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JÜRGEN MOLTMANN AS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN

Political Hermeneutic of Scripture
as Foundational
for Ecological Theology

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the way Jürgen Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic informs his salvation-historical approach to ecological theology. Coming from the post-Barthian camp of German Protestant theology, Moltmann has inherited Karl Barth's theological critique of the technological-scientific spirit of modernity. Moltmann differs from Barth, however, in the fact that his underlying preoccupation with the question of theodicy leads him to interpret Barth's theological critique of modernity from within the perspective of modernity's victims. This he accomplishes by retrieving the biblical tradition of *eschatologia crucis*. Moltmann's political hermeneutic of scripture, which he develops on the basis of the *eschatologia crucis*, vindicates his salvation-historical approach to nature by offering a substantial critique of the modern techno-scientific spirit. Furthermore, it enables Moltmann's ecological theology to put the crisis of modernity within the broader horizon of the problem of radical evil, thereby offering a profounder hope for the liberation of the suffering creation called for by the WCC theme "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation."

Résumé

Dans cette dissertation est examinée la manière dont Jürgen Moltmann nous informe de son approche historique du salut vis-à-vis de la théologie écologique dans son herméneutique biblique. Vu qu'il vient du camp théologique protestant allemand établi après l'époque de Barth, Moltmann épouse sa critique théologique en ce qui concerne l'esprit technologique et scientifique de la modernité. Cependant, Moltmann diffère de Barthe par le fait que sa préoccupation de la question de théodicée l'amène à interpréter la critique théologique barthienne de modernité de la perspective de ses victimes. Il réalise ceci en récupérant la tradition biblique de l'eschatologia crucis. Moltmann base les raisonnements de son herméneutique politique des Saintes Ecritures sur l'eschatologia crucis et justifie son approche historique du salut vis-à-vis de la nature en offrant une critique approfondie de l'esprit techno-scientifique moderne. De plus, la théologie écologique de Moltmann lue permet de mettre la crise de modernité dans le contexte plus large du mal radical. Ainsi, il donne l'espoir que la création sera libérée de sa souffrance. Ceci fait appel au théme du Conseil Mondial des Eglises: "Justice, paix et l'intégrité de la création."

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Preface

Jürgen Moltmann's theology has exerted a great influence on my theological reflections ever since I first encountered it in Prof. Douglas Hall's "Theology of the Cross" seminar. As an "evangelical" Protestant from Asia, who has inherited the legacy of the Reformation faith in its missionary form, I have for long struggled to understand the Reformation *sola scriptura* principle in the light of the questions raised by the Christian communities in Asia regarding the soico-politically dubious role of the privatizing and de-politicizing reading of scripture the missionaries taught them. Hence, it is no wonder that Moltmann's incorporation of the liberationist perspective into the *sola scriptura* principle, made possible by his appeal to the theology of the cross tradition, has had such a strong appeal to me. In addition, Moltmann's "eco-logical turn" has challenged me to open up the horizon of my biblical exegesis to embrace also the voice of the suffering nature contained in scripture.

In view of this uniquely mediating role which I believe Moltmann's theology plays between the Reformation *sola scriptura* principle and the liberationist call for politicized reading of scripture, I found it unjust that Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic is usually regarded as a minor variation on Barth's hermeneutic without much significance of its own. This common perception, as exemplified by the relegation of Moltmann to a single footnote on Barth in David Kelsey's *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, is no doubt responsible for the relative paucity of literature on Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic (I found only one article on this subject out of the

vast corpus of literature on Moltmann). I wrote this essay, therefore, as my small tribute to Moltmann's accomplishment as a biblically oriented, "post-modern" Protestant thinker.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to several people who have helped me write this essay. My thanks go first and foremost to my supervisor, Prof. Douglas John Hall, for his invaluable guidance and helpful suggestions. He is the one who first introduced to me the theology of the cross tradition, which has up to this day been the guiding light of my theological journey. He has also been ever so patient with one whose mother tongue is not English. I would like to extend my warm thanks to Principal Pierre Goldberger of the United Theological College for his never-failing encouragement and moral support. I am also grateful to other faculty and students at the Faculty of Religious Studies, from whom I have learned a great deal. I cannot fail to mention the Librarians who helped me track down some difficult-to-find articles. In closing, I dedicate this work to my uncle, aunt and their family, without whose support and sacrifice I could not have completed this study.

Unless otherwise indicated, the scriptural quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

Hyo-Dong Lee

Abbreviations

References to the works of Jürgen Moltmann will use the following abbreviations. Full Citations of these works are found in the bibliography. Since the English translations of the original German works were used for direct quotations, their abbreviations are also given in parentheses.

AKgG "Antwort auf die Kritik an 'Der gekreuzigte..." 1979.

AKTH "Antwort auf die Kritik der Theologie..." 1969a.

Cg "The Crucified God" 1974.

DgG *Die gekreuzigte Gott* 1972.

DWJC *Der Weg Jesu Christi* 1989 (WJC).

EG *Experiences of God* 1980a.

EH *The Experiment Hope* 1975a.

GdG *Der Geschichte des dreieinigen Gottes* 1991 (HTG).

GS *Gott in der Schöpfung* 1985 (GC).

HP *Hope and Planning* 1971.

KKG *Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes* 1975b.

R "Response" 1993

RRF *Religion, Revolution, and the Future* 1969b.

TdH *Theologie der Hoffnung* 1964 (TH).

TE "Theology as Eschatology" 1970a.

TGT "Theology in Germany Today" 1984.

TNSD "Towards the Next Step..." 1970b.

TRG *Trinität und Reich Gottes* 1980b (TK).

ZS *Zukunft der Schöpfung* 1977 (FC).

Introduction

Jürgen Moltmann's ecological theology, represented by his monumental Gifford Lectures *Gott in der Schöpfung*, has been recognized as an ambitious post-Barthian attempt to address, theologically, the present ecological crisis.[1] Moltmann's Barthian heritage, which drives him even to offer a small "apology" for taking up the work of "natural theology" much-shunned among Barthians,[2] can most clearly be seen in the fact that his doctrine of creation is firmly rooted in his exegeses of scripture. Moltmann claims that "every theology of nature interprets nature in the light of the self-revelation of the creative God" (GS 66; GC 53), and that the aim of his ecological theology is not to see "what nature can contribute tc our knowledge of God, but what the concept of God contributes to our knowledge of nature"(GS 66; GC 53).

This rootedness of Moltmann's theology in scripture, which makes his approach to nature "salvation-historical,"[3] has raised many critical voices. They complain that Moltmann fails to use scientific data with credibility and respect, and that his imposition of scriptural and "salvation-historical" categories on nature makes

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[1]Per Lønning, "Die Schöpfungstheologie Jürgen Moltmanns: Eine Nordische Perspektive," *Kerygma und Dogma* 33 (1987): 210. See also John B. Cobb, Jr., "Barth and the Barthians: A Critical Appraisal," in *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 175.

[2]See the preface to *Gott in der Schöpfung*.

[3]See Lønning, pp. 208-211. See also GdG 120-121.

his ecological theology incompatible with modern scientific world-view.[4] They are also concerned that, because of his preoccupation with the doctrine of redemption, his ecological theology is too anthropocentric.[5] These critical voices resonate with James Gustafson's earlier critique of Moltmann that he "desires to fly in the face of centuries of development in the natural sciences," and that his theology is "primarily significant for human persons."[6] The doubts raised here regarding Moltmann's theological project can be put in the form of a negative question: Is it not fundamentally impossible for a theology to be both salvation-historical and ecological at the same time?

I seek to argue in this dissertation that these critical voices do not effectively critique Moltmann's theology, because the crisis of modernity is now calling into question the fundamental assumptions underlying these critiques, namely the very modern assumptions that nature and history are separate and distinct entities, and that the final arbiter on the issues belonging to the realm of nature is natural science. I argue that Moltmann's "salvation-historical" approach is meant as a post-Barthian theological response to the crisis of modernity; for Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic

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[4]Klaus Musfeldt, "Wird der Löwe Stroh fressen:...," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 33 (1991): 307-309; Jim Mcpherson, "The Integrity of Creation: Science, History, and Theology," *Pacifica* 2 (1989): 338-343. See also Løning, p. 222.

[5]Stephen G. Dunn, "New Christian Attitudes toward the Earth: A Survey," *ARC* 22 (1994): 32.

[6]James Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vol 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 44, 48. Gustafson goes on to say: "whether nature can be historical is a matter of scientific, not theological, investigation" (p. 48).

— which he developed in *Theologie der Hoffnung*, brought to maturity in his "political" phase,[7] and carried forward into his later theological works — is in itself a thoroughgoing critique of the techno-scientific spirit of modernity. I argue that, by taking up Barth's eschatological-christological interpretation of scripture, Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic provides a transcendent source of critique by which modernity itself could be judged and transcended.

Moltmann differs from his mentor Barth, however, in the fact that his underlying preoccupation with the question of theodicy drives him, in his exegesis, to have recourse to the "weak" tradition of *eschatologia crucis* which he claims has so long been suppressed in Christendom. This move, I argue, enables Moltmann to take up the voices of the suffering victims of modernity as a transcendent source of critique by which the oppressive modern *status quo*, legitimized by the supposedly "neutral" and "objective" criteria of modern science and technology, could be judged and transcended.

It is my claim that this "political hermeneutic" of scripture, as Moltmann calls it, provides the epistemological foundation of his ecological theology, which I dub "politico-ecological theology." Furthermore, I argue that, because of its sensitivity to the question of theodicy, this political hermeneutic enables Moltmann's politico-ecological theology to put the crisis of modernity within the broader horizon of the question of radical evil. It is this question of radical evil, I argue, that enables Molt-

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[7]Moltmann calls this phase of his theological journey "theology in movement, dialogue and conflict" (GdG 233; HTG 176).

mann's politico-ecological theology to be both salvation-historical and ecological at the same time, offering a promising way towards the integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives called for by the WCC theme "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation."

My method of approach in this dissertation is synchronic rather than diachronic. In other words, I do not seek primarily to trace the historical development of Moltmann's political hermeneutic or of his politico-ecological theology; I seek rather to bring out the consistency of Moltmann's theology[8] by analyzing the logic of his biblical hermeneutic as he developed it in *Theologie der Hoffnung* and in his other earlier theological works, and by examining how this biblical hermeneutic operates in his later works — notably *Gott in der Schöpfung* — to provide them with a "salvation-historical" orientation in a way conducive to meeting the challenge of the "JPIC."

In the first chapter, I examine the contended issue of the viability of a scripturally based, "salvation-historical" approach to nature, especially in view of the crisis of modernity with which both nature and humanity are presently faced. In the second chapter, I seek to draw out Moltmann's indebtedness to Barth's theological critique of

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[8]Moltmann's theology has been criticized for lacking in consistency and being too easily "swayed" by a variety of ecumenical influences (Richard John Neuhaus, "Moltmann vs. Monotheism," *Dialog* 20 [1981]: 242). Moreover, Moltmann himself acknowledges that his "ecumenical method" may have irritated especially the doctoral students concerned with the consistency of his theology (GdG 231). However, for the sake of my argument for Moltmann's consistency, I would like to refer to one of the biographical notes Moltmann has written, in which he outlines his theology in three points: his theology is built upon a biblical foundation, shaped by an eschatological orientation, and geared toward a responsible political commitment (GdG 240).

modernity, and how he has gone beyond Barth's biblical hermeneutic — via the *eschatologia crucis* — to arrive at his political hermeneutic of scripture. Detailed analysis of Moltmann's political hermeneutic, with an eye to its character as a critique of modernity "from the underside," comprises the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, I examine how his political hermeneutic provides the epistemological foundation of his politico-ecological theology, enabling its integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives through a "salvation-historical" approach to nature. I end this essay with some concluding remarks on the significance and implications of Moltmann's politico-ecological theology for nature and humanity faced with the crisis of modernity.

Chapter One

Is Nature To Be Liberated?: Scripture and the Crisis of Modernity

In her 1984 publication *To Work and To Love*, Dorothee Sölle gives a poignant expression to the understanding of creation informed by the liberationist perspective: "In the beginning was liberation."[1] Far from merely being a word-play, this subtle twist on Genesis 1:1 is a bold declaration that unites two concerns which are at the forefront of the agenda of the multi-pronged movements for liberation: the liberation of human individual and society from oppression, spearheaded by the "Reds," and the liberation of nature from human exploitation, as advocated by the "Greens."[2] Sölle's book may be taken as yet another indication of the growing awareness among both liberation and ecological theologians that the two kinds of liberation are inextricably related to each other as two sides of the same coin, and that the division of theology into the two camps itself reveals theology's captivity to modern techno-scientific dualism that views humanity and nature as separate and independent entities.[3] The

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[1]Dorothee Sölle with Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984), p. 7.

[2]I am indebted to Prof. Gregory Baum for these expressions.

[3]*Liberating life* is the best example of this growing theological awareness: Charles Birch, William Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel eds., *Liberating Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 1-4; see especially in this volume John F. Haught, "Religions and Cosmic Homelessness: Some Environmental Imaginations," pp. 161-172.

adoption by the World Council of Churches at its Sixth General Assembly (Vancouver, 1983) of the theme "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" has served as a benchmark for this growing trend towards theological wholeness.

Envisioning a holistic theology of liberation[4] that encompasses both humanity and nature, however, must necessarily involve a serious re-appropriation of the scriptural tradition in which Christian theology is rooted and from which it obtains an identity uniquely its own.[5] Is it really possible to read Genesis 1:1 as "In the beginning was liberation," as Sölle does? How firm a ground do we have in the scriptural tradition of speaking of the "liberation of creation"? If indeed "Christian visions of world and of salvation are profoundly shaped by the biblical story of creation,"[6] one may be driven to ask what role the scriptural tradition — especially the biblical story of creation — can and must play in the coming together of the two theological movements as represented by the "JPIC" process.

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[4]As is made evident by my use of the term "holistic," here I use the term "theology of liberation" in a much broader sense than what it usually denotes, i.e., the kind of theology that arose in the Latin American context in the 1960s and 70s. I use the term "holistic theology of liberation" to emphasize the point that a "salvation-historical" approach to ecological theology — based on scripture —is *sine qua non* of any theology that purports to embody the spirit of "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation."

[5]As George Lindbeck puts it, scripture is the "lens" through which theologians ought to view the world: George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), p. 119.

[6]"Liberating Life: A Report to the WCC" (The Annecy Report: a consultation sponsored by the WCC at Annecy, France, September 1988), in Birch, Eakin, and McDaniel, p. 276.

The importance of asking such questions needs to be recognized, especially in view of the rather disparaging account of the promise of the scriptural tradition for grounding such a movement as the "JPIC" process, namely the view first voiced by Lynn White, Jr. in his 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." As is well known, this essay has exerted enormous influence upon many scholarly and popular (including theological) circles in subsequent decades.[7] Lynn White claims that, due to its too lofty estimate of humankind and its consequent inordinate preoccupation with human salvation and transcendence, the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition pronounces divine blessing over human domination of nature and pushes the ensuing suffering of nature out of its scope of salvation. The scriptural tradition, according to Lynn White, is ecologically bankrupt.

If White is right, then it is possible that the scriptural tradition is responsible, if not to the extent of bearing "a huge burden of guilt" as he claims, then at least partially, for the genesis of that particularly modern (i.e., techno-scientific and anthropocentric) understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature which has precipitated the present ecological crisis.[8] Moreover, if scripture's unremitting

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[7]Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207. See also H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 1ff.

[8]It would be unfair to say that the Judeo-Christian tradition is not nuanced in regard to its attitudes towards nature: Birch, Eakin, and McDaniel, p. 7. See also Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 4-50; William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Montreal & Kingston/London/Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 29-35, 45-72. For the most definitive treatment of the relationship between the Judeo-Christian

concern about redemption is indeed pertinent only to humanity, as White claims, then scripture would not have much to say regarding the present suffering of nature. If the fundamental redemptive motif which runs through the length and breadth of scripture as *cantus firmus* sings only of human liberation, then scripture would have little to offer the community of creation faced with the prospect of an ecological disaster which could be in scale unparalleled in history. In that case, the coming together of the two theological movements would not be able to root itself in the scriptural tradition.

Lynn White's claim, however, is debatable. It needs to be admitted that, in the history of the West, the biblical story of creation was read mainly in anthropocentric terms: human beings were created in the image of God and given dominion over nature, only to fall after disobeying God.[9] Because of this anthropocentric reading of the creation story, the rest of the bible was also read as referring primarily to human salvation.[10] It is however also true that this anthropocentric reading of scripture was usually — especially in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages — done within the context of the underlying world-views that incorporated more or less positive interpretations of nature. These interpretations of nature, usually in the form of amalgama-

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scriptural tradition and the genesis of modern attitudes towards nature, see Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[9]For a recent attempt at an alternative — non-anthropocentric — understanding of the biblical concept of dominion, see Douglas J. Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; New York: Friendship Press, 1986).

[10]"Liberating Life," p. 276.

tion of the biblical creation story with either Platonic or Aristotelian pictures of the world, affirmed nature's fundamental goodness and acknowledged its value — independent of its usefulness for humans — as an aid in understanding God's providence.[11] Although the status of the human species as the "crown and jewel"[12] of God's creation in these world-views made nature recede somewhat into the background in favor of the divine-human drama of salvation, even this anthropocentric language of "crown and jewel" presupposed a rather moderate view of humanity: humanity has fallen and is expressly in need of redemption.[13] This modest view of humanity seems nowhere to have supported anything akin to modern absolutism of human rule over nature.

Probably White's criticism applies, at least in a modified form, not to scripture itself nor to the history of its interpretation in general, but to that particular segment of Christianity called Liberal Protestantism; for Liberal Protestantism, while not being responsible for the actual *genesis* of the modern techno-scientific and anthropocentric mind-set, nevertheless tried to accommodate it by retreating from any serious discussion about the fate of nature. This is largely due to the fact that, since the Enlightenment, the spectacular growth of modern science had made a great impact upon the religious consciousness of the West. By virtue of its incomparably greater

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[11]Santmire, pp. 31-44, 55-95, 106-119. See also Leiss, p. 34.

[12]Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans; New York: Friendship Press, 1990), p. 113.

[13]Ibid., pp. 191-200. See Santmire, pp. 121-133.;Leiss, pp. 34-35.

explanatory power over natural phenomena, modern science increasingly took over the role of the authoritative interpreter of nature and, in so doing, pushed every scriptural interpretation of nature and every religious world-view based on it — ancient or modern — into the realm of groundless metaphysical speculation or of myth.[14] The retreat of nineteenth-century Liberal theology into the realm of human experience, as represented by Schleiermacher and the Kant-Ritschlian distinction between the human sphere and the sphere of nature, was an attempt at peaceful co-existence with this techno-scientific spirit of modernity.[15] In line with this anthropological reduction of theology, the exponents of Liberal theology regarded scripture as a human witness to the human experience of transcendence, whose supreme instance was that of the historical Jesus.[16] For the Liberals, therefore, scripture spoke little about the order of nature, far less about its integral redemption. To the contrary, the impersonal and mechanical order of nature, now newly understood as a process of conflict and struggle in line with the Darwinian theory of evolution, was to be overcome and "rescued" from its brute "nature-ness" by the spiritual and ethical victory of human beings over nature (i.e., the ushering in of the Kingdom on earth.

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[14]See Barbour, pp. 56-79.

[15]For the apologetic character of Liberal theology, represented by its ablest exponent, Ritschl, see Philip Hefner's lucid introductory essay on Ritschl's theology in Albrecht Ritschl, *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. 27-29. See also Barbour, pp. 104-108; Santmire, pp. 133-138. For a comprehensive and critical assessment of Liberal theology in regard to its apologetic character, see George Rupp: *Culture-Protestantism: German Liberal Theology at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977).

[16]Barbour, p. 106.

understood as "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man").[17] It was to this victory of the human spirit that the Liberals thought scripture, especially its account of Jesus, bore testimony.[18]

This historic retreat of the scriptural tradition into the realm of the human spirit for the sake of accommodating the techno-scientific spirit of modernity, though lamentable in itself, should probably not be condemned wholesale as a sheer perversion of the Christian gospel; for the modern techno-scientific mind-set which forced this retreat originally had its beginning in the critical spirit of the Enlightenment which, in the name of Reason, mounted an extensive attack upon the theocratic *ancien régime* and the religious ideologies[19] that buttressed it, including its ideological use

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[17]"The kingdom of God which thus...presents the spiritual and ethical task of mankind as it is gathered in the Christian community is *supranatural*, insofar as in it the ethical forms of society are surpassed (such as marriage, family, vocation, private and public justice, or the state), which are conditioned by the natural endowment of man (differences of sex, birth, class, nationality) and therefore also offer occasions for self-seeking. The kingdom of God is *supramundane*...insofar as we understand as "mundane" the nexus of all natural, naturally conditioned and organized existence" (Albrecht Ritschl, "Instruction in the Christian religion," in *Three Essays*, pp. 223-224). See also *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, ed. and trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay et al (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), pp. 221-280, 362-64; For the tacit approval given by Liberal theology — as a consequence of its highly spiritual motif — to the modern industrial plunder of nature, see Hall, *Steward*, pp. 112-114.

[18]Hefner in Ritschl, *Three Essays*, pp. 18-19.

[19]Here I use the term "ideology" as meaning a network of ideas which represents and serves the interests of individuals or groups by being simultaneously explanatory and deceptive in regard to the state of affairs that exists in reality.

of the scriptural tradition.[20] In his book *Atheism in Christianity*, the Marxist revisionist philosopher Ernst Bloch has made a convincing case for the "Christian" character of this Enlightenment spirit, particularly in the famous distinction he made between nature-oriented cosmological religions and "the religion of the Exodus."[21]

According to Bloch, nature-oriented cosmological religions explain the present order of the world in terms of its origin in the beginning of time, i.e., in terms of creation myth.[22] Since the creation myths of cosmological religions have a static understanding of cosmos as an eternally recurring cycle created, preserved, and sanctioned by the creator(s), these religions tend accordingly to interpret the present socio-political and religious order in analogy to the eternal cyclical order of nature. In

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[20]For the critical and liberating aspect of the Enlightenment, represented by French and German thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, see Gregory Baum, *Theology and Society* (New York/ Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 128-135, 222-225. See also Leiss, pp. 19-23. What I found to be the most penetrating discussion of the nature of the Enlightenment is the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School: see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: The Seaburry Press, 1972); Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O'connell et al. (New York/St. Louis/San Francisco/ Toronto: Herder and Herder, 1972); Paul Connerton, *The Tragedy of Enlightenment: An Essay on the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge/London/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[21]Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 29-34. For Bloch, the term "religion" itself stands for creation-oriented nature religions: "Religion is re-ligio, binding back. It binds its adherents back, first and foremost, to a mythical God of the Beginning, a Creator-God. So, rightly understood, adherence to the Exodus-figure called "I will be what I will be"...is no longer religion" (p. 9).

[22]Ibid., pp. 29-31

other words, nature-oriented cosmological religions offer theistic and theocratic world-views which interpret the order of the world as a static, hierarchical order of beings on the apex of which sits God. Hence, Bloch claims, these religions tend to function as ideological justification of the political and religious *status quo*. The "religion of the Exodus," in contrast, undermines the *status quo*, because its God is the God of history and of the future.[23] By enacting historical acts of salvation, understood in terms of exodus from the oppressive present, the God of history draws our eyes to the future, i.e., to the Kingdom. Therefore, the "religion of the Exodus" is an "atheism" that challenges the theism of cosmological religions and the socio-political and religious *status quo* it justifies.[24] When Bloch says there is "atheism" in Christianity, he is referring to the subversive and liberating traditions of the Exodus and of the Kingdom which have long been suppressed in Christendom in favor of the creation tradition.[25]

Bloch's critique of cosmological religions can be understood as voicing the Enlightenment suspicion towards the tendency of religion in general to use arguments from nature to buttress and to sanction society's prevailing political, economic, and cultural organizing principles.[26] Viewed from Bloch's perspective, the Enlighten-

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[23]Ibid., pp. 215-222.

[24]Ibid., pp. 267-273.

[25]Ibid., pp. 24-26, 69-83.

[26]See Leiss, pp. 180-181: "Precapitalist societies share almost universally a common feature, namely, a reliance on various "naturalistic" categories as a basis for social organization, distinctions of rank, the allocation of work, maintenance of political domination, and so forth. In other words, the principles which provide a

ment critique of the theocratic *ancien régime* was at the same time a critique of the régime's metaphysical-theistic version of Christianity whose ideological appropriation of the creation tradition — by buttressing static metaphysical views of the universe — rendered even the potentially anthropocentric language of "crown and jewel" quite impotent and bereft of its full liberating potential for oppressed human beings. Liberal theology's critique of metaphysical dogma in the name of history can be understood as an attempt to answer this Enlightenment challenge by becoming, in its own way, a "religion of the Exodus." In return for enlisting the help of the critical acumen of the modern historical sciences, Liberal theologians turned the realm of nature — in a certain sense "happily" — over to the natural sciences so that, thus freed from all preoccupation with "naturalistic" metaphysics that had previously bound dogmatic interpretations of scripture, they might then freely engage in the liberating task of excavating, through the layers of fallacious metaphysical interpretations of scripture, the facts of history which they thought testified to the transcendent freedom of the human spirit fully revealed in the historical Jesus.[27]

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justification for the allocation of roles and power are grounded upon the assertion that they conform to the 'order of nature.'" Leiss points out that, when Enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke spoke in seemingly naturalistic categories, — for example in the context of discussion of natural rights — what they meant by "nature" was actually "reason" (p. 182).

[27]For the critical and liberating function of Liberal anti-metaphysical stance, see Ritschl's essay "Theology and Metaphysics" in *Three Essays*, pp. 155-156: "...It is at this very point that the disparity between metaphysical cosmology and every religious world view emerges. In all of its forms, the religious world view is established on the principle that...the sublime power which holds sway in or over that course of the world sustains or confirms for the personal spirit its own value against the limitations imposed by nature or by the natural workings of human society." Liberal theologians

With all good intentions, however, Liberal theology could neither see nor predict the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" (Adorno and Horkheimer) coming full circle: the Enlightenment preoccupation with human liberation and human transcendence over nature led eventually to the modern technological-industrial exploitation of nature which, in turn, is now threatening to usher in the downfall of the entire creation.[28] The Enlightenment emphasis upon the critical consciousness and freedom of the human subject, originally required for overcoming ignorance and superstition that had previously bound the human subject to nature and tradition, has lost its ethical and self-critical dimension and, as a result, produced the modern techno-scientific and positivistic mind-set. In other words, reason as the organ of human self-emancipation has lost its ethical-humanistic drive and collapsed into instrumental rationality.[29] This collapse has caused grievous social and ecological consequences, for instrumental rationality does not have the self-critical power that enables reason to pacify and control the irrational forces intrinsic to the human subject, namely *human*

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contrasted Hellenistic metaphysical dogma with Judaic concept of history, and regarded the latter as the more original and "purer" form in which the gospel was presented. But this "history" was understood as the sphere of the transcendent freedom of the human spirit and not as something cosmic in dimension, as it is understood in biblical eschatology. In this sense, Liberal theology shares the Enlightenment suspicion of metaphysical-theistic religions (see Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders, 5th ed. [London: Ernest Benn, 1958], pp. 139-162).

[28]For this, see Leiss, pp. 185-193; Adorno and Horkheimer, pp. 3-42; Connerton, pp. 60-79.

[29]See Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi Press, 1991), pp. 93-108

nature. The result of this unleashing of human nature, now armed with technological means far more powerful than ever, is the domination of both nature and humans by technological-industrial society.[30] But the tragedy of the Enlightenment is that instrumental reason does not recognize itself as standing under the dictate of *human* nature. It is in a state of self-deception, claiming to be standing in a neutral, a-historical vantage point free from the influence of every kind of "irrational forces of nature," i.e., ethnic, cultural, religious, and class identities that define a human being within a specific historical and natural context. The subject-object division and the ideal of detached objectivity so foundational to the modern techno-scientific mind-set are here exposed as ideological: In the name of objectivity and scientific neutrality, modern science has "objectified" nature so that humanity could control, dominate and exploit it at will. The subject-object division characteristic of scientific inquiry and the ideal of "controlled environment" aimed at in the production of scientific knowledge both testify to the ideological nature of the techno-scientific mind-set which accepts as veritable knowledge only knowledge about what can in principle be controlled: nature needs to be controlled, in order to be known and used for human

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[30]It is important to note that instrumental rationality is at work when "pure" capitalism or Soviet-style ("state-capitalistic") communism erodes all 'naturalistic' or personalized foundations of traditional economic behavior that usually put predetermined limits on the degree to which productive forces are unleashed upon nature. Here the unleashing of human nature takes the form of unbridled human greed for production and consumption, very often at the expense of nature and human communities (see Leiss, pp. xviii-xx).

benefit.[31] What this means is that the positivistic criteria of truth upheld by modern science are historical phenomena peculiar to modern era, existing largely for the sake of serving the particularly modern expression of human will-to-power.

As D. J. Hall points out, Liberal theology, due to its preoccupation with human liberation from nature, produced a highly positive — and "spiritualized" — anthropology which did not have proper language to check the unmitigated human *hybris* revealed in the gradual transformation of the critical spirit of the Enlightenment into techno-industrial "Prometheanism."[32] The "dialectic of the Enlightenment" has revealed that an inordinate pursuit of human liberation alone begets too high a view of humanity — that is, "humanity above nature" (even above *human* nature) — which is deceptive of reality and dangerous to the well-being of the rest of the creation;[33] and Liberal theology has proven itself to be part of the very phenomenon that the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" has disclosed. The "shaking of the foundations" that Liberal theology encountered in the crises of the early decades of this century — the crises which have continued down into the present in one form or another — was only the natural outcome of the failure of the modern project which had not fully taken into account the ambiguity of *human* nature. The root of human nature goes much

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[31]For the ideological nature of the positivistic criteria of modern science, see Horkheimer, pp. 3-9 ("Notes on Science and the Crisis").

[32]Hall, *Steward*, pp. 112-114, 191-200. See also no. 26.

[33]This has become especially evident in the shocking revelation of the appalling magnitude of environmental degradation in the former communist block, which pursued — with an unprecedented frenzy — human liberation both from nature and from irrational social conditions. See Leiss, p. x.

deeper into the "irrational" kingdom of nature than Liberal theologians naïvely thought.

What this implies is that one cannot talk, as Liberal theology did, about human liberation without referring at the same time to the liberation of nature, including *human* nature. Bloch's sharp distinction between nature and history — and between creation and liberation — becomes in this respect problematic, despite its politically and culturally critical meaning which is in itself laudable. Since the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" has shown that nature and history are not two distinct and independent entities, and that every human activity (including modern science) cannot escape the context of the "irrational" kingdom of nature (including *human* nature) which it affects and by which, in return, it is affected, the Liberal captivity to the allegedly "neutral" and "objective" criteria of modern science needs to be criticized. In other words, theology is called to critique the irrational forces of nature operating behind the purportedly "rational" functioning of modern science and technology, and to show a way towards the liberation of both nature and humanity from the power of these irrational forces. Humanity and nature, faced with the tragic failure of critical reason to overcome the forces of nature, would thereby be given hope that comes from a transcendent source.

In view of this call for a holistic theology of liberation, the fundamental redemptive motif that runs through the length and breadth of scripture takes on an added significance. Scripture reminds us of the ambiguity of the creation, represented by the suppressed images of chaos (chaos-water or chaos-monster) and expressed in

the language of evil, sin, conflict, suffering and death.[34] The Pauline language of the "groaning" of the creation (Rom 8:18-25) and the prophetic vision of the peaceable kingdom — where "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together" and "the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isa 65:25; cf.Isa 11:6, Hos 2:18) — all point to the need of the whole creation to be redeemed from its present "bondage to decay" (Rom 8:21) and to the hope that this will happen at the end. These scriptural testimonies counter the exegetical presupposition of Liberal theology that scripture is mainly concerned with human redemption and transcendence to the exclusion of any genuine concern about the redemption of nature. Freedom from the ideological shackles of the positivism of modern science means — as far as theology is concerned — the freedom to take up these biblical testimonies for the sake of envisioning a holistic theology of liberation.

In this sense, the rediscovery of the cosmic nature of biblical eschatology, begun by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer at the turn of the century, becomes significant.[35] But as can be seen from their abandonment of the cosmic eschatology of scripture as incompatible with the modern scientific account of the universe, Weiss and Schweitzer were too much heirs to the legacy of the modern captivity of Liberal

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[34]Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 166-177. See also Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 310-330.

[35]Johanness Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, ed. and trans. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 84-104. See also Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, 2nd Eng. ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1926).

theology to be able to recognize the ideological nature of the modern scientific world-view and to bring out the possible significance of their discovery for a theology of nature.[36] It is probably due to this lingering legacy of Liberal biblical hermeneutic that some ecological theologians who are trying to overcome the modern captivity of Liberal theology, especially those influenced by the process thinking of Alfred North Whitehead, have tried to construct a holistic theology of liberation from perspectives informed primarily by the biological sciences and with little input from the supposedly anthropocentric scriptural tradition. This effort, represented by the seminal 1981 volume *The Liberation of Life* by Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., tries to counter the modern techno-scientific thinking with concepts such as "process," "interdependence," "balance" and "harmony," all of which are derived from their

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[36]Having rooted out the Ritschlian idea of the kingdom of God from New Testament Theology, Weiss essentially went back to the Ritschlian position by severing systematic theology from its biblical foundations: "Under these circumstances, one will perhaps judge the connection of the modern dogmatic idea with the words of Jesus to be a purely external one...That which is universally valid in Jesus' preaching, which should form the kernel of our systematic theology is not his idea of the Kingdom of God, but that of the religious and ethical fellowship of the children of God. This is not to say that one ought no longer to use the concept "Kingdom of God" in the current manner. On the contrary, it seems to me, as a matter of fact, that it should be the proper watchword of modern theology. Only the admission must be demanded that we use it in a different sense from Jesus" (Weiss, p. 135). Also Schweitzer: "But the truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the Spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world" (Schweitzer, *Quest*, pp. 399).

interpretation of the Darwinian evolutionary theory from within the perspective of process philosophy.[37]

This theological attempt to enlarge the scope of liberation so as to include nature suffers, however, from the lack of any substantial theological foundation to speak of liberation at all. Its primarily evolutionary perspective has little to say concerning the problem of evil, because, as Birch and Cobb themselves admit, evolution "inevitably brings conflict, suffering and death in its train."[38] Seen from the Darwinian perspective, though the conflict and suffering present in nature may be lamentable as an unavoidable tragic dimension of the phenomenon of life itself, they cannot be regarded as something ethically wrong — that is, something from which nature needs to be redeemed.[39] If this perspective is consistently pursued, even the present ecological crisis may be understood as an ultimately tragic consequence of the billions of years of evolutionary drive and not as anything close to a moral failure: the human species, thought to be the fittest to survive, proves itself to be totally unfit as it brings an end not only to itself but also to the entire evolutionary history of this

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[37]Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr, *The Liberation of Life: From the Cell to the Community* (Cambridge/London/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 1-10.

[38]Ibid., p. 199.

[39]For the impossibility of deriving ethical norms from evolution, see Barbour, pp. 93-96. James A. Lovelock's Gaia theory seems to offer a new scientific model of evolution open to ecological ethics, although the theory's scientific credibility is still being much debated: see Stephen H. Schneider and Penelope J. Boston, eds., *Scientists on Gaia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 1-74.

planet. In face of the disheartening fact that "evil is an inherent part of good"[40] in the process of Life, Birch and Cobb admit that here scientific knowledge helps them but little.[41] It is this inability of science to distinguish between essence and existence, and to provide an ethical directive in the face of the ambiguity of the creation, that made Albert Schweitzer give up his search for a life- and world-affirming ethic grounded in the scientific knowledge about the world and turn to the mysticism of "reverence for life."[42] On the same line, Birch and Cobb are forced in the end to make, on the basis of Whitehead's philosophy, a not-so-convincing declaration: "We find ourselves choosing to trust Life."[43] The hope for the future — that is, the hope for the final victory of good over evil — seems to have become for them a matter of arbitrary choice or of accepting a particular philosophical system.

The dilemma that faced Schweitzer, Birch and Cobb offers us the indispensable insight that any theological attempt to redress the tragic failure of critical reason must take seriously the scriptural motif of the redemption of nature; for without it a

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[40]Birch and Cobb, p. 193.

[41]Birch and Cobb, p. 201.

[42]Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, trans. C. T. Campion (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949), pp. 199-201. Because Schweitzer basically followed the "spiritualizing" biblical hermeneutic of Liberal theology and denied the modern relevance of biblical eschatology he himself had discovered, he did not attempt to ground his world-affirming ethics in the scriptural tradition, either: pp. 51-59. See also Lois K Daly, "Ecofeminism, Reverence for Life, and Feminist Theological Ethics" in *Liberating Life*, eds. Charles Birch, William Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 96-107.

[43]Birch and Cobb, p. 201.

holistic theology of liberation would be deprived of any substantial *theological* foundation to speak of liberation at all. The scriptural motif of the redemption of nature warns us against a blanket use of the idea of harmony and interrelatedness to envision a global community of creation, as can be seen in certain sectors of the ecology movement influenced by New-Age style syncretism or by Eastern religions.[44] An unqualified use of the idea of harmony and interrelatedness, whether informed by the biological sciences or by New-Age syncretism, does not do justice to the ambiguity of nature. Without the fundamental redemptive motif offered by scripture, theology stands in the danger of falling into the kind of static metaphysical theism which was so much the target of the Enlightenment critique of religious

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[44]Of course I am not here saying that the language of interconnectedness and harmony of all things is all there is to Eastern religions or native American religions. The problem of suffering, for example, is the central concern of Buddhism. I am here referring primarily to New-Age style syncretism which appropriates only certain positive aspects in the language of non-Christian religious traditions: see for example Rita Nagashima-Brock, *Journies by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. 50-88. In this sense it may be worthwhile to refer to an incident at the Earth Summit in Rio, when religious leaders attending a pre-conference meeting "Sacred Earth" came up with a declaration of faith. It solemnly announced that "the universe is sacred because all is one," and that humanity needs "to evolve earth ethics with a deeply spiritual orientation." The declaration defined the ecological crisis first and foremost as a spiritual crisis resulting not from sin but from ignorance, i.e., the ignorance regarding the harmonious interrelatedness of all things on the planet Earth. An interesting thing to note is that the declaration was soundly rejected by the evangelical churches in Brazil as a shapeless religious syncretism incompatible with the Christian message of salvation witnessed to in the scripture. In doing so, the Brazilian evangelicals gave expression to their uneasiness with the naïve language about the interrelatedness and harmony in the creation. They claimed that, as Christians, and in faithfulness to scripture, they cannot help but stress the salvific significance of Jesus Christ to the "fallen" creation (Loren Wilkinson, "How Christian is the Green Agenda," *Christianity Today* 37 [1993]: 16-20).

ideologies. The liberationist critique of ecological theology, that it is an attempt by the rich to cover up the appalling magnitude of oppression of the poor, may be viewed as inheriting this Enlightenment suspicion, especially when some proponents of the ecology movement are taken into account who speak of the creation in terms of the primarily positive values of harmony and symbiosis.[45] The scriptural testimonies to the ambiguity of nature remind us that any Christian interpretation of nature, be it creation theology, ecological theology or theology of nature, needs to be informed by the scriptural motif of redemption if it is to take up the task of redressing the "dialectic of the Enlightenment."

This evident necessity of the redemptive motif of scripture for a holistic theology of liberation brings us back to the task of integrating the creation tradition and the liberating tradition of the Exodus. The preceding discussion of the scope of the problem allows us now to delineate three points that are essential for any prospective theological-hermeneutical attempt to integrate the creation tradition and the Exodus tradition: 1) It must first be able to critique the ideological nature of the positivistic criteria of modern science, so that scripture may again be enabled to speak on behalf of nature with a legitimate claim to truth. 2) In so doing, however, it must not bypass the original critical impetus given at the beginning of modern science,

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[45]See D. Preman Niles, ed., *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992). See also no. 42 above. However, when this liberationist critique becomes a critique of JPIC itself, it reveals the narrow-sightedness that is detrimental to the urgent task of redressing the "dialectic of the Enlightenment."

namely the Enlightenment critique of politico-religious ideologies. In order to accomplish this, the creation tradition must be interpreted from within the perspective of the Exodus tradition so that the fundamental redemptive motif of scripture may be given the central place. 3) This "salvation-historical" approach to the creation tradition must not be interpreted in an anthropocentric sense, as offering a primarily divine-human drama of salvation, with nature merely providing the stage or the background. It must speak of the liberation of nature — including *human* nature — from its own ambiguity, so that the curse of the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" behind the present global crisis may be found with its *radical* ("going to the root") solution.

This essay argues that a fruitful way towards the integration of the two scriptural traditions — one that does justice to all four points delineated above — is laid by Jürgen Moltmann's political hermeneutic of scripture, which provides the epistemological foundation of his politico-ecological theology. In the next chapter Moltmann's political hermeneutic will be discussed, first in terms of its roots in Barth's theological critique of modernity, and secondly in relation to his critique of Barth's neglect of the question of theodicy.

Chapter Two

Barth and Moltmann: The Search for a Biblical Critique of Modernity

1. The Root of Moltmann's "Salvation-Historical" Approach to Ecological Theology

In the preface to *Gott in der Schöpfung*, Moltmann speaks about the eclipse of the doctrine of creation in German Protestant theology since the Confessing Church's struggle against the "German Christians" and their "blood and soil" politico-religious ideology, and a renewed significance that needs to be given to the doctrine of creation in face of the present ecological crisis (GS 11-12). Although he admits that the concerns of the Barmen Theological Declaration have by no means become out of date, he sees the situation as changed:

> In the 1930s, the problem of the doctrine of creation was knowledge of God. Today the problem of the doctrine of God is knowledge of creation. The theological adversary then was the religious and political ideology of 'blood and soil', 'race and nation'. Today the theological adversary is the nihilism practised in our dealings with nature (GS 11: GC xi).

Since the magnitude of the ecological crisis by which humanity is today faced was completely unknown at that time, Moltmann argues, Barmen's rejection of the German Christians' "natural theology" need not be interpreted as rejection of any theological attempt to extend theology's horizon to cosmic breadth for the sake of envisioning an ecological doctrine of creation.

As he embarks on the work of "extending theology's horizon to cosmic breadth" in *Gott in der Schöpfung*, Moltmann is driven to ask a fundamental epistemological question: "Where can we find the foundation for knowledge of the world as God's creation? With what objective theological right is nature (*physis*) seen and treated as creation (*ktisis*)?" (GS 66; GC 53). To this question Moltmann gives an answer that determines the entire line of his quest for an ecological theology: "The starting point for a *Christian* doctrine of creation can only be an interpretation of the biblical creation narratives in the light of the gospel of Christ" (GS 66; GC 53-54). In other words, Moltmann is here claiming that any truly Christian doctrine of creation needs to start from a biblical hermeneutic — in this case, a biblical hermeneutic *informed by the Christian proclamation of Jesus Christ*. Moreover, for Moltmann, such a Christian biblical hermeneutic is none other than "messianic" biblical hermeneutic:

> I understand the word 'Christian' in its original sense, as 'messianic'; but messianic as the word has been moulded by Jesus' proclamation and his history. So a Christian doctrine of creation is a view of the world in the light of Jesus the Messiah; and it will be determined by the points of view of the messianic time which has begun with him and which he defines (GS 19; GC 4).

Moltmann further clarifies the meaning of the term "messianic" in his volume on christology, *Der Weg Jesu Christi*. According to him, "if we take the word 'Christian' literally, the Christian faith is a messianic faith" (DWJC 11; WJC xiii); for Jesus Christ is to be perceived as the still-hoped-for messiah "in the light of the Old Testament promises and the history of hope of Israel today" (DWJC 17; WJC 1). Viewed from this perspective, "Jesus is the messiah; the church is the messianic

community; being a Christian means being human in the messianic sense" (DWJC 17; WJC 1). Furthermore, for Moltmann, the term messianic is intended to encompass the whole creation, as expressed in the language of messianic kingdom, the messianic era and the messianic land (DWJC 17). Accordingly, Moltmann puts creation within the context of a messianic history — a kind of "salvation history" — that aims at the redemption of creation: "According to biblical traditions, creation is aligned towards its redemption from the very beginning; for the creation of the world points forward to the sabbath, 'the feast of creation.'"[1]

Although Moltmann makes these claims within the context of dialogue with Judaism (i.e., of making connection with the messianic hope of Israel's faith), they are not *ad hoc* claims attached to his central theological theses just for the sake of enabling such an interreligious dialogue. In reality, Moltmann's messianic claims carry forward his consistent and cardinal thesis since the publication of *Theologie der Hoffnung*, viz., that given the appalling magnitude of suffering present in the world, the universal lordship of Christ has not yet been fulfilled, and that we have still to look forward to the parousia of the promised messiah (TdH 11-12; DWJC 47-51).[2] This fundamental eschatological thesis lies behind Moltmann's use of the term "messianic theology" as the overall title of his theology.

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[1]GS 20; GC 5. For Moltmann's "salvation historical" approach, see Løning, "Schöpfungstheologie," pp. 209-211.

[2]"Eschatology is the passionate suffering and passionate longing kindled by the Messiah" (TdH 12; TH 16).

In order therefore to understand Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic informed by this messianic perspective, and to unearth, by so doing, the epistemological foundation of Moltmann's ecological doctrine of creation, it is necessary to examine his eschatological and "political" hermeneutic of scripture from *Theologie der Hoffnung* onwards, for which he is indebted to a significant degree to Karl Barth's eschatological-christological interpretation of scripture.

2. Moltmann's Barthian Starting Point: The Primacy of Eschatology

Jürgen Moltmann has once referred to his relationship with his own theological roots in a short, cryptic sentence that said it all: "I became...a nonconformist in that theological school to which I owe the most: the Barth school"[3] Profoundly stamped by his experience as a prisoner of war during the World War II, Moltmann started his theological studies when the influence of Karl Barth was at its height. Referring to himself in the third person he briefly describes the formative years of his theology:

> This student sat at the feet of Gerhard von Rad, Ernst Käsemann, Hans Joachim Iwand, Ernst Wolf, and Otto Weber at the University of Göttingen. There he imbibed the theology of the Confessing Church, inspired by Karl Barth and preserved throughout the years of struggle between the church and the Nazi state...We learned the origin of the Christian faith in the suffering of him who was crucified and in the liberating power of the risen Christ...We could withstand the crucifying experiences of life only through faith in the vicarious suffering and death of Christ our brother, and in the freedom conferred by his resurrection. That is what made us so Christocentric. Barth's theology was simply the first and most enlightening formulation of faith in such

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[3]Jürgen Moltmann, "Forward," in A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), pp. vii.

> experiences. That is why we didn't become Barthians, but with gratitude went beyond him toward the eschatological, toward the theology of the cross, and a politically critical theology.[4]

As M. Douglas Meeks has shown in his masterly analysis of the origins of the theology of hope, Moltmann was influenced in one important way or another by his teachers at Göttingen and by his encounter with Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope.[5] As Moltmann himself acknowledges time and again, however, it was primarily within a Barthian framework of thought that he embarked on his own theological journey that eventually led to *Theologie der Hoffnung*. What Moltmann did during that journey was that he appropriated and reshaped the eschatological-christological motif that stood at the core of Barth's framework of thought — more specifically, in Barth's concept of revelation — in order to arrive at the thorough-going eschatological hermeneutic of *Theologie der Hoffnung*.[6] Hence, two questions need to be directed at this momentous process of germination of Moltmann's theology: 1) What is the

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[4]Jürgen Moltmann, "Forward," in M. Douglas Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. xi-xii. See also Moltmann's biographical sketch in EG 10; GdG 173-174.

[5]Meeks, pp. 19-71. See also Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the making* (Basingstoke, Hants, UK: Marshall Pickering, 1987), p. 5ff. It is worthy to note also the significant influence of the Dutch theologian Arnold van Ruler's theology of the apostolate (EG 11).

[6]Moltmann writes: "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" (TdH 12; TH 16). For Moltmann's reshaping of Barth's eschatology, see the correspondences between Barth and Moltmann in Karl Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), p. 342.

eschatological-christological motif in Barth's concept of revelation that Moltmann appropriated? 2) How did he reshape it?[7]

3. Karl Barth's Eschatological-Christological Hermeneutic of Scripture

It is well known that Karl Barth was the leading exponent of the movement of "dialectical theology" in the 1920s, and that, coming out of the shattering experience of the first World War, the leaders of the movement pushed through a thorough eschatologization of the Christian gospel by presenting the revelation of God as God's eschatological judgment upon the present which brings all human history to its final crisis.[8] From the early years of his theological career, especially after the second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*, Barth constantly emphasized the "infinite qualitative distinction" between time and eternity, between human beings and God.[9] Barth's catch-phrase "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth" epitomizes both the abysmal gap which Barth claims exists between Creator and creatures and the eschatological nature of God's revelation. Barth draws a clear and radical distinction

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[7]Of the variety of influences to which Moltmann's breakthrough after Barth is indebted, this thesis focuses on the biblical-theological works of von Rad and Käsemann. Moltmann's appropriation of them in the light of the theodicy question forms the foundation of his biblical hermeneutic in *Theologie der Hoffnung*.

[8]For this, see James M. Robinson ed., *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 9-30.

[9]Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 10.

between the divine Spirit and the human spirit, and identifies the divine Spirit with God who convicts humanity of its sin and achieves reconciliation by free grace.[10]

Barth's emphasis upon the eschatological nature of God's revelation can be understood as a reaction against the Liberal accommodation of the Enlightenment critique of metaphysical theism and the consequent anthropological reduction of theology. As has been stated in the earlier discussion of Liberal theology, the Enlightenment had cast a grave doubt upon the uncritical use of metaphysical categories in classical theism. This modern sceptical attitude was epitomized by Kant's three critiques which demolished the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of traditional theologies.[11] For Kant, due to their limited rational faculties, human beings cannot have theoretical knowledge of metaphysical realities. Metaphysical realities such as God, therefore, can at best be postulated as the transcendental ethical conditions of the human subject.

The Enlightenment critique of religious metaphysics and the consequent subjectivistic reduction of religion were accepted in principle by Schleiermacher, the "Father" of Liberal theology. The difference was that Schleiermacher tried to secure religion's own, unique place not in the sphere of ethics as in Kant's case but in the sphere of "feeling (*Gefühl*)" — that is, the religious self-consciousness of the believer

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[10]See Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

[11]Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), pp. 39-67. See also Richard Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921).

which Schleiermacher named "the feeling of absolute dependence." For Schleiermacher, the starting point of Christian theology is the "pious self-consciousness (*das fromme Selbstbewusstsein*)" of the believer.[12] This "pious self-consciousness," according to Schleiermacher, is a distinctively Christian modification, conditioned by the sense of sin and grace, of the more general religious "feeling of absolute dependence."[13] All talk about God, according to Schleiermacher, must first start "from below," i.e., from the *pietas* of the believer, and then proceed to inquire after the *origin* of this *pietas*: "the *Whence* of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word 'God'."[14] For Schleiermacher, the Christian faith is none other than the subjective awareness of the immediate presence of God, which he believes is most fully achieved in Jesus Christ.[15]

In his famous lectures on the nineteenth century Protestant theologians, Barth finds the roots of the failure, both of Schleiermacher and of Liberal theologians after him, in their apologetic tendency to reduce the transcendental reality of God to purely historical or anthropological categories, when faced with the Enlightenment critique of

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[12]Alasdair I. C. Heron, "Barth, Schleiermacher and the Task of Dogmatics," in *Theology beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the Birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986), p. 271.

[13]Ibid., p. 282.

[14]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. and trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 16.

[15]Ibid., p. 569.

metaphysical theism.[16] When the reality of God is absorbed into the categories of the human subject, two things are to be anticipated: critical minds would not be hesitant to deny it any objective reality, as can be seen from Feuerbach's anthropological reduction of religion; secondly, theology would lose its "discernment of spirits," namely its ability critically to assess, on the basis of objective criteria, all the varying human — many of them ideological — claims to God. In this sense, Barth's picture of God as the eschatological "Wholly Other" is the logical outcome of his concern with the loss of objective basis for speaking about God in Liberal theology.[17]

Barth's theological project needs, however, to overcome a major obstacle: Is it possible, after the Enlightenment critique of metaphysical theism, to talk about God as an objective reality distinct from the subjective faith of the believer? To the extent to which Barth stresses, over against Schleiermacher, the reality of God who is "Wholly Other," he is compelled to find a way to talk about this God in an objective, scientific way and to show at the same time how such an "alien" God is available to us at all, without ever diminishing or blurring the clear and radical distinction between God and creatures which he has always maintained. In other words, Barth is forced back to a methodological duel with Kant.

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[16]Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, trans. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 460ff.

[17]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, part 1 & 2, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 634.

At this critical point, rather than accommodating the Kantian challenge (as Schleiermacher did) by separating the "private" religious sphere of feeling from the sphere of "public" knowledge, Barth faces the challenge head-on. In order not to repeat what he considers Schleiermacher's greatest mistake, Barth proposes an entirely new avenue of knowledge in which knowledge of the Subject (God), who in grace and mercy makes Godself "object" for us, is imparted to the inquiring human subject. Barth's study of Anselm, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, in which he makes this methodological claim, goes against the entire grain of the modern positivistic-scientific attitude — especially the narrow reductionist tendencies regarding the criteria of public knowledge — in its conviction that truly scientific knowledge is shaped by its object and not in advance by an *a priori* theory of knowledge or methodology.[18] Barth claims that, since God is the object of the science of theology, theology must follow the kind of rational method of inquiry appropriate to God. Since God is not, however, an object that can be grasped and possessed by the inquiring human mind but Subject who is free, God would be forever beyond the reach of human knowledge were it not for God's free decision to disclose God's own self to the inquirer. Theological inquiry, therefore, must always follow this Subject and submit itself to the self-disclosure and judgment of this Subject. Consequently,

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[18]Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum. Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of His Theological Scheme*, trans. Ian W. Robertson (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 40-53. See also Barth, *Protestant Theology*, p. 393.

unless God freely imparts the rationality of divine revelation to the believer so that it may rationally be understood, knowledge of God is not possible.[19]

It is important to note here that what stands at the center of Barth's methodological claim is not God *in se* but God *pro nobis* revealed in Jesus Christ. For Barth, God who is Subject is not the God of classical theism who either sits aloof from the world at the apex of the great chain of being or lies immovable and impassible at the bottom of creation as the "Ground of Being" (i.e., a kind of God who would easily fall prey to the Enlightenment critique of metaphysics), but the trinitarian God who freely reveals Godself in Jesus Christ (the Word) through the Holy Spirit, as attested in scripture.[20] The God of scripture acts to reveal Godself not out of some alien necessity or some ontological continuity between God and creatures, but out of the necessity of divine love, i.e., out of divine grace freely given.[21] "God acts" means that God is not tied down to creaturely realities, but is forever on the move, breaking out of every human system and ideology that tries to contain God. God reveals God's

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[19]Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, p. 55.

[20]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, part 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 186. See also Ted Peters, "Trinity Talk," part 1 & 2. *Dialog* 26 (1987): 44, 136-137.; John Thompson, "On the Trinity," *in Theology Beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the Birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986), pp. 26-27.; W. Waite Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987), p. 91.

[21]Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, part 1, p. 186f., 346f.

own self in this freedom of God, "speaking as an I and addressing by a Thou."[22] This is the meaning of Barth's statement that "God reveals Himself as the Lord,"[23] since, for Barth, lordship means freedom that comes from ontic and noetic autonomy.[24]

The key thesis of Barth's biblical hermeneutic lies in his claim that we meet this sovereign God when God freely reveals God's own self in the Word through the human words of the biblical text.[25] The human words of the biblical text, although merely human words in the eyes of the positivistic historian, can nevertheless, through a free and gracious act of God, "become" the Word of God to the exegete in the power of the Holy Spirit.[26] This is possible because God as Subject freely decides to speak through these human words as the Word of God. Accordingly, the revelation of the Word of God is none other than the free disclosure of God's own self as "*Dei loquentis persona.*"[27] To state the matter otherwise, the Word of God

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[22]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), p. 307.

[23]Ibid., p. 306.

[24]Ibid., p. 307.

[25]Barth does acknowledge the possibility of God's self-revelation taking place through mediums other than the biblical text. However, inasmuch as these "secular parables of truth" must be tested by scripture, they cannot be considered truly independent mediums of divine revelation: Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, part 3, first half, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), pp. 86-135.

[26]Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 457-472, 527-535.

[27]Ibid., p. 304.

testified to in the human words of the biblical text is "God's own direct speech which is not to be distinguished from the act of speaking and is therefore not to be distinguished from God Himself."[28] This understanding of the "event" of the Word as God's free speaking is behind Barth's claim that the "substance" or the "subject matter" of the words of the biblical text has sovereign freedom to or not to make itself spoken and heard as the Word.[29] Furthermore, because God is Subject who acts and speaks in freedom, the exegete is absolved from the task of differentiating the infallible from the fallible portions of the biblical text; for God is free to speak even in the parts of scripture where the exegete has never expected to hear the Word.[30]

This "actualism"[31] revealed in his concept of the self-revelation of God enables Barth to overcome the anthropological reduction of the concept of revelation carried out by Liberal theology. The human words of the biblical text, which Liberal theology thought were human witnesses to the human experience of the transcendent, are understood as the medium through which God directly speaks the judging and redeeming Word. Although these human words may contain scientific or historical "errors" when they refer to God, the universe, or the facts of history, this does not prevent God from speaking through these human words in God's sovereign freedom.

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 469.

[30]Ibid., pp. 530-531.

[31]George Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 30.

As Barth puts it, although the general concept of historical or scientific truth may function as the criterion of evaluating the human side of the biblical witnesses to revelation, it can never have jurisdiction over the divine side of the biblical witnesses. Crossing this boundary would be tantamount to abandoning the general concept of historical or scientific truth and making a confession of faith or of unbelief in regard to the possibility that God may speak through these biblical witnesses [32]. In other words, when scientific inquiry asks after God who freely makes Godself an "object" of our inquiry, it must follow the kind of rational method of inquiry appropriate to God who is Subject, by following this Subject and submitting itself to the self-disclosure and judgment of this Subject.

In view of this consistent emphasis on God's freedom as Subject, it is not difficult to understand the criticism Barth levels against Rudolf Bultmann's program of "demythologization."[33] Barth regards Bultmann's aversion to mythical language as inheriting the legacy of the Liberal submission to the tyranny of the modern scientific world-view, and asks this question: Why not through mythical language? Barth claims that, if the Word of God is always spoken through the human words of the biblical text which always contain particular world-views of particular times, then it is not the exegete's job to accept or to reject world-views; for it is not the case that a certain world-view makes it easier for God to speak the Word. The fact that our

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[32]Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol 1, part 1, p. 325.

[33]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, part 2, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. &. T. Clark, 1960), pp. 443-449.

faith might be helped by accepting or rejecting a certain world-view is not relevant to exegesis, since the inspiration of scripture (the fact that the Word is spoken through scripture) cannot be reduced to our faith in it. For Barth, the inspiration of scripture has an objective basis in revelation itself,[34] because the action of God is objective enough to emerge victorious from all the fluctuations of human subjectivity: "the statement that the Bible is the Word of God is an analytical statement."[35]

If divine self-revelation meets us, as Barth claims, through the human words of scripture regardless of the world-views in which they are expressed, then a particular form of the biblical text (for instance the cosmic eschatology characteristic of the New Testament) need not be discarded as an arcane myth nor stripped of all its references to God and to the world existing outside of the human subject, as in Bultmann's case. To the contrary, since God who is revealed through scripture and its proclamation confronts, in divine freedom and lordship, all human realities (the entire world) as their judgement and crisis, the universal scope of biblical eschatology is only too well suited to give testimony to the universal-eschatological character of God's self-revelation.

As will be discussed in the next section, it is this eschatological-christological motif in Barth's concept of God's self-revelation that Moltmann appropriates and reshapes on the basis of biblical eschatology — the eschatology that he considers has been suppressed since the "Constantinization" of Christianity (DWJC 48). If in

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[34]Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol 1, part 1, p. 534.

[35]Ibid., p. 535.

sovereign freedom and lordship God breaks free from all human attempts to contain God and confronts these attempts as their judgment, whether it is the attempt by the "Constantinian" church to turn God into the Almighty Father-God-King or the attempt by the modern positivistic-scientific mind-set to exclude any reference to the "Coming One" from the domain of public knowledge, then one is enabled to proclaim the God revealed in biblical eschatology even if that God is politically "dangerous" or scientifically "outdated." Moltmann indeed uses Barth's eschatological-christological motif as a theological battering-ram to break out of the Liberal captivity to the modern mind-set and once again to speak about society, history, and nature — the entire world — as the realm in which God works and which God redeems.[36]

4. Moltmann's Critique of Barth: The Centrality of the Theodicy Question

In *Theologie der Hoffnung*, Moltmann welcomes the discovery of the central significance of eschatology for Jesus and early Christianity, made in the late nineteenth century by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, as "one of the most

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[36]For Moltmann's critique of the Liberal anthropological reduction of theology, see TRG 77-78 (TK 60-61): "...they [Liberal assumptions about Jesus] arise out of a preliminary hermeneutical decision which is highly questionable. History means human history, and human history is the sphere of morals. So Jesus has to be understood as a human person. But he is only authoritative as a human person to the extent in which he is able to be a pattern for our own moral actions. All theological statement which the Christian faith makes about God therefore have to be understood and interpreted as the expressions of Christian moral existence. If they cannot be understood as the expressions of moral existence then we have to reject them as dogmatistic."

important events in recent Protestant theology" (TdH 31; TH 37). According to Moltmann, Weiss and Schweitzer presented Jesus to nineteenth-century Liberal Christianity as "a stranger with an apocalyptic message that was foreign to it" (TdH 31; TH 37), and shattered, by so doing, the long-held assumption of a harmonious synthesis between Christianity and culture.

Moltmann criticizes both discoverers, however, for failing to bring out the significance of their discovery for the present. For Moltmann, both Weiss and Schweitzer had no real understanding of eschatology at all, because both were still held captive by the Liberal assumption that eschatology was an archaic and antiquated world-view incompatible with the modern scientific mode of thinking. Consequently, Moltmann claims, they discarded eschatology merely as a time-conditioned element in Jesus' preaching, and tried instead to find some other timeless element in his message and existence whose significance could still be applied to the modern world (TdH 31-33).

In line with this criticism is Moltmann's critique of Rudolf Bultmann. It is of course true that Moltmann sees the first truly significant rehabilitation of eschatology coming with the advent of so-called "dialectical theology" in 1920s, and that he regards Bultmann as part of the movement (TdH 33). As has been stated earlier, the exponents of "dialectical theology" — notably Barth and Bultmann — pushed through a thorough eschatologization of the Christian gospel by presenting the revelation of God as God's eschatological judgment upon the present which brings all human history to its final crisis. Although Moltmann appreciates Bultmann's claim that

eschatology is something still very relevant to the modern world, however, he is not wholly satisfied with the way Bultmann understands the nature of eschatology. Moltmann criticizes Bultmann's understanding of eschatology as not being faithful to the *biblical* understanding of eschatology originally rejected by Weiss and Schweitzer. In other words, Moltmann is arguing that Bultmann does not truly overcome Weiss and Schweitzer and what they represent: the Liberal captivity to the modern techno-scientific mode of thinking.

According to Moltmann, Bultmann distorts the biblical understanding of eschatology when he claims that the *eschaton* comes only upon the individual human self in the event of God's revelation, and that the event of revelation is none other than the event of faith in which the inauthentic human existence (i.e., the inauthentic self-understanding) is judged and restored to its authentic or eschatological state (TdH 53-58). Bultmann's thesis of the hidden, unobjectifiable and unverifiable correlation of God and the human self as the only possible avenue of revelation — and, therefore, as the only possible ground of eschatology — disturbs Moltmann, for it secures the present relevance of eschatology only by severing the realm of human subjectivity, where eschatology is relevant, from the objective realm of nature and history where eschatology is at best regarded as arcane myth (TdH 56). For Moltmann, this retreat into the private realm of human subjectivity for the sake of avoiding confrontation with the modern scientific mode of thinking reveals, just as in the case of Weiss and Schweitzer, Bultmann's captivity to the modern techno-scientific mind-set and his consequent inability to grasp the cosmic nature of eschatology testified to in the

biblical witnesses. Bultmann's program of existentialist interpretation and of "demythologization" is a logical outcome of this captivity, since Bultmann's hermeneutical program tries to find within the biblical text that core eschatological element of kerygma, namely the authentic self-understanding expressed in the text which functions as God's revelation and judgment (the *eschaton*) upon the inauthentic self-understanding the reader brings to the text. The mythological and universal-eschatological "shell" in which that kerygma is presumed to be expressed, in contrast, is discarded as irrelevant to the modern mind (TdH 251-254).

What Moltmann suspects as lurking behind Bultmann's inability to break loose from the fetter of the modern techno-scientific mind-set is the spectre of the Kantian understanding of eschatology, i.e., what Hans Urs von Balthasar calls "transcendental eschatology," which Bultmann has inherited from his Liberal teacher Wilhelm Herrmann (TdH 51-51). According to Moltmann, Kant is held captive by the Newtonian view of the universe as a mechanism or a self-contained system of cause and effect. Consequently, Kant understands scientific knowledge as an objectifying kind of knowledge whose categories are suited to explain a closed system or world-order governed by set laws such as the law of causality (TdH 40-41). When reality is experienced under such categories, any reference to God's existence and action in the world, such as cosmic eschatology, has to be excluded in principle from within the boundaries of scientific knowledge (TdH 39-40). This concept of scientific knowledge, according to Moltmann, lies beneath Kant's critiques of theological metaphysics and of every conceivable eschatology expressed in terms of cosmology and saving

history. For Kant, eschatology can have meaning only as referring to the non-objectifiable realm of the transcendent "self" where freedom and openness to the future reign instead of causality. The idea of the *eschaton*, i.e., the ultimate goal of all things, refers to the eternal and transcendental conditions in the sphere of the moral reason, namely the conditions which enable one to become a free and open being, making moral decisions and living as a moral self in the hostile clockwork world ruled by the relentless law of cause and effect (TdH 41).

Moltmann's critical attitude towards the transcendental eschatology of Kant and Bultmann, especially towards its retreat from the public realm of objective scientific knowledge into the private realm of human subjectivity, is based on his understanding that transcendental eschatology is incompatible with the biblical understanding of eschatology:

> If faith awaits the 'redemption of the body', and a bodily resurrection from the dead, and the annihilation of death, then it begins to see itself in a profound bodily solidarity with the 'earnest expectation of the creature' (Rom. 8.19ff.), both in its subjection to vanity and in the universal hope...It is not possible to speak of believing existence in hope and in radical openness, and at the same time consider the 'world' to be a mechanism or self-contained system of cause and effect in objective antithesis to man...Without a cosmic eschatology there can be no assertion of an eschatological existence of man. Christian eschatology therefore cannot reconcile itself with the Kantian concepts of science and of reality (TdH 60; TH 69).

If theology is to be faithful to biblical eschatology, Moltmann claims, it needs to break out of Liberal theology's "negative alliance" (TdH 67; TH 76) with the modern scientific mode of thinking — that is, the tacit agreement that theology can speak of revelation and eschatology as referring mainly to the realm of the human spirit.

As Moltmann himself admits, by arguing for the necessity of putting an end to Liberal theology's "negative alliance" with the spirit of the modern age, he is here being "completely in accord with the demand made by Barth...that the 'lordship of Christ' must be consistently testified and presented all the way to the very heart of secular reality" (TdH 73-74; TH 83). Given this agreement, it is only natural that Moltmann concurs with Barth's critique of Bultmann regarding "his holy respect for the 'profane' laws of the world and its science."[37] Just as Barth claims that the eschatological lordship of God, revealed in the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, breaks into secular reality and brings its "profane" laws to their final crisis, Moltmann claims that the revelation of God witnessed to in biblical eschatology frees the realm of the world and history from the tyranny of the modern techno-scientific mind-set (TdH 81-83, 156-157).

This does not mean, however, that Moltmann wholly endorses Barth's concept of revelation and eschatology as entirely biblical. In spite of Barth's attack on Liberal theology's retreat into the religious experience of the human subject, and in spite of the universal nature of Barth's concept of the *eschaton* that enables this critique, Moltmann suspects the same Kantian transcendental eschatology lurking behind Barth (TdH 45-50). It is true, according to Moltmann, that Barth conceives the *eschaton* as God's judging and saving revelation of God's own self that comes universally upon the whole of reality and not only upon the private realm of the human self, as in

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[37]Barth's critique of Bultmann in "Rudolf Bultmann: Ein Versuch, ihn zu verstehen," in *Theologische Studien* 34 (1952): 47, quoted in TdH 50, note 53 (TH 59, note 3).

Bultmann's case. In this sense, Barth is being faithful to the universal nature of biblical eschatology. What Moltmann sees as problematic, however, is Barth's concept of God's "self" which is revealed as the *eschaton*. According to Moltmann, Barth puts the transcendental subjectivity of God in place of the Kantian transcendental subjectivity of the human self (what his Liberal teacher Wilhelm Hermann meant by "self") when he claims, by way of the doctrine of Trinity, that revelation is none other than God's non-groundable, unprovable and, above all, self-grounding and self-vindicating act of revealing God's own self in Christ the Word (TdH 45-46). The problem for Moltmann with this transcendental subjectivity of God is that, in his effort to demonstrate that what is revealed in Christ is really God's own self and not something of a mask, Barth speaks of God's self-revelation in Christ as the revelation of what God is "beforehand in himself," namely the immanent Trinity (TdH 48-49; TH 56). By identifying the transcendental subjectivity of God with the eternal lordship and glory of the immanent Trinity — as can be seen from his linking of the self-revelation of God with "the lordship of God" — Barth conceives the *eschaton* on the Platonic time-eternity pattern: the self-revelation of God means an eternal presence of God in time (TdH 49-50). This, according to Moltmann, is none other than Kant's transcendental eschatology — that is, the eschatology within whose framework the *eschaton* is understood as the apocalypse of the transcendent (or "original") self of God or of a human being.[38] Barth's exegetical comment on Rom. 13:12 ("Of the

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[38]Moltmann claims that the fact that Barth later himself revised his transcendental eschatology — on the ground that it is unbiblical — only adds weight to his argument that Barth's eschatology is more Platonic than biblical (TdH 49-50).

real end of history it may be said at any time: The end is near!") or his comment on I Cor. 15 ("...the limits of time of which he [the radical biblical thinker] speaks must be the limits of all and every time and thus necessarily the origin of time" [TdH 44; TH 51]) can all be easily understood, Moltmann claims, if the Kantian transcendental eschatology in the background of Barth's thinking is recognized.

Given the influence of Kant's transcendental eschatology on Barth's concept of revelation, Moltmann claims, it is small wonder that Barth's exegetical principles exhibit the same Platonic time-eternity pattern. The "substance" or the "Spirit of the Bible" which Barth claims bridges the historical distance between the biblical text and the exegete is, according to Moltmann, none other than the undemonstrable and self-proving event of the happening of the Word, namely the self-revelation of God in Christ, in which "God is known through God" (TdH 256-259). This means that Barth's exegetical key is the fact that the "history of God in Christ *for* men" has taken place and is still taking place in the great event of the Word in which God addresses humans as the *eschaton* and is proved as God (TdH 257-258). Because of this eschatological character of every exegesis, the sovereign Word of God in the "words" (the human words of the biblical text) makes the exegete obey and move on from the exegesis of the words to the missionary proclamation of the Word (TdH 258-259). Moltmann believes, however, that this divine sovereignty of the Word which proves God to be God and wins the obedience of the exegete has its origin and source in the presence of eternity in time, namely, the presence in history of the eternal lordship

and glory of the immanent Trinity. This, according to Moltmann, is the same time-eternity pattern of Barth's Kantian transcendental eschatology.

Why is Moltmann so disturbed by Barth's appropriation of the time-eternity pattern of Kant's transcendental eschatology, and the language of God's "lordship" that accompanies it? The answer to this question lies in Moltmann's life-long preoccupation with the theodicy question.[39] In one of the essays he has written on Barth, Moltmann makes a comment which is pertinent to understanding his uneasiness with Barth's theology:

> I felt the stately, meditative and doxological style of the *Church Dogmatics* to be like a beautiful dream: too beautiful to be true on this earth, from the annihilation of which in the war we had just escaped. Only the doctrine of predestination with its theology of the cross (in II.2) touched my heart (GdG 174; HTG 126).

Out of his acute awareness of the reality of human suffering, Moltmann calls Barth's system "too beautiful to be true on this earth." In other words, Moltmann is dissatisfied with Barth's transcendental eschatology for its failure to do full justice to the incompleteness and "not-yet" nature of the present.[40] Moltmann claims that the

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[39]Moltmann recounts how he came to raise the theodicy question during his visit to the concentration camp at Maidanek in Poland around the time he wrote *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Cg 9-10).

[40]Moltmann's quote from Calvin at the beginning of *Theologie der Hoffnung* shows his concern with this "not-yet" nature of the present (TdH 14; TH 18): "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

reality of unredeemed humanity in the world full of injustice and suffering makes Barth's language of the eternal lordship of God "premature":

> For that 'God proves himself through God'...must undeniably imply that 'God is all in all' and that he proves his divinity in all that is and all that is not. Of this omnipotent divinity of God, however, the only sign we have here in history is the *foreglow* of the raising of Christ from the dead...'The Word' in 'the words' can, rightly understood, only have an apocalyptic sense and mean the 'Word' which here in history is only to be witnessed to, only to be hoped for and expected, the 'Word' which God will one day speak as he has promised [italic mine] (TdH 258; TH 281).

For Moltmann, the problem with the time-eternity pattern of Barth's Kantian transcendental eschatology is that it is too a-historical. He claims that the Enlightenment critique of theological metaphysics resulted in the 'dual track in the history of modern thought' in which

> Descartes' methodizing approach to world experience is inevitably joined dialectically by Pascal's *logique du cœur*, the rational system of the Enlightenment by aesthetic subjectivity, historical scepticism by the non-historical mysticism of the solitary soul, the positivism of a science that is independent of values (Max Weber) by the appealing tones of the philosophy of existence (Karl Jaspers). For theology, this resulted in the dilemma that according as the story of Christ became for the intellect an 'accidental truth of history', so faith was transformed into an immediate contemplation of 'eternal truths of reason' — [i.e.] the 'pure, immediately God-given faith of reason' (TdH 42; TH 49).

For Kant, whose theology best embodies this subject-object division, the God-world relationship is one of the dichotomy between the eternal, changeless conditions of the human subject, who is transcendent above the flux of history, and the "godless" world and history of the positivistic sciences.

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midst of the darkness upon the path illumined by the word and Spirit of God!' (on Heb. II.I)."

Moltmann believes that, when Barth tries to overcome the Kantian dichotomy by bringing the "godless" world and history under the eschatological lordship of the transcendent subject, this time not the human subject as in Kant's case but the divine Subject, he allows this transcendental divine Subject to retain all the attributes, all the relations and distinctions of the transcendental human subject (TdH 46-47). This means that Barth's God is eternal, changeless and above the flux of history, and that the self-revelation of Barth's God is the "pure presence of eternity in time." Moltmann claims that this transcendent God meets history only "tangentially" (TNSD 162) by breaking into it "from above," i.e., from eternity. This essentially a-historical and impassible God[41] is revealed in all the fullness of eternal divine glory in the event of God's self-revelation in Christ, while the world and history, supposedly brought under the glorious eschatological lordship of God in this event of Christ, are still full of injustice and suffering. As can be seen in Barth's "onto-theological argument for the proclamation" (TdH 259; TH 281) — the claim that the divine lordship revealed in the revelation of the Word makes the exegete to move on to proclamation in faith and obedience — Barth's understanding of God's lordship makes faith to "skip over" the reality of suffering in the world:

> 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

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[41]Still, Moltmann acknowledges that Barth has tried to overcome the "apathy" axiom in theology through his theology of the cross in CD II,2 and IV, 1-4 (Cg 10, note 3).

> 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 (TdH 15; TH 19).

For Moltmann, Barth's neglect of the theodicy question results in the fact that the theological import of Barth's celebrated reclaiming of the reality of God distinct from the human subject is undermined, especially when it comes to speaking about society, history, and nature — the entire world — as the realm in which God works and which God redeems. Given the fact that any claim regarding the "objective" reality of God distinct from the human subject must explain this reality of God in relation to the present condition of the "objective" realm (the world), Barth's construing of the God-world relationship in terms of the eschatological revealing in history of God's full lordship only flies in the face of the reality of the unredeemed world. This means that Barth's eschatological-christological overcoming of the Liberal captivity to the positivistic spirit of modern science is still susceptible to the Enlightenment critique of religious ideologies, despite the fact that Barth's God is not simply a return to the pre-Enlightenment God of metaphysical theism.

It is of course debatable whether Barth's eschatology is indeed transcendental eschatology pure and simple, i.e., a pure presence of the eternal without history or future.[42] It suffices here, however, to say that, by means of his critique of Barth, Moltmann is siding with Hegel over against Kant: any account of God as Subject must

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[42]See Barth's letter to Moltmann in Barth, *Letters*, p. 349. Moltmann himself sees that in Barth's system there is an ambiguity in this regard (TdH 49-50, 77 note 110).

dialectically incorporate (and not merely "tangentially" meet) the "objective" reality of nature and history, including all the conflict and suffering in the world, so as to be able to meet the challenge of the theodicy question.[43] This of course does not mean that Moltmann is merely an Hegelian,[44] for his demand for a dialectical incorporation in eschatology of the conflict and suffering present in the world is based on his understanding of *biblical* eschatology. In fact he criticizes both Barth and Bultmann for making "the *concept* of revelation the starting point for a new way of speaking of the revelation of God, without first asking what is the reference and bearing of the words for the revelation of God in the Old and New Testaments" (TdH 38; TH 45).

It is therefore necessary, at this juncture, to take a closer look at Moltmann's own understanding of the *biblical* concept of revelation and eschatology which he claims does justice to the theodicy question. My argument here will be that Moltmann's own understanding of biblical eschatology is foundational to his political

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[43]TdH 41-43. For his "Hegelian" traits Moltmann is indebted to H. J. Iwand: Meeks, p. 30ff; Bauckham, *Messianic*, p. 6, 106. See also DgG 232-233, 240-241; AKgG 175. For the significance of Hegel in face of the theodicy question, see AKTH 229: "Das sinnvolle einer Entfaltung der theologia crucis mit Einschluß des „spekulativen Karfreitags" Hegels liegt darin, die Schuldfrage, die durch die westkirchleche Tradition juridifiziert und durch den Protestantismus individualisiert wurde, wieder so weit zu fassen, daß die Theodizeefrage mit aufgenommen werden kann. Seit die protestantische Theologie neukantianisch die Theodizeefrage abwies, hat sie kein umfassendes Verstandnis mehr für das, was Paulus „Sünde" nannte, und darum auch keinen Sinn mehr für die kosmische Weite der Gottesgerechtigkeit."

[44]See his critique of Hegel for claiming that what is real is rational in TdH 154-155; DgG 69-70.

hermeneutic, on the basis of which he tries to face the challenge of the question of suffering.

Accordingly, the succeeding chapter will develop Moltmann's political hermeneutic of scripture in four points: 1) his retrieval of the *eschatologia crucis* tradition; 2) his interpretation of the *eschatologia crucis* as pointing to the future of the victims of history; 3) the logic by which he relates the past scriptural tradition to the "political" life of humankind today; 4) his critique of modernity by means of a "practical" response to the theodicy question.

Chapter Three

Moltmann's Political Hermeneutic of Scripture

1. Scripture Revisited: Moltmann's Retrieval of the *Eschatologia Crucis*

In *Theologie der Hoffnung*, Moltmann makes a conceptual distinction that is pertinent to discerning his own understanding of biblical eschatology:

> The real language of Christian eschatology...is not the Greek *logos*, but the *promise* which has stamped the language, the hope and the experience of Israel. It was not in the *logos* of the epiphany of the eternal present, but in the hope-giving word of promise that Israel found God's truth... Eschatology as a science is therefore not possible in the Greek sense, nor yet in the sense of modern experimental science, but only as a knowledge in terms of hope, and to that extent as a knowledge of history and of the historic character of truth (TdH 34; TH 40-41).

As has been analyzed by M. D. Meeks and others, this distinction between the Greek *logos* and the biblical *promise* reveals the influence on Moltmann of the two movements in the field of biblical scholarship in the 1960s that called for re-historicizing of eschatology: what Moltmann calls "The new, no longer historicoreligious but theological approach to the Old Testament,"[1] led by Gerhard von Rad and later also by W. Zimmerli, R. Rendtorff and others, and the "apocalyptic renaissance" in New Testament theology led by Ernst Käsemann.[2]

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[1]TGT 202. See also TdH 36

[2]Meeks, pp. 67-73. See also Bauckham, *Messianic*, pp. 6-7: "...the pressure from biblical scholarship to overcome the dehistoricizing of eschatology which had characterised most twentieth-century German theology was mounting, and it was in the conjunction of these biblical theological influences with his systematic theological

Following the "more recent theology of the Old Testament" (TdH 36; TH 42), Moltmann first focuses upon the special peculiarity of the Israelite faith which sets it apart from the religions of the world around Israel, which von Rad and others regard as "epiphany religions." Moltmann follows von Rad and others in claiming that, in contrast to the epiphany religions which were preoccupied with the appearances of gods that hallow places and times, the Israelite religion, which had a nomadic origin, was primarily concerned to understand the appearances of Yahweh in terms of the uttering of a word of divine promise (TdH 85-91). This Moltmann claims is why "the words and statements about the 'revealing of God' in the Old Testament are combined throughout with statements about the 'promise of God'" (TdH 36; TH 42). The declaration "I am Yahweh" that contains the standard view of revelation in the Old Testament (TdH 101-102) does not point merely to the self-disclosing of the mystery of a person, because it is always bound with God's promises, functioning as the guarantee of their fulfillment. According to Moltmann, this peculiarly Israelite understanding of revelation as promise is the result of the fact that, when Israel entered the settled life of Canaan, they took over elements of the epiphany religions and subjected them to an important "historicizing," as Von Rad calls it:

> Where the bands of Israel enter the land, they receive the land and the new experiences of settled life as 'fulfilment of the promise', as realization of the pledge given in the wilderness by the God of promise who had caused their fathers to journey into it...Thus the assurance of their own existence is attained through historic remembrance of the previous promise of God...and the gift of land and people is seen as the visibly

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concerns and, eventually, with Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope, that Moltmann found the way to do theological justice to biblical eschatology" (p. 7).

> maintained faithfulness of Yahweh. This is an essentially different assurance of existence from what Israel found in the land and fertility cults of Palestine. Land and life are not brought into congruence with the gods by means of an epiphany religion, but are understood as a piece of history in the vast course of the history of promise (TdH 90; TH 101).

But Moltmann is not claiming here that this history of promise can be interpreted in terms of the simple formula of "promise and fulfillment." Since history has shown that many of God's promises brought disappointments, as can be seen from the annihilation of Israel as a nation, Moltmann opposes interpreting divine promises as "mummified formulae" chained to what they once meant (TdH 100; TH 111). According to Moltmann, "between promise and fulfilment there is a whole variety of intermediate links and processes such as exposition, development, validation, assertion, renewal, etc." (TdH 101; TH 112). When the Israelite faith faced new experiences of history, it mastered them by reinterpreting the promises given to it, i.e., by enlarging the horizon of those promises, as carried out by the prophets. Faced with the catastrophe of Israel's annihilation as a nation, prophets interpreted this event not as "non-fulfillment" of the promise of the land and people but as God's judgment that would bring in a renewal of Israel's covenant with God, now universalized to include all the gentiles (TdH 112-120). This process of reinterpretation and universalization, which reached its furthest limit when the cosmos itself was taken up in the eschatological history of late Jewish apocalyptic (TdH 123-124), reveals the constant process of transformation "in which the traditional accounts of the promises took their place in the mastering of the new experiences of history, while the new experiences of history were understood as transformations and expositions of the promises (TdH

100). It is this process which reveals the true meaning of "God's revelation as promise":

> ...the God who is recognized in his promises remains superior to any fulfilment that can be experienced, because in every fulfilment the promise, and what is still contained in it, does not yet become wholly congruent with reality and thus there always remains an overspill (TdH 94; TH 105).

Because of the inexhaustibility of the God of promise, who never exhausts Godself in any historic reality, the promises are not liquidated by either "disappointments" or "fulfillments"; for the experience of "disappointment" arises from the fact that human hopes and longings, when one looks forward to the inexhaustible God of promise, "stretch further than any fulfilment that can be conceived or experienced," while the "fulfillments" are taken as "expositions, confirmations and expansions of the promise" (TdH 94; TH 105). Therefore, historical events, whether felt as "disappointments" or "fulfilments," come to bear the mark of something not yet finished, when viewed within the horizon of the remembered and expected promises. They must be "passed on" for the sake of that which in them is determinative also for future generations and which needs to be freely interpreted and actualized anew (TdH 96-97). The "overplus of promise," which constantly "overspills" history, causes those who hear God's promises to engage in this process of reinterpreting and hoping anew, until the promises come "to rest" in a reality that wholly corresponds to God (TdH 95; TH 106); and this reality that wholly corresponds to God is Yahweh's death-negating lordship over all peoples, as proclaimed in apocalyptic eschatology (TdH 119).

It is in the context of this history of promise that Moltmann, following von Rad and Käsemann, puts the New Testament witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[3] Moltmann believes that there is both continuity and discontinuity in the transition from the Old to the New Testament, because the old promise to Abraham is *eschatologically validated* in the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to Moltmann, Paul, who stands in the tradition of the rabbinic Torah theology and of late Jewish apocalyptic, links the traditional Abrahamitic promises with the promise of life — "life" understood no longer in the context of possessing the land but as the resurrection of the dead (TdH 131). What is new with Paul is that he grounds the certainty of the fulfillment of the promise, not in the fulfilling of the law or in Yahweh's faithfulness to the election and covenant, but rather in the power of God who calls into being things that are not; that is, the power that has been proven by God's raising of Christ from the dead (TdH 131-132). Through Paul the promise is thus liberated from the confining grip of the law and the election of Israel, and is made unconditional and universal, acquiring its eschatological certainty in the resurrection of Christ (TdH 132-133). While the Old Testament history of promise finds in the gospel of Christ its future within a new, universal horizon, the gospel of Christ in return acquires an eschatological direction from the history of promise (TdH 132-134).

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[3]For the influence of von Rad in this, see Meeks, p. 71. For Käsemann, see TE 6-7.

Since every Old Testament promise has an "overspill" which cannot be exhausted by any event of fulfillment, the fact that the event of the death and resurrection of Christ is thus put in the context of the eschatological history of promise implies that this event still has its future. This means that the gospel is promise, and as promise "an earnest of the promised future" (TdH 133; TH 148). According to Moltmann, Paul's struggle against the "ecstatic eschatology of fulfilment" (TdH 142; TH 157), which he finds among the Hellenized Christians in Corinth, is due to his understanding that the resurrection of Christ points, not to the fulfilled lordship of Christ, but to the promised and still outstanding lordship of Christ (TdH 140-150). By taking up this position, Paul is of course standing in the tradition of late Jewish apocalyptic theology; but Moltmann claims that there is more, because seeing the resurrection of Christ with an "eschatological proviso" (Käsemann)[4] results in the fact that the significance of the cross is brought to the fore:

> His [Paul's] criticism has two focal points. For one thing, there is an 'eschatological proviso' which he maintains against this fulfilment ecstasy. It consists of the so-called 'relics of apocalyptic theology' which assert themselves in his view of the resurrection of Christ, of the sacrament, of the presence of the Spirit, of the earthly obedience of the believer, and of course in his future expectations. And secondly, there is his *theology of the cross, in which he opposes the ecstasy that abandons the earth on which that cross stands* [Italic mine]. There is a profound material connection between these two starting points of his criticism. We shall therefore call the basis of his criticism the *eschatologia crucis*, meaning by this both objections in one (TdH 145; TH 160).

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[4]Quoted in TdH 146 (TH 160).

Paul's *eschatologia crucis*, in Moltmann's view, is not a mere repetition of late Jewish apocalyptic but the eschatological promise of the Old Testament reinterpreted and pointed towards the future on the basis of his theology of the cross. According to this *eschatologia crucis*, the full lordship of God has not yet been established, for the suffering of the present age represented by the cross has not yet been fully overcome. This means that the resurrection of Christ stands as the hope-giving promise of the eschatological lordship of God, and that this lordship of God will be established only through the suffering of the cross — the suffering that is inevitable when one, in hope, does not abandon the earth on which the cross stands.[5] This, Moltmann contends, is why Paul stresses the eschatological character of Christian life over against the ecstatic eschatology of the Corinthian Church:

> Paul asserts an eschatological distinction: ...Fellowship with Christ is fellowship in suffering with the crucified Christ. The baptized are dead with Christ, if they are baptized into his death. But they are not already risen with him and translated into heaven in the perfect tense of the cultus. They attain participation in the resurrection of Christ by new obedience, which unfolds itself in the realm of the hope of resurrection. In the power of the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, they can obediently take upon them the sufferings of discipleship and in these very sufferings await the future glory (TdH 146; TH 161).

Moltmann claims, furthermore, that Paul understands the dialectical relationship between the cross and resurrection as characterizing not only the life of the baptized but also the life of the whole creation; for "Inasmuch as call and promise point the believer on the way of obedience in the body and on earth, earth and the

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[5]Because of this Moltmann criticizes Pannenberg for merely adopting Old Testament apocalypticism without the cross (TdH 72-73).

body are set within the horizon of the expectation of the coming lordship of Christ" (TdH 146; TH 161). Because the *eschatologia crucis* does not abandon the earth on which the cross stands, the nature of the redemption for which it hopes becomes corporeal; and this corporeality is what gives biblical eschatology its universal and cosmic character:

> The corporeality which thus comes to the fore in hope is plainly the starting point for the solidarity of the believer with the whole of creation which, like him, is subjected to vanity — in hope...Hence it is on this hope of the redemption of the body that the universality which belongs to the Christian hope depends (Tdh 195; TH 214).

It is important to note that Moltmann takes the Pauline *eschatologia crucis* — cosmic in its scope and christological in its focus — as the definitive form of biblical eschatology, at least for Christians.[6] Because for Moltmann the *eschatologia crucis* is truly biblical and Christian eschatology, he cannot help lamenting the unfortunate fact that this truly Christian eschatology was eventually eclipsed by the *eschatologia gloriae* of Christendom — namely the eschatology which, with the help of the absolutizing and eternalizing categories of Greek metaphysics, portrays the resurrection of Christ as the presence of the eternal glory of God on earth, and interprets it as the fulfillment of eschatological expectations in the politico-religious establishment of Christendom.[7] With this historical background in mind, Moltmann calls for the

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[6]"Between the expectations of late Jewish apocalyptic and of Christian resurrection eschatology stands the cross of Jesus. Hence all Christian eschatology bears the mark of an *eschatologia crucis*" (TdH 73; TH 83).

[7]TdH 11, 142-144; DWJC 20-21, 48-49. Moltmann criticizes Barth for making the event of the resurrection of Christ the eschatological fulfillment itself (the self-

rehabilitation of the *eschatologia crucis* today with a view to recovering — over against the Greek *logos* of the modern techno-scientific spirit — the true mode of God's presence on earth as the "dialectic of cross and resurrection" (TdH 182; TH 200).

2. The Future of God as the Future of the Crucified People.

As the analysis of the preceding section shows, Moltmann's retrieval of the *eschatologia crucis* tradition has brought to light the "not-yet" character of God's self-revelation as promise. For Moltmann, this means that the revelation of the full meaning of God's "self" is not found in the promises themselves but only where God is faithful to the promises:

> ...if the revelations of God are promises, then God 'himself' is revealed where he 'keeps covenant and faithfulness for ever' (Ps. 146.6). Where God, in his faithfulness to a promise he has given, stands to that which he has promised to be, he becomes manifest and knowable as the selfsame Self. 'God himself' cannot then be understood as reflection on his transcendent "I-ness" but must be understood as his selfsame-ness in historic faithfulness to his promises (TdH 104-105; TH 116).

If God's self is revealed where God keeps the divine promises, then the promises themselves do not fully reveal God's self. The divine promises, together with the divine Name that is their guarantee, only point to the future when God will be fully revealed as the God of power and glory who has been able to keep all the promises:

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revelation of God as the revelation of the lordship of God). For Moltmann, Barth's dependence on the Platonic time-eternity pattern of eschatology moves him close to the *eschatolgia gloriae* of Christendom (TdH 49-50, 207-208).

> Revelation of Yahweh surely stands not only at the beginning of the history of promise, with the result that the promises and commandments are given in his 'name', but there is revelation also in that future to which the promises point and towards which the commandments set us on the way. There, however, it is not only the personal name of Yahweh that will be revealed, but his divinity and glory will be revealed in all lands, so that the ancient promise 'I am Yahweh' will be fulfilled in the 'kabod Yahweh', the glory of God that fulfils all things (TdH 103; TH 114).

The fact that God's self is thus only eschatologically indicated and not itself fully revealed implies that God's self is revealed in the process in which "the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present" (TdH 17; TH 21) until the present reality, through God's faithfulness, is transformed into the Kingdom that corresponds to the full revelation of God's self. The *eschaton* is here understood not in Barth's sense of the term as the judgment of God's lordship upon human realities, but as the "power of the future" that transforms the present. The fact that the full revelation of God's self is thus identified with the *eschaton* means that God is an eschatological God, i.e., a God with "future as his essential nature" (Bloch).[8]

It is important at this point to ask what Moltmann means by "the future of God," namely the future represented by the language of the divine kingdom and lordship. Is this future the future of a progressive society, i.e., the future of our plans and actions which we believe will usher in an utopia on earth? For Moltmann, this future is none other than the future of Jesus Christ:

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[8]Quoted in TdH 12 (TH 16).

> "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...Hence the question whether all statements about the future are grounded in the person and history of Jesus Christ provides it with the touchstone by which to distinguish the spirit of eschatology from that of utopia" (TdH 13; TH 17).

What needs especially to be taken into consideration, however, is the fact that, following the *eschatologia crucis*, Moltmann identifies the future of Christ with the future of the *crucified* Christ. Moltmann claims that the future of the risen Christ was proclaimed by the witnesses of Easter when they proclaimed his resurrection with the messianic titles that indicated their anticipation of the his future lordship; and this they did in the context of the apocalyptic expectation of the universal resurrection of the dead (TdH 75, 173-179). This means that the resurrection of Christ is the promise of his future, and that his future is none other than God's future, i.e., the *eschaton* in which God's death-negating lordship will be all in all. The Easter community recognized at the same time, however, that the risen Christ, whose future it proclaimed in its witness to his resurrection, was identical to the one who had been crucified (TdH 75). For Moltmann, this means that "the identity of Jesus can be understood only as an identity *in*, but not above or beyond, cross and resurrection" (TdH 182; TH 200), and that this identity is an "identity in infinite contradiction" (TdH 182; TH 200). This identity is achieved when the contradiction between death and life is bridged by the *creatio ex nihilo* resurrection of the crucified one; and this is the work of the faithful God who keeps promises:

> In the act of raising by God, Jesus is identified as the crucified one who is raised. In that case the point of identification lies not in the person of Jesus, but *extra se* in the God who creates life and new being out of nothing. He is then wholly dead and wholly raised. For this kind of thinking, the self-revelation of Jesus in his appearances includes the revelation of the divinity and faithfulness of God (TdH 182; TH 200).

If the resurrected one is thus identical with the crucified one in the act of resurrection as *creatio ex nihilo*, this means that the future of the resurrected one is also identified with the future of the crucified one by the same act of resurrection. Moltmann believes that it is this very act of identification which creates the "dialectic of cross and resurrection" that moves history towards the *eschaton*; for the fact that the crucified (dead!) one is given his future *ex nihilo* creates such a contradiction in the face of perceived reality that the present reality is confronted by an eschatological *novum*:

> If, however, the event of the rasing of the one who was crucified is recognized to be *creatio ex nihilo*, then it is not a case here of possible changes in existing things, but of all or nothing. Then it becomes clear that this world 'cannot bear' the resurrection and the new world created by resurrection. The dialectic which would seek to bear this contradiction must be of an apocalyptic kind. The reconciling synthesis of cross and resurrection can be expected and hoped for solely in a totality of new being (TdH 206; TH 226).

For Moltmann, this means that the dialectic of cross and resurrection is "an open dialectic, which will find its resolving synthesis only in the *eschaton* of all things" (TdH 183; TH 201). The eschatological *novum* introduced by the future of the resurrected Christ is what gives hope for the future of the crucified Christ; and since this hope makes the present reality of the rule of death inadequate and surpassable in the light of the future of the crucified Christ, it stands as "a sort of

primum movens at the head of the process of history" (TdH 78; TH 88). The subject of the transforming power of this hope is the Spirit, the "earnest and pledge of his [Christ's] future" (TdH 192; TH 211). The Spirit resolves the dialectic by driving and transforming history towards its goal, until the universal lordship of Christ is established on the earth so that God may be "all in all."[9]

By thus identifying the future of God (*eschaton)* with the future of the crucified Christ, Moltmann is here giving expression to the epistemological principle of the theology of the cross: viz., that the divinity of God is revealed in what is alien to God, namely the suffering and death of the cross.[10] This implies that, since God is revealed in suffering and death, God is identified with the afflicted, the downtrodden, and the dead.[11] If God is thus identified with the crucified people whom the crucified one represents, this in turn means that the future of God is identified with the future of the crucified people:

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[9]TdH 192-196. For Moltmann's fuller account of the work of the Spirit resolving the dialectic of cross and resurrection, see KKG 43-52.

[10]DgG 30-33. See also TdH 180 (TH 198): "The experience of the cross of Jesus means...the experience of the god-forsakenness of God's ambassador — that is, an absolute *nihil* embracing also God. The experience of the appearance of the crucified one as the living Lord therefore means...the experience of the nearness of God in the god-forsaken one, of the divineness of God in the crucified and dead Christ — that is, a new totality which annihilates the total *nihil.* The two experiences stand in a radical contradiction to each other, like death and life, nothing and everything, godlessness and the divinity of God."

[11]For Moltmann the cross of Christ is the most significant "expression" of real human affliction, and the resurrection of Christ the most significant "protest" against human affliction (RRF 96).

> But the more it [faith] interprets this eschatological transcendence in Christian terms - that is, with its eyes on the crucified Jesus - the more it will become conscious that the qualitatively new future of God has allied itself with those who are dispossessed, denied and downtrodden at the present day; so that this future does not begin up at the spearheads of a 'progressive society', but down below, among society's victims (ZS 23).[12]

Since the revelation of God witnessed to in scripture is the promise of God's future, what is disclosed in the biblical witnesses to divine revelation is the promise of the future of the crucified people. The hope for the future of the crucified Christ that stands as the *primum movens* of the process of history is none other than the hope for the future of the crucified people, namely the hope that stands in contradiction to the reality of their suffering. The dialectic of cross and resurrection is precisely this tension between the suffering of the crucified people and hope for their future in God. By identifying the future of God with the future of the crucified people in his interpretation of the *eschatologia crucis* tradition, Moltmann lays the foundation of his "political" hermeneutic of scripture.[13]

3. Political Hermeneutic of Scripture: Listening to the Victims

The key to the hermeneutics of scripture, according to Moltmann, is what he calls "the future of scripture" (TdH 260; TH 283). By this he means the future fulfillment of the divine promises to which the scriptural witnesses point. Since the

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[12]From "Die Zukunft als neues Paradigma der Transzendenz," first published in *Internationale Dialog Zeitschrift* 2 (1969):2-13.

[13]The most lucid and succinct presentation of Moltmann's political hermeneutic is found in his essay "Towards a Political Hermeneutic of the Gospel," in RRF 83-107.

future of the divine promises to which the past scriptural witnesses point, however, is what gives the present also its universal and eschatological future, the future of the past and of the present merge into one in Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic. It is this common future which the past and the present share, Moltmann claims, that makes historical understanding possible:

> The "future" which belongs to historical phenomena and brings out their meaning, is also the future for which the present, if it wishes to be a historical present, must assume responsibility. For this reason, the "future" mediates between past and present, making the dialogue of historical understanding necessary (RRF 91).

In Moltmann's view, it is this mediation of the future that brings down the wall between "the historical fact in itself" and "the historical event for me" (RRF 90). This means that the scriptural witnesses — their proclamation, their understanding of existence and the world, etc. — can be understood only when we "look in the same direction as they do," namely when we set our eyes upon the common future of the past and the present (RRF 90). Moltmann believes, however, that setting one's eyes upon this common future means being engaged in the common "mission" in which the past and the present both participate:

> ...this 'future of scripture' does not yet lie in the several readers' own present, but in that which gives the momentary present its orientation towards a universal, eschatological future. Hence present perception of the 'future of scripture' takes place in that mission which plays its part in history and in the possibilities of changing history. The biblical witness is witness to a historic forward-moving mission in the past, and hence in the light of the present mission it can be understood for what it really is (TdH 261; TH 283).

Accordingly, the real point of reference for the hermeneutics of scripture lies "in the mission of present Christianity, and in the universal future of God for the world and for all men, towards which this mission takes place" (TdH 260; TH 283).

Moltmann claims, however, that both the common future of the past and present and the common mission that drives history towards this common future need to be understood on the basis of the *eschatologia crucis*, in order to distinguish them from the utopian spirit and mission of a progressive society. As has been argued in the preceding section, Moltmann believes that the future of God, to which the scriptural witnesses point, is the future of Christ, and that the future of Christ is the future of the crucified people. This implies that the common future of past and present in God, to which scripture testifies, is none other than the common future of the crucified people of both past and present ages. Hence, Moltmann contends that the scriptural witnesses to this future need to be understood as *protests against real human affliction, both past and present* (RRF 96). For him, the missionary proclamation of the resurrection of the crucified Christ was "the ferment of new freedom," as can be seen from Paul's preaching of the gospel of free justification against the religions and idols that repressed and chained humanity of his time (RRF 96). But this past proclamation of freedom is to be understood as a protest not only against the afflictions of its own time but also against the sufferings of the present age, because past and present both look forward to the same freedom of the coming Kingdom.

What this common future and mission of the crucified people of the past and present ages reveal is the dialectic of the constant and the variable that is central to

Moltmann's biblical hermeneutic. Moltmann claims that what is constant in every biblical exegesis is the future of the crucified Christ. What is variable, in contrast, is the alignment of the church's proclamation and life towards this future (RRF 102).

> No one can conserve our forefathers' conceptions and representations of hope. They arose out of their time and were directed against their misery. For this reason, we must go beyond them, but always in the same direction and with the same intention. The conceptions, images, and words are variable because they are determined by their time. Invariable, however, is their orientation toward the future of Christ and the coming freedom which he reveals for the afflictions of the present situation (RRF 103).

In other words, the church's proclamation and life are variable, because in every new age new forms of affliction, sin, and alienation arise, producing new forms of protest against them and new forms of representation of hope. But since throughout all periods of history there exists "a solidarity of afflicted men in their common lack of freedom and glory,"[14] the past and the present are in "the partnership of deprivation" (RRF 103) in spite of the changes in social orders and world-views. It is in this solidarity that the invariable, i.e., the future of the crucified Christ, becomes the common future for all periods of history and the "ferment of new freedom" for every age groaning under un-freedom. For Moltmann, this means that the main reference

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[14]RRF 103. See also TdH 268 (TH 291): "In the messianic light of hopeful reason the historian must make manifest something of the 'cracks and flaws' in which past ages earnestly expect their justification and redemption. Then there is solidarity between the present and the ages of the past, and a certain contemporaneousness both in the historical alienation and in the eschatological hope. This solidarity is the true core of similarity, on the ground of which an analogical understanding becomes possible over the ages. Only this solidarity in the earnest expectation which groans under the tyranny of the negative and hopes for liberating truth, takes historic account of history and performs among the dead shades of history the service of reconciliation."

for biblical exegesis is not the church as an institution but the crucified people — "the 'wandering people of God,' who go from affliction to affliction and from freedom to freedom through the course of history" (RRF 103).

Moltmann claims, therefore, that the first step in the exposition of scripture is to investigate critically how a particular scriptural proclamation of the future of God protested against and liberated from the afflictions of its own age (RRF 99). Since the protest of the past witnesses points to the common future in God which the present shares with the past, the second step in the exposition is to find out what the present afflictions of humanity are *against which this past tradition protests* (RRF 96). Following these two steps means that we are thereby driven into the present mission of protesting against and seeking liberation from the present afflictions of humanity, for the one who here mediates the biblical horizon of freedom to the oppressions of the present is the divine Spirit (TdH 266-267). When we encounter in scripture the hope of the past tradition which protests against past and present sufferings of the crucified people, we are driven by the Spirit into obedience, that is, into our present mission of anticipating and working for the future to which this hope points, namely the eschatological Kingdom of justice, peace, and life hoped for by the crucified people (TdH 185-204). To put it otherwise, following the two exegetical steps means none other than being "taken up" in obedience to the Spirit into the dialectic of cross and resurrection that moves history towards the *eschaton* (TdH 75-78, 192-196).

Moltmann calls the hermeneutic which follows the above exegetical steps "historic and eschatological exposition" of scripture (TdH 261), for it involves

investigating history in order to find the eschatological future of the past — that is, the future which makes the past exercise historic influence on the present. Moreover, this "historic and eschatological exposition" is at the same time a "political" hermeneutic of scripture, first because the eschatological future that it finds in scripture is the future of the crucified people of past and present, and secondly, because this future of the crucified people functions as divine protest against their *real suffering on earth* and becomes, in the power of the Spirit, the ferment of new freedom for transforming the "political" life of humankind. Here, "politics" is understood in the Aristotelian sense of the word as the "inclusive horizon of the life of mankind" (RRF 98),[15] because, according to the *eschatologia crucis* tradition, the eschatological hope for the future of the crucified people is found within the universal horizon of the redemption of the entire world.

4. "Practical" Answering of the Theodicy Question as a Critique of Modernity

By way of his political hermeneutic of scripture, Moltmann seeks to remedy what he regards as the fundamental flaw in Barth's onto-theological response to the

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[15]Moltmann seems to use the term *political* in a narrower sense after his "theology in movement, dialogue and conflict" period, as can be seen from his separation of "psychological liberation" from "political liberation" in *DgG* 268-315. This probably is the reason why he does not make "political theology" the overall title of his theology. However, this does not mean that his political hermeneutic has lost its original implications in his later theological works, for Moltmann's "messianic" hermeneutic retains all the essential qualities of his political hermeneutic. For the various uses of the term *political* among "political theologians," see John B. Cobb, Jr., *Political Theology*, pp. 10-15.

Enlightenment critique of metaphysical theism, namely Barth's neglect of the theodicy question. As analyzed in the preceding section, Moltmann's political hermeneutic enlarges the scope of eschatology to include the entire world — that is, the political realm understood as the "inclusive horizon of the life of mankind" — not on the basis of the epiphany of the present universal lordship of God (as in Barth's case) but on the basis of the universal-eschatological hope of the crucified people contained in the biblical witnesses to God's promise. This means that Moltmann's universalizing and "politicizing" of eschatology is inseparably connected to the question raised by the crucified people: Why is there so much suffering, injustice and oppression on earth, if God is God — "*Si Deus, unde malum*?" (RRF 100; TE 2-4). Since the universal-eschatological hope of the crucified people contained in this question sets us — through the power of the Spirit — on the present mission of anticipating and working for the future to which this hope points, the universalizing and "politicizing" of eschatology in Moltmann's political hermeneutic inevitably leads to the "practical answering of the theodicy question":[16] God's divinity is being continually advocated by our present mission on earth towards the full revelation of God's divinity (the Kingdom).

It is in view of this "practical answering" of the theodicy question that Moltmann criticizes "the banal pathos" (TE 3) of the Enlightenment critique of the old

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[16]TE 47-48: "The question: if God is, why is there still evil in the world? becomes an accusation not against God but against ourselves, and is answered, to begin with, through the *verum facere* of the Christians in their various vocations to the world of misery" (p. 47). See also TdH 106; AKTH 230-238; Bauckham, "Theodicy," p. 94.

cosmological, "mythical" world-views. He claims that the Enlightenment critique of these world-views overlooked the universal-eschatological hope contained in biblical eschatology, namely the hope of the crucified people which inevitably invokes the theodicy question (TdH 268-279).

Moltmann admits that the Enlightenment critique, represented by scientific positivism and historical criticism, has once served a commendable end: by investigating the origins and the scientific veracity of the cosmological world-views through which the religious and political powers consolidated their rule, and by exposing these world-views for what they really were, the Enlightenment critique freed the present from the tyranny of the past.[17] But by overlooking the universal-eschatological hope contained in the past scriptural tradition, the Enlightenment critique at the same time turned blind eyes to the theodicy question contained in that hope; for that hope, in the garb of cosmological eschatology, protested against humanity's suffering in its own time. Since this cosmological question of theodicy can and must be transposed into a new key, i. e., reformulated in terms of political and social questions of the present,[18] the Enlightenment oversight of the theodicy question means that it has contributed immensely to the stifling of the universal-eschatological hope of the crucified

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[17]TH 210-214; RRF 83-84; HP 56-57. See also GS 140-141.

[18]TE 46-47: "If the real predicament underlying the theistic world view was the theodicy question (Si Deus, unde malum?), the Christian initiative for the overcoming of this predicament today, using the possibilities of the modern world, must enter the battle for God's righteousness on earth politically in the battle against human misery. Therefore, cosmological theology must now be replaced by *political theology*."

people of the past, which otherwise could have functioned as the ferment of new freedom for the present (RRF 99).

By stifling this hope, the modern sciences and historical criticism, although they functioned at first as revolutionary critiques of the present, have eventually brought about a neutralization of the present by the past and the subsequent stagnation of the present into the *status quo* of modern societies (TH 210-212; HP 40-41). In the name of objectivity and scientific neutrality, the modern sciences have taken up the role of defender of the vested interests of modern technological civilizations, as can be seen, for example, in their effort to banish "mythical" religious perspectives from the realm of nature so that it may be "de-sacralized," "objectified" and exploited at will for human benefit (GS 36-43). By catering to the positivistic spirit of the modern sciences, "carbon-14 historicism" (TNSD 164) has turned the power of the historic past into the neutral "facticity" of the historical data, and deprived the past of its power to challenge and transform the *status quo* of modern bourgeois liberal societies.

Thus, by stifling the protest of the past scriptural tradition against the suffering of the crucified people under the modern *status quo*, the positivistic sciences have become part of the very evil against which Moltmann's "practical" response to the theodicy question is directed. By taking up again the universal-eschatological future of the crucified people of the past and present (i.e., the hope represented by the *creatio ex nihilo* resurrection of the crucified Christ), Moltmann's hermeneutic introduces an eschatological *novum* into the *status quo* of modern technological civiliza-

tions legitimized by the positivistic sciences, and, in so doing, exposes the sciences' own "irrational" and historic character (TNSD 156-163). The *creatio ex nihilo* resurrection of the crucified Christ, when taken up into our present mission as the source of our hope, continually introduces an eschatological *novum* into history. This eschatological *novum* brings about the destruction of the *status quo* of modern technological civilizations; for in this movement of history, driven by the dialectic of cross and resurrection, the "neutral" criteria of truth advocated by modern science and technology are themselves exposed as standing, not above but in the midst of history. They are unmasked as constituting a "negative" and antithetical moment in the history of the mission towards the Kingdom.[19] In other words, they are exposed as exercising in the midst of history an ideological function of advocating the vested interests of modern societies at the expense of their victims. This disclosure is made possible, because the eschatological *novum* that carries out this unveiling is none other than the protest of the past scriptural tradition against the suffering of the crucified people under the modern powers-that-be, and our mission in obedience to the hope for their future.

It is significant to note here that Moltmann questions the validity of the positivistic criteria of truth in terms of what function they exercise. Whereas Barth regards the positivistic sciences as humanly, "profanely" true, and therefore always capable of becoming un-true whenever they encounter the greater truths of God who cannot be fettered by human criteria of truth, Moltmann questions their truth in terms

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[19]TdH 158-164, 218-224, 248-250, 259-279; TNSD 163-164

of how they function in the history of the mission towards the *eschaton* — that is, in terms of whether they stand for or against the "practical" response to the theodicy question.[20] This means that his understanding of truth is a "practical" one (RRF 138), and that his political hermeneutic stands in the line of Karl Marx's political analysis of religion or Bonhoeffer's "irreligious critique of religion" (RRF 93-94).[21] Moltmann's political hermeneutic does not ask whether a particular scriptural tradition is "true"; it asks what that tradition *does* for the mission towards the eschatological kingdom of justice, peace and life, because, on account of the "power" of its future to shape the present, every scriptural tradition itself stands in the midst of history and exercises either ideological or liberating influence upon historical events.[22] Taking up a particular scriptural tradition as normative for Christian proclamation and mission might be "arbitrary" or even "partisan" in the eyes of the positivistic histor-

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[20]In this sense Moltmann emphasizes the need of modern science to recover its original revolutionary impetus to free the present from every dogmatic claim to politico-religious absolutism, so that modern science may again become "true" (RRF 83-84).

[21]For a similar analysis of Moltmann's "Marxist" hermeneutic, see J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 28-33; Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's Theology of Hope Revisited," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989): 211.

[22]Moltmann demands that historical criticism recover its original critical and revolutionary spirit, and work to recover the liberating traditions of the past that have been stifled by the ideological traditions of the past. According to Moltmann, the present must be confronted critically with the past, namely the past identified with the help of historical reconstruction as "things as they really were." The next step, which historical criticism has neglected, is to recover the alternative possibilities and hope for the present which were already in germ in the past but which were ideologically suppressed or neglected, so that they may be taken up again and integrated into the future of the present (GS 140-143).

ian,[23] but what is important for Moltmann is whether or not that particular tradition gives witness to, and draws us into, the on-going missionary history driven by the dialectic of cross and resurrection:

> With this in mind, it will also be clear *why* exactly this Christian tradition and proclamation necessitates understanding and cannot, as with other traditions of the past, be appropriated arbitrarily or simply forgotten. If the biblical texts present a horizon of concern which encroaches upon the whole affliction of the present and indicates for it the new possibilities of a future open to God, then out of an indeterminate historical observation will come a passionate understanding captivated by the future (RRF 97).

Accordingly, a particular scriptural tradition needs to be heard first, if it protests against the suffering of the crucified people of past and present by pointing to their hope-giving future in God, and by calling us into the worldly, "political" mission of fighting against injustice and un-peace that create their suffering. This means that, for Moltmann's political hermeneutic, the on-going missionary history that "practically" answers the theodicy question is the main hermeneutical reference; and this in turn implies that it is the victims who must have the hermeneutical priority, because only by listening to their voices can we discern the real character of the afflictions of the present age, against which our "practical" response to the

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[23]For the critiques of Moltmann who are concerned with his "one-sided" use of scripture, see Christopher Hinz, "Feuer und Wolke im Exodus: Kritisch-assistierende Bemerkungen zu Jürgen Moltmann's Theologie der Hoffnung," in *Diskussion über die "Theologie der Hoffnung" von Jürgen Moltmann*, hrsg. Wolf-Dieter Marsch (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), pp. 135-136; A. H. J Gunneweg, *Understanding the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1978), pp. 199-200; Van A. Harvey, "Secularism, Responsible Belief, and the "Theology of Hope," in *The Future of Hope*, ed. Frederick Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 148. For Moltmann's answer to these critiques, see AKTH 205-207.

theodicy question must be directed.[24] Furthermore, for Moltmann this is tantamount to saying that a particular scriptural tradition is "true" if it points to the cross and resurrection of Christ; for it is the dialectic of cross and resurrection (the *eschatologia crucis*) which represents the suffering, voice and hope of the victims and which draws us into the mission in accordance with their hope:

> How is the truth in the world of lies revealed? Like the light in the darkness, so comes the truth of God into the world of lies and becomes the victim of violence and injustice. In the crucified Christ, God's truth meets us as a contradiction to the contradictions of this world. In Christ, the suffering truth of God looks at us...The crucified Christ stands between the victims of world history. He does not stand on the side of the perpetrators, the murderers and the victors. From this follows that the most important help to the recognition of truth...is the perspective of those who have become our victims (R 67).

[24]R 60-62. See also EH 6-8

Chapter Four

The Liberation of the Creation: Moltmann's Politico-Ecological Theology

1. Political Hermeneutic of the Creation Narratives: Nature as Victim

In the first chapter of this thesis, the question was raised whether a holistic theology of liberation that encompasses nature is possible on the basis of scripture. Is it possible, in other words, to interpret the creation tradition from within the perspective of the liberating tradition of the Exodus, so that the resulting ecological theology may withstand the Enlightenment critique of politico-religious ideologies? Moltmann's political hermeneutic offers a fruitful way of reading scripture which answers the above question in the affirmative, for *it listens first and foremost to the voice of the victims*. Since nature is one of the most conspicuous victims of modern techno-scientific civilizations, following Moltmann's hermeneutic means taking up the universal-eschatological hope of the whole creation as expressed in scripture, particularly in the Pauline *eschatologia crucis*: the whole creation, to quote, "has been groaning in labor pains until now," "in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:22). When this universal-eschatological hope of the whole creation is taken up in our exegesis of scripture, we are driven to a mission of protest against the present suffering of nature under the technological-industrial exploitation perpetrated by modern civilizations.

This mission of protest, when understood as the theological mission of raising a prophetic voice against the powers-that-be, would involve two steps: first, both the modern banishment of non-scientific conception of nature in the name of scientific objectivity, and the mechanical, "objective" conceptualization of nature presented by the modern sciences, are to be unmasked together as an ideological justification of the modern industrial exploitation of nature. Secondly, a new biblical picture of nature, based on an interpretation of the biblical creation narratives understood in the light of the *eschatologia crucis*, is to be offered as a corrective to the traditional scientific model. This new biblical understanding of nature would view nature as a "crucified" victim whose hope of liberation lies in the "revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19). Viewing nature as a victim of human "crucifixion" means that the liberation of nature is incorporated into the universal-eschatological horizon of our "practical" response to the theodicy question: the *creatio ex nihilo* resurrection of the crucified Christ, when taken up into our present mission as the source of our hope for the future of the crucified nature, continually introduces the eschatological *novum* that drives nature towards the home of its identity.

This biblical representation of nature would be able to avoid the Enlightenment critique of politico-religious ideologies, since it does not allow appealing to the original order of creation for the sake of legitimizing the present. In other words, this perspective on nature would not allow nature as it is at present to be understood as having already achieved its identity that is the "home" of humanity. Since here nature as it is at present is understood as a suffering victim, its identity as the "home"

of humanity would have to be found at the *eschaton*, when the hopes of all suffering victims will find their conclusive dénouement.

The epistemological foundation of Moltmann's politico-ecological ("messianic") theology is provided by this biblical-eschatological perspective on nature. Moltmann's starting point, as lucidly presented in *Gott in der Schöpfung*, is the theodicy question raised by the modern conquest of nature (GS 34-43). By listening first and foremost to the voice of nature as a victim, Moltmann is driven in his exegesis to face the universal-eschatological hope of nature which has "fallen victim to transience and death," and which "wishes for 'an abiding habitation'" (GS 81; GC 68). Moltmann takes up this hope and reformulates it in political and ecological terms into a critique of the modern industrial exploitation of nature.

As the first step of this critique, Moltmann criticizes the modern sciences which, in the name of objectivity and scientific neutrality, have taken up the role of defender of the vested interests of modern technological civilizations:

> The living relationship of human societies to the natural environment has been lastingly — if not already irreparably -- destroyed by human technologies for exploiting nature...Technologies are nothing but applied sciences. And the sciences, together with the technologies, have grown up out of particular human concerns. Human concerns are bound up with them, precede them and utilize them. These concerns are governed by the basic values and convictions of human societies...What values have guided the development of modern civilizations?...It is only modern civilizations which, for the first time, have set their sights on development, expansion and conquest. The acquisition of power, the increase of power, and the securing of power: these, together with the 'pursuit of happiness', may be termed the values that actually prevail in modern civilizations (GS 37, 40; GC 23, 26).

In Moltmann's view, this means that the effort of the modern sciences to banish "mythical" religious perspectives from the realm of nature harbors a hidden will-to-power: nature needs to be "de-sacralized" and "objectified" so that it may be exploited at will for human benefit. The mechanical picture of nature presented by the modern sciences is none other than the product of this modern will-to-power. Since what has produced this ideological distortion of our knowledge of nature are the criteria of truth upheld by the modern sciences, which prize above all else the analytical, "objectifying" thinking with its distinctions between subject and object. Moltmann demands that we leave this modern prison of "objectivity" and restore the pre-modern concept of knowledge as participation (GS 17-18). By so doing, Moltmann claims, we would be enabled to participate in the sufferings and hopes of nature voiced in pre-modern concepts of nature, and to take up again the question of theodicy embedded in them.

As the second step of his theological critique, Moltmann engages in the work of interpreting the biblical creation narratives in the light of the *eschatologia crucis*.[1] For him, this means seeing the whole creation within the context of an on-going history of liberation and redemption:

> The biblical — and especially messianic — doctrine of creation fundamentally contradicts the picture of the static, closed cosmos, resting in its own equilibrium or revolving within itself. Its eschatological orientation towards a future consummation accords far more with the concept of a still incomplete *cosmic history* (GS 204; GC 196).

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[1]See pp. 27-30 of this paper

The event of creation itself, according to Moltmann, is aligned from the very beginning with this on-going history, because the cross and resurrection of Christ are determinative for understanding the form of God's presence and act on earth, including God's creation of the world.[2] Since — according to the *eschatologia crucis* — God's revelation is always the promise of the future lordship of God given to the world of suffering, God's act of creation cannot be understood as already disclosing the full glory of God's lordship on earth. In Moltmann's view, this means that the original creation was not "perfect," in the sense that it was not yet permeated by God's full power and glory. Seeing the present condition of the world as it is, subject to transience and death, Moltmann cannot envisage an original state in which the creation was permeated through and through with God's life-giving power. In other words, Moltmann is here rejecting the term "fallen nature," since he cannot see how nature could have fallen, like humanity, by sinning:

> Nature has fallen victim to transience and death. It has not fallen through its own sin, like human beings. To talk about "a fallen nature" is therefore highly dubious. And yet a sadness lies over nature which is the expression of its tragic fate and its messianic yearning. It is enslaved and wishes to be free, for it is transitory and wishes for 'an abiding habitation'(GS 81; GC 68).

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[2]GS 68; GC 55. For Moltmann's "soteriological understanding of creation," in which he follows G. von Rad, see GS 66-68: "Israel learnt to understand the world as God's good creation in the light of the saving events of the exodus, the covenant and the settlement in the Promised Land...The *special* experience of God which emerged from 'God the Lord's revelation of himself moulded and interpreted Israel's *general* experience of the world" (GS 67; GC 54). See also TE 29.

For Moltmann, therefore, the original creation was not closed in on itself in its eternal perfection, but was open to suffering; for, from the very beginning, the creation was being assailed by the same power of transience and death under which it is still groaning.

At this point the difficult question arises as to how one can account for this power of transience and death as a force assailing the creation from its very beginning. Here Moltmann appeals to the kabbalistic doctrine of *zimsum*:[3] God withdrew into Godself in order to make room for the creation, and in so doing created a God-forsaken space pervaded by absolute death — the *nihil*:

> The space which comes into being and is set free by God's self-limitation is a literally God-forsaken space. The *nihil* in which God creates his creation is God-forsakenness, hell, absolute death, and it is against the threat of this that he maintains his creation in life (GS 100; GC 87).

Moltmann claims that, in the event of creation, God entered this absolute death and created the world *ex nihilo*, i.e. out of absolute death. This means, further, that the act of creation was the beginning of God's suffering history with the creation, culminating in Christ's death on the cross: "When God permitted creation, this was the first act in the divine self-humiliation which reached its profoundest point in the cross of Christ" (GS 100; GC 87). Since the cross of Christ means God's profoundest entry into the *nihil*, the resurrection of the crucified Christ proves God's power to create and redeem the world *ex nihilo* (ZS 169-171). In the on-going history of liberation and redemption, God enters into the creation's suffering and,

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[3]*zimsum* means "God's self-limitation." See GS 98-103.

through God's *creatio ex nihilo* power of resurrection, introduces the *eschatological novum* that drives the creation towards the *eschaton*:

> By yielding up the Son to death in God-forsakenness on the cross...the eternal God enters the Nothingness out of which he created the world....He pervades the space of God-forsakenness with his presence. It is the presence of his self-humiliating, suffering love for his creation, in which he experiences death itself...In the path of the Son into self-emptying and bondage, to the point of the death he died, and in the path of his exaltation and glorification by the whole creation, God becomes omnipresent.[4]

The life of the creation is created out of, sustained against, and liberated from the encroaching power of death through this dialectic of cross and resurrection. Activated by the Spirit, this dialectic persists until absolute death is finally banished by God's re-occupation of the God-forsaken space of creation — that is, God's becoming "all in all" at the *eschaton* (GS 219-221).

It can be discerned here that, due the acute sensitivity of Moltmann's political hermeneutic to the theodicy question raised by the suffering of nature, the author goes

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[4]GS 103; GC 91. This quoted paragraph is in fact a summary of "the trinitarian history of God" which Moltmann develops in DgG and TRG. This "trinitarian history of God," which provides the ontology from which Moltmann's *eschatologia crucis* is developed into his pneumatological doctrine of creation, is a form of panentheism that involves God in the history of the creation and takes this history into God's own trinitarian history. Moltmann develops this doctrine of God by interpreting the cross and resurrection of Christ not only as historical events but also as events within the life of God. In other words, Moltmann conflates the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity. What this amounts to is that all the injustice and suffering present in history come to constitute God's real suffering, and that, because of this divine suffering, God is yet to achieve God's own self — God's sovereign "lordship" — in the Kingdom promised by Christ's resurrection. As is evident, Moltmann's *eschatologia crucis* provides the eschatological orientation and the christological focus both of which are foundational to this "trinitarian history": see DgG 214-254; TK 166-178, 192-194 *passim*).

even beyond the traditional account of the Fall to locate the source of the creation's suffering, not in humanity's sinfulness, but in the concept of the *nihil*. This, evidently, creates problems for Moltmann's critics.

2. Liberation from the *Nihil*?: The Question of Radical Evil

Moltmann's critics have complained that Moltmann's concept of *nihil* plays too pivotal a role in the application of his political hermeneutic to the creation narratives; they find this dualistic, "Manichaean," and — therefore — un-biblical.[5] Even in terms of Moltmann's own biblical hermeneutic this concept seems questionable, for his political hermeneutic demands that the biblical witness to the apocalyptic suffering of nature be interpreted — in politico-ecological terms of today — as a protest against the present suffering of nature at the hands of modern technological civilizations, so that the eschatological hope of nature may again be taken up in our actual mission today. Is Moltmann being inconsistent with his own biblical hermeneutic when, after having interpreted the biblical witness to nature's suffering as a protest against the modern industrial victimization of nature, he goes on to claim — almost in apocalyptic language — that the modern victimization of nature needs to be understood as the phenomenon of nature being "assailed by the *nihil*"?

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[5]Paul D. Molnar, "The Function of the Trinity in Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 683; Brian J Walsh, "Theology of Hope and the Doctrine of Creation: An Appraisal of Jürgen Moltmann," *Evangelical Quarterly* 59 (1987): 72; Henri Blocher, "Divine Immutability," in *The Power and Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990), pp. 14-19.

This question, together with the charge of Manichaeism, can be answered only when we take into consideration Moltmann's underlying preoccupation with the question of theodicy. Behind his concept of the *nihil* as absolute death stands Moltmann's perception of the God-forsakenness of the earth on which the cross stands. For Moltmann, the evil of modern civilizations that has culminated in Auschwitz and Hiroshima is evil to such a degree that it cannot be understood merely in anthropological terms as a product of human sin; that is, it cannot be seen merely as the culmination of human sin that has jeopardized the once-perfect creation.[6] Moltmann contends that the evil of Auschwitz and Hiroshima can only be understood as absolute evil — that is, as an annihilating, demonic power of absolute intensity and magnitude.[7] Faced with the phenomenon of the existence of such evil in the world, which seems to give credibility to Manichaean dualism, Moltmann is driven to think of the world as having been created and being sustained in a space "given-up" (that is,

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[6]"...sin cannot be merely understood in anthropological terms as transgression of the law, guilt, and distress of conscience on man's part. Law and conscience reveal the oppression of 'the power of sin', which is at once godlessness and God-forsakenness. That is why behind sin is death — absolute death and the total end...It is an apocalyptic pressure of affliction for everything that wants to live and has to die...It is also the divine lament of all senseless suffering in the world, the suffering and injustice 'that cries out to high heaven'" (ZS 170; FC 164). See also GS 81.

[7]"...the experiences of Auschwitz and Hiroshima raise questions for which no answers are endurable, because the questions are fundamentally protests. Even Hegel found that there was a Negative which could not 'be turned to good' in any dialectic...Ernst Bloch too was able to see nothing in the incinerators of Maidanek except the hard, meaningless, annihilating Nothingness. There is undoubtedly a grain of wheat that dies without bringing any fruit, a grain of wheat that is trampled into the ground, without there being truly — let alone necessarily — any positive negation of this negation afterwards" (GS 104; GC 91).

"forsaken") by the life-giving God. Since life only comes from God, a space forsaken by God has to be understood as permeated by absolute death; hence, *creatio ex nihilo* — creation out of absolute death. This means that every presence on earth of the power of annihilation and death (as can be seen for example in the modern industrial destruction of nature) needs to be understood as the phenomenon of the creation being assailed and encroached upon by the power of the *nihil*. By the same token, this also means that the sign of God's reign on earth is present wherever God's *creatio ex nihilo* power of resurrection drives out death from the space of creation and fills it with God's life-giving presence, namely, the Spirit.

Moltmann's explanation of the phenomenon of radical evil is foundational to his integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives, because the question of radical evil demarcates the universal-eschatological scope of our "practical" response to the theodicy question. As has already been argued, the universalizing and "politicizing" of eschatology in Moltmann's political hermeneutic is inseparably connected to the question: Why is there so much senseless suffering, injustice and oppression on earth, if God is God? Due to this theodicy question, Moltmann's political hermeneutic sets the eschatological hope for the future of the crucified people, as well as our mission in obedience to that hope, within the universal horizon of the redemption of the entire world. The critical point is that it is this "opening up" of the universal horizon of redemption, made necessary by the radicality of evil, that enables Moltmann to integrate the present sufferings and future glory of the crucified people with those of nature. The history of this planet, a history which has culminated in

Auschwitz and Hiroshima, is so full of indescribable and senseless suffering, misery, destruction and death, that it has to be understood as being assailed from its very beginning by the power of absolute death threatening to annihilate the creation itself. What this implies is that, since the whole creation is being threatened by the annihilating power of absolute death, *nature cannot be understood as an indifferent background to the divine-human drama of salvation*. Human beings and nature belong to the same community of creation and share a common fate, for they are being threatened by the same *nihil* and are both longing for redemption from it: "Human beings and nature have their own destinies on their own particular levels; but in their enslavement and their liberty they share a common history."[8]

Since humanity and nature belong to the same community and share a common history, the liberation of one is inseparable from the liberation of the other. This means that the horizon of our mission becomes universal, and that the hope of nature is taken up and integrated into our "practical" response to the theodicy question raised by the phenomenon of radical evil. Nature as a "crucified" victim of modern humanity comes to be understood as suffering, together with humanity, the common victimization under the annihilating power of the *nihil*; and the liberation both of humanity and of nature — i.e., of the whole creation — from the power of the *nihil* becomes the universal-eschatological horizon of our mission. It belongs to our mission to fight against every presence on earth of the power of the *nihil*, such as the modern industrial destruction of nature, since the *creatio ex nihilo* resurrection of the

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[8]GS 82; GC 69. See also GS 147-150.

crucified Christ gives us hope for the future of the *"crucified" creation*. The sign of God's reign on earth is present wherever and whenever we are engaged in our mission; and this sign is none other than the sign of God's *creatio ex nihilo* power of resurrection driving out death from the space of creation and filling it with God's life-giving presence.

It is in this sense that Moltmann claims that "Creation is to be redeemed through human liberty" (GS 82; GC 69), and that the creation of the new heaven and earth begins with the liberation of human beings and ends with the redemption of nature (GS 82). Our mission towards the liberation of the creation, when taken up into God's suffering and hope-giving history with the creation, continually introduces the eschatological *novum* that drives the whole creation towards the goal of its true identity, namely the sabbath of the creation, when the dead will be raised and the power of death forever banished from the creation (GC 220-221, 286-292).

Conclusion

Humanity in today's global context is increasingly led to feel the power of full-blown modernity, characterized by the increasing domination of life on this planet by instrumental rationality. The peace of the planet is being progressively destroyed by the rising spiral of political, economic, and ecological violence — inflicted upon the poor, the powerless, and the weak (including nature) — by those who wield the power of modernity to the highest degree of sophistication. Married to the omnipresent commodifying power of global capitalism and the universalistic, uniform culture it promotes, science and technology are wreaking havoc upon countless numbers of human communities and natural habitats. This grave situation gives powerful witness to the tragic failure of the Enlightenment project for human liberation, a project which originated in the West but is now expanding its hegemony to every corner of the globe.[1]

In the face of this global reality that is producing untold number of victims, we are driven to ask: Is human reason really the organ by which humanity is meant to free itself from the tyranny of nature and become the subject of its own history? Will it be possible for us to construct, relying upon our reason alone, a rational form of society based upon a network of just and peaceable relationships among ourselves and with other creatures? The romantic critics of the Enlightenment, from Rousseau

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[1]See pp. 12-18 of this paper.

onwards, already gave a rather pessimistic answer to these questions: the ideal of disembodied, Cartesian reason is an abstraction, leading to human alienation from the bodily and social context in which every human life is situated. Hegel developed the position that reason itself is socio-historically constituted, and hence is inextricably rooted in its "naturalistic" contexts, namely value traditions, ethnic heritages, and community experiences that shape and define every human being. It is in line with this romantic reaction that a wide spectrum of "post-modern" critics of modernity, ranging from French deconstructionist thinkers to liberation theologians, appeal to tradition and community in their effort to counter the corrosive influence of instrumental rationality. The "neo-Barthian" stream among these critics, represented by the French Protestant thinker Jacques Ellul and the "antifoundationalists" such as John Milbank, George Lindbeck and Stanley Hauerwas, take the Christian "narrative" — prominently, Christian scripture — as hermeneutical guide for their rational description of and ethical practice in the world.[2]

This "post-modern" invocation of communal traditions, however, can be dangerous in terms of its socio-political implications. As argued by Paul Tillich in his 1932 book *Die Sozialistische Entscheidung*, every romantic or conservative appeal to communal identity and religio-cultural tradition can easily fall prey to the kind of

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[2]Lindbeck, pp. 113-124; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford, UK/Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), pp. 380-434; Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations into Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), pp. 38ff.

"blood and soil" religio-political ideology propagated by the Nazis.[3] Unless it is geared towards the creation of a more just and humane society, the "post-modern" retrieval of the non-rational elements in community, ethnic heritage and religious tradition may only serve to camouflage the destructive power of instrumental rationality that actually reigns "behind the scene," namely in the socio-economic structure of society. In this sense, the question put to the "neo-Barthian" theologians by Tillich would be this: How are you going to prevent the kind of ideological misuse of scripture, as has been perpetrated by the religio-political establishment of Christendom, when you make scripture the "lens" through which you view the world?

Here it becomes significant for the "neo-Barthian" theologians to take note of the well-known distinction, made by the "Father" of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, between what has so far been the understood task of modern theology and the new question put to it by liberation theology.[4] According to Gutiérrez, the primary concern of modern theology has been the apologetic task of addressing unbelievers or believers influenced by the secularizing tendencies in the West since the Enlightenment criticisms of religion. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's question, "How are we to proclaim God in a world come of age?" reveals, according to Gutiérrez, the anguish

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[3]Paul Tillich, *Die Sozialistische Entscheidung* (Offenbach a. M.: Bollwerk-Verlag, 1948), pp. 24-48, 104-131.

[4]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), pp. 23-24, 113-114.

at the core of this modern theological task: How are we to convince the secularized people of modernity that *the Christian gospel is true*?

Gutiérrez, however, criticizes this modern theological question for its one-sidedness, i.e., its blindness to the other side of history where the "world" has been "made incapable of coming of age" (Moltmann)[5] and where "nonpersons," instead of the secularized modern mind, bring the Christian gospel into question. Gutiérrez believes that modern theology shares responsibility for the modern world's inauguration of a "world made incapable of coming of age"; for the Christian church has failed to critique the ideological nature of Western modernity that has "come of age" at the expense of other peoples who have, thereby, been turned into "nonpersons." The apologetic task of liberation theology, Gutiérrez claims, is addressing these "nonpersons." The question put to Christians by these "nonpersons" is not "*Is the Christian gospel true?*" but "*What does the Christian gospel do for us, the victimized?*"[6]

This "victim's perspective" or the perspective "from the underside of history,"[7] whose most lucid expression probably is given by the concept of *minjung* in

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[5]WJC 65

[6]Gutiérrez, p. 24. Reinhold Niebuhr makes a pertinent remark in this regard: "Who is better able to understand the true character of a civilisation than those who suffer most from its limitations? Who is better able to state the social ideal in unqualified terms than those who have experienced the bankruptcy of old social realities in their own lives?" (*Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960], p. 157.

[7]Robert McAfee Brown, *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 44.

Korean *minjung* theology,[8] offers an indispensable means by which the "post-modern" retrieval of the Christian narrative can be guarded against its "Constantinian" ideological misuse. For the churches which are now engaged in the struggle to liberate themselves, both politically and culturally, from their long-standing entanglement with the modern powers-that-be, and which are now faced with the task of recasting their vision of mission so that it may be conducive to the "mending" of the creation (E. Fackenheim), the perspective of the victims may well be the most important anti-Constantinian epistemological principle for the envisioning of their task. Furthermore, it provides a valuable conceptual tool for the integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives. If for "nonpersons" one substitutes "victimized nature" or "the endangered ecosphere," the resulting holistic theology of liberation, which includes nature in its concept of victim, would be able to engage the

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[8]*Minjung* is a Korean word literally meaning "the mass of the people." Its theological implications, however, go far beyond its literal meaning: "...'minjung' is *not* a concept or object which can easily be defined or pointed at, for it is a living reality which is dynamic and changing, and it has to define itself as a subject...The minjung is present where there is socio-cultural alienation, economic exploitation and political suppression. Therefore, a woman is a minjung when she is dominated by man, by the family or by socio-cultural structures and factors. An ethnic group is a minjung group when it is politically and economically discriminated against by another ethnic group. A race is minjung when it is dominated by another powerful ruling race as is the case in a colonial situation. When intellectuals are suppressed for using their creative and critical abilities against rulers on behalf of the oppressed, then they too belong to the minjung. Workers and farmers are minjung when they are exploited, their needs and demands are ignored, and [when] they are crushed down by the ruling powers" (David Kwang-sun Suh. "A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation.." in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Yong Bock Kim [Singapore: The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, 1981]. p. 39).

question of suffering raised by both theological camps in face of the present globalization of technological-capitalist institutions and culture.

Jürgen Moltmann's political-ecological theology can be understood as a post-Barthian approach to this wide-ranging theological call for attention to victim's perspective in face of the crisis of modernity. As the analysis of his political hermeneutic in the preceding chapters has shown, Moltmann is deeply concerned with providing a *scriptural* answer to the question of theodicy raised by the victims. This concern is what sets his biblical hermeneutic apart from that of his mentor Barth and of the "neo-Barthians." His preoccupation with the questions and protests raised by the suffering victims of modernity leads Moltmann, in his biblical hermeneutic, to have recourse to the "weak" tradition (D. J. Hall) of *eschatologia crucis* that has long been suppressed in Christendom. By taking up the *eschatologia crucis* tradition, Moltmann goes beyond Barth's "triumph" over modern *hybris* through recourse to a high "Calvinistic" application of divine sovereignty. Moltmann's manner of overcoming the *hybris* of modernity is *by way of the crucified and risen Christ*. Moltmann the exegete encounters in scripture, not the sovereign Word of a God who overcomes profane modernity, but the crucified Christ, crucified by the modern as well as the ancient powers-that-be. In the death-cry of the crucified Christ he hears the voice of the victims of modernity. In God's resurrection of the crucified Christ, Moltmann finds, in turn, a God-given hope for the eschatological future of modernity's victims. When Moltmann the exegete obeys this hope, he is drawn to participate in the Spirit-driven mission towards the universal-eschatological Kingdom of justice and life that

overcomes modern technological-capitalist civilizations. What this amounts to is that the *eschatologia crucis* he finds in scripture leads to the practical — and not theoretical — answering of the theodicy question raised by the victims of modernity.

As it becomes the epistemological foundation of Moltmann's politico-ecological theology, this political hermeneutic of scripture unites salvation-historical approach with an ecological approach to faith, and in so doing opens up a way towards the integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives called for by the "JPIC" process of the World Council of Churches. The universal-eschatological scope and christological focus of Moltmann's political hermeneutic makes it possible for his political-ecological theology to reflect the voice of the entire creation — both nature and humanity — as victim.

This does not, however, mean that Moltmann's political hermeneutic offers a kind of theology that pays attention only to the crisis of modernity and its victims. Moltmann's political hermeneutic opens up the possibility of a profounder answer to the theodicy question, one that gets at what he considers the roots of the crisis of modernity, namely the problem of radical evil. Being true to his own political hermeneutic, Moltmann takes the victims' voices, heard in the midst of absolute evil represented by Auschwitz and Hiroshima, so seriously that he interprets the creation narratives as presenting the picture of the creation forsaken from the very beginning to the *nihil*. In other words, Moltmann goes beyond the type of traditional theodicy that explains the existence of evil and suffering in terms of abused human freedom, — that is, in terms of the Fall — via a radicalization of the *eschatologia crucis*. He

traces the roots of the evil that is Auschwitz and Hiroshima to the fact that both God and the creation are open to suffering as the result of God's provisional self-limitation *vis-à-vis* the creation. The consequent provisional victimization of the entire creation by the power of absolute death, and the liberation of the creation brought about by God's suffering participation in the fate of the creation, is the kerygma that stands at the core of Moltmann's theological integration of liberationist and ecological perspectives.

Moltmann's transcendence of the traditional account of the Fall via his radicalization of the *eschatologia crucis* raises the question whether the traditional account — an established interpretive tradition since Augustine — can so easily be abandoned. Moltmann's account also harbors the danger of obscuring human evil, by presenting it in terms of the ambiguity of the creation itself. Nonetheless, it is not easy to answer the question put to us by Moltmann, viz., "How else can we understand the phenomenon of absolute evil such as Auschwitz or Hiroshima?" Explaining the existence of such evil solely in terms of its human origin may harbor "the human need to imagine ourselves in control, even at the cost of guilt," as Elaine Pagels puts it.[9] Tracing the root of evil in the creation's own ambiguity is probably a more humbling antidote to the *hybris* of a modernity that views the phenomenon of evil and suffering as a problem to be solved rather than as a mystery that accompanies life. As has been unveiled by the "dialectic of the Enlightenment," the profound ambiguity

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[9]Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 149.

of human nature, on which the failure of the modern project rests, is rooted in the ambiguity of nature itself. In this sense, Moltmann's salvation-historical and ecological response to the question of radical evil by way of the *eschatologia crucis* offers a profounder hope for the liberation of the suffering creation than one provided by the traditional account of the Fall.

This theological answer to the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" cannot, however, be taken merely as a theoretical answer. When that occurs, Moltmann's approach cannot avoid Sallie McFague's critique that, by locating evil at the heart of the creation, Moltmann underplays human responsibility.[10] In order to avoid turning into "a mythology of apocalyptic promise,"[11] as Dorothee Sölle puts it, Moltmann's politico-ecological theology must be incarnated through our participation in God's suffering mission of banishing the *nihil*. In this sense, Moltmann's theological answer to the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" is true to his political hermeneutic; for it calls for our *verum facere*: "Creation is to be redeemed through human liberty" (GS 82; GC 69).

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[10]Sallie McFague, "Imaging Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body," in Birch, Eakin, and McDaniel, pp. 224-225.

[11]Dorothee Sölle, *Political Theology*, trans. John Shelley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 51

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