JURGEN MOLTMANN AND HIS THEOLOGY OF HOPE

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In the 'theology of hope' a static view of reality is replaced by a dynamic view which is always plunging toward the future. The task before us is to show how this dynamic type of thinking can be found in the theology of Moltmann. At least within a Protestant context, Jurgen Moltmann of Tubingen, rightfully deserves the title of the "theologian of hope."[1] The key to understanding his futuristic theology, this "theology of hope," is the concept that God is subject to the process of time.[2] In this process, God is not fully God,[3] because God is part of time which is pushing forward into the future. If God is limited by the future,

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1. There are other theologians connected with the general movement. Wolfhart Pannenberg of Munich and Ernst Benz of Marburg are considered part of the movement of this futuristic theology. The former may be considered the dogmatician of the movement with his *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968) and the former the historian with his *Evolution and Christian Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966). As with the emergence of various theological schools, there is always the tendency to associate the movement with church history, so Benz traces his concept of hope from the early church to the present. In America, Carl E. Braaten of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago has definitely aligned himself with the "theology of hope" with his book *The Future of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Braaten is obviously and admittedly dependent on the writings of Moltmann. The "theology of hope" seems to be replacing existentialist oriented neo-orthodoxy. It made its debut in America with Moltmann's *The Theology of Hope*, in 1967. At that time I gave the movement a favorable review in *Christianity Today* (February 18, 1968), p. 32. The review entitled "One to Disrupt the Status Quo" extolled the strong Biblical orientation of the movement. I had a completely different reaction to *Religion, Revolution and the Future*. My review entitled the "Revival of Hegelianism" (*Christianity Today*, December 19, 1969) scores Moltmann heavily for turning the church into an instrument of revolutionary activity. It cannot be overlooked in this regard that both Moltmann and Benz have been associated in dialogue with the Marxists. Braaten also suggests using revolutionary methods if the present laws stand in the way of the goal. Most of the references used in this article are taken from Moltmann's two books, *The Thelogy of Hope* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967) and *Religion, Revolution and the Future* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969). The first will be abbreviated TH and the second RRF. *Religion, Revolution and the Future* is a collection of essays.
2. A hint of this type of thinking can be found in Moltmann's article "The Realism of Hope" in the *Concordia Theological Monthly XL*, (March 1969) pp. 149-155. Here he favors the Christ who participates in the processes of time instead of the Christ who is part of eternity. The limitations of God to time are most evident in Nels F. S. Ferre, *The Universal Word* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969). See his chapters on "Creation," "Continuation," and "Consummation" (pp. 188-271).
3. RRF, "Hope and History," p. 207 f. The Thomistic question concerning the existence of God is replaced by the question of when God will become fully God.

man is given limitless possibilities[4] or freedom by the future. Man does not passively wait for the final consummation of all things, but by participating actively in society[5] and in the social orders he can hurry the coming of the end. This goal or end is a utopian society.[6] The purpose of the Christian message, both in theology and preaching, is not so much as to report on the past as to change the future. On that account the church's message is called "historical initiative" and "performative language."[7] Thus the task of the church is to preach and proclaim in such a way that the people will not only believe but that they will act in history and change it. The present in itself is not important. What is important is that in the present, the future grasps the individual and thrusts him into definitive action to shape the future.

Here the difference between traditional Christianity and the "theology of hope" has to be made clearly. In traditional Christianity, God and Jesus Christ stand outside of time, at least since the ascension. This is not to deny the incarnation. This was an act in time. But it was a free act of God, an act of condescension, whereby the eternal God, who is above the creaturely limitations of time and space, freely limits Himself. In Moltmann's approach, eternity and time are merged into one category.[8] Our Lutheran dogmatics can dialectically speak of the eternity and temporality of Jesus Christ. Our Lord in the Gospel can enigmatically speak of Himself as existing before Abraham. The Jews, realizing the apparent contradiction, reply that He is not yet fifty years of age. Traditional Christianity does not teach that Christ is 1970 years old. However with the ascension, our Lord with His thirty and some years goes into a sphere where there is no counting of days or years. Jesus Christ does have a future in the sense that He will appear in time to end all time, but He is not subject to time now. The future does not hold any surprises for Him, as implied in the "theology of hope."

The "theology of hope" is not based upon the Biblical model, even

4. RRF, "Religion, Revolution, and the Future," p. 39. Moltmann's sentence, "Peoples have the right to determine their own future," might be sound politically but not theologically. It should be noted that Moltmann has no place in his theology for what has been commonly called original sin. If one criticism could be leveled against Moltmann, it would be an anthropological one. In the "theology of hope" there is no mention of the crippling effects of sin. Is man really as capable of guiding the future as Moltmann suggests? Lutheran theologians should feel particularly sensitive here, since the first major controversy of the Reformation was on the question of the natural capabilities of man before God. Article II of the *Augsburg Confession*, "Original Sin," gives a negative verdict on man's abilities. Cf. Luther's *Bondage of the Will*.
5. Man is obligated to look for "revolutionary social change," RRF, "What is 'New' in Christianity," p. 5.
6. The terminology is Moltmann's. "The all-embracing vision of God and of a new creation is to be realized in concrete utopias which summon and make sense out of present initiatives for overcoming the present negatives of life." RRF, "Religion, Revolution, and the Future," p. 40.
7. RRF, "Hope and History," p. 207.
8. In Bultmann's theology, time is subsumed and lost in the category of eternity. In Moltmann's theology, eternity is lost in time. Cf. RRF, "Religion, Revolution, and the Future," p. 23.

though much of its terminology and content are shaped in the Biblical mould. The "theology of hope" is based on the philosophical axiom that time, as it forces itself into the future, is the substance of reality. There is no supernatural sphere where God already exists in eternity. There is no fixed moment when time shall come to an end. The future is an unknown quantity to both man and God. God is also in time being propelled along by the movements of time. What we have in the "theology of hope" is process philosophy dressed up in Biblical, even Fundamentalistic dress.[9] What we mean by this is that the "theology of hope" is greatly dependent on legitimate Biblical imagery, but the legitimacy of using the Biblical imagery in this way is an entirely different question.

Jurgen Moltmann's book, *The Theology of the Hope,* the first of his writings to be readily available in English, went through the Bible, with an almost "cover to cover" thoroughness, to develop his ideas of the future and hope. The approach was absolutely refreshing in contrast of the "here and now" humdrum of the existential theologians who were virtually the uncontested masters of theology in the first half of this century. The existential theologians always gave the impression that they had little interest in the past or future. If Jesus Christ is risen from the grace, He is risen for me here and now as I listen to preaching. Even if Jesus Christ is to return for judgment, the more important thing is that Jesus Christ is making a judgment now on my actions. For this approach, with its emphasis on "this is the day of repentance and salvation," overconcern with the historical veracity or falsity destroys the moment of eternal truth, when Jesus Christ is grasped by faith. For the existential oriented theologians, all history seemed to dissolve into the moment of faith.[10]

To his credit, Moltmann's "Theology of Hope" does take a realistic view of history and it does offer a real future. Past and future do not dissolve in an eternal present. In developing this futuristic theology, Moltmann does have considerable weight of Biblical history on his side. Luther read the Bible from the principle of justification by grace through faith and he saw it shining out on every page. Moltmann has done something similar, but with the principle of future hope. In doing this, he has developed a legitimate Biblical thought which laid deeply buried

9. His first book translated in English, *Theology of Hope,* may be considered at first glance a *biblical theology.* He relies very heavily on the future of hope and promise connected with the Old Testament prophets. His exegesis of certain Pauline passages, I Thess. 4:14 and I Cor. 15, is done along traditional lines (pp. 162 f.).

10. For the existential oriented theologians, all history seemed to be dissolved into the present moment of faith. Cf. Walter Schmithals, *An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann.* Translated by John Bowden (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), p. 171 ff. Bultmann takes Christianity out of history as he calls this "the objectivizing of God, making him into an "idol" and places it in the word as received by faith. If Christianity dissolves for Moltmann, it is not in the present as for Bultmann, but in the future. But here the reader will have to be the ultimate judge for himself.

and hidden during the existential period in twentieth century European theology.

Without getting into the debate of whether he read his philosophy into the Bible or the Bible into his philosophy, he saw rightly that the Old Testament God is a God who promises. Here is how he applies some of the Biblical data. The promise does not tie a person to the present but to the future. The name of God, YHWH, is the God of the nomadic tribes in Sinai's peninsula, always going before His people, always leading them into the future.[11] The promise projects the believers into the future. Even when the promise is fulfilled, the promise is not destroyed because of future expectation. The exodus tradition of the Jews, along appearances of God are significant not because of present reality but because of future expectation. The exodus tradition of the Jews along with the office of the prophet, are all used to show the future is the reality. In planning for the future of Israel, YHWH reserves the right for Himself to annul His own covenants and agreements.[12] Nothing is fixed in the mind of YHWH, He exists under the condition of perfect freedom. There are no divine absolutes.[13] The terminology of the later prophets, especially Jeremiah and others who speak of a "new David," a "new covenant," a "new Israel" and a "new Zion"[14] all are used to demonstrate the "theology of hope."

The New Testament is read in the same light. God is not the Absolute, but God is the God of faithfulness who makes His promises.

The Gospels are not legends, but they are recollections of persons who have been caught up by the eschatological hope. The future of Abraham is applied by Paul to a universal eschatology. The Old Testament Scriptures, that which was written aforetime, open up new possibilities for the church.[15] The resurrection of Jesus Christ is important

11. Moltmann uses the theory that Yahweh was the God of the nomadic tribes to good advantage since he is pictured as "the Leader who goes before his people, ..." TH, p. 216. The "exodus" theme is also a strong motif in this theology.
12. TH, p. 127. The revolutionary ethic of the "theology of hope" is easily seen in its ethic that action against what is considered unjust law is not only proper but suggested. However, the matter goes a little deeper when God can annul His own institutions. In note 4 above we discussed briefly the absence of original sin in this theology. Since there is no fixed law, there is really no ground for original sin. As law is the reflection of the essence of God, so it is subject as much as God is to the changes of time or to the future. "Sin," if the word dare be used, is not the breaking of fixed law, but the refusal to act in accordance with the times. The question of the validity of the law is not one of the law per se but of God. In discussing this theology of revolution, attention should be given to the questions of God and the standards of action rather than to the overt expressions of this movement in revolution. Sin for Moltmann is not the breaking of a law but despondency and despair. These are called the origin of sin. TH, p. 121.
13. Of course the one absolute is that everything is subject to change. Cf. TH, p. 121, "To this extent the promise of the covenant and the injunctions of the covenant have an abiding and guiding significance until the fulfillment."
14. TH, p. 129.
15. TH, p. 153.

because it makes history, in laying the ground-work for a future resurrection of all flesh. This resurrection of Jesus is not to be interpreted historically but eschatologically. The question of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not valid for Moltmann, since this question would require a static answer. For him the resurrection is to be understood from the future.[16] "What happened between the cross and the Easter appearances is then an eschatological event which has its goal in future revelation and universal fulfillment."[17] Traditionally, it is stated that Christ's resurrection is the historical basis of the final resurrection. Moltmann would say that the final resurrection is the basis of Jesus' resurrection.[18] Rather than standing at the Open Tomb and looking forward, we are to project ourselves into the final resurrection. From there the resurrection of Jesus can be legitimatized. There is much that is appealing in the "theology of hope." It deals with a real history rather than the misty spiritual categories of the existential theologians.

But this should not prevent asking some serious questions. Why should the principle of future hope be the overarching principle of the church or of reality? Now this should not be understood as denying the importance of the "future" in either the Old or New Testaments. The Gospel is after all promises of God. However, isn't it so that the promises of God regarding the future are based on God's definitive acts in history? Hasn't Moltmann perhaps put the cart before the horse? God's deliverance of Israel, which looks for its hope in the future, is based upon the

16. There have generally been two ways in which the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been verified. These two ways are by history and faith. Paul in I Corinthians 15 leans heavily on offering eyewitnesses as historical proof that Jesus did rise from the dead. While one can question Paul's method, it seems beyond question that with his careful listing of witnesses that this was his intent. The neo-orthodox theologians leave behind the historical question and suggest that faith is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Walter Schmithals, *An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, *op. cit.*, p. 138. An actual resurrection of Jesus is called incredible. Christian faith is only interested in the resurrection as an existential experience. Moltmann offers now a third solution. For him the resurrection is verifiable eschatologically but not historically. Future proofs are substituted for past and present ones. Cf. RRF, "Resurrection as Hope," p. 50 f. "We can verify historically who is involved in the alleged resurrection event but we cannot verify the event itself." The event can only be verified in a world not dominated by death and sin. By pushing the question into the future, Moltmann can avoid answering the question and his statements concerning the resurrection of Jesus as definitely ambivalent. He will say that the resurrection of Jesus "is subject to *eschatological vertification.*" The emphasis is Moltmann's. However, this is anything but a certain hope. Cf. Moltmann's essay, "The Realism of Hope," CTM, *op. cit.*, p. 151. "But now, of course, we naturally have the feeling that all conceptions of the future and above all of a future after death are dreams, fantasies, speculations. We know nothing precise about the future. We would rather not believe anyone who says he knows anything about it."
17. TH, p. 201.
18. Cf. note 16. RRF, "Resurrection as Hope," p. 52. "The Christian hope is not founded on the isolated event of Jesus' resurrection, but in his total person and entire history—which through the resurrection became eschatologically qualified. . . . In confessing Jesus' resurrection, faith does not imply that Jesus has been removed to heaven or has been eternalized in God, but that He has been received into the future of the 'kingdom of heaven' and the coming glory of God."

deliverance out of Egypt. The word of promise can be accepted sincerely because God has acted in history and has shown Himself to be reliable. The God who laid a foundation in the deliverance out of Egypt is also the God of the New Testament who establishes faith and the church upon the resurrection of Jesus. The promise of the Son of man to return in judgment receives substance because He is the one who has come forth from the grave. God is not only ahead of time in the future, but God is also prior to time. Moltmann understands the former but not the latter. Time is not the place for God to exercise unlimited freedom, but time is the place where God carries through that plan formed in eternity.

Moltmann's concept of the futuristic God allows for the destruction of categories which have been built into creation by God. He allows for the destruction of categories of the past in order to realize the future. There is really no concept of a fixed natural and moral law. It is here where the theology of revolution has a theological foothold. Since the future is the overarching category, nothing in the present or past is final.[19] There is nothing which is not open to correction. But is this good New Testament theology? In the New Testament there is a certain finality in the acts of God. If they are open to expansion, they are certainly not open to correction.[20] It is Jesus Christ who gives meaning to the future and not the future that gives meaning to Jesus Christ. Here I would like to make a criticism that is not totally theological. If the "theology of hope" removes finality from everything which is present or past, is the concept of hope also open to possible change and even destruction in the future? In other words is the principle self-destructing?[21] If the "theology of hope" is a final word in explaining reality, then on what is that final word based? If that final word is a word of God spoken sometime in the past, then the future gets its meaning from the past and not the past from the future, as Moltmann contends.

Where the "theology of hope" is bound to get the most attention is in its ethics rather than its theological or philosophical premises. There is a certain relationship to Marxism in that both have strains of Hegelianism in them.[22] This might be a gross overexaggeration, but the

19. The incarnation is not a past event, but is spoken of the symbol of the future of God. The eschatological reality is described as superseding all historical realities. Cf. RRF, "Hope and History," pp. 212-216.
20. RRF, "Religion, Revolution, and the Future," p. 32. The world is spoken of as "the history of an experiment of salvation...." Cf. also Nels Ferre, *The Universal Word, op. cit.*
21. This thought was suggested in an editorial in *Christianity Today* (Vol. 12, 14, pp. 696 ff.), "New Hope for Theology?" "If theological concepts indeed give no 'fixed form to reality, but...are expanded by hope...' (TH. p. 36), why should Moltmann exempt even his concept of hope from this same lack of finality?" There is no satisfactory epistomological answer to the "theology of hope." Existential theology claimed the encounter itself was the answer. But for Moltmann's theory, no answer is available now.
22. Strains of Hegel may be detected in the following sentence. "Theoretically expressed: the positive, the new, the future which we seek can be historically circumscribed in the process of the negation of the negative." RRF, "Religion, Revolution and the Future," p. 30.

results of Marxism and "theology of hope" seem very similar. Moltmann in his essay "God in Revolution" lays down an ethic which finds its focus in changing society.[23] The older theology put the emphasis on individual conversion and repentance. Here God's instrument was the preaching of the Word causing an inner, internal change in the individual. The "theology of hope" makes society its object. One of Moltmann's major tenets is that there are no fixed forms and structures in the world. Replacing structures are functional forms. God has not laid down authoritarian forms in the past which must be followed.[24] Rather man sets down forms which are to be used in realizing the future. Future means freedom and freedom means relativity. The death of Christ opens for mankind messianic possibilities. These possibilities enter the stream of history. This freedom towards the future is exercised by criticism and protest, creative imagination and action. The question must be asked in what direction is the church to exercise these critical and creative activities? The Christian or the church is to put itself on the side of the oppressed or the humiliated. This initiates the dialectic for the forward progress of history.[25]

> By undermining and demolishing all barriers—whether of religion, race, education, or class—the community of Christians proves that it is the community of Christ. This could indeed become the new identifying mark of the church in our world, that it is composed, not of equal and like-minded men, but of dissimilar men, indeed of former enemies. . . . The way toward this goal of a new humane community involving all nations and languages is, however, a revolutionary way.

Then what is the difference between Martin Luther King and Karl Marx? Both sided with the oppressed and here they are both right. The employer is depriving the employee of his right, deprived himself of his own true humanity.[26] These are several points worth noting here. Reconciliation takes place across religious boundaries and this may indeed suggest universalism.[27] The end goal of the church is the universal reign of God.

23. Moltmann suggests the use of violence in bringing about the desired future. RRF, "God in Revolution," p. 143. *"There is only the question of the justified and unjustified use of force and the question of whether the means are proportionate to the ends."* (Italics are Moltmann's.) He also speaks favorably of "revolutionary social change" (RRF, "What is 'New' in Christianity," p. 5) and of *"economic alienation of man"* and of *"political alienation of man."* (RRF, "Religion, Revolution, and the Future," p. 38. (Italics are Moltmann's.)
24. Cf. RFF, "God in Revolution," p. 138. Here Moltmann sets down his thesis in some detail that truth is determined by how it works. *"Thesis 4: The new criterion of theology and of faith is to be found in praxis."* Again the italics are Moltmann's. Cf. also in the same essay, p. 147, "The Christian God is no heavenly guarantor of the status quo."
25. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
27. Cf. RRF, "Hope and History," p. 203, "In making present of history, Christian theology anticipates simultaneously this one universal future for all men and all things." Moltmann speaks frequently of one world community. This universalism should be thought of more as being political than a total universal redemption on the other side of the grave. There seems to be no room for this kind of thought in his theology.

His critique of Karl Marx is based not on the Seventh Commandment, but on the principle of humanity whereby the individual hurts himself more than he hurts somebody else. The offended and the offenders are the same person.[28]

What, in the *Theology of Hope,* first seemed to be a Christian eschatological thrust, perhaps overstated, but nevertheless welcomed, turns out to be a plan of universalistic redemption in the sphere of this world.[29]

> In this sense, Christianity's taking sides with the "damned of the earth" is a way to the redemption and reconciliation of the damned and the damners. Only through the dialect of taking sides can the universalism of salvation make its entrance into the world. Any ecclesiastical triumphalism is, therefore, an immature anticipation of the Kingdom of God.

The language here is reminiscent of Karl Marx with his plan of dialectical progress in the world. For Moltmann the church is not the epitome of God's activity on earth, rather it is the instrument through which God is bringing about universal reconciliation. The kingdom of grace merges into the universal kingdom of power, to use traditional language.

To bring about this universal kingdom of God, revolution may be an appropriate means, but not necesarily the only one. Moltmann's thesis is this:[30] "*The problem of violence and non-violence is an illusory problem. There is only the question of the justified and unjustified use of force and the question of whether the means are proportionate to the ends.*" This open-ended ethic is no surprise. If God and Christ receive their basis from the future, then our actions should also be judged by the future. The application of commandments can have no part in such a system. If the action brings about the desired results, then such action is justified. The radical program of Moltmann's is seen in the following:[31] "The use of revolutionary violence must be justified by the humane goals of the revolution and the existing power structures unmasked in their inhumanity as 'naked violence.' The criterion for action is the measure of possible transformation." What are the means then of the revolution?[32] "Any means may be appropriate, but they must be different and better than those of the opposition if they are to bewilder the opposition."[33] The Christian participates in revolution realizing that the revolution is not the final, but one of many steps in bringing about the desired result.

28. RRF, "God in Revolution," p. 142.
29. *Ibid.,* p. 143.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.,* p. 145.
33. *Ibid.,* p. 147. Here the question must be asked of Moltmann on what basis do I know that one condition is better than another? If a standard for what is "good" and "evil" exists, then it has been laid down in the past. But this the "theology of hope" does not allow.

The revolution cannot be finalized. Finalized revolutions are ludicrous and laughable. Che Guevara said, "The vocation of every lover is to bring about the revolution." Moltmann approves a transposition of this statement into "The duty of every revolution is to bring about love."[34]

So far it has been shown how Moltmann understands the promises and the future in both Old and New Testament and what this means so far as actual involvement of the Christian is concerned. We must now, out of fairness to Moltmann, examine more carefully the basis of his approach. In traditional theology, *theology* is the narrow sense, meaning the doctrine of God, stands as the first topic, and eschatology as the last. In Moltmann's theology these two categories are merged into one. Therefore it can be plainly and simply stated that for him theology is eschatology. This means that the study of God is the study of the future. The future is God's mode of being with us.[35]

> God is Lord in carrying out His reign. In the actual demonstration of His divinity He is 'God with us' and with the world. The divinity of God will become manifest and real only in the coming of His unlimited reign.

Rather than taking the options of the God who is *in us, above us, between us,* Moltmann prefers the God who is *in front of us.*[36] The *"in us"* God refers to the God of sanctification. The *"above us"* God refers to the Sovereign God. The *"between us"* God refers to the God of the encounter which finds its most obvious caricature in neo-orthodoxy. *God is* present in the way in which His future takes control over the present in real anticipations and prefigurations, *but is not yet* present in the form of His eternal presence. The dialectic between His being and His being-not-yet is the pain and the power of history. Caught between the experiences of His presence and of His absence, we are seeking His future, which will solve this ambiguity that the present cannot solve." Hegel's dialectic between "yes" and "no" is evident here. God is called the "creator of new possibilities."[37] In speaking of the God who was, is and is to come, the future has "a dominance over the other tenses. Future is the 'coming of God.' "[38] The promises of God in the Old Testament are historical because they open up the future. History is a category of the future. The past has value because it announced the future. The memory of the past is the memory of past hopes whereby we still long for the future.

"At the consummation of that purpose Jesus will return His dignity so

The dignity or deity of Jesus is also circumscribed by the category of future. When God is all in all in the future, the dignity of Jesus will come to an end. Jesus is the means of bringing about the future of God.

34. *Ibid.*
35. RRF, "Hope and History," p. 208.
36. References seem applicable to the theologies of Calvin, Luther and Barth, in that order.
37. RRF, "Hope and History," p. 209.
38. *Ibid.*

that God will be 'all in all.' "[39] The Lordship of Christ is provisional. Jesus is the preparatory Messiah and in Christ there is "a real incarnation of God's future."[40] Messiahship, like history, is a category of the future.[41]

The church on earth is the vanguard of the new humanity which is freed from inhumanity. On that account the church participates in the groaning of the world, as the world moves forward toward the goal. On that account the Christian community may be called "the sacrament of God's hope for the world."[42] Moltmann's ideas become clearly visible as universalistic when he applies his concept of messianic eschatology to the process of history itself.[43]

> If we combine the idea of God with the idea of the future, the future assumes a creative character for time and for the whole of the historical being. Out of the future spring new possibilities and of these possibilities a new reality is created.

This reinforces a previous thought important to process theology, that God is subject to the processes of time. Events in history do not have value in and of themselves, but receive value from the eschatological reality.[44]

> But no historical reality is already that prevailing eschatological reality; therefore, the prevailing reality transcends all historical realities and renders them once again historical realities.

Here we might be back to the philosophy of Plato where the true reality exists in a transcendent sphere. Events and objects in our sphere of existence only receive their reality because they are copies of the transcendent. In Moltmann's theology this transcendent concept is not a *present* but a *future.*

Now several obvious criticisms can be leveled at the approach of Moltmann. I have also indicated that his theology has been a contribution in that it has uncovered once again the forward action of God in history. Just to level dogmatic criticisms at his approach would be an injustice. We simply do not want to line up agreements and disagreements in a point by point approach. His theology is at fault primarily because he does not make a distinction in what he calls the "kingdom of God." In Lutheran theology this has been divided into two categories, the kingdom of power and the kingdom of grace. This is, of course, Luther's distinction, but it is also the distinction of the Lutheran

39. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Eschatology takes precedence over Christology. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 214, "Eschatological Christology goes astray if it does not become in the countermovement a Christological eschatology."
42. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*

Confessions whereby the Christian in one sphere relates to the civil order and in another sphere to God.[45] This is not to establish a false dualism and neither is it denying the reality of God in both spheres, as if one were divine and the other not. But the Augsburg Confession in its anthropolgy does predicate man with a free will in secular or natural matters and with an enslaved will over against the things pertaining to salvation.[46] In the theology of Moltmann, church and world are wrapped up in one concept called "the kingdom of God." Even in the Gospels the kingdom of God refers to the kingdom that comes through preaching, individual repentance and faith and not to political orders. Since Moltmann does not use this distinction and perhaps does not recognize it as even valid, he claims that the church as church should directly effect and change social orders. Please remember this is not to question the valid participation of Christians as Christians working in the world for improvement. The Augsburg Confession makes this an obligation of all Christians and even non-Christians. However, Moltmann states that politics and revolution can be used in bringing about the realization of the kingdom of God. Since the kingdom of God is brought down to a tangible earthly reality, it is therefore quite natural, as he suggests that reconciliation is an occurrence between persons, forces, groups, etc., and can be brought about by politics and sometimes revolution.[47] Reconciliation in the older theology was between God and man in the sphere not governed by the order of this world.

Moltmann's "theology of hope" was a reaction against the "word" theology of the neo-orthodox theologians. But it is on this very point that his own theology needs the corrective of the theology he wanted to correct. Granted he has taken history more seriously than Bultmann could ever take it, but he has not taken seriously that God's kingdom comes by preaching to the individual. Bultmann might have been wrong on many points, but in spite of the exaggerations in his position, he was not wrong in saying that Christianity is a "theology of the word." Christianity is a religion of hope, but it is a hope anchored to God who has spoken a word through His prophets and apostles.

45. *Augustana* VII and XVI speak of the church and states as two spheres of God's activities.
46. *Augustana* II and XVIII are anthropological articles. Man is divided so to speak as he looks at the two kingdoms. Because of original sin, he is totally incapable of the things that pertain specifically and directly to God, the kingdom of grace. However, he does have some freedom in the kingdom of power. Lutheran anthropology suggests the existence of two kingdoms on earth. Augustana VII and XVI state this explicitly.
47. Recommended here is the reading of the entire article, RRF, "Toward a Political Hermeneutic of the Gospel," pp. 83-107.