to offer up things of their own, whether finances, goods, or other services, to the service of their neighbor. The Christian brings hope to those in need in the midst of the worship service.

The liturgy also helps the Christian to understand what it means to live out his daily life beyond the confines of the worship service. The traditional liturgy only fills a small portion of the week. For the rest of the week, the Christian's life is guided and informed by what took place in the liturgy. God's Word of promise is still active and directing the attention of the Christian toward the future. The Christian also is able to reflect on the sacramental experience and to look ahead to the next time they will be able to participate in it. In this way, the Christian's life, even outside the liturgy, still centers on the liturgy and the sacraments within it. Thus, hope flows out of the sacraments into the everyday life of the Christian. The Christian is able to confront the struggles and difficulties of life with the hope that he has been given. God's promises, together with the sacramental experience, remind him of the better future that is to come with the Kingdom. The Christian becomes aware that there is nothing that will prevent God's future from unfolding, and thus no difficulty in life that will carry eternal implications.

It is at the completion of the liturgy that hope enters into its fullest purpose: bringing all of creation into the restoration of God's Kingdom. Having been made aware of the need for hope in the world outside, the Christian is directed to share what he has experienced in the Eucharist with those who have either lost hope in God's promises or who have not yet heard them. The

However, it is only in God's sacramental presence that the restoration of the Kingdom is experienced.

Christian recounts God's salvific work to those in despair and how Christ has brought the Kingdom into the present day.

The message of God's promises is multi-faceted. It involves the spiritual message of restoration brought about by God's forgiveness and grace. It also involves the message of the physical restoration. Proclaiming Christ as the destroyer of death who has paved the way for a general resurrection of the dead through his own resurrection shares with the hearers the full scope of what God's promises entail. This message helps the hearers to understand what it is that God has done through Christ's resurrection and what he will do in the future through the Kingdom. It helps put into perspective the troubles of the present world and God's ultimate triumph over all things.

Through this proclamatory work, the Christian calls upon those in despair to examine what God has done through history and how all of creation is tied to the future God is creating for it in the Kingdom. By apprehending God's promises, whether for the first time or after falling into despair, the believer is directed toward the source of hope in God's Word and the sacraments. The believer is brought into the gathered assembly of the faithful and is able to experience for themselves Christ's Kingdom.

This proclamatory work also comes in a more indirect form as the Christian engages in the vocations and life events that he is called to undertake. Recalling from the previous chapter, there are several ways in which this takes place. In events like a wedding, the Christian declares his belief in the future that God has laid before him. Through a future marked by God's providence and blessing, God demonstrates his care for the Christian through his spouse and shows him that there is reason to hope, for a better future is possible. In his funeral, the Christian declares the hope that has guided his life and that has now come to fulfillment with the

confirmation of his place in the Kingdom. The vocations given to a Christian are also places where hope may be proclaimed. Whether as a parent, a citizen, a worker, or in any other position given to him to fill, the Christian works to improve the lives of those given into his care. His efforts espouse a belief that a better future is possible and allude to the perfect future that awaits the coming of God's Kingdom.

In addition to the proclamation of God's promises, there is also the more generalized work of hope that seeks to better the lives of those in need. Caring for those who need basic necessities, who are suffering from emotional distress, or nearly any issue that can cause someone to see the future as bleak becomes a place where hope is needed. By serving the needs of his neighbor, the Christian demonstrates that a better future is possible. The Christian is then able to explain what the goal of the future is and how one can become a part of it. This becomes an avenue for hope in the life of those outside the church. Thus, even in work that is not directly proclamatory, the Christian testifies to the restoration of the Kingdom and the hope God gives.

The Christian is also called to bring hope to creation itself. The restoration that will come with the Kingdom will carry that restoration to all of creation. That means that creation in the present day has a better future to look forward to as well. Hope is active in creation as Christians work to bring that restoration to the creation around them. Restoring beauty and purity to the world is a demonstration of what God will accomplish through the Kingdom in an even greater sense. Though creation cannot apprehend hope in the traditional sense, its proleptic restoration helps elucidate the full scope of the Kingdom and serves as a testimony to the full breadth of the restoration.

In this way, God's Word of promise extends hope to all things in creation. The hope that is found in God's promises is communicated by the proclamation of his Word, realized in the

sacraments, understood in liturgy, and lived in creation. Hope enters creation through the people who have received it from God and who have seen its effects in their own lives. Seen in its totality, hope flows outward from God, through the church, to all of creation. At the same time, hope always leads back up. It draws creation into the church and from there into the presence of God in his Kingdom. Through this system, God gives hope to the world and calls the world to come to where that hope can be instilled in deeper ways, so that those who receive God's hope may live to see that hope fulfilled in the coming of his Kingdom.

All of the hope-giving work that a Christian does out in the world, for those in the church, those outside the church, and for creation itself, is not in vain. Beyond the proclamatory aspect of this work that brings God's promises to those that have not heard or those who are in despair, it is unclear exactly how God will make use of this work in the Kingdom. However, the fact that God does have a place for everything that is done to bring hope to the present world is made clear. This knowledge allows a Christian to confidently carry the hope that they have into the work they do in the world. The work of the church and of individual Christians is both productive and necessary for incorporating the world into the kingdom of God to the degree that it is possible prior to the coming of Christ and the fullness of the Kingdom that accompanies his arrival.

The path that hope takes from God to the world is setup so that Christians are incorporated into the life of the Kingdom and are given the resources to share the hope they have received with the rest of the world and with one another. God's Word of promise is the source of all Christian hope and the beginning of hope for the world as well. God's promises alone are enough to offer hope to hearers, but the structure that God has created with the sacraments and liturgy gives Christians new ways of experiencing this hope and understanding its impact on their lives

and in the world. The sacraments and liturgy bring Christians into the ongoing work of the Kingdom and give purpose and direct their activity in the world. Their participation in the sacraments and liturgy extends hope into the rest of their lives and gives them the means to carry hope into the world outside in ways that facilitate the engagement of God's Word with the world. Thus, the structure of hope that God has designed allows hope to be received through his promises and then confirmed and experienced through the sacraments. The liturgy transforms that hope from something that is given to the individual Christian into a gift that he can then give to the rest of the world. In this way, every part of the structure has a purpose and strengthens the overall work of hope. In order for hope to accomplish all that God has set out for it to do, every piece, from the proclamation of God's Word of promise, to the sacraments, the liturgy, and the outward hope-filled work of Christians in the world, must be utilized. The multi-faceted nature of hope is designed to give Christians the life of the resurrected Christ and to hold them in that life until the coming of the kingdom of God and the fulfillment of all the promises God has made to the world.

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