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Introduction

Richard Bauckham

In publications spanning fifty years, Jürgen Moltmann has pursued what he calls an adventure in theological discovery. It all began in prisoner-of-war camps in the late 1940s. As a young German soldier faced with the newly revealed horrors of the Nazi regime, he found God in the gift of unexpected hope and in the companionship of the Christ who suffers with us. Over the years he has written frequently of this deep experiential root of his theology, but when, in the 1960s, his first major book, *Theology of Hope*, became a theological phenomenon (even on the front page of the *New York Times*), what drew so much attention was the way it seemed to chime with the mood of that remarkable decade. In western Europe and North America, it was a time when unlimited possibilities of radical change for the better seemed within reach. But Christian churches focused on individual salvation beyond this world lacked the theological resources for positive engagement with the secular hopes of the time. Moltmann's work sought to restore the full dimensions of Christian hope. Sweeping aside the aversion to future eschatology in the German theological tradition, Moltmann showed how the biblical history of promise projects a new future for this world and its history. Within the horizon of God's coming renewal of God's whole creation there was plenty of room for proximate hopes of social and political transformation, awakened and sustained by ultimate hope. This was a programmatic reorientation of theology that, in a single move, turned the church toward both the future and the world. Of course, it was far from the only way in which Christians worldwide were recovering an impetus to seek transformation in all dimensions of human life, but it would be hard to exaggerate its influence.

I first read *Theology of Hope* when it was still Moltmann's only major work. No doubt I was not immune to the optimistic mood of the time, but what impressed and excited me was that Moltmann was not giving theological support to some general notion of hope, still less to optimism. The center of his theology was (and has always remained) the biblical history of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. Against the background of the Old Testament history of God's promises, Moltmann read the history of Jesus as messianic history, full of promise for the all-embracing kingdom of God. Christian eschatology speaks

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of Jesus Christ and his future, which is the world's future only because it is first of all the future of the world's Messiah. This not only inspires Christians to join with others in pursuing present possibilities of change that correspond to the coming kingdom. It also gives Christian hope a critical potential, especially when it is remembered that the resurrection gave new life to the *crucified* Christ, the one who in his abandoned death was identified with the most wretched and the most hopeless. Christian hope has nothing in common with the complacent optimism of the successful. Solidarity with the victims—including the victims of "progress"—alone gives it Christian authenticity. While those who saw in *Theology of Hope* little more than a theological gloss on the progressivist optimism of the modern age were surprised, even shocked, by the turn Moltmann's theology took in his next major book; those attuned to the christological heart of his early work were somewhat less taken off-guard. Whereas *Theology of Hope* found God-given hope in the resurrection of the crucified Christ, *The Crucified God* found the suffering love of God in the cross of the risen Christ. A dialectic of cross and resurrection was at work in both.

There is continuity and coherence between the two books, but not even Moltmann had anticipated where he would be led by his attempt to retrieve the "profane horror and godlessness" of the cross from interpretations that disguise its offensiveness. It required a "revolution" in the concept of God that then took a good part of several more books to be developed fully. In effect, Moltmann put Jesus' dying cry, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me," at the center of his understanding of God. Taking this cry seriously requires both that God must be understood to suffer, with consequences for the traditional understanding of divine impassibility, and also that the cross as an event of divine suffering be understood as anevent "between God and God," a trinitarian event. At the cross, Jesus, the divine Son incarnate, identified with the world in all its godlessness and godforsakenness so as to take it within the love between the Son and the Father. In their love for the world, the Father abandoned his Son to death, suffering his loss, and the Son voluntarily suffered abandonment by his Father. Their mutual love, the Holy Spirit, united them at this point of agonizing separation, such that the whole of the world's pain was taken up into a trinitarian history in hope of the overcoming of all evil. This was "revolutionary" because it made the cross an event internal to God's own trinitarian relationships and an event that affects not only the world, but also God. From this beginning, Moltmann was to develop a trinitarian understanding of the world in God and God in the world.

Theology of Hope and *The Crucified God* are undoubtedly classics of twentieth-century theology. One could approach them by locating them in the

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history of German theology. Moltmann was one of several theologians who in the 1960s took up the theme of eschatological hope as a way of opening up theology to the world and the future. *The Crucified God* was one of the first books to take up the task of Christian theology "after Auschwitz"—that is, in the light of what the Holocaust has made theologically unthinkable. Moltmann's radical probing of the meaning of the cross for our understanding of God has much in common with the work of his Tübingen colleague Eberhard Jüngel, while the trinitarian theologies of both belong to a wider renaissance of trinitarian theology in the later part of the twentieth century. Yet classics are classics because they transcend their own time. If these two books seem less remarkable now than they did in their time, it is precisely because of the huge influence they have had. Yet such is the passion and the vigor of their argument, that new readers continue to find them profoundly inspiring in ways which are certainly not available through merely secondhand acquaintance.

Theology of Hope and *The Crucified God* were programmatic works or, one might say, "orienting" works, which serve to give to the whole of theology a particular kind of orientation. Eschatological hope has remained a decisive characteristic of all of Moltmann's theology and the cross has remained for him a decisive criterion of an adequately Christian theology. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* completed this early trilogy, and performs a similar role, not so much through its understanding of the church as through its development of *The Crucified God*'s rather rudimentary account of the Spirit, making more fully viable the notion of a trinitarian history of God with the world. Then Moltmann's work took a new turn. He embarked on what became a series of seven planned volumes, five on classic Christian doctrines (Trinity, creation, Christology, pneumatology, eschatology), one on theological method (*Experiences in Theology*, not represented in this volume), and one on theological ethics. They have something like the traditional shape of a dogmatics or systematic theology, but he preferred to call them "contributions to theology," characteristically stressing their open and dialogical character as one theologian's contribution to the ongoing task. Early in his career, Moltmann had thought Karl Barth's achievement was something that left nothing more to be said, and he had not been able to write creative theology until he saw that Barth's treatment of future eschatology was seriously reductive. In his own work, he has no ambition to say the last word.

Moreover, while his early works created a fundamental structure of thought that has supported all his later work, Moltmann's thinking has proved constantly able to integrate new insights and to develop in fresh directions. Throughout his career, he has traveled frequently and extensively, and

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wherever he goes he has attempted to engage with the churches, the theology, and the politics. As a result, it would be hard to think of a theologian whose work has benefited from such a wide and diverse range of ecumenical influences. In his trinitarian theology, he engaged with Orthodox theology, and in his pneumatology, with Pentecostalism. In his emphasis on the discipleship ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, he came close to the churches of the Radical Reformation. From feminist theology, especially through his wife Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, herself a leading feminist theologian, came an affirmation of bodily experience and, in some of his latest work, a turn from professorial objectivity to a more personal form of expression. A dialogue with Jewish theology has been important throughout his working life. At the same time, he has constantly returned to the theological tradition, retrieving its insights, learning from its mistakes, and continuing its debates.

This is not the place for a descriptive account or analysis of Moltmann's mature theology. Instead, by way of inviting readers into the rich experience of engaging with his work, I would like to highlight three key themes or characteristics:

1. *Passion*. This word, in its multiple meanings and dimensions, is a helpful clue to Moltmann's understanding of God. In his work, God's love is not the dispassionate benevolence of the God of traditional theism, who is impassible in the sense that he not only cannot suffer but cannot be affected by the world he loves, whether in suffering or in joy. Rather, for Moltmann, God's love is his passionate concern, his committed and costly involvement with the world. In the passion of Christ (in the traditional sense of his suffering), we find the com-passion of God, God's fellow suffering with all who suffer. The apathetic God (where "apathetic" is the Greek term for impassible, unmoved by anything outside himself) has his counterpart in apathetic humanity, people who hold back from life and love, commitment and involvement, for fear of suffering. The contemporary world respects competitiveness and success, not vulnerability. But in the company of the passionate and compassionate God, apathetic humans become open for love, suffering, and joy.

2. Mutuality and *Perichoresis.* For Moltmann, God is love because the three persons who are God constitute their unity in an intimate reciprocity of loving relationships. In the terminology of the Greek Fathers, *perichoresis* means that the three persons are "in" one another. Moltmann abandons the traditional idea of a fixed "order" of the persons in favor of a dynamic of changing relationships, in which the divine persons engage with each other in the course of engaging with the world. For the Trinity is not a closed circle of love, but an open and inviting unity. In God's history with the world, the world is

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drawn into the loving relationships of the Trinity. Moltmann here extends the application of *perichoresis*, using it to describe the relationship between God and the world. God is in the world and the world is in God. As in the Trinity, this mutual indwelling does not obliterate difference, but constitutes relationship-in-difference or difference-in-relationship. The parallel is not complete, however, because in the Trinity God is in unity with God, like with like, whereas in God's relationship with the world God is united with what is not God, God's other. God's creation participates in the divine life, but does not become God.

In discarding the traditional idea of an "order" within the Trinity, in which the Father has a certain sort of priority, Moltmann grounds in God his rejection of hierarchical relationships in favor of relationships of mutuality. While hierarchy expresses dominance and suppresses freedom, relationships of loving mutuality are liberating. In the "kingdom" of God, the lordship of God is a provisional image and friendship with God the more adequate one. In Moltmann's political thought, the nondominating relationships within the Trinity ground democratic freedoms in society, while in his ecclesiology, hierarchy gives way to the reciprocity of different gifts exercised by equal participants. Moltmann's preferred model of the church is the image of open friendship, which does not form a closed circle of familiarity among those who are like each other, but is open in love for the outsider and the unlike.

The notion of mutuality, opposed to hierarchy and domination, also comes into its own in Moltmann's ecological understanding of the world. He sees the creation, humans included, as a community of God's creatures who share the earth in mutual interdependence. Creation itself is a perichoretic community constituted by relationships of mutuality. In the face of ecological catastrophe, humans need to move away from the exploitative domination that is destroying the natural world on which they are inescapably dependent. They also need to modify the purely objectifying form of knowledge that has accompanied domination of nature, a form of knowledge in which the knowing subject masters its object by isolating and analyzing it. An ecological theology requires instead a participatory form of knowledge, in which things are perceived in the totality of their relationships and the human subject perceives itself as a participant in the interdependence of all things.

3. *Life.* Moltmann's book on the Spirit, not initially part of his plan for the series, testifies to the growing importance of life as a unifying or embracing term in his theology. It is entitled *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation.* He understands the Spirit as "the divine wellspring of life"—source of all life, continually renewing all life, as well as ultimately source of eternal life for all

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creation. This makes it possible for the whole of life to be experience of God and for God to be experienced in all things. The Spirit of life is God experienced in the profundity and vitality of life lived in God. In an important move to overcome the persistent duality of the "spiritual" and the "material," Moltmann insists that, as the Spirit of *life*, the Spirit of God is not related to the "spiritual" as opposed to the "material," nor to the human as opposed to the rest of creation. Life in the Spirit is not a life of withdrawal from the bodily, social, and natural world, but is characterized by a love of life and an affirmation of all life. This is a fresh form of Moltmann's characteristic concern for a theology of positive involvement in God's world. In the face of accumulating threats to life in our time, Moltmann gives an "ethics of life" an important place in his final work, *Ethics of Hope.*

Of course, the title of this concluding study of theological ethics reaffirms Moltmann's starting point. It is an *Ethics of Hope* that finally fulfills the ethical promise of his *Theology of Hope*. Moltmann's fifty years of theological exploration have taken him through times in which it has become much harder to hope than it seemed in the 1960s. He has come to see the contemporary world as an increasingly perilous experiment. So it has become even more important that Christian hope means resisting and anticipating—resisting the normative force of what dominates the present and anticipating the new and liberating future that comes from God.

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1

Theology of Hope

On its publication in 1964, during the postwar years of ferment and change, Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope *made an immediate and astonishing impact. It was to some extent a critical response to the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's* Principle of Hope,[1] *which had deeply impressed him. But Moltmann took up Bloch's "hopes for a world without God" so as to link them with "the God of hope" (Rom. 15:13) of Jewish and Christian tradition. The church had always seen eschatology (the doctrine of the last things) as an appendix, something that clocks in once hope for the world has nothing more to offer. But Moltmann sees the Christian faith not only as hope for the end but as hope and promise from the beginning, a hope and promise based on the resurrection of Jesus. The future hope remains "this-worldly," because expectation leads to a new setting forth and a transformation of the present, and therefore takes in history. In his autobiography,* A Broad Place,[2] *he later wrote:*

> *I believe that three key concepts are essential for every Christian theology of hope:*
>
> 1. *the concept of the divine promise in the Old Testament;*
> 2. *the concept of the raising of the crucified Christ as God's future for the world, in the New Testament;*
> 3. *an understanding of human history as the mission of the kingdom of God today.*

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Introduction: Meditation on Hope

Source: Moltmann 1964; ET 1967/1993:15–36.

1. What Is the Logos of Christian Eschatology?

Eschatology was long called "the doctrine of the last things" or "the doctrine of the end." By these last things were meant events which will one day break upon man, history, and the world at the end of time. They included the return of Christ in universal glory, the judgment of the world and the consummation of the kingdom, the general resurrection of the dead and the new creation of all things. These end events were to break into this world from somewhere beyond history, and to put an end to the history in which all things here live and move. But the relegating of these events to the "last day" robbed them of their directive, uplifting, and critical significance for all the days which are spent here, this side of the end, in history. Thus these teachings about the end led a peculiarly barren existence at the end of Christian dogmatics. They were like a loosely attached appendix that wandered off into obscure irrelevancies. They bore no relation to the doctrine of the cross and resurrection, the exaltation and sovereignty of Christ, and did not derive from these by any logical necessity. They were as far removed from them as All Souls' Day sermons are from Easter. The more Christianity became an organization for discipleship under the auspices of the Roman state religion, the more eschatology and its mobilizing, revolutionizing, and critical effects upon history as it has now to be lived were left to fanatical sects and revolutionary groups. Owing to the fact that Christian faith banished from its life the future hope by which it is upheld, and relegated the future to a beyond, or to eternity, whereas the biblical testimonies which it handed on are yet full to the brim with future hope of a messianic kind for the world—owing to this, hope emigrated as it were from the church and turned in one distorted form or another against the church.

In actual fact, however, eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it. From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element *of* Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. For Christian faith lives from the raising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promise of the universal future of Christ. Eschatology is the passionate suffering and passionate longing kindled by the Messiah. Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine.

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Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, of every Christian existence, and of the whole church. There is therefore only one real problem in Christian theology, which its own object forces upon it and which it in turn forces on mankind and on human thought: the problem of the future. For the element of otherness that encounters us in the hope of the Old and the New Testaments—the thing we cannot already think out and picture for ourselves on the basis of the given world and of the experiences we already have with the world—is one that confronts us with a promise of something new and with the hope of a future given by God. The God spoken of here is no intra-worldly or extra-worldly God, but the "God of hope" (Rom. 15:13), a God with "future as his essential nature" (as [Ernst] Bloch puts it), as made known in Exodus and in Israelite prophecy, the God whom we therefore cannot have either in us or over us but always only before us, who encounters us in his promises for the future, and whom we therefore cannot have either, but can only await in active hope. A proper theology would therefore have to be constructed in the light of its future goal. Eschatology should not be its end, but its beginning.

But how can anyone speak of the future, which is not yet here, and of coming events in which one 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 "eschato-*logy*" 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 experiences 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. If, however, the future were to bring something startlingly new, we have nothing to say of that, and nothing meaningful can be said of it either, for it is not in what is new and accidental, but only in things of an abiding and regularly recurring character that there can be log-ical truth. Aristotle, it is true, can call hope a "waking dream," but for the Greeks it is nevertheless an evil out of Pandora's box.

But how, then, can Christian eschatology give expression to the future? Christian eschatology does not speak of the future as such. It sets out from a definite reality in history and announces the future of that reality, its future possibilities, and its power over the future. Christian eschatology speaks of Jesus Christ and *his* future. It recognizes the reality of the raising of Jesus and proclaims the future of the risen Lord. Hence the question whether all statements about the future are grounded in the person and history of Jesus

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Christ provides it with the touchstone by which to distinguish the spirit of eschatology from that of utopia.

If, however, the crucified Christ has a future because of his resurrection, then that means on the other hand that all statements and judgments about him must at once imply something about the future which is to be expected from him. Hence the form in which Christian theology speaks of Christ cannot be the form of the Greek *logos* or of doctrinal statements based on experience, but only the form of statements of hope and of promises for the future. All predicates of Christ not only say who he was and is, but imply statements as to who he will be and what is to be expected from him. They all say: "He is our hope" (Col. 1:27). In thus announcing his future in the world in terms of promise, they point believers in him towards the hope of his still outstanding future. Hope's statements of promise anticipate the future. In the promises, the hidden future already announces itself and exerts its influence on the present through the hope it awakens.

The truth of doctrinal statements is found in the fact that they can be shown to agree with the existing reality which we can all experience. Hope's statements of promise, however, must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced. They do not result from experiences, but are the condition for the possibility of new experiences. They do not seek to illuminate the reality which exists, but the reality which is coming. They do not seek to make a mental picture of existing reality, but to lead existing reality towards the promised and hoped-for transformation. They do not seek to bear the train of reality, but to carry the torch before it. In so doing they give reality a historical character. But if reality is perceived in terms of history, then we have to ask with J. G. Hamann: "Who would form proper concepts of the present without knowing the future?"

Present and future, experience and hope, stand in contradiction to each other in Christian eschatology, with the result that man is not brought into harmony and agreement with the given situation, but is drawn into the conflict between hope and experience. "We are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24, 25). Everywhere in the New Testament the Christian hope is directed towards what is not yet visible; it is consequently a "hoping against hope" and thereby brands the visible realm of present experience as a godforsaken, transient reality that is to be left behind. The contradiction to the existing reality of himself and his world in which man is placed by hope is the very contradiction out of which this hope itself is born—it is the contradiction between the resurrection

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and the cross. Christian hope is resurrection hope, and it proves its truth in the contradiction of the future prospects thereby offered and guaranteed for righteousness as opposed to sin, life as opposed to death, glory as opposed to suffering, peace as opposed to dissension. Calvin perceived very plainly the discrepancy involved in the resurrection hope: "To us is given the promise of eternal life—but to us, the dead. A blessed resurrection is proclaimed to us—meantime we are surrounded by decay. We are called righteous—and yet sin lives in us. We hear of ineffable blessedness—but meantime we are here oppressed by infinite misery. We are promised abundance of all good things—yet we are rich only in hunger and thirst. What would become of us if we did not take our stand on hope, and if our heart did not hasten beyond this world through the midst of darkness upon the path illumined by the word and Spirit of God!" (on Heb. 11:1).

It is in this contradiction that hope must prove its power. Hence eschatology, too, is forbidden to ramble, and must formulate its statements of hope in contradiction to our present experience of suffering, evil, and death. For that reason it will hardly ever be possible to develop an eschatology on its own. It is much more important to present hope as the foundation and the mainspring of theological thinking as such, and to introduce the eschatological perspective into our statements on divine revelation, on the resurrection of Christ, on the mission of faith, and on history.

2. The Believing Hope

In the contradiction between the word of promise and the experiential reality of suffering and death, faith takes its stand on hope and "hastens beyond this world," said Calvin. He did not mean by this that Christian faith flees the world, but he did mean that it strains after the future. To believe does in fact mean to cross and transcend bounds, to be engaged in an exodus. Yet this happens in a way that does not suppress or skip the unpleasant realities. Death is real death, and decay is putrefying decay. Guilt remains guilt and suffering remains, even for the believer, a cry to which there is no ready-made answer. Faith does not overstep these realities into a heavenly utopia, does not dream itself into a reality of a different kind. It can overstep the bounds of life, with their closed wall of suffering, guilt, and death, only at the point where they have in actual fact been broken through. It is only in following the Christ who was raised from suffering, from a godforsaken death and from the grave that it gains an open prospect in which there is nothing more to oppress us, a view of the realm of freedom and of joy. Where the bounds that mark the end of all human hopes are broken through in the raising of the crucified one, there faith can

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and must expand into hope. There it becomes παρρησία and μακροθυμία. There its hope becomes a "passion for what is possible" (Kierkegaard), because it can be a passion for what has been made possible. There the *extensio animi ad magna* [the reaching out of the soul toward the great], as it was called in the Middle Ages, takes place in hope. Faith recognizes the dawning of this future of openness and freedom in the Christ event. The hope thereby kindled spans the horizons which then open over a closed existence. Faith binds man to Christ. Hope sets this faith open to the comprehensive future of Christ. Hope is therefore the "inseparable companion of faith. "When this hope is taken away, however eloquently or elegantly we discourse concerning faith, we are convicted of having none. . . . Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when this truth shall be manifested; faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father towards us; faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed; faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith. For as no one except him who already believes His promises can look for anything from God, so again the weakness of our faith must be sustained and nourished by patient hope and expectation, lest it fail and grow faint. . . . By unremitting renewing and restoring, it [hope] invigorates faith again and again with perseverance."[3] Thus in the Christian life faith has the priority, but hope the primacy. Without faith's knowledge of Christ, hope becomes a utopia and remains hanging in the air. But without hope, faith falls to pieces, becomes a fainthearted and ultimately a dead faith. It is through faith that man finds the path of true life, but it is only hope that keeps him on that path. Thus it is that faith in Christ gives hope its assurance. Thus it is that hope gives faith in Christ its breadth and leads it into life.

To believe means to cross in hope and anticipation the bounds that have been penetrated by the raising of the crucified. If we bear that in mind, then this faith can have nothing to do with fleeing the world, with resignation, and with escapism. In this hope the soul does not soar above our vale of tears to some imagined heavenly bliss, nor does it sever itself from the earth. For, in the words of Ludwig Feuerbach, it puts "in place of the beyond that lies above our grave in heaven the beyond that lies above our grave on earth, the historic *future*, the future of mankind."[4] It sees in the resurrection of Christ not the eternity of heaven, but the future of the very earth on which his cross stands. It sees in him the future of the very humanity for which he died. That is why it finds the cross the hope of the earth. This hope struggles for the obedience of the body,

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because it awaits the quickening of the body. It espouses in all meekness the cause of the devastated earth and of harassed humanity, because it is promised possession of the earth. *Ave crux!—unica spes!* [Hail cross, the only hope].

But on the other hand, all this must inevitably mean that the man who thus hopes will never be able to reconcile himself with the laws and constraints of this earth, neither with the inevitability of death nor with the evil that constantly bears further evil. The raising of Christ is not merely a consolation to him in a life that is full of distress and doomed to die, but it is also God's contradiction of suffering and death, of humiliation and offense, and of the wickedness of evil. Hope finds in Christ not only a consolation *in* suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise *against* suffering. If Paul calls death the "last enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26), then the opposite is also true: that the risen Christ, and with him the resurrection hope, must be declared to be the enemy of death and of a world that puts up with death. Faith takes up the contradiction and thus becomes itself a contradiction to the world of death. That is why faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present. If we had before our eyes only what we see, then we should cheerfully or reluctantly reconcile ourselves with things as they happen to be. That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope. This hope keeps man unreconciled until the great day of the fulfillment of all the promises of God. It keeps him *in statu viatoris* [in the position of the wanderer], in that unresolved openness to world questions which has its origin in the promise of God in the resurrection of Christ and can therefore be resolved only when the same God fulfills his promise. This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a "continuing city." It makes the church the source of continual new impulses towards the realization of righteousness, freedom, and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come. This church is committed to "answer for the hope" that is in it (1 Peter 3:15). It is called in question "on account of the hope and resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6). Wherever that happens, Christianity embraces its true nature and becomes a witness of the future of Christ.

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3. The Sin of Despair

If faith thus depends on hope for its life, then the sin of unbelief is manifestly grounded in hopelessness. To be sure, it is usually said that sin in its original form is man's wanting to be as God. But that is only the one side of sin. The other side of such pride is hopelessness, resignation, inertia, and melancholy. From this arise the *tristesse* and frustration which fill all living things with the seeds of a sweet decay. Among the sinners whose future is eternal death in Rev. 21:8, the "fearful" are mentioned before unbelievers, idolaters, murderers, and the rest. For the Epistle to the Hebrews, falling away from the living hope, in the sense of being disobedient to the promise in time of oppression, or of being carried away from God's pilgrim people as by a flood, is the great sin which threatens the hopeful on their way. Temptation then consists not so much in the titanic desire to be as God, but in weakness, timidity, weariness, not wanting to be what God requires of us.

God has exalted man and given him the prospect of a life that is wide and free, but man hangs back and lets himself down. God promises a new creation of all things in righteousness and peace, but man acts as if everything were as before and remained as before. God honors him with his promises, but man does not believe himself capable of what is required of him. That is the sin which most profoundly threatens the believer. It is not the evil he does, but the good he does not do, not his misdeeds but his omissions, that accuse him. They accuse him of lack of hope. For these so-called sins of omission all have their ground in hopelessness and weakness of faith. "It is not so much sin that plunges us into disaster, as rather despair," said Chrysostom. That is why the Middle Ages reckoned *acedia* [listlessness or sloth] or *tristitia* [melancholy] among the sins against the Holy Spirit which lead to death.

Josef Pieper in his treatise *Über die Hoffnung* (1949) has very neatly shown how this hopelessness can assume two forms. It can be presumption, *praesumptio*, and it can be despair, *desperatio*. Both are forms of the sin against hope. Presumption is a premature, self-willed anticipation of the fulfillment of what we hope for from God. Despair is the premature, arbitrary anticipation of the non-fulfillment of what we hope for from God. Both forms of hopelessness, by anticipating the fulfillment or by giving up hope, cancel the wayfaring character of hope. They rebel against the patience in which hope trusts in the God of the promise. They demand impatiently either fulfillment "now already" or "absolutely no" hope. "In despair and presumption alike we have the rigidifying and freezing of the truly human element, which hope alone can keep flowing and free" (p. 51).

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Thus despair, too, presupposes hope. "What we do not long for, can be the object neither of our hope nor of our despair" (Augustine). 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. "Living means burying hopes," says [Theodor] Fontane in one of his novels, and it is these "dead hopes" that he portrays in it. Our hopes are bereft of faith and confidence. Hence despair would seek to preserve the soul from disappointments. "Hope as a rule makes many a fool." Hence we try to remain on the solid ground of reality, "to think clearly and not hope any more" ([Albert] Camus), and yet in adopting this so-called realism dictated by the facts we fall victim to the worst of all utopias—the utopia of the status quo, as [Robert] Musil called this kind of realism.

The despairing surrender of hope does not even need to have a desperate appearance. It can also be the mere tacit absence of meaning, prospects, future, and purpose. It can wear the face of smiling resignation: *bonjour tristesse!* All that remains is a certain smile on the part of those who have tried out the full range of their possibilities and found nothing in them that could give cause for hope. All that remains is a *taedium vitae*, a life that has little further interest in itself. Of all the attitudes produced by the decay of non-eschatological, bourgeois Christianity, and then consequently found in a no longer Christian world, there is hardly any which is so general as *acedia*, *tristesse*, the cultivation and dandling manipulation of faded hopes. But where hope does not find its way to the source of new, unknown possibilities, there the trifling, ironical play with the existing possibilities ends in boredom, or in outbreaks of absurdity.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the figure of presumption is found at many points in German idealism. For [Johann Wolfgang] Goethe, [Friedrich] Schiller, [Leopold von] Ranke, Karl Marx, and many others, Prometheus became the great saint of the modern age. Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods, stood in contrast to the figure of the obedient servant of God. It was possible to transform even Christ into a Promethean figure. Along with that there frequently went a philosophical, revolutionary millenarianism which set itself to build at last that realm of freedom and human dignity which had been hoped for in vain from the God of the divine servant.

In the middle of the twentieth century we find in the literary writings of the existentialists the other form of apostasy from hope. Thus the patron saint that was Prometheus now assumes the form of Sisyphus, who certainly knows the pilgrim way, and is fully acquainted with struggle and decision and with patient toil, yet without any prospect of fulfillment. Here the obedient servant of God can be transformed into the figure of the honest failure. There is no hope

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and no God any more. There is only Camus's "thinking clearly and hoping no more," and the honest love and fellow-feeling exemplified in Jesus. As if thinking could gain clarity without hope! As if there could be love without hope for the beloved!

Neither in presumption nor in despair does there lie the power to renew life, but only in the hope that is enduring and sure. Presumption and despair live off this hope and regale themselves at its expense. "He who does not hope for the unexpected, will not find it," runs a saying of Heraclitus. The uniform of the day is patience and its only decoration the pale star of hope over its heart" ([Ingeborg] Bachmann).

Hope alone is to be called "realistic," because it alone takes seriously the possibilities with which all reality is fraught. It does not take things as they happen to stand or to lie, but as progressing, moving things with possibilities of change. Only as long as the world and the people in it are in a fragmented and experimental state which is not yet resolved, is there any sense in earthly hopes. The latter anticipate what is possible to reality, historic and moving as it is, and use their influence to decide the processes of history. Thus hopes and anticipations of the future are not a transfiguring glow superimposed upon a darkened existence, but are realistic ways of perceiving the scope of our real possibilities, and as such they set everything in motion and keep it in a state of change. Hope and the kind of thinking that goes with it consequently cannot submit to the reproach of being utopian, for they do not strive after things that have "no place," but after things that have "no place *as yet*" but can acquire one. On the other hand, the celebrated realism of the stark facts, of established objects and laws, the attitude that despairs of its possibilities and clings to reality as it is, is inevitably much more open to the charge of being utopian, for in its eyes there is "no place" for possibilities, for future novelty, and consequently for the historic character of reality. Thus the despair which imagines it has reached the end of its tether proves to be illusory, as long as nothing has yet come to an end but everything is still full of possibilities. Thus positivistic realism also proves to be illusory, so long as the world is not a fixed body of facts but a network of paths and processes, so long as the world does not only run according to laws but these laws themselves are also flexible, so long as it is a realm in which necessity means the possible, but not the unalterable.

Statements of hope in Christian eschatology must also assert themselves against the rigidified utopia of realism, if they would keep faith alive and would guide obedience in love on to the path towards earthly, corporeal, social reality. In its eyes the world is full of all kinds of possibilities, namely all the possibilities of the God of hope. It sees reality and mankind in the hand of him whose voice

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calls into history from its end, saying, "Behold, I make all things new," and from hearing this word of promise it acquires the freedom to renew life here and to change the face of the world.

4. Does Hope Cheat Man of the Happiness of the Present?

The most serious objection to a theology of hope springs not from presumption or despair, for these two basic attitudes of human existence presuppose hope, but the objection to hope arises from the religion of humble acquiescence in the present. Is it not always in the present alone that man is truly existent, real, contemporary with himself, acquiescent, and certain? Memory binds him to the past that no longer is. Hope casts him upon the future that is not yet. He remembers having lived, but he does not live. He remembers having loved, but he does not love. He remembers the thoughts of others, but he does not think. It seems to be much the same with him in hope. He hopes to live, but he does not live. He expects to be happy one day, and this expectation causes him to pass over the happiness of the present. He is never, in memory and hope, wholly himself and wholly in his present. Always he either limps behind it or hastens ahead of it. Memories and hopes appear to cheat him of the happiness of being undividedly present. They rob him of his present and drag him into times that no longer exist or do not yet exist. They surrender him to the non-existent and abandon him to vanity. For these times subject him to the stream of transience—the stream that sweeps him to annihilation.

Pascal lamented this deceitful aspect of hope: "We do not rest satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten its course; or we recall the past, to stop its too rapid flight. So imprudent are we that we wander in times which are not ours, and do not think of the only one which belongs to us; and so idle are we that we dream of those times which are no more, and thoughtlessly overlook that which alone exists. . . . We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so."[5] Always the protest against the Christian hope and against the transcendent consciousness resulting from it has stubbornly insisted on the rights of the present, on the good that surely lies always to hand, and on the eternal truth in every moment. Is the "present" not the only time in which man wholly exists, which belongs wholly to him, and to which he wholly belongs? Is the "present" not time and yet at once also more than time in the sense of coming and going—namely, a *nunc stans* [an existing "now"] and to

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that extent also a *nunc aeternum* [an eternal "now"]? Only of the present can it be said that it "is," and only present being is constantly with us. If we are wholly present—*tota simul*—then in the midst of time we are snatched from the transient and annihilating workings of time.

Thus Goethe, too, could say: "All these passing things we put up with; if only the eternal remains present to us every moment, then we do not suffer from the transience of time." He had found this eternally resting present in "nature" itself, because he understood "nature" as the *physis* that exists out of itself: "All is always present in it. Past and future it does not know. The present is its eternity." Should not man, too, therefore become present like nature?

> Why go chasing distant fancies?
> Lo, the good is ever near!
> Only learn to grasp your chances!
> Happiness is always here.

Thus the true present is nothing else but the eternity that is immanent in time, and what matters is to perceive in the outward form of temporality and transience the substance that is immanent and the eternal that is present—so said the early Hegel. Likewise Nietzsche endeavored to get rid of the burden and deceit of the Christian hope by seeking "the eternal Yea of existence" in the present and finding the love of eternity in "loyalty to the earth." It is always only in the present, the moment, the *kairos*, the "now" that being itself is present in time. It is like noon, when the sun stands high and nothing casts a shadow any more, nor does anything stand in the shadow.

But now, it is not merely the *happiness of the present*, but it is more, it is the *God of the present*, the eternally present God, and it is not merely the present being of man, but still more the eternal presence of being, that the Christian hope appears to cheat us of. Not merely man is cheated, but still more God himself is cheated, where hope does not allow man to discover an eternal present. It is only here that the objection to our future hopes on the ground of the "present" attains to its full magnitude. Not merely does life protest against the torture of the hope that is imposed upon it, but we are also accused of godlessness in the name of the God whose essential attribute is *numen praesentiae* [present being]. Yet what God is this in whose name the "present" is insisted upon as against the hope of what is not yet?

It is at bottom ever and again the god of Parmenides, of whom it is said in Fragment 8 (Diels): "The unity that is being never was, never will be, for now it Is all at once as a whole" (νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν). This "being" does not

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exist "always," as it was still said to do in Homer and Hesiod, but it "is," and is "now." It has no extension in time, its truth stands on the "now," its eternity is present, it "is" all at once and in one (*tota simul*). In face of the epiphany of the eternal presence of being, the times in which life rises and passes fade away to mere phenomena in which we have a mixture of being and non-being, day and night, abiding and passing away. In the contemplation of the eternal present, however, "origin is obliterated and decay is vanished." In the present of being, in the eternal Today, man is immortal, invulnerable, and inviolable ([Georg] Picht). If, as Plutarch reports, the divine name over the portal of the Delphic temple of Apollo was given as *EI*, then this, too, could mean "Thou art" in the sense of the eternal present. It is in the eternal nearness and presence of the god that we come to knowledge of man's nature and to joy in it.

The god of Parmenides is "thinkable," because he is the eternal, single fullness of being. The non-existent, the past, and the future, however, are not "thinkable." In the contemplation of the present eternity of this god, non-existence, movement and change, history and future become unthinkable, because they "are" not. The contemplation of this god does not make a meaningful experience of history possible, but only the meaningful negation of history. The *logos* of this being liberates and raises us out of the power of history into the eternal present.

In the struggle against the seeming deceit of the Christian hope, Parmendides's concept of God has thrust its way deeply indeed into Christian theology. When in the celebrated third chapter of Kierkegaard's treatise on *The Concept of Dread* the promised "fullness of time" is taken out of the realm of expectation that attaches to promise and history, and the "fullness of time" is called the "moment" in the sense of the eternal, then we find ourselves in the field of Greek thinking rather than of the Christian knowledge of God. It is true that Kierkegaard modified the Greek understanding of temporality in the light of the Christian insight into our radical sinfulness, and that he intensifies the Greek difference between *logos* and *doxa* into a paradox, but does that really imply any more than a modification of the "epiphany of the eternal present"? "The present is not a concept of time. The eternal conceived as the present is arrested temporal succession. The moment characterizes the present as a thing that has no past and no future. The moment is an atom of eternity. It is the first reflection of eternity in time, its first attempt as it were to halt time." It is understandable that then the believer, too, must be described in parallel terms to the Parmenidean and Platonic contemplator. The believer is the man who is entirely present. He is in the supreme sense contemporaneous with himself and one with himself. "And to be with the eternal's help utterly and completely

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contemporaneous with oneself today, is to gain eternity. The believer turns his back on the eternal, so to speak, precisely in order to have it by him in the one day that is today. The Christian believes, and thus he is quit of tomorrow."

Much the same is to be found in Ferdinand Ebner, whose personalist thinking and pneumatology of language has had such an influence on modern theology: "Eternal life is so to speak life in the absolute present and is in actual fact the life of man in his consciousness of the presence of God." For it is of the essence of God to be absolute spiritual presence. Hence man's "present" is nothing else but the presence of God. He steps out of time and lives in the present. Thus it is that he lives "in God." Faith and love are timeless acts which remove us out of time, because they make us wholly "present."

Christian faith then means tuning in to the nearness of God in which Jesus lived and worked, for living amid the simple everyday things of today is of course living in the fullness of time and living in the nearness of God. To grasp the never-returning moment, to be wholly one with oneself, wholly self-possessed and on the mark, is what is meant by "God." The concepts of God which are constructed in remoteness from God and in his absence fall to pieces in his nearness, so that to be wholly present means that "God" happens, for the "happening" of the uncurtailed present is the happening of God.

This mysticism of being, with its emphasis on the living of the present moment, presupposes an immediacy to God which the faith that believes in God on the ground of Christ cannot adopt without putting an end to the historic mediation and reconciliation of God and man in the Christ event, and so also, as a result of this, putting an end to the observation of history under the category of hope. This is not the "God of hope," for the latter is present in promising the future—his own and man's and the world's future—and in sending men into the history that is not yet. The God of the exodus and of the resurrection "is" not eternal presence, but he promises his presence and nearness to him who follows the path on which he is sent into the future. YHWH, as the name of the God who first of all promises his presence and his kingdom and makes them prospects for the future, is a God "with future as his essential nature," a God of promise and of leaving the present to face the future, a God whose freedom is the source of new things that are to come. His name is not a cipher for the "eternal present," nor can it be rendered by the word *EI*, "thou art." His name is a wayfaring name, a name of promise that discloses a new future, a name whose truth is experienced in history inasmuch as his promise discloses its future possibilities. He is therefore, as Paul says, the God who raises the dead and calls into being the things that are not (Rom. 4:17). This God is present where we wait upon his promises in hope and transformation. When

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we have a God who calls into being the things that are not, then the things that are not yet, that are future, also become "thinkable" because they can be hoped for.

The "now" and "today" of the New Testament is a different thing from the "now" of the eternal presence of being in Parmenides, for it is a "now" and an "all of a sudden" in which the newness of the promised future is lit up and seen in a flash. Only in this sense is it to be called an "eschatological" today. "Parousia" for the Greeks was the epitome of the presence of God, the epitome of the presence of being. The parousia of Christ, however, is conceived in the New Testament only in categories of expectation, so that it means not *praesentia Christi* but *adventus Christi*, and is not his eternal presence bringing time to a standstill, but his "coming," as our Advent hymns say, opening the road to life in time, for the life of time is hope. The believer is not set at the high noon of life, but at the dawn of a new day at the point where night and day, things passing and things to come, grapple with each other. Hence the believer does not simply take the day as it comes, but looks beyond the day to the things which according to the promise of him who is the *creator ex nihilo* and raiser of the dead are still to come. The present of the coming parousia of God and of Christ in the promises of the gospel of the crucified does not translate us out of time, nor does it bring time to a standstill, but it opens the way for time and sets history in motion, for it does not tone down the pain caused us by the non-existent, but means the adoption and acceptance of the non-existent in memory and hope. Can there be any such thing as an "eternal Yea of being" without a Yea to what no longer is and to what is not yet? Can there be such a thing as harmony and contemporaneity on man's part in the moment of today, unless hope reconciles him with what is non-contemporaneous and disharmonious? Love does not snatch us from the pain of time, but takes the pain of the temporal upon itself. Hope makes us ready to bear the "cross of the present." It can hold to what is dead, and hope for the unexpected. It can approve of movement and be glad of history. For its God is not he who "never was nor will be, because he now Is all at once as a whole," but God is he "who maketh the dead alive and calleth into being the things that are not." The spell of the dogma of hopelessness—*ex nihilo nihil fit*—is broken where he who raises the dead is recognized to be God. Where in faith and hope we begin to live in the light of the possibilities and promises of this God, the whole fullness of life discloses itself as a life of history and therefore a life to be loved. Only in the perspective of this God can there possibly be a love that is more than *philia*, love to the existent and the like—namely, *agape*, love to the non-existent, love to the unlike, the unworthy, the worthless, to the lost, the transient, and the dead; a love that can

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take upon it the annihilating effects of pain and renunciation because it receives its power from hope of a *creatio ex nihilo*. Love does not shut its eyes to the non-existent and say it is nothing, but becomes itself the magic power that brings it into being. In its hope, love surveys the open possibilities of history. In love, hope brings all things into the light of the promises of God.

Does this hope cheat man of the happiness of the present? How could it do so! For it is itself the happiness of the present. It pronounces the poor blessed, receives the weary and heavy laden, the humbled and wronged, the hungry and the dying, because it perceives the parousia of the kingdom for them. Expectation makes life good, for in expectation man can accept his whole present and find joy not only in its joy but also in its sorrow, happiness not only in its happiness but also in its pain. Thus hope goes on its way through the midst of happiness and pain, because in the promises of God it can see a future also for the transient, the dying, and the dead. That is why it can be said that living without hope is like no longer living. Hell is hopelessness, and it is not for nothing that at the entrance to Dante's hell there stand the words: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

An acceptance of the present which cannot and will not see the dying of the present is an illusion and a frivolity—and one which cannot be grounded on eternity either. The hope that is staked on the *creator ex nihilo* becomes the happiness of the present when it loyally embraces all things in love, abandoning nothing to annihilation but bringing to light how open all things are to the possibilities in which they can live and shall live. Presumption and despair have a paralyzing effect on this, while the dream of the eternal present ignores it.

5. Hoping and Thinking

But now, all that we have so far said of hope might be no more than a hymn in praise of a noble quality of heart. And Christian eschatology could regain its leading role in theology as a whole, yet still remain a piece of sterile theologizing if we fail to attain to the new thought and action that are consequently necessary in our dealings with the things and conditions of this world. As long as hope does not embrace and transform the thought and action of men, it remains topsy-turvy and ineffective. Hence Christian eschatology must make the attempt to introduce hope into worldly thinking, and thought into the believing hope.

In the Middle Ages, Anselm of Canterbury set up what has since been the standard basic principle of theology: *fides quaerens intellectum—credo, ut intelligam* [faith that seeks understanding—I believe in order to understand]. This principle holds also for eschatology, and it could well be that it is of

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decisive importance for Christian theology today to follow the basic principle: *spes quaerens intellectum—spero, ut intelligam* [hope that seeks understanding—I hope in order to understand]. If it is hope that maintains and upholds faith and keeps it moving on, if it is hope that draws the believer into the life of love, then it will also be hope that is the mobilizing and driving force of faith's thinking, of its knowledge of, and reflections on, human nature, history, and society. Faith hopes in order to know what it believes. Hence all its knowledge will be an anticipatory, fragmentary knowledge forming a prelude to the promised future, and as such is committed to hope. Hence also *vice versa* the hope which arises from faith in God's promise will become the ferment in our thinking, its mainspring, the source of its restlessness and torment. The hope that is continually led on further by the promise of God reveals all thinking in history to be eschatologically oriented and eschatologically stamped as provisional. If hope draws faith into the realm of thought and of life, then it can no longer consider itself to be an eschatological hope as distinct from the minor hopes that are directed towards attainable goals and visible changes in human life, neither can it as a result dissociate itself from such hopes by relegating them to a different sphere while considering its own future to be supra-worldly and purely spiritual in character. The Christian hope is directed towards a *novum ultimum*, towards a new creation of all things by the God of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It thereby opens a future outlook that embraces all things, including also death, and into this it can and must also take the limited hopes of a renewal of life, stimulating them, relativizing them, giving them direction. It will destroy the *presumption* in these hopes of better human freedom, of successful life, of justice and dignity for our fellow men, of control of the possibilities of nature, because it does not find in these movements the salvation it awaits, because it refuses to let the entertaining and realizing of utopian ideas of this kind reconcile it with existence. It will thus outstrip these future visions of a better, more humane, more peaceable world—because of its own "better promises" (Heb. 8:6), because it knows that nothing can be "very good" until "all things are become new." But it will not be in the name of "calm despair" that it seeks to destroy the presumption in these movements of hope, for such kinds of presumption still contain more of true hope than does skeptical realism, and more truth as well. There is no help against presumption to be found in the despair that says, "It will always be the same in the end," but only in a persevering rectifying hope that finds articulated expression in thought and action. Realism, still less cynicism, was never a good ally of Christian faith. But if the Christian hope destroys the presumption in futuristic movements, then it does so not for its own sake, but in order to destroy in these hopes

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the *seeds of resignation*, which emerge at latest with the ideological reign of terror in the utopias in which the hoped-for reconciliation with existence becomes an enforced resignation. This, however, brings the movements of historic change within the range of the *novum ultimum* of hope. They are taken up into the Christian hope and carried further. They become precursory, and therewith provisional, movements. Their goals lose the utopian fixity and become provisional, penultimate, and hence flexible goals. Over against the impulses of this kind that seek to give direction to the history of mankind, Christian hope cannot cling rigidly to the past and the given and ally itself with the utopia of the *status quo*. Rather, it is itself summoned and empowered to creative transformation of reality, for it has hope for the whole of reality. Finally, the believing hope will itself provide *inexhaustible resources* for the creative, inventive imagination of love. It constantly provokes and produces thinking of an anticipatory kind in love to man and the world, in order to give shape to the newly dawning possibilities in the light of the promised future, in order as far as possible to create here the best that is possible, because what is promised is within the bounds of possibility. Thus it will constantly arouse the "passion for the possible," inventiveness and elasticity in self-transformation, in breaking with the old and coming to terms with the new. Always the Christian hope has had a revolutionary effect in this sense on the intellectual history of the society affected by it. Only it was often not in church Christianity that its impulses were at work, but in the Christianity of the fanatics. This has had a detrimental result for both.

But how can knowledge of reality and reflection upon it be pursued from the standpoint of eschatological hope? Luther once had a flash of inspiration at this point, although it was not realized either by himself or by Protestant philosophy. In 1516 he writes of the "earnest expectation of the creature" of which Paul speaks in Rom. 8:19: "The apostle philosophizes and thinks about things in a different way from the philosophers and metaphysicians. For the philosophers fix their eyes on the presence of things and reflect only on their qualities and quiddities. But the apostle drags our gaze away from contemplating the present state of things, away from their essence and attributes, and directs it towards their future. He does not speak of the essence or the workings of the creature, of *actio*, *passio*, or movement, but employs a new, strange, theological term and speaks of the expectation of the creature (*expectatio creaturae*)." The important thing in our present context is, that on the basis of theological view of the "expectation of the creature" and its anticipation he demands a new kind of thinking about the world, an expectation-thinking that corresponds to the Christian hope. Hence in the light of the prospects for

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the whole creation that are promised in the raising of Christ, theology will have to attain to its own, new way of reflecting on the history of men and things. In the field of the world, of history and of reality as a whole, Christian eschatology cannot renounce the *intellectus fidei et spei* [the understanding of faith and hope]. Creative action springing from faith is impossible without new thinking and planning that springs from hope.

For our knowledge and comprehension of reality, and our reflections on it, that means at least this: that in the medium of hope our theological concepts become not judgments which nail reality down to what it is, but anticipations which show reality its prospects and its future possibilities. Theological concepts do not give a fixed form to reality, but they are expanded by hope and anticipate future being. They do not limp after reality and gaze on it with the night eyes of Minerva's owl, but they illuminate reality by displaying its future. Their knowledge is grounded not in the will to dominate, but in love to the future of things. *Tantum cognoscitur, quantum diligitur* (Augustine). They are thus concepts which are engaged in a process of movement, and which call forth practical movement and change.

"Spes quaerens intellectum" [hope seeking knowledge] is the first step towards eschatology, and where it is successful it becomes *docta spes* [educated hope].

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Promise and History

Source: Moltmann 1964; ET 1967/1993:102–106.

The Word of Promise

If in the word promise we have before us a key-word of Israel's "religion of expectation," then it must now by explained what we have to understand by "promise" and more specifically by the "promise of (the guide-) God.[6]

(a) A promise is a declaration which announces the coming of a reality that does not yet exist. Thus promise sets man's heart on a future history in which the fulfilling of the promise is to be expected. If it is a case of a divine promise, then that indicates that the expected future does not have to develop within the framework of the possibilities inherent in the present, but arises from that which is possible to the God of the promise. This can also be something which by the standard of present experience appears impossible.[7]

(b) The promise binds man to the future and gives him a sense for history. It does not give him a sense for world history in general, nor yet for the historic character of human existence as such, but it binds him to its own peculiar history. Its future is not the vague goal of possible change, nor the hope aroused by the idea of possible change; it is not openness towards coming events as such. The future which it discloses is made possible and determined by the promised fulfillment. It is in the first instance always a question here of [Martin] Buber's "hopes of history." The promise takes man up into its own history in hope and obedience, and in so doing stamps his existence with a historic character of a specific kind.

(c) The history which is initiated and determined by promise does not consist in cyclic recurrence, but has a definite turn towards 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. It is not evolution, progress, and advance that separate time into yesterday and tomorrow, but the word of promise cuts into events and divides reality into one reality which is passing and can be left behind, and another which must be expected and sought. The meaning of past and the meaning of future comes to light in the word of promise.

(d) If the word is a word of promise, then that means that this word has not yet found a reality congruous with it, but that on the contrary it stands in contradiction to the reality open to experience now and heretofore. It is only for that reason that the word of promise can give rise to the doubt that measures the word by the standard of given reality. And it is only for that reason that this

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word can give rise to the faith that measures present reality by the standard of the word. "Future" is here a designation of that reality in which the word of promise finds its counterpart, its answer, and its fulfillment, in which it discovers or creates a reality which accords with it and in which it comes to rest.

(e) The word of promise therefore always creates an interval of tension between the uttering and the redeeming of the promise. In so doing it provides man with a peculiar area of freedom to obey or disobey, to be hopeful or resigned. The promise institutes this period and obviously stands in correspondence with what happens in it. This, as [Walther] Zimmerli has illuminatingly pointed out, distinguishes the promise from the prophecies of a Cassandra and differentiates the resulting expectation of history from belief in fate.

(f) If the promise is not regarded abstractly apart from the God who promises, but its fulfillment is entrusted directly to God in his freedom and faithfulness, then there can be no burning interest in constructing a hard and fast juridical system of historical necessities according to a scheme of promise and fulfillment—neither by demonstrating the functioning of such a schema in the past nor by making calculations for the future. Rather, the fulfillments can very well contain an element of newness and surprise over against the promise as it was received. That is why the promise also does not fall to pieces along with the historical circumstance or the historical thought forms in which it was received, but can transform itself—by interpretation—without losing its character of certainty, of expectation, and of movement. If they are *God's* promises, then God must also be regarded as the subject of their fulfillment.

(g) The peculiar character of the Old Testament promises can be seen in the fact that the promises were not liquidated by the history of Israel—neither by disappointment nor by fulfillment—but that on the contrary Israel's experience of history gave them a constantly new and wider interpretation. This aspect comes to light when we ask how it came about that the tribes of Israel did not proceed to change their gods on the occupation of the promised land, but the wilderness God of promise remained their God in Canaan. Actually, the ancestral promises are fulfilled in the occupation of the land and the multiplication of the people, and the wilderness God of promise makes himself superfluous to the extent that his promises pass into fulfillment. The settled life to which they have attained in the land has little more to do with the God of promise on the journey through the wilderness. For the mastering of the agrarian culture the local gods are to hand. It could of course be said that the ancestral promises regarding the land have now been fulfilled and liquidated but that, for example, the promises of guidance and protection for

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the hosts of Israel in the holy wars continue and are still live issues. But it could also be said that the God who is recognized in his promises remains superior to any fulfillment that can be experienced, because in every fulfillment 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 fulfillments in the occupation of the land do not fulfill the promise in the sense that they liquidate it like a check that is cashed and lock it away among the documents of a glorious past. The "fulfillments" are taken as expositions, confirmations, and expansions of the promise. The greater the fulfillments become, the greater the promise obviously also becomes in the memory of the expositor at the various levels of the tradition in which it is handed down. There is no trace here of what could be called the "melancholy of fulfillment." This peculiar fact of the promise that goes on beyond experiences of fulfillment could also be illustrated by the traces the promise leaves in the hopes and desires of men. It is ultimately not the delays in the fulfillment and in the parousia that bring men disappointment. "Disappointing experiences" of this kind are superficial and trite and come of regarding the promise in legalistic abstraction apart from the God who promises. On the contrary, it is every experience of fulfillment which, to the extent that we reflect on it as an experience behind us, ultimately contains disappointment. Man's hopes and longings and desires, once awakened by specific promises, stretch further than any fulfillment that can be conceived or experienced. However limited the promises may be, once we have caught in them a whiff of the future, we remain restless and urgent, seeking and searching beyond all experiences of fulfillment, and the latter leave us an aftertaste of sadness. The "not yet" of expectation surpasses every fulfillment that is already taking place now. Hence every reality in which a fulfillment is already taking place now, becomes the confirmation, exposition, and liberation of a greater hope. If we would use this as a help toward understanding the "expanding and broadening history of promise,"[8] if we ask the reason for the abiding overplus of promise as compared with history, then we must again abandon every abstract schema of promise and fulfillment. We must then have recourse to the theological interpretation of this process: the reason for the overplus of promise and for the fact that it constantly overspills history lies in the inexhaustibility of the God of promise, who never exhausts himself in any historic reality but comes "to rest" only in a reality that wholly corresponds to him.[9]

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The Resurrection and the Future of Jesus Christ

Source: Moltmann 1964; ET 1967/1993:139–43.

Gospel and Promise

When we come to the question of the view of the revelation of God in the New Testament, then we discover the fact, already familiar from the Old Testament, that there is no unequivocal *concept* of revelation. What the New Testament understands by revelation is thus again not to be learned from the original content of the words employed, but only from the event to which they are here applied. The event to which the New Testament applies the expressions for revelation imparts to them a peculiar dynamic which is messianic in kind and implies a history of promise. The general impression could be described in the first instance by saying that with the cross and resurrection of Christ the one revelation of God, the glory of his lordship which embraces righteousness, life, and freedom, has begun to move towards man.[10] In the gospel of the event of Christ this future is already present in the promises of Christ. It proclaims the present breaking in of this future, and thus *vice versa* this future announces itself in the promises of the gospel. The proclamation of Christ thus places men in the midst of an event of revelation which embraces the nearness of the coming Lord. It thereby makes the reality of man "historic" and stakes it on history.

The eschatological tendency of the revelation in Christ is manifested by the fact that the revealing word is εὐαγγέλιον and ἐπαγγελία in one. . . . The gospel of the revelation of God in Christ is thus in danger of being incomplete and of collapsing altogether, if we fail to notice the dimension of promise in it. Christology likewise deteriorates if the dimension of the "future of Christ" is not regarded as a constitutive element in it.

But how is "promise" proclaimed in the New Testament as compared with the Old Testament history of promise? How is the future horizon of promise asserted in the New Testament as against the views of the Hellenistic mystery religions?

The approach to Christology has been sought in Christian dogmatics along different lines. We here select two basic types as illustrations of the problem.

Since the shaping of Christian dogmatics by Greek thought, it has been the general custom to approach the mystery of Jesus from the general idea of God in Greek metaphysics: the one God, for whom all men are seeking on the ground of their experience of reality, has appeared in Jesus of Nazareth—be it that the highest eternal idea of goodness and truth has found its most perfect teacher in him, or be it that in him eternal Being, the Source of all things, has become

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flesh and appeared in the multifarious world of transience and mortality. The mystery of Jesus is then the incarnation of the one, eternal, original, true, and immutable divine Being. This line of approach was adopted in the Christology of the ancient church in manifold forms. Its problems accordingly resulted from the fact that the Father of Jesus Christ was identified with the one God of Greek metaphysics and had the attributes of this God ascribed to him. If, however, the divinity of God is seen in his unchangeableness, immutability, impassibility, and unity, then the historic working of this God in the Christ event of the cross and resurrection becomes as impossible to assert as does his eschatological promise for the future.

In modern times the approach to the mystery of Jesus has often been from a general view of the being of man in history. History has always existed, ever since man has existed. But the actual experiencing and conceiving of the existence of man as historic, the radical disclosure of the historic character of human existence, came into the world with Jesus. The word and work of Jesus brought the decisive change in man's understanding of himself and the world, for by him man's self-understanding in history was given its true expression in an understanding of the historical character of human existence. Instead of a general question of God and a general idea of God, which finds its true expression in Jesus and is thus verified by him, what is here presupposed is a general concept of the being of man, a general questionableness of human existence, which finds its true expression in Jesus and is thus verified by him.

Both approaches to the mystery of Jesus set out from the universal, in order to find its true expression in the concrete instance of his person and his history. Neither of these approaches to Christology, to be sure, *need* bypass the Old Testament, but their way does not necessarily lie through it. The approach of Jesus to all men, however, has the Old Testament with its law and its promise as a necessary presupposition. It is therefore a real question whether we do not have to take seriously the importance for theology of the following two propositions:

1. It was *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, of Jacob, the God of the promise, who raised Jesus from the dead. Who the God is who is revealed in and by Jesus, emerges only in his difference from, and identity with, the God of the Old Testament.

2. *Jesus was a Jew*. Who Jesus is, and what the human nature is which is revealed by him, emerges from his conflict with the law and the promise of the Old Testament.

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If we take these starting points seriously, then the path of theological knowledge leads irreversibly from the particular to the general, from the historic to the eschatological and universal.

The first proposition would mean, that the God who reveals himself in Jesus must be thought of as the God of the Old Testament, as the God of the exodus and the promise, as the God with "future as his essential nature," and therefore must not be identified with the Greek view of God, with Parmenides's "eternal present" of Being, with Plato's highest Idea, and with the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle, not even in his attributes. Who he is, is not declared by the world as a whole, but is declared by Israel's history of promise. His attributes cannot be expressed by negation of the sphere of the earthly, human, mortal, and transient, but only in recalling and recounting the history of his promise. In Jesus Christ, however, the God of Israel has revealed himself as the God of all mankind. Thus the path leads from the *concretum* to the *concretum universale*, not the other way round. Christian theology has to think along *this* line. It is not that a general truth became concrete in Jesus, but the concrete, unique, historic event of the crucifying and raising of Jesus by Yahweh, the God of promise who creates being out of nothing, becomes general through the universal eschatological horizon it anticipates.[11] Through the raising of Jesus from the dead the God of the promises of Israel becomes the God of all men. The Christian proclamation of this God will accordingly always move within a horizon of general truth which it projects ahead of it and towards which it tends, and will claim in advance to be general in character and generally binding, even if its own universality is of an eschatological kind and does not come of abstract argument from the particular to the general.

If on the other hand theology takes seriously the fact that Jesus was a Jew, then this means that he is not to be understood as a particular case of human being in general, but only in connection with the Old Testament history of promise and in conflict with it. It is through the event of the cross and resurrection, which is understandable only in the context of the conflict between law and promise, that he becomes the salvation of all men, both Jews and Gentiles. It is the Christ event that first gives birth to what can be theologically described as "man," "true man, "humanity"—"neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). Only when the real, historic, and religious differences between peoples, groups, and classes are broken down in the Christ event in which the sinner is justified, does there come a prospect of what true humanity can be and will be. The path leads here from the historic and unique to the universal, because it leads from the concrete event to the general in the sense of eschatological direction. Christian

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proclamation will consequently here again move within the horizon of general truth and make the claim to be universally binding. It will have to expound this claim in contra-distinction to other kinds of general anthropological concepts of *humanitas*, precisely because its own general concept of humanity has an eschatological content. It will not be able, for example, to set out from the fact that man is the being which possesses reason and language, and then go on to verify this aspect of his being by means of the event of justification, but it will set out on the contrary from the event of justification and calling, and then go on in face of other assertions as to the nature of man to uphold this event which makes man, theologically speaking, true man.

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Exodus Church

Source: Moltmann 1964; ET 1967/1993:338 *(the book's concluding paragraph).*

As a result of this hope in God's future, this present world becomes free in believing eyes from all attempts at self-redemption or self-production through labor, and it becomes open for loving, ministering self-expenditure in the interests of a humanizing of conditions and in the interests of the realization of justice in the light of the coming justice of God. This means, however, that the hope of resurrection must bring about a new understanding of the world. This world is not the heaven of self-realization, as it as said to be in Idealism. This world is not the hell of self-estrangement, as it is said to be in romanticist and existentialist writing. The world is not yet finished, but is understood as engaged in a history. It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world in which we can serve the future, promised truth and righteousness and peace. This is an age of diaspora, of sowing in hope, of self-surrender and sacrifice, for it is an age which stands within the horizon of a new future. Thus self-expenditure in this world, day-to-day love in hope, becomes possible and becomes human within that horizon of expectation which transcends this world. The glory of self-realization and the misery of self-estrangement alike arise from hopelessness in a world of lost horizons. To disclose to it the horizon of the future of the crucified Christ is the task of the Christian church.

Notes

1. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vols., 1954–59, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

2. Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press/London: SCM Press, 2008), 101.

3. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* III.2.42, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (London: SCM Press, 1961), 590.

4. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1848); trans. George Eliot as *The Essence of Christianity* (London: John Chapman, 1854).

5. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, No. 172, trans. W. F. Trotter, Everyman's Library #874 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1943), 49f.

6. For the expression "guide-God," cf. Martin Buber, *Königtum Gottes*, 2d ed., 1936, xi; see *The Prophetic Faith*, trans. C. Witton Davies (New York: Macmillan, 1940).

7. For what follows, cf. the definitions of promise by Walther Zimmerli, "Verheissung und Erfüllung," *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952): 38ff.

8. Gerhard von Rad, "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments," *Evangelische Theologie* 12 (1952): 25f.

9. Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. T. Dickinson (London: SCM Press, 1966), 94ff.

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10. Hannelis Schulte, "Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Neuen Testament," *Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie* 13 (1949): 23.

11. Cf. Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes,* trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), 30f.

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