

**“WHEN FREEDOM IS CLOSE”:
JÜRGEN MOLTMANN’S USE OF CONTRADICTION IN HIS TRILOGY**

by

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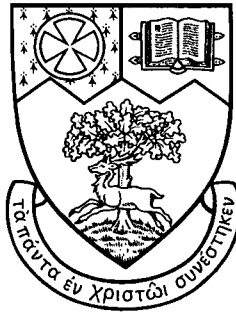
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ABSTRACT

“When Freedom is Close”: Jürgen Moltmann’s Use of Contradiction in his Trilogy

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Jürgen Moltmann’s trilogy—*Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God*, and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*—is pervaded by the concept of “contradiction.”

Secondary literature commonly alludes to his theology of contradiction, describing his theology as “dialectical,” but the literature rarely analyzes it comprehensively. This thesis seeks to fill this lack. It argues that in Moltmann’s trilogy God creates and fosters in the world three different types of contradiction (objective, subjective and active) through three different means (God’s promises, his crucifixion, and the work of his Spirit in and through the Church) in order to accomplish his purposes. The inductive sections of the thesis show that contradiction exists in nearly every chapter of each book. The systematic sections show contradiction is central to the main systematic theological topics of the trilogy. Understanding Moltmann’s theology of contradiction this way allows for clearer interpretation of his theology as a whole.

To Mel,
My BFFL

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INTRODUCTION

It can be said with certainty that by the end of the twentieth century Jürgen Moltmann was the best-known German theologian alive at the time.¹ Indeed, Richard Bauckham claims that Moltmann probably had the most influence world-wide of any Protestant dogmatic theologian alive today.² In 1964 he became a major theologian almost overnight with the publication of his *Theology of Hope*. Within the span of two years it went through six editions and was translated into five different language, and was further translated into other languages after that.³ W. March says that the theology of hope, rather than being a passing fad, has marked a genuine turning point in the progression of theology.⁴ Despite the odds against ever writing a book so impactful again, Moltmann's next book, *The Crucified God*, arguably reached the same level of importance and popularity.⁵ Moltmann's theology has aided Christianity in rethinking key areas of its self-understanding (by getting it to think historically and eschatologically) and its understanding of God (by arguing that God is passible and influenced by world history).

Given the level of importance Moltmann's theology enjoys in contemporary theology, secondary work on him has abounded ever since 1964. Scholars have attempted to understand, clarify, and mine his ideas to bring out their full potential of richness. One aspect of these endeavors has been to uncover what the major themes of his works are.

¹ Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 15.

² Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 1.

³ Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 98.

⁴ March, *Grateful Reflections*, 42.

⁵ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 29. *The Crucified God* has undergone more translations and editions than any of his other books (Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 200).

Topics such as eschatology, promise, hope, and the cross and resurrection are among the important themes that pervade his writings.

One theme, however, that has been neglected is contradiction. To be clear, it is not entirely uncommon for the secondary literature to mention the dialectical nature of certain aspects of Moltmann's theology.⁶ What is uncommon—if existent at all—is for contradiction or dialectic to be discussed in a detailed, systematic, or comprehensive way. Scholars have not attempted to discern the pervasiveness of this theme or the extent to which it defines Moltmann's most central topics. Instead, scholars have seemed to be content with briefly mentioning or alluding to the dialectic, more or less in passing.

Why contradiction is not looked at in more detail is not entirely clear, but five thoughts will be provided here. First, because contradiction is not a topic that Moltmann himself spends extended time explicitly discussing, perhaps commentators have simply followed suit and considered it unimportant. As discussed below, contradiction itself is never the direct object of Moltmann's focus but rather something that describes the style, shape, and method of his theology. Second, dialectics in philosophy extend back to Marx, Hegel, and even as far back as Socrates and Plato.⁷ Relatedly, dialectical theology originates with such major theologians as Karl Barth, on whom there is no shortage of secondary literature. Perhaps Moltmann's commentators have felt that dialectics is either a tired or sufficiently-covered topic that talking about its existence in Moltmann would be redundant. Third, it is uncontroversial that Moltmann has been significantly influenced

⁶ See e.g., Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology I," 143–63; Meeks, *Origins*, 7–9, 35–38; Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 83, 98–103; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 2, 35–37. For the purposes of this thesis, the existence of "contradiction" and the existence of "dialectic" in Moltmann's writing will be viewed as equivalent. Both refer to (1) the existence of pairs, (2) opposition and conflict existing between the pairs, and (3) the conflict between pairs being of a dynamic rather than static nature.

⁷ Kenny, *Modern World*, 18–23; Kenny, *Rise of Modern Philosophy*, 113; Kenny, *Ancient Philosophy*, 159–60.

by Hegel, Marx, and Barth, three thinkers that have keenly focussed on dialectics (though of incredibly differing kinds).⁸ In light of this, maybe commentators have considered it unsurprising that the dialectical nature of Moltmann's theology mimics the dialectical nature of their thought.

The fourth possibility is that scholars have felt that the dialectical nature of Moltmann's theology is too obvious and straightforward to warrant a discussion of its own. It may be that scholars have been drawn to aspects of Moltmann's theology that seem more controversial and deserving of debate. Fifth, perhaps scholars have believed that studying contradiction in Moltmann would not significantly add to any of the major lines of theological discussion. That is, topics such as divine revelation, divine impassibility, and the nature of the Trinity are major theological topics that have been discussed since the early church. Thus it is no surprise that topics such as these in Moltmann's writing have received the most attention. In comparison, maybe studying a theme in Moltmann's writing, in and of itself, is perceived as less interesting, relevant, and productive.

However, each of the five possibilities would be a misguided reason to not study contradiction in Moltmann. First, though he does not spend time focussing on it himself, observing contradiction in his writings clarifies what he does explicitly focus on. In response to the second and third possibilities, though dialectics is a topic that has received plentiful attention throughout history, Moltmann is himself a significant theologian for modern times and deserves attention for his unique contributions. It is

⁸ On Hegel's influence see Meeks, *Origins*, 35–38; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 6, 107. On Marx's influence see Meeks, *Origins*, 136; Chapman, "Christian Dialogue," 435–50; Genovesi, *Expectant Creativity*, 86. On Barth's influence see Meeks, *Origins*, 15–22; Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 16–23.

highly doubtful the contradiction in his writings mirrors completely the dialectics of those that have gone before him. Fourth, though some aspects of his theology are obviously dialectical in nature (e.g., his conception of promise), other aspects are not as obviously dialectical. Nor is it necessarily obvious that there are different types of contradiction in his writing and that they are all related to one another. Fifth, studying contradiction in Moltmann clarifies what his stance is on the major systematic theological topics (e.g., divine impassibility) and why he chooses to take that stance.

The goal of this thesis is to fill this void in the secondary literature. This thesis argues that in Moltmann's trilogy God creates and fosters in the world three different types of contradiction (objective, subjective and active) through three different means (God's promises, Christ's crucifixion, and the work of his Spirit in and through the Church) in order to accomplish his purposes. This project also has two secondary outcomes. Showing that this theme of contradiction is not only an *existing* theme but that it is also an *important* theme in his work is the first. Demonstrating that this subject matter in Moltmann's theology has meaningful application to the daily life of Christians and the church is the second. Brief suggestions along these lines will be made in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Introduction to Jürgen Moltmann

Moltmann was born and raised in Germany, on April 8, 1926, to a pair of nominally Christian parents.⁹ As he grew up his family went to church only on Christmas Eve, and he knew very little of the Christian faith.¹⁰ At the time of World War Two he was drafted into the German army as a soldier. Two events during his experience as a

⁹ Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 9.

¹⁰ Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 14.

soldier were particularly influential for him, forever changing the trajectory of his life. The first occurred during a bombing raid by the Royal Air Force called “Operation Gamorrah” in which it tried to demolish the centre of Hamburg, where Moltmann happened to be at the time. During the ensuing firestorm a comrade that was standing right next to him was entirely blown apart by an attack, but Moltmann was left unscathed. This led him to wonder a series of deep questions: why his comrade died but not him, what gives life meaning, and where God was through all of this. Moltmann says that his theology began that night.¹¹

The second event was his imprisonment by the Allies as a prisoner of war, and his encounter with God there. As a prisoner of war he experienced deep and profound struggle in all aspects of his being. Goethe’s poems (his favorite poems) lost all meaning; the utter defeat of Germany, its destroyed cities, and the millions of refugees filled him with horror; seeing pictures of the gas-camps Belsen and Auschwitz filled him with both horror and shame; and soon all of these emotions turned into a senseless weariness to live life. But his life was changed when he was given a Bible. He did not understand most of it, but came upon the Psalms of lament and identified with them, and soon after came upon Jesus’ cry of dereliction on the cross in the Gospel of Mark: “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” From that point on he knew that Jesus understood him and was his brother in suffering. He now had the courage to live again that he needed.¹²

These life experiences are a helpful backdrop to his theology. It would be unfair and incorrect to say that his theology was derived simply from these experiences—his

¹¹ Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 16; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 16–17.

¹² Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 17; Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, 7–8; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 26–35.

theology draws from the Bible, from philosophy, church tradition, and life experience. But with that being said, with hindsight it is clear that these two particular experiences have influenced his focuses and emphases throughout his life. As a prisoner of war he experienced that God was present precisely in godforsakenness, and that God is full of compassion and therefore capable of suffering. These experiences later become theological propositions that he maintains and argues for throughout his work.¹³ Similarly, Moltmann's tangible experience of suffering and hope reinforcing each other in a dialectical relationship also left its marks on his theology, not least in the cross-resurrection dialectic that runs throughout his writings.¹⁴ The relevance of these two experiences to the theme of contradiction in his work is no exception. It is not hard to spot the theme of contradiction in a seminal and experiential form in these experiences during World War Two, as will become clear in the main section of this thesis.

These profound experiences with God during the war led him to pursue theology afterwards. As a theology student he was taught and/or influenced by four professors in particular. Through Otto Weber he picked up ideas from Calvinism and the Reformed tradition. Weber's teaching led Moltmann to see the whole world—including culture, economy, and the state—as being under God's reign; to emphasize God faithfulness to his promises and humanity's hope in God's faithfulness; as well as eschatology being the driving force of mission.¹⁵ Through Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk Moltmann learnt that the purpose of the church is for mission and not for itself, and from this began to emphasize orthopraxis over orthodoxy.¹⁶ From Hans-Joachim Iwand, Moltmann found

¹³ Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 23. Also see Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, 8.

¹⁴ Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 22. Also see Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, 8–9.

¹⁵ Meeks, *Origins*, 22–25; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 45–48.

¹⁶ Meeks, *Origins*, 25–30.

that God is recognized as God through the godlessness and atheism of humanity, that knowledge of God cannot be obtained through nature or reflection on humanity but is only found through the eschatological revelation of Christ, and that Hegel's understanding of the "death of God" in modernity is fitting.¹⁷ Finally, from Ernst Wolf Moltmann came to see that eschatology has direct bearing on social ethics, that the command of God has bearing on society, and that ethics runs throughout all of theology.¹⁸

After graduating and finally finishing *Theology of Hope* Moltmann quickly became, as mentioned above, one of the most important living theologians in the world, and thereafter found himself within the "school of hope." The school of hope refers to a number of emerging German theologians in the mid- to late-twentieth century that were writing about eschatology, the future, and history. Four of the most prominent were Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Ferhard Sauter, and Johannes Metz.¹⁹ These theologians never formed any official group, and they actually had a high degree of variance between their theologies.²⁰

Moltmann's first three major works—*Theology of Hope*, *The Crucified God*, and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*—form a sort of trilogy. His theological method while writing each of these books was "*the whole of theology in one focal point*." In other words, in *Theology of Hope* he looks at all of theology through the lens of eschatology, in *The Crucified God* he looks through the cross, and in *The Church in the Power of the*

¹⁷ Meeks, *Origins*, 30–35. See Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 41–43. Meeks notes that Iwand's preference for theologies of revelation over natural theology derives from the influence of Barth.

¹⁸ Meeks, *Origins*, 41–48; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 48–50.

¹⁹ Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 3–5.

²⁰ Meeks, *Origins*, 2.

Spirit through ecclesiology and pneumatology. After the trilogy he began a series of what he describes as “contributions to theology,” or “*my own part as a contribution to the collective whole of theology*.”²¹ Though Moltmann is intentionally using the word “contribution” to deny any sense of systematic completeness to his work, this series nonetheless is essentially what would usually be called a systematic theology. He covers the Trinity (doctrine of God), creation, Christology, pneumatology, eschatology, and ethics in this series.

Introduction to the Trilogy

In the first book of the trilogy, *Theology of Hope*, Moltmann argues that for too long Christian theology has treated eschatology (i.e., the “last things”) as a relatively unimportant appendage to the rest of theology. Instead of envisioning “the end” as something that will happen after the world and history are finished—and therefore as something with little bearing on the present—he contends that Christian eschatology sees the end as bursting in upon the present, and thus as extremely relevant. He goes about his argument by showing that contemporary theology has a misconception of how God reveals himself. He reviews a number of different perspectives on the revelation of God, most notably those of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and the salvation history perspective. But Moltmann states that the common weakness of each is their failure to see revelation as something that points forwards to a future that is in genuine contrast to the present.

Biblically speaking, the revelation of God comes in the form of promise. Promise points to a future that is different from the way reality is presently, and the span it creates

²¹ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, ix (emphasis original).

in between the act of promising and the fulfilment of the promise is the history in which the receivers of the promise move towards the point of fulfilment. The pivotal and exemplary promise against which all other promises must be understood, says Moltmann, was God's raising Jesus Christ from the dead. Two central contradictions to the book result from the resurrection. First, Jesus' identity bears a contradiction because though he became the resurrected Christ he remains the crucified Christ. Second, as a promise for the ultimate future of the world, the resurrection brought the promised future into contradiction with reality as it exists presently. The result of these contradictions is that history must be seen as something forward-moving and incomplete. Additionally, these contradictions do not allow the church to become contented with the status quo of the society it lives in. With its eyes fixed on the future the church must critically engage society to conform it to the coming kingdom.

The Crucified God is a result of the fact that any theology of hope must also have a theology of the cross, just as there is no resurrection without the crucifixion, as two reverse sides of the same coin. Speaking in bold terms, he argues that the criterion of all theology is the crucified Christ, and that the cross is the "test of everything that deserves to be called Christian."²² Moltmann begins the book by describing what he perceives to be a struggle in the contemporary church to maintain simultaneously its relevance to the world and its Christian identity. Christ's cross, he suggests, resolves this struggle because it provides the church with both a solid foundation for Christian identity and an impetus to be relevant to the world by participating in its suffering. Next Moltmann surveys

²² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 2, 7.

multiple ways that the church has tried to either “pretty” or spiritualize the cross, thereby ignoring its truly radical nature and implications.

The only appropriate way to do justice to Jesus’ death on the cross is by looking at it historically, from the perspective of his life and ministry, and also eschatologically, from the reverse perspective of his resurrection. Jesus’ life and death show that his teaching and behaviour led him to be crucified as a blasphemer, rebel, and ultimately as one abandoned by God. But from the opposite side, that of the resurrection, it can be seen that sinful and godless humans only have access to the gifts of the risen and exalted Christ—new life, new creation, freedom—because Christ first identified with them on the cross. Moltmann does not stop with observing the cross’ meaning for humans, but he goes further to look at what the cross means for God himself. For God, the cross means that God can suffer, is passionately involved with the affairs of his creation, has experienced death “in” himself through the cross, is present with all humans who suffer, and makes himself known to humans through weakness rather than strength. Moltmann concludes by suggesting ways that this theology can lead to liberation in the psychological and political spheres of life.

Less single-focussed than the previous two books in the trilogy, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* looks at theological topics from the angle of ecclesiology, with a heavy accent of pneumatology also. Moltmann maintains that what the church is cannot be known by looking at the church in and of itself; no definition of it can be given that demarcates the phenomenon “church” from other phenomenon.²³ Rather, it must be understood in the context of its relations to and relationships with other things. Due to

²³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 19-20.

this, he discusses three relationships the church participates in on its course through history. First, the church has a relationship with Christ himself, the church's foundation. By remembering its relationship to Christ, its origin and foundation, the church is reminded that it is not for itself or any ideology but for Christ. Christ was a herald of joy and friend to all, and he proclaimed, embodied, and suffered for God's liberating future, especially to the benefit of the poor and suffering.

Second, the church has a relationship to the future of itself and the world in general, that is, the kingdom of God. All that the church is and does must be oriented towards the goal of the coming kingdom. In its relationships with Israel, other world religions, and "processes of the world's life" the church is to play the role of messianic mediator of the kingdom. Third, it has a relationship with the Holy Spirit, which is the eschatological gift of power given to the church by God. Through its relationship with the Holy Spirit the church is empowered to remember its origin, hope for its future, and mediate history and eschatology. It is through the presence and power of the Spirit that the church is something distinctive in the world and not a mere reflection or pawn of society. In light of the theology expressed throughout the book, Moltmann emphasizes that the church is called to political engagement, a missional focus, solidarity with the poor, and ecumenism and unity.

The Three Types of Contradiction and the Three Sources of Contradiction

There are three types of contradiction in Moltmann's trilogy: objective contradiction, subjective contradiction, and active contradiction. All three types of contradiction are present in and significant to each book of the trilogy. Objective contradiction refers to the objective existence of two opposing realities existing in close

proximity to each other at the same time; or, put another way, a situation in which two contradicting states are side by side, confronting and clashing with one another. The contradiction is always between one reality that is good and another reality that is evil, one that is of God and another that is not, one that is perfect and another is evil, one that is glorious and another that is weak, or something along similar lines. An example of objective contradiction is what results when God makes a promise. God's promise is characteristically in stark contrast to the present reality of its hearer(s), so objective contradiction is created by the promise and the as-yet unfulfilled reality existing side by side.²⁴

Subjective contradiction is the subjective feeling or emotion caused by objective contradiction. The following aphorism is an exemplary case of subjective contradiction in Moltmann's writing: "When freedom is close, the chains begin to hurt."²⁵ In this saying, the objective contradiction is that between existing imprisonment and the freedom that is close at hand. He is saying that when prisoners know they will be free soon, they feel an added sense of longing and restlessness for their freedom. They undergo a tangible experience of dissatisfaction and tension between their current situation and the new reality that is breaking in.

The third and last type of contradiction is active contradiction. Unlike the previous two types of contradiction, which refer to states of being, this third type refers to action, as when one actively sets out to oppose, defy, or put an end to something.²⁶ In the

²⁴ See, e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17–18, 85–86, 103, 139.

²⁵ Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 75. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21–22, 88, 105–6.

²⁶ See, e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16, 21–22, 304, 328–29.

imprisonment example, the active contradiction would be trying to put an end to (i.e., contradicting) one's enslavement by working for freedom.

God is always the initiator of the objective contradiction that sets into motion the other two types; objective contradiction does not and cannot come about by any other power. This is true because apart from God there is only sinful humanity and broken creation.²⁷ If God never acted then nothing would contradict the sin and brokenness of creation, and the present state of creation would remain its permanent state. It is always God's glory that contradicts weakness, God's new creation that contradicts old creation, God's promised future that contradicts present reality, and so on. This important clarification leads to another: contradiction is only a useful means to an end. God does not value contradiction in and of itself. It is not as though if God saw too much life in the world he would introduce more death to restore the balance of contradiction. The point rather is that there are a multitude of things leading to death currently in the world that need to be contradicted, and God is the one that acts to introduce the life that contradicts the death. Moltmann is clear that God's desire is for life to one day win out completely so that there is no death to be in objective contradiction with it.²⁸ But until that day God's aim is to create and foster contradiction of everything leading to death.

As was briefly mentioned above, causal relationships exist between the types of contradiction. God never skips creating objective contradiction to jump to creating subjective or active contradiction. He always first initiates objective contradiction, and then objective contradiction leads to the other two kinds. Thus, it must be said that the

²⁷ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103, 163, 208–9, 211; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27–28, 68, 72–73, 165; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 58–60, 80–81, 99.

²⁸ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163–64, 223, 280–81; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27–28, 214, 254–55; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 32, 58–62, 210.

other two kinds are created by God indirectly. Subjective contradiction can only come from the objective contradiction initiated by God. Moltmann states explicitly that subjective contradiction (his conception of it at least) does not come from any activity or experience apart from God.²⁹ The causal relationships between active contradiction and the other two are more complex. In some circumstances subjective contradiction drives active contradiction, where restlessness with how things are lead one to actively oppose the way things are.³⁰ In other cases, Moltmann speaks of objective contradiction causing active contradiction, while not mentioning subjective contradiction.³¹ Based on other passages it may be warranted to infer that subjective contradiction is present wherever objective contradiction exists and active contradiction is arising, but Moltmann does not always explicitly state this.

In addition to the three types of contradiction, this thesis also identifies and describes certain important instances of “non-contradiction.” Identifying the existence of non-contradiction in the trilogy is not one of the main aims of this thesis, but it is nonetheless helpful because it acts as a foil for the three kinds of contradiction. An instance of non-contradiction is anything that works against objective, subjective, or active contradiction. Non-contradiction usually takes shape as one of two negative extremes: what can be called “assimilation” or “ghettoization.”³² When assimilation occurs, the two realities that are supposed to be in contradiction with each other can no longer do so because they have become essentially the same reality. When ghettoization

²⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 276. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 62–63, 230; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 262, 273.

³⁰ E.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 317–18; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 287.

³¹ E.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 291.

³² These are terms Moltmann occasionally uses (e.g., Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 20–21).

occurs, the two realities are so removed from one another that they cannot engage and therefore contradict one another.³³

God is always the one who creates objective contradiction in the world, and he does so through many different methods, but three methods (i.e., “sources of contradiction”) are key in Moltmann’s trilogy. Moreover, they correspond to the systematic theology categories covered in the trilogy. *Theology of Hope* is primarily about eschatology, and so the main source of objective contradiction covered in the book is promise. When God makes a promise, the future reality spoken of in the promise is put in objective contradiction to the present reality that its hearers experience.³⁴ *The Crucified God* is primarily about Christology, and the main source of objective contradiction in it is God’s crucifixion. In and of himself God has ultimate strength and life, but when the Son was incarnated and crucified God’s deity is put in objective contradiction to suffering and death.³⁵ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* focusses on pneumatology and ecclesiology, so the main source of objective contradiction in this book is the Spirit working in and through the church. The Spirit, as the eschatological power of God, shapes and moves the church so that the powers of new creation present within it stands in objective contradiction to all that is passing away in the world.³⁶

Review of the Literature

Treating the topic of contradiction as a distinct theological category and as a key to understanding other areas of Moltmann’s thought is absent from the scholarship on

³³ For probably the clearest example in the trilogy of assimilation and ghettoization impeding objective contradiction, see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 8–28. A pattern similar to assimilation and ghettoization can also occur in the areas of subjective and active contradiction too (see, e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 22–29, 305, 319–20; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 7–10, 228–42, 316–27).

³⁴ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17–18, 103, 161.

³⁵ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27–28, 68–69, 169, 182–84.

³⁶ See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 291, 294–95, 354–56.

Moltmann. In fact, to my knowledge no paper or book has a discussion of the three kinds or the three sources of contradiction in Moltmann that approximates what I intend to do in this thesis. In order to make this point clear, I briefly summarize the most relevant secondary sources that discuss any of the books in Moltmann's trilogy.

Jerry Irish's "Moltmann's Theology of Contradiction" is the only secondary source that explicitly deals with the topic of contradiction in Moltmann's theology. Irish focuses on the contradiction that exists between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection—a key topic in Moltmann's theology. Interpreting Moltmann, Irish explains that Jesus' unique identity comes from the contradiction between his death and Easter appearances. Christ's death and resurrection go together and must interpret one another. Because of the resurrection one must see hope in the cross, and because of the cross one must see a true contradiction—and not simply a denial—of death in the resurrection.³⁷ Since Christ is both the crucified and risen one, God is never distant from suffering but indeed comes to humans as someone crucified. Just as the crucifixion must be seen in light of the resurrection, so present suffering must be seen in light of God's coming salvation.³⁸

Richard Bauckham's *Moltmann*, which overviews and summarizes the three books of the trilogy, is significant for two reasons. The book is significant because, to my knowledge, there is no book that overviews the trilogy as insightfully yet concisely as Bauckham. Secondly, the book is significant specifically for this thesis because Bauckham makes relatively frequent reference to the "cross-resurrection dialectic" that is central to Moltmann's theology. He introduces the concept in his coverage of *Theology of Hope*, saying that Jesus' identity as both crucified and risen is an identity in total

³⁷ Irish, *Theology of Contradiction*, 22.

³⁸ Irish, *Theology of Contradiction*, 23.

contradiction. He was fully dead but then fully risen, and it is the God who raised him that maintains Jesus' identity. This dialectic is the same one that is promised for all creation: all death and godforsakenness will be abolished by the same God who raised Jesus from the dead.³⁹

As he goes on to discuss *The Crucified God* and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Bauckham on multiple occasions points out that other aspects of Moltmann's theology take the form of the cross-resurrection dialectic. In particular, he points to God's love for and identification with his opposite in *The Crucified God*, and the dialectical experiences of suffering and joy in *The Church and the Power of the Spirit*.⁴⁰ The dialectics that Bauckham observes in Moltmann's trilogy are similar in form to what this thesis is calling the theology of contradiction. But Bauckham expands on this subject very little, let alone looking at it systematically.⁴¹

In *Theology of Human Hope*, Rubem Alves devotes a lengthy discussion to critiquing the proposals Moltmann puts forward in *Theology of Hope*, and the conversation topics come close to the concepts of contradiction put forth in this thesis. For Moltmann, according to Alves, it is God's transcendent promise, particularly Christ's resurrection, that is the source of human hope, and it is that which gives humans restless hearts and spurs them on to anticipate the coming future in their actions.⁴² According to Alves, Moltmann's focus on the "wholly other" nature of the resurrection is similar to the

³⁹ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 35.

⁴⁰ See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 67–72, 97–100, 126–28. In Moltmann, see e.g., Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 25–28; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 109–13.

⁴¹ Bauckham's later book, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, also deserves to be noted. It excellently covers Moltmann's theology, more or less book-by-book, from *Theology of Hope* through *The Spirit of Life*. However, its material on the trilogy is quite similar to that of his earlier work, *Moltmann*, and therefore is not looked at in more depth here.

⁴² Alves, *Human Hope*, 57, 59, 65.

Platonic and ascetic characteristics of Barth's early theology;⁴³ whereas Alves prefers to emphasize Christ's incarnation as the stimulus for Christian hope.⁴⁴ People's restless hearts do not come from the contrast between God's promises and present reality, rather, as humans, people naturally feel in their flesh the inadequacy between the world and themselves and their community.⁴⁵ As one last example, Alves maintains that passivity and idleness come from the belief that the Church merely imitates the promised future, whereas active struggle and conflict are what is needed to truly change unjust systems.⁴⁶

Douglas Meeks expertly outlines the development of Moltmann's theology of hope in *Origins of Theology of Hope*. The book is not so much a biography in the sense of outlining chronologically Moltmann's experiences and developments in thought over the years on his way to publishing the *Theology of Hope*, although some of that is present. Rather, Meeks paints Moltmann as starting with a problem that needs to be solved: modern theology is paralyzed by rigid dichotomies such as object and subject, church and world, and existence and science. Then the rest of the book details a sort of intellectual journey to find a solution to this problem, a "dialectic of reconciliation" that brings together these separate dichotomies. Moltmann interacts with a number of theologians and philosophers over the course of his journey: Karl Barth, Ernst Bloch, Otto Weber, Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, Hans-Joachim Iwand, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Ernst Wolf, Rudolf Bultmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Gerhard von Rad,

⁴³ Alves, *Human Hope*, 61.

⁴⁴ Alves, *Human Hope*, 67–68.

⁴⁵ Alves, *Human Hope*, 59.

⁴⁶ Alves, *Human Hope*, 65. Changing unjust systems through active struggle and conflict is something Moltmann is now known for endorsing, but only hints of this exist in *Theology of Hope* (which Alves was critiquing). Moltmann develops this theme much more fully beginning in *The Crucified God*. Furthermore, Alves is noting inconsistency in Moltmann. If utopia is assuredly coming regardless of human action then it is inconsistent for Moltmann to say it must be worked for. Passivity and idleness, according to Alves, are more appropriate responses to Moltmann's theology.

and Ernst Käsemann. Through critical interaction with these thinkers Moltmann concludes that it is the promissory history of God, especially the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which can reconcile the dichotomies.⁴⁷ Eschatological thinking does not allow for faith to remain an absolutely subjective thing or for the objective world to be godless.⁴⁸ God's promise reveals a future that envelops both people and the world, and it sets people on a mission to transform the world so that it accords with the promised future.⁴⁹

An often-quoted secondary source is *The Logic of Promise*, by Christopher Morse. In this book Morse takes it upon himself to evaluate Moltmann's concepts of promise and revelation with the aid of American analytic philosophy. The first two chapters are an overview of promise and revelation, as laid out in *Theology of Hope*, as well as other authors and schools of thought that shaped his thinking, and in doing so Morse distills Moltmann's theology of promise down to three main assertions. In the final three chapters Morse lays out his criticisms of Moltmann's theology of promise, which fall under the categories of "the language of promise," "the experience of history," and "eschatological ontology." Morse's goal here is not to say that Moltmann's theology is hopelessly wrong, but rather, with the aid of analytical philosophy, he seeks to show that the way Moltmann phrases and constructs his theology is sometimes inconsistent or unclear. For example, in the third chapter he points out that Moltmann often speaks as if "the future" has the ability to literally act on the present, even though it is an abstract

⁴⁷ Meeks, *Origins*, 9.

⁴⁸ Meeks, *Origins*, 38.

⁴⁹ Meeks, *Origins*, 103.

concept, where it would be more appropriate to talk about promise itself having the ability to alter the present.⁵⁰

Unlike *Theology of Hope*, few books have been written devoted to discussing *The Crucified God*, despite its significance. The best material for *The Crucified God* occurs in particular chapters of books or in journal articles. Books that devote at least one notable chapter to *The Crucified God* include Bauckham's *Moltmann*, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz's *The Kingdom and the Power*, A. J. Conyers' *God, Hope, and History*, and Ton van Prooijen's *Limping but Blessed*. In *The Kingdom and the Power*, Müller-Fahrenholz summarizes *The Crucified God* as well as criticizes the way Moltmann founds his theology of the Trinity on the crucifixion.⁵¹ In *God, Hope, and History*, Conyers inspects *The Crucified God* for a negative stance towards hierarchy and power.⁵² In *Limping But Blessed*, van Prooijen shows how in providing a critical theory of God *The Crucified God* also provides a "liberating anthropology."⁵³

Along with these chapters there are a number of helpful journal articles on *The Crucified God*. Some criticize Moltmann primarily for rejecting divine impassibility, some for failing to explain why God allows suffering, and some for suggesting separation or a fracture in the Trinity.⁵⁴ Other criticism have been leveled against *The Crucified God* that are more unique in nature. Burnell F. Eckardt Jr. maintains that Luther's theology

⁵⁰ Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 65

⁵¹ Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 77–80.

⁵² Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 112–13, 118–19.

⁵³ Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 317–19.

⁵⁴ On divine passibility, see Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal," 396–406; Jowers, "Theology of the Trinity," 251–54; Jansen, "God's (Im)mutability," 284–293; Zimany, "Meaning of the Crucifixion," 8–9. On permitting suffering, see Bush, "Trinitarian Conflict," 29; Jeronicic, "Eye of Charity," 49–50; Jaeger, "Problem of Evil," 12; Jantzen, "Jesus' Despair," 5. On separation in the Trinity, see Youngs, "Emptied God," 55–56; Jantzen, "Jesus' Despair," 5; Gabriel, "Beyond the Cross," 106–7. On ascribing brutality to the Father, see Jowers, "Theology of the Trinity," 247–49.

provides far less support for Moltmann's theology than Moltmann believes it does.⁵⁵

David A. Scott holds that the ethics put forward in *The Crucified God* are truncated because the only focus on the Son and suffering and not on other elements of the Christian faith, such as creation.⁵⁶ Finally, some articles are more neutral or positive in their stance towards the book. Ryan A. Neal believes, contrary to popular opinion, that *The Crucified God* is actually in discontinuity with the theology of *Theology of Hope*.⁵⁷ John David Jaeger describes Moltmann's use of the theology of Abraham Heschel, and Andrew K. Gabriel largely defends Moltmann against the arguments of Moltmann's critics.⁵⁸

Other secondary sources on Moltmann are no more similar to my thesis topic than the sources mentioned above. Many secondary sources only discuss *Theology of Hope*, presumably because it was his ground-breaking and (probably) most influential work. Moreover, these sources that only discuss *Theology of Hope* almost always focus entirely on objective contradiction and not on the other two kinds. Objective contradiction is likely focussed on because it is vital to Moltmann's concept of promise and is made most explicit. Sources on *The Crucified God* usually treat theodicy, God's impassibility, or the Trinity. Scholars understandably focus on those three topics because they are important and much debated topics in theology, but at best they allude to the concept of contradiction in their discussion. Secondary sources on *The Church and the Power of the Spirit* are simply hard to find at all.

⁵⁵ Eckardt, "Luther and Moltmann," 19–26.

⁵⁶ Scott, "Trinitarian Basis," 168–76.

⁵⁷ Neal, "Minority Report," 26–43.

⁵⁸ Jaeger, "Abraham Heschel," 168–73; Gabriel, "Beyond the Cross," 93–109.

Broadly speaking, this thesis makes a fourfold contribution to the scholarship on Moltmann. First, whereas in other secondary literature contradiction is at best alluded to or briefly described, this thesis gives a sustained, comprehensive, and systematic description of his theology of contradiction. Because of the meagre amount of material on Moltmann's concept of contradiction, material to inform this thesis must be collected from relevant bits and pieces of various works and then systematized. Second, whereas other secondary literature frequently focusses solely on *Theology of Hope*, this thesis will discuss his entire trilogy. By inspecting the trilogy a fuller sense of Moltmann's early theology will be attained. Third, when other secondary literature does discuss the dialectical nature of certain aspects of Moltmann's theology, it speaks fairly generally without identifying different kinds of dialectic. This thesis will show that there is specifically three types of contradiction (objective, subjective, and active) and that they always come from one of three specific sources (God's promises, Christ's crucifixion, or the Spirit working in and through the church). Fourth, while other secondary sources can give the impression that contradiction is something small and secondary in Moltmann, this thesis will show its importance. Contradiction is both pervasive throughout most chapters of the trilogy as well as central to Moltmann's understanding of the main systematic theological topics that the trilogy discusses.

Method

In order to focus the scope of this thesis, I am only analysing the three books of Moltmann's trilogy, not the rest of his works. There are three reasons for choosing these books and not others. First, the trilogy contains the two most popular and influential books in his corpus—*Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*. These two books are the

foundation of his stature as a theologian and are his most well-known works. Second, it is sensible for the third book studied in this thesis to be *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* because it is the book in his corpus that most inherently belongs with the other two. Moltmann has stated that he never intentionally set out to write a trilogy of books, but in hindsight he states it is appropriate to label these three books as a “trilogy.”⁵⁹ He admits that each of the three books is “one-sided,” but if read together the one-sidedness of each is corrected by the two others so that a more holistic perspective emerges.⁶⁰ Authors observe that a book about the church and the Spirit belongs with books about the cross and the resurrection in a similar way that Pentecost belonged with Good Friday and Easter Sunday.⁶¹ Thus, by studying the three books together this thesis preserves their complementariness. The third reason for focussing on these three books and not others is that Moltmann’s trilogy is clearly preparatory work for all of his later writings, as Moltmann himself remarks.⁶² Any significant theme or concern in Moltmann’s later writings is probably present in his trilogy in some form or another.

My thesis is a work in contemporary systematic theology. It is systematic for two reasons. First, it deals with four major doctrinal concerns in systematic theology. *Theology of Hope* deals with eschatology; *The Crucified God* deals with Christology; and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* deals with pneumatology and ecclesiology. Second, it shows the role the theological concept of contradiction has in Jürgen Moltmann’s theology and relates it to these four doctrinal concerns.

⁵⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, xiii.

⁶⁰ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, ix.

⁶¹ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 110.

⁶² Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 1.

There are two major steps in my methodology. The first task is to identify the theological concept of contradiction in the three volumes of Moltmann under examination in this thesis. Moltmann does not always use the word “contradiction” to describe instances of the concept that I call contradiction. Because the instances of this one theological concept had not been given a label by Moltmann, I chose a word to describe them. I decided to use the term “contradiction” to express this theological concept for two reasons. First, it is a term intrinsic to his vocabulary that he uses relatively frequently. A term that Moltmann himself uses is more appropriate than a term alien to his vocabulary. Second, Moltmann uses “contradiction” to describe each of the three kinds of contradiction that this thesis identifies on at least one occasion for each kind.⁶³

Contradiction is not something that Moltmann ever devotes a chapter or even a section of a chapter towards; he never spends time defining it or systematically describing it. It is a word that is frequently found peppered throughout his writings, used as a tool to help him describe the object of his description, but never the object of his description itself. Therefore, because the subject matter of this thesis is never made the explicit focus of any section, chapter or book by Moltmann, this thesis systematizes a topic that Moltmann does not systematically spell out himself, but nevertheless is a fundamental theological concept for him.

Next, because nothing in Moltmann’s writing is explicitly devoted to contradiction, how will this thesis identify the concept of contradiction in Moltmann’s

⁶³ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18, for “contradiction” being used to refer to objective contradiction; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 38, to refer to subjective contradiction; and Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21, to refer to active contradiction.

writing? Sometimes instances of objective contradiction are obvious in Moltmann's works because he speaks in terms of a "contradiction" between two opposing states of being. In other places, however, Moltmann's discussion about two opposing states bumping up against each other and conflicting with each other indicates the concept of contradiction. Often he uses spatial terms to describe the relationship of the two opposing states. For example, one can break into the other, the two can co-exist beside each other, or the one can be inside the other.⁶⁴

With regards to subjective contradiction, only rarely does Moltmann use "contradiction" to describe this concept; more commonly he will use words like restlessness, sighing, longing, and tension.⁶⁵ Subjective contradiction is not to be equated with mere suffering, because suffering that is caused simply by pain and that has nothing opposing or conflicting with it is not really a result of contradiction. There are, however, instances in which Moltmann talks about a forward-looking suffering that suffers with a purpose, knowing the salvation that is to come,⁶⁶ and this is indeed a form of subjective contradiction. Likewise, there is a suffering that is a result of intentionally taking up the sufferings of others, and this too can be considered subjective contradiction.⁶⁷

Active contradiction is the proactive attempt to oppose or put an end to the evil reality that is in objective contradiction with the good reality coming from God.⁶⁸ It appears in the trilogy in two main identifiable forms. One form is the act of fleeing from

⁶⁴ For an example of one state of reality breaking into another, see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 217. For two realities co-existing beside each other see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18. For one existing inside the other see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 26.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 33; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64; Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

⁶⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 51.

⁶⁷ The reasons for this are slightly complex and will be explained in chapter 2 on *The Crucified God*.

⁶⁸ For example, if God's new creation was coming into objective contradiction with the old creation of the world, active contradiction would be to proactively oppose old creation.

something, as when one flees from slavery towards freedom.⁶⁹ This act of leaving slavery and choosing freedom not only makes a statement about the evil of slavery but it also deflates slavery's power by moving oneself from being under it. The other form of active contradiction is the opposing of things through confrontation and attack. When Jesus healed the sick he was attacking the sickness or demon in order to put an end to it.⁷⁰ Terms associated with the first form include "liberation," "exodus," and "freedom";⁷¹ whereas terms associated with the second include "protest," "transform," "critical," and "negate."⁷² Often the two forms appear together in the same passage. Any occurrence of either form will be considered an instance of active contradiction.

Having established the means for identifying contradiction, it must now be established how the argument of this thesis will be defended, which is the second major step in my methodology. The body of this thesis has three main chapters, one for each book. An alternative way of organizing this thesis would have been to devote a chapter to each kind of contradiction (e.g., objective contradiction as it appears in all three books). However, because Moltmann can often talk about each kind of contradiction within a single paragraph, that sort of layout would have unnaturally fractured his thoughts and been an injustice to the interdependence of the kinds of contradiction.

Each of the three body chapters will contain an inductive/exegetical section followed by a systematic section, both of which have unique functions in defending the argument of the thesis. The purpose of an inductive section is to inspect each chapter of the book under concern for instances of contradiction. For instance, the chapter on

⁶⁹ E.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 9.

⁷⁰ As in Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 85.

⁷¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 84, 191.

⁷² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21, 33, 119; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 254.

Theology of Hope will have an inductive section that walks through all six chapters of *Theology of Hope* in order to draw attention to important instances of contradiction. The inductive sections will strengthen and advance this thesis in three ways. First, inspecting each chapter of all three books strengthens the argument because it assures that the argument is grounded on a comprehensive inspection of the trilogy. The likelihood of missing or ignoring a piece of evidence against this thesis is little.

Second, the inductive sections show that contradiction is pervasive throughout the trilogy. If contradiction was something Moltmann barely mentioned then it could easily be misinterpreted and it would be less worth discussing. But by showing that contradiction exists in essentially every chapter the inductive sections establish that contradiction is clearly a theme that exists and is worth discussing. Third, inspecting each book inductively assures that contradiction is observed within the context of Moltmann's broader arguments and natural train of thought. Proof-texting and misinterpretation due to abstracting passages out of their contexts is therefore made less likely.

The systematic section of each body chapter systematically discusses what was introduced in the inductive sections. The main features of each kind of contradiction—objective, subjective, and active—are highlighted in depth. Additionally, the three kinds of contradiction are shown to come from one of the three sources of contradiction: God's promises, Christ's crucifixion, or the Spirit working in and through the church. In describing the features and source of the contradiction, contradiction is shown to be integral to the main systematic theological topic of each book in the trilogy.⁷³

⁷³ *Theology of Hope* focusses on eschatology, *The Crucified God* on Christology, and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* on ecclesiology and pneumatology.

This thesis is be strengthened and advanced by the systematic section in two ways. First, the systematic sections show that the instances of contradiction in the trilogy are not random, unrelated things. Instead, they can be brought under three particular categories and can be show to come from one of three particular sources. Moreover, it will be shown that each kind of contradiction is related to the others, sometimes in a causal relationship. By showing that contradiction consistently has a specific shape and set of features, the systematic sections establish that contradiction is a theme that exists and that it exists *in the particular way* stated by this thesis. Second, they show that contradiction is central to the main systematic theological topic of each book. If the theology of contradiction existed only in passing comments at the periphery of Moltmann's main arguments one might question if it was being properly interpreted or if it existed at all. But if it is significantly bound up with his arguments on the main theological issues of his books, then there is greater assurance that it exists and is being interpreted correctly.

There are four primary kinds of evidence that would count against this thesis. First, there could be evidence that there is more than or less than three kinds of contradiction. If an instance of contradiction did not fit under one of the three categories, that would suggest there are more than three kinds. If no instances correspond to one or more kinds of contradiction, that would suggest there are less. Second, and similar to the first, there could be evidence that there are more than or less than three sources of contradiction. Third, if more than a few chapters in the trilogy do not contain contradiction, that would suggest contradiction is less pervasive than this thesis suggests. If contradiction is not a pervasive theme then the argument of this thesis is weakened.

Fourth, if contradiction has little to do with the main theological topics and arguments of each book, that would suggest contradiction is less central to Moltmann's theology in the trilogy. This thesis would in turn be less persuasive. Overall, if all four of these types of evidence appear in Moltmann's trilogy this would suggest that the theology of contradiction itself probably does not exist at all—or at least it exists in a way much different than this thesis suggests. But conversely, if three kinds of contradiction are found, three sources are found, contradiction is pervasive, and contradiction is central, then this thesis is confirmed.

ANALYSIS OF *THEOLOGY OF HOPE*

Introduction

Theology of Hope is a book about eschatology, “the ultimate horizon” of the world.¹ But Moltmann stresses that the world’s transformation towards this ultimate horizon is initially set in motion only by the promise of God, particularly in the resurrection.² Therefore in *Theology of Hope* eschatology and promise are inseparably bound together. This chapter discusses the relationship contradiction has to promise. It is shown that a major function of God’s promise can be summarized by saying it creates objective, subjective, and active contradiction to bring the world into correspondence with God’s coming future. The inductive section of this chapter shows that Moltmann’s theology of contradiction plays a significant role in each chapter of *Theology of Hope*. The systematic section of this chapter shows that Moltmann’s concept of promise, and therefore eschatology, cannot be understood apart from contradiction because creating contradiction is an essential purpose of promise.

Inductive Section

This section walks through each chapter of *Theology of Hope* to identify the occurrences of Moltmann’s theology of contradiction within them. The central chapter of the book, both in content and physical location, is the chapter on the resurrection (chapter three).³ In that chapter Moltmann describes Jesus’ simultaneous identity as both crucified and risen, and he describes the resurrection as a promise to the world that it will be brought to new life just as Jesus was. Chapters one and two prepare the way by critiquing

¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15–16, 125.

² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 179–81, 192–95.

³ See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 44; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 23.

some misguided perspectives on divine revelation and by inspecting God's promises in the Old Testament. Chapters four and five draw implications that the resurrection has in the areas of historical study and the calling of the church. This section makes clear that contradiction is a present and important element to each of these chapters and topics.

Introduction: "Meditation on Hope"

The important arguments of the chapter can be seen mostly as a series of four non-contradiction/contradiction contrasts. The first contrast is between the future as *logos* and the future as something new. Although Moltmann does use the word "eschatology" throughout the book, he says the term "eschato-logy" could be potentially misleading. "Eschatology" is potentially misleading because the Greek term *logos* refers to "a reality which is there, now and always, and is given true expression in the word appropriate to it." If the future had the character of *logos* it would be flat, static, and predictable. But in actual fact, the future something that "startling new" and unlike anything we already know.⁴

Following from the first contrast, the second contrast is between "doctrine statements" and "statements of hope." If the future had a *logos* it could be spoken of with doctrine statements. "Doctrine" here means "a collection of theses which can be understood on the basis of experiences that constantly recur and are open to everyone."⁵ Doctrines in this sense are based on experiences of the world as it presently is; indeed, their truth is verified by their agreement with present experience. Contrastingly, the future as Moltmann envisions it must be spoken of with "statements of hope and of

⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17.

⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17.

promises for the future.”⁶ The exact opposite of doctrinal statements, the truth of hope statements are found in their contradiction to present reality, because the future (revealed in Christ and his resurrection) stands in opposition to the sin and death of the present.⁷

Already in these first two contrasts Moltmann alludes to the three kinds of contradiction. The future as *logos* is referring to a future that is simply continuous repetition of the suffering of present reality, with no other reality to contrast it, to show that that is not all there is, and to provide hope of something different. The future God has for the world has an “element of otherness” that is not from the world itself, and therefore it creates objective contradiction when it comes into contact with this present world.⁸ Statements of hope and promise must be used to speak of the reality that is in objective contradiction with the present reality available to experience. These statements of hope and promise lead to a “hunger and thirst” (subjective contradiction) in their hearers and speakers, as well as to a desire to lead present reality to its hoped-for transformation (active contradiction).⁹

The third contrast is between a hope which hopes for the liberation of this earth, on the one hand, and two opposite but equally harmful kinds of non-contradiction. The first kind of non-contradiction is ghettoizing in that it is a hope that leads the Christian to “flee the world” into a “heavenly utopia.”¹⁰ This kind of hope runs from the suffering of

⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17.

⁷ In contexts such as this, Moltmann has a negative view of experience in which he says truth about God cannot be obtained through experience. American theologians, who in general may tend to particularly value present human experiences, have criticized him sharply for these statements (see Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 82; Chapman, “Black Theology,” 112). But these criticisms do not acknowledge that Moltmann can speak positively about experience in different contexts (see e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 197; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 84).

⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 19, 18.

¹⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 19.

the world and focusses merely on an other-worldly heaven that is supposedly waiting for believers after death. The second kind of non-contradiction is assimilating in that it remains comfortably in this world and sees in it nothing wrong or needing of transformation. A Christian hope based on faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ provides the corrective to both of these views. Suffering cannot be skipped over to get to utopia because resurrection happened only after the suffering of the cross; but the world can no longer be content with suffering because the resurrection revealed there is a better future coming. The first kind of non-contradiction is (in a significant sense) already living in the reality of new creation and the second is only living in the reality of present suffering. But both attitudes fail to see that two realities exist and are in conflict with each other. True Christian faith, however, sees the reality revealed in the raising of Christ as “God’s contradiction of suffering and death.”¹¹

The fourth contrast is between Christian hope, on the one hand, and (once again) two opposite but equally negative attitudes on the other. Despair is the first negative attitude, and it is being convinced that the hoped-for reality will never come. Presumption is the second negative attitude, and it is being convinced that the hoped-for reality is already here when it is not. Contrastingly, Christian hope believes both that there is a better reality that will come (in contrast to despair) but that this reality is not yet fully here and so must be eagerly anticipated (in contrast to presumption). The pattern of this fourth contrast is very similar to that of the third: the correct stance in Moltmann’s view is one that acknowledges the difference between present and future, longs for the future,

¹¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21. Moltmann also speaks in this passage of “unrest” and an “unquiet heart,” which are both terms of subjective contradiction.

and uses every possibility to “strive” after it.¹²

Chapter One: “Eschatology and Revelation”

According to Moltmann, for many theologians or schools of theology their concept of eschatology is bound up with their understanding of the revelation of God, and vice versa. In this chapter he summarizes four major understandings of revelation and how they are inadequate.¹³

The understandings of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann are his first two examples of incorrect theologies of revelation. He characterizes the eschatologies of both as “transcendental eschatology,” which, for present purposes, has two predominant characteristics. The first is that the origin and goal of the revelation are the same.¹⁴ For Barth, God is the Revealer and the Revealed, because God speaks simply about himself, and for Bultmann, God’s revelation is a person’s coming to their own authentic self, a process that begins and ends in the human person.¹⁵ The second characteristic is that the revelation takes place in the realm of pure subjectivity. Revelation has nothing to do with “the discernable, explicable, objectively demonstrable world of things and of history” and only takes place in that inward place of personal existence which is “as grounded in itself as the living of life,” and which “no one can explain, but everyone can experience.”¹⁶ Barth emphasized the subjectivity of God, and Bultmann emphasized the subjectivity of the human, but neither incorporated the objective realm. This meant that for Barth the

¹² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 25.

¹³ For a good description of the purpose of chapter one, see Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 46.

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 46.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 54, 61. See Meeks, *Origins*, 61, 63.

¹⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 60, 52. When discussing Bultmann’s existentialist theology Moltmann is rarely positive. For description of Moltmann’s evaluation of Bultmann/existentialism, see Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 76; Gilbertson, *Book of Revelation*, 80; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 6–11.

eschaton was the boundary that took place in revelation between God's eternity and humanity's finiteness, and for Bultmann it was the event of a person's coming to their authentic self—but for neither was the *eschaton* about the future of the world and of history.¹⁷

The third and fourth incorrect understandings were “salvation history” and history as the indirect self-revelation of God. Salvation history theology said that God's plan for the world could be discerned by examining history.¹⁸ The second view, held most prominently by Wolfhart Pannenberg, maintained that God himself was being revealed in partial and anticipatory ways through events in history, and that one day history as a completed whole will totally reveal all of God.¹⁹ Both views, however, hold that history reveals God (and his will).

Moltmann's major critique of the transcendental eschatologies of Barth and Bultmann is that they are unbiblical: the Bible shows that God reveals himself in the form of promise, which has neither of the two characteristics of transcendental eschatology. First, whereas for transcendental eschatology the origin and goal of revelation is the same, a promise is given in the present and refers to (has its goal in) the future. No contradiction can exist if the origin and goal of revelation are identical, because where there is no future (i.e., no goal) different from the present (i.e., the origin), there can be no two realities in contradiction but only unity. Promise, on the other hand, shows that the world, humanity, and even Christ himself are not now what they will be, which creates

¹⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 51, 62. Also see Davis, “Opening Dialogue,” 706; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 6–7. On Moltmann's use of the theology of Walther Zimmerli and Gerhard von Rad to surpass the inadequacies of Barth and Bultmann, see Meeks, *Origins*, 9–10.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 69, 70.

¹⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 77.

two different realities (present and future) that can then be in contradiction.²⁰ Second, whereas transcendental eschatology has only to do with pure subjectivity, God's promises include human existence but also include the whole created cosmos. Fleeing to inward subjectivity can be a way of fleeing from the suffering and death in the objective world, which is thus fleeing from contradiction. God's promise, however, opens one's eyes to the suffering and death in the objective world that oppose God's will; it "opens him to pain, patience and the 'dreadful power of the negative'" and "makes him ready to take the pain of love and of self-emptying upon himself" in mission.²¹

Moltmann also has two main critiques of salvation history and Pannenberg's eschatology. First, both views posit a significant degree of continuity between history (i.e., existing reality) and God and his will: history reveals God and his will. But for Moltmann, God is revealed in promise, and God's promises in fact show the sharp level of discontinuity between the future he has promised and existing reality.²² The other two perspectives see revelation as eschatological because reality is unconcluded but is heading towards conclusion, whereas Moltmann sees revelation as eschatological because current reality is in objective contradiction to God and his will and therefore must be changed.²³ The second critique is that these two views hold that historical events in general reveal God, whereas for him God is revealed first and foremost in the contradiction of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁴ More will be said about this

²⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 87, 91.

²¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 91.

²² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 91. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 46.

²³ Gilbertson, *God and History*, 144. This distinction is important. Moltmann is not espousing the general, continuous forward-movement of the world into the future, like Pannenberg. He is espousing a dialectic in which the reality of God (his promised future for the world) and the reality of this unredeemed world clash in conflict with each other and in this way propel the world forward. See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 34; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 37; Gilbertson, *God and History*, 143; Meeks, *Origins*, 70.

²⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84.

later in the thesis, but for present purposes it is suffice to say that God's ultimate promise (and therefore his ultimate revelation) to the world is his raising of Christ from the dead, because what he did to Christ he will do for the world too.²⁵ Christian eschatology must be founded on and driven by this event.

Chapter Two: "Promise and History"

This chapter performs the dual function of further clarifying the nature of God's revelation through promise as well as preparing the way for his central chapter on the resurrection of Christ. Because Christ and the New Testament must be seen in light of the Old Testament, the chapter prepares for the next by outlining how God's promise worked in his relationship with Old Testament Israel.²⁶

Before describing promise Moltmann again describes a form of revelation, the "epiphany of the eternal present," that is in contrast to promise. Oriental nations that surrounded Israel were concerned with epiphanies (arrivals) of the gods they worshipped. The epiphany of a god would mean the place, time, and recipients of the epiphany would be hallowed and thereby "granted correspondence with, and participation in, the eternal [i.e., timeless and unchanging] divine cosmos."²⁷ The recipients would be protected from the "chaos" of transience and time through communion with the eternal divinity. Places where epiphanies would happen would become sacred and thus important for the festivals these cultures would hold in order to repeatedly order and sanctify the chaos of time.²⁸

²⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 88.

²⁶ An overall criticism of Moltmann in Christopher Morse's *Logic of Promise* is that Moltmann's understanding of promise was derived from philosophers such as Georg Plicht and Ernst Bloch rather than detailed examination of the theory of speech-act and linguistic evidence (Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 66). While Morse makes some valid points in this regard, they do not ultimately affect the larger and most important claims made in *Theology of Hope*, as Morse himself alludes to (Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 81).

²⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 99.

²⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 98.

In contrast to “epiphany of the eternal present” the God of Israel revealed himself through promise, which is defined not by “static elements” but “vectoral and kinetic elements.”²⁹ Observing the important elements of “nomad religion” help clarify the elements of the religion of promise: nomads begin at a certain point, there is another point where they hope to end at, and there is a journey in between to get from the one to the other.³⁰ Likewise, for Israel there would be a point at which God gives a promise, a point in the future in which the promise would be fulfilled, and a space opened up in-between in which there is a journey (sometimes literal, sometimes metaphorical) to get from one to the other.³¹ Where epiphany is about the absence of movement and change, promise leads to both.

Upon first glance it may seem that Moltmann’s concern in this chapter is to emphasize forward-motion (advancing from one point to another) rather than contradiction, but closer inspection shows this is not the case. To be sure, forward-motion is without a doubt something he is trying to emphasize, but contradiction is necessary and complementary to his concept of forward-motion. This can be seen, for example, in the language he uses to contrast revelation through promise rather than epiphany. He states that God’s revelation “manifestly does not serve to bring the ever-threatened present into congruence with his eternity,” for that would create harmony and unity rather than

²⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 96.

³⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 96. It is important to note that Israel remained future-oriented even when they had settled in Canaan and were no longer literal nomads (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 97; see Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 18).

³¹ Moltmann maintains that God’s people are to know God by his historic faithfulness to them. In the past God has been true to his promises, and he should be expected to be the same with regards to still-outstanding promises. This sort of knowledge of God is in contrast to knowing God in and of himself, in his “transcendent ‘I-ness’” or “Super-Ego” (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 116). God must be known by his concrete actions in history, not by attempting to get behind them to grasp his eternal Being. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 112–19; Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 37; Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 48; Heinitz, “Eschatological and the Political,” 371; Smith, “Theology of Revelation,” 56.

contradiction.³² But rather “its effect is that the hearers of the promise become incongruous with the reality around them,” because the promise itself is in objective contradiction with reality around them.³³ This incongruity in turn causes hearers of the promise to “strike out in hope towards the future.”³⁴ Thus it is contradiction that motivates and sustains forward-motion. Revelation through epiphany, however, brings all time into one eternal moment, and where there is only oneness there can be no contradiction between two things (i.e., the future and the present).³⁵

If forward-motion alone was the main point, then it would be expected for him to speak favorably of recipients of revelation attaining to the place or state that God has promised them through progression or “evolution.” But in fact he speaks against them.³⁶ Moltmann explicitly says that fulfilment of promise does not come about through possibilities inherent in the present, as though recipients could simply journey to the fulfilment with the motivation, power, and knowledge of where to go they already have and have been using.³⁷ Likewise, he denies that the journey is about having some vague sense that things could be better someday and so setting out to hopefully arrive at this possibly-existing place.³⁸ In contrast to all of this, God’s promise reveals a concrete

³² Each of the seven characteristic features of God’s promises that Moltmann lists on pages 102–106 are taken from Walter Zimmerli’s essay “Promise and Fulfillment” except for the fourth (Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 30). The fourth feature, unique to Moltmann, is that God’s promise “stands in contradiction to the reality open to experience now and heretofore” (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103).

³³ See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 39; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 88; Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 26.

³⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 100.

³⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 99.

³⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103.

³⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103.

³⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103. In light of Moltmann’s clear stance on this issue, it is odd that Douglas Hall accuses Moltmann of propounding a theology that can too easily be confused with mere optimism (Hall, “Optimistic Society,” 376–90). First, whereas optimism’s hope is based either on wishful thinking or faith in human progress, Christian hope is firmly based on God’s promise. Second, whereas optimism envisions a better world developing out of the possibilities already inherent in the present, Moltmann maintains that God’s transcendental power contradicts the present (see discussion below). Third,

future reality that gives the hearers a specific goal and “cuts into events and divides reality” into that which is passing away and that which is to come (objective contradiction).³⁹ The interval between promise and fulfilment is called a “field of tension” because the promise has created a longing, or what Moltmann calls a “tense *inadaequatio intellectus et rei*” (inadequacy between the mind and its object).⁴⁰ But then promise leads to action because, to use the nomad metaphor, people must get up and walk to get to the promised land, and because the “unrest” created by promise drives them forward.⁴¹

Chapter Three: “Resurrection and the Future of Jesus Christ”

This chapter on the resurrection is the central chapter of the book. Not only is the resurrection the foundational element of Christianity, it is also the quintessential revelation (and therefore promise) of God that Moltmann calls “the one” revelation of God.⁴²

Within the chapter, one of the primary ideas is Jesus’ identity in total contradiction as the crucified and risen one.⁴³ The resurrection event itself was not witnessed by any of the disciples; all they witnessed were the crucifixion before and the

whereas optimism assumes world transformation will be easy, Moltmann affirms that it will require suffering (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 155–64). On this issue see Schweitzer, “Douglas Hall’s Critique,” 7–25.

³⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103.

⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 102.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120, 102. In this example Moltmann speaks as though human effort is necessary for the fulfilment of promise, but elsewhere he speaks of the fulfilment of promises as a total act of God (e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 86, 103). Bauckham concludes that, for Moltmann, establishing the kingdom is entirely the work of God, but human efforts create “anticipations” of the kingdom in history (Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 102; see Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 102, 104, 340). However, Timothy Harvie is probably correct when he says that Moltmann wishes to say that establishing the kingdom is paradoxically both entirely God’s work and that humans participation is necessary (Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 28, 45; see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 45).

⁴² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 165, 139. See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 32.

⁴³ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 33.

Easter appearances after.⁴⁴ At the cross they witnessed godforsakenness consume God's ambassador (Jesus), but with the Easter appearances they saw God's nearness in the godforsaken one and God's divinity in the one who was killed. "The two experiences stand in a radical contradiction to each other, like death and life, nothing and everything, godlessness and the divinity of God."⁴⁵ But more importantly, the contradiction goes beyond the disciples' experience right into the very heart of who Jesus is. By the faithfulness of God to Jesus, Jesus remained the same person amidst the radical discontinuity of being wholly dead and then wholly raised.⁴⁶ The one who was crucified was the risen one, and the one who was raised was the crucified one. Christ's identity is not above or beyond the cross and resurrection; rather his identity is "in" them so that "the contradictions between cross and resurrection are an inherent part of his identity".⁴⁷ In other words, Christ has (or is) objective contradiction within himself.

One cannot stop with the contradiction within Christ as an individual person, however, because his Good Friday was not a private Good Friday, nor was his Easter a private Easter.⁴⁸ All creation experiences a "universal Good Friday" in which the suffering and godforsakenness that characterizes the cross also characterizes all of

⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 197.

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 198.

⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 200. The fact that Jesus remained the same person is important because, as Moltmann goes on to explain, Christ's death and resurrection are a sign for what will happen to the world (see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 18, 35; Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 24; Conradie, "Justification of God," 99). The world will be completely destroyed and re-created, but by God's faithfulness it will be the same world, renewed. For Bauckham this continuity between old and new helpfully provides the foundation for a Christian ethic in which work done now will matter for the new creation (Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 35, 40). For Douglas James Schuurman, however, the annihilation of the present world for creation *ex nihilo* of the new creation establishes a "world-negating" ethic in which it is senseless to work for the health of earthly, corporeal, and social reality (Schuurman, "Creation," 43–44). Regardless of which author is theologically correct, Bauckham has interpreted Moltmann in the way Moltmann desires to be interpreted.

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 200.

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 211.

creation.⁴⁹ In the same way, Christ's resurrection can be seen as an "analogy" of what will happen to all creation.⁵⁰ Creation is presently unredeemed but in the resurrection God promises to renew and "resurrect" creation.⁵¹ The cross-resurrection dialectic within Jesus himself has set in motion an analogous dialectic within creation, and this dialectic (both in Christ and creation) will find its synthesis in the *eschaton* and new creation.⁵² At that time "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28), death will be annihilated by resurrection life, God's righteousness will put everything at peace with each other, and God's kingdom and rule will fully come.⁵³

Moltmann confronts a few different ideas that lead to non-contradiction in order to uphold the cross-resurrection contradiction in Christ and the world. The one idea of non-contradiction that is most important and noteworthy here is what he calls "*eschatologia gloriae*" (eschatology of glory). Eschatologies of glory have Hellenistic roots and seek to steal the Christ event of its timely elements and instead interpret it as an

⁴⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 211, 223.

⁵⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 180. The resurrection is God's ultimate promise to humanity and the world because in it God promises to renew all of creation in the same way Christ was renewed. See Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 15; Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 33; McSwain, "Community Transformation," 263.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 223, 195

⁵² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 201. Ton van Prooijen helpfully describes the historical dimension of the dialectic: "The 'cross' has to do with the conflicts of our age, with the concrete suffering of people due to inhumane structures; the 'resurrection' with hope for the world, with the transformation of unjust structures" (Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 83). Also see Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 101; Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 15; McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 30.

⁵³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163, 204, 223. Meeks states that from Moltmann's perspective the dialectical theology of Barth would not be dialectical but paradoxical. According to Meeks, Barth maintains that God's transcendence and humanity's immanence remain in "absolute contradiction." Moltmann, however, envisions genuine reconciliation: a world that wholly corresponds to God (and his promises), without any remaining contradiction (Meeks, *Origins*, 60–61). For this reason Alves' accusation that Moltmann's theology is merely a ninety-degree rotation of Barth's (i.e., horizontal rather than vertical) is inappropriate (Alves, *Human Hope*, 61; see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 41). Also see Moltmann, *Hope and Planning*, 23–25, 30; Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 74, 201, 226; Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 42; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 42; Heinitz, "Eschatological and the Political," 374.

epiphany.⁵⁴ This sort of eschatology arose from “apocalyptic ecstasy,” which is when Christians first thought that by Christ’s resurrection and exaltation, and the coming of the Spirit, they were living in a new era in which all of God’s promises had been fulfilled.⁵⁵ Soon this belief that they lived in an age of fulfilment, an age where everything has been concluded and the absolute has been reached, turned into single-minded focus on the absolute of the eternal God.⁵⁶ Simultaneous to this process, they also increasingly emphasized Christ as exalted Lord and deemphasized Christ crucified.⁵⁷ As a result to all of this (1) the sacraments were understood to transport believers from the realm of death and transience into the timeless realm, (2) earthly and corporeal things lose importance, (3) the church’s task is to draw all people into the unity with God it already has.⁵⁸

Moltmann counteracts any *eschatologia gloriae* with an *eschatologia crucis* (eschatology of the cross). With the resurrection, God’s future is “already present” in the form of promise and has “begun to move towards man.”⁵⁹ But although Christ has been resurrected he does not yet have unopposed lordship over the world, and so death has lordship over the world to a great extent. Thus the cross-resurrection contradiction remains as Christ’s identity and as part of the reality of this world until he attains complete lordship and everything is created anew.⁶⁰ Through God’s promise in the resurrection believers are made keenly aware of all of the objective contradiction in the world, the way in which universal Good Friday exists alongside the dawn of universal

⁵⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 155.

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 156, 158.

⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 157.

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 158.

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 158, 156, 159.

⁵⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 139.

⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 201.

Easter.⁶¹ Feeling the disparity between the cross of the world and its coming resurrection, believers “suffer and hope, groaning and travailing in expectation” of new creation.⁶² Holding to the earthiness of the cross and Christ crucified leaves no room to become “unworldly,” but rather “takes the trials, the contradictions and the godlessness of this world seriously” and enters into solidarity with groaning and sighing creation.⁶³ Christ’s resurrection does not just incite passive discontentment but also is vocational and missional.⁶⁴ Once again, holding to the cross does not allow “docetic hope which [sic.] leaves earthly conditions or corporeal existence to the mercy of their own contradictoriness” but opens the believer up to enter the pain of the world.⁶⁵ True Christian hope leads the believer out into the world to (1) be a benefit to the world, (2) proclaim the future of the resurrection and the righteousness of God, (3) engage in the mission and love of Christ for the world, (4) enter into solidarity with the suffering (e.g., become homeless with the homeless), and (5) seek after the life of the world by embracing trial and suffering.⁶⁶

Randall Otto has raised the question as to whether Moltmann understands the bodily resurrection of Christ to have actually happened.⁶⁷ There are two reasons why Otto believes Moltmann does not hold to an actual resurrection. First, Moltmann states that the resurrection does not speak the language of “facts” but of faith, hope, and promise.⁶⁸ Second, Moltmann holds that the resurrection is not a completed event and is in some

⁶¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 164, 195, 196.

⁶² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 158. See also Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 206, 214, 223, 229.

⁶³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163, 223. Genovesi states that, for Moltmann, remembering the cross guards against naïve optimism (Genovesi, *Expectant Creativity*, 95).

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 195, 166. See also Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 188, 202, 211, 222, 225.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 196–97.

⁶⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163, 212, 224, 213.

⁶⁷ Otto, *God of Hope*, 150–171; Otto, “Resurrection,” 83, 86. Also see Placher, “Present Absence,” 175–77.

⁶⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 173.

sense still in the process of coming about.⁶⁹

While it must be admitted that Moltmann speaks in terms that can easily be misunderstood, it is obvious that Moltmann does in fact believe that Jesus was physically, objectively resurrected in space and time. The first remark raised by Otto must be understood in the context of Moltmann's discussion of the modern historical method and Ernst Troeltsch's principle of analogy. Troeltsch's principle of analogy states that if an event of the past corresponds to other events in human experience that are normal, customary, and frequent, it is more probable that the past event actually happened.⁷⁰ For Moltmann, however, the resurrection is absolutely without analogy in human experience because it is eschatologically new and in contradiction to the godlessness that defines present experience.⁷¹ Therefore, when Moltmann declares that the resurrection does not speak the language of "facts" he is saying that the reality of the resurrection cannot be ascertained by means of the historical method.⁷² Moltmann's second remark must be understood in the context of his comments about Jesus being both resurrected and crucified until the *eschaton*. As discussed above, by maintaining that Jesus is still crucified Moltmann does not mean that Jesus is in any way dead or not fully alive. Rather, he means that all things do not yet correspond to Christ's lordship and are yet to

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 171.

⁷⁰ Gilbertson, *God and History*, 3.

⁷¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 172–81; MacLeod, "Christology of Jürgen Moltmann," 37; Gilbertson, *God and History*, 18; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 94.

⁷² John Macquarrie's criticism is also relevant here (Macquarrie, "Eschatology and Time," 122). He states that Moltmann's thinking about the resurrection is circular. On the one hand, Jesus' resurrection will be without analogy, and therefore unable to be historically verified, until God renews all things at the *eschaton* and Jesus' resurrection finally finds an analogy (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 180). On the other hand, the only basis for hope that God will renew all things is that Jesus was in fact resurrected (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 194). However, Moltmann's point is not that we cannot know whether the resurrection happened or not, but that because of its present-contradicting character the resurrection cannot be ascertained through the historical method.

be renewed, and it is in this sense alone that the resurrection is a process that remains uncompleted.⁷³

A similar sort of logic is behind certain other mystifying statements in *Theology of Hope*. Perhaps one of the most controversial and unclear statements in the book is when Moltmann says that God has “future as his essential nature.”⁷⁴ Likewise, he says that God is a God “we therefore cannot really have in us or over us but always only before us,” God does not exist as eternal presence but “promises his presence and nearness,” and God is the “coming One.”⁷⁵ These statements could understandably lead one to interpret him as saying that God in some sense does not currently exist but only exists in the future, as some scholars seem to have done.⁷⁶ Langdon Gilkey, for example, critiques Moltmann for placing God in the future. According to Gilkey, Moltmann places God in the future for the purposes of theodicy, so that rather than being a presently all-powerful God over creation Moltmann’s God exists entirely in the future and therefore cannot be held responsible for evil and suffering. Gilkey proceeds to describe how placing God in the future present problems for other aspects of Moltmann’s theology. If God was truly in the future he could not raise Christ to life or equip humans in the present with transcendental power—both things that Moltmann affirms.⁷⁷

Daniel Castello and Joy Ann McDougall are correct when they say that Moltmann’s theology of the ontology and nature of God is not well-developed in *Theology of Hope*.⁷⁸ Problems will arise if one attempts to interpret the above statements

⁷³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163, 201.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16, 30, 164.

⁷⁶ See Otto, *God of Hope*, 83; Alves, *Human Hope*, 61; Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 58; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 111–13;

⁷⁷ Gilkey, “Universal and Immediate,” 85–86; Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 233–35.

⁷⁸ Castello, “Reclaiming the Future,” 211; McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 36.

regarding God and the future as theologically precise statements that compose Moltmann's doctrine of God. Of much greater concern to Moltmann in this context is the existence of suffering in the world and humanity's need to be liberated from it.⁷⁹ Or, in the phrasing of this thesis, Moltmann's underlying focus is the existence of negative things in the present that contradict God's promised future. He is associating God's divinity with his rule over creation: presently God's divinity is not fully shown because certain things still contradict his rule, but with the new creation his divinity will be fully manifest. "In the exercise of his reign he is the Lord, and in the real manifestation of his deity he is God. Therefore, his deity will only be manifest with the coming of his kingdom."⁸⁰ Thus, God does ontologically exist in the present but his kingdom has not yet fully come, and so only in that sense God is still "coming."⁸¹

Chapter Four: "Eschatology and History"

An important topic that last chapter's statements about the resurrection has implications for is that of history. By discussing the nature of history (or historical research) this chapter concerns itself with a necessary presupposition that makes contradiction and promise possible.

The main issue that Moltmann confronts is the desire of humanity in the modern age to find the "'end of history' in history."⁸² Because of the forward-moving tendency of history, new possibilities for life continuously confront humankind and (eventually) force it to leave old traditions, institutions, and methods of life behind. But leaving the familiar

⁷⁹ On the utterly important place that suffering holds in Moltmann's theology see O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, 109; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 30; Jaeger, "Problem of Evil," 6; Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 15–24.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 10.

⁸¹ On this discussion see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 85–88, 119, 160–64, 191–202; Moltmann, "Theology in the Project," 16; Meeks, *Origins*, 80–87; Willis, *Theism*, 161–62.

⁸² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 264.

behind and venturing into the unknown and new is a frighteningly uncomfortable feeling, so humanity tries to find a way of ending these radical jumps into the unknown, which effectively means (as Moltmann sees it) ending history itself.⁸³

Humanity's means of attempting to end history is through historical science and philosophy of history, because once "the circumstances, laws and origins of revolution [i.e., the forward progression of history] can be thoroughly understood, then it becomes calculable and also avoidable."⁸⁴ Two complementary routes are taken to try to understand and calculate history. The first is to find beneath its transient and "chaotic" movement an "immanent *logos*," an unchangeable "essence" that is behind and somehow giving meaning to or determining particular historical events.⁸⁵ The second is to "objectify" historic reality with a detachment that sees it as a series of static and established facts.⁸⁶

Christ's resurrection shows this concept of and relationship to history to be incorrect. With respect to history being static and established facts, this will not be the case until history is actually finished and can be viewed as a completed whole.⁸⁷ In terms of contradiction, when history is a static and finished whole there will be no objective contradiction between present and promised reality, and there will be no mission to transform the world (active contradiction). But as of now there still is an outlying future and thus a mission that grasps onto "new possibilities" for history and leaves "inadequate realities" behind.⁸⁸ With respect to history having a *logos*, the Judeo-Christian tradition

⁸³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 230, 235.

⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 235.

⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 245.

⁸⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 240.

⁸⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 245.

⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 284.

rejects this Greek notion and rather thinks of history in terms of “the new” and “the promised.”⁸⁹ The point of the resurrection was that it was not simply another manifestation of an unchanging *logos*, but that it was a genuinely new and contradictory reality to the reality experienced thus far. Similarly, Christian mission which springs from the resurrection is concerned with true transformation (active contradiction) of the world, rather than leaving it unchanged.⁹⁰ With respect to the general desire to end history “in” history, Christians do long for the promised day when all things will be at rest and in harmony, but they know that this day cannot be prematurely manufactured before the promised day comes.⁹¹ Until that day they stay restless and looking in every way to contradict death and suffering in the world.

Chapter Five: “Exodus Church”

Moltmann states that with the rise of modern industrial society humans have experienced the rise of the radicalization both of the objectivity of the world and of the subjectivity of their own selves.⁹² On the one hand, industrial society has made it so that the only way people publically relate to each other is as producer and consumer. Social relationships are objectified by reducing them to the “facts and functions” of satisfying

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 260.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 288. Also see Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 38, 101; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 34; Meeks, *Origins*, 141. For more on Moltmann’s prescription to the church to transform the world, see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 39; March, “Grateful Reflections,” 53. Moltmann is not as clear in *Theology of Hope* as he is in later works that the church is called to transform the systems and structures of society and politics, but traces of this belief can be found throughout the book, particularly chapter five (see Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 100). Arne Rasmusson understandably critiques Moltmann for being too general in his ethical prescriptions: he commonly speaks of “transformation” and “liberation” but does not outline in detail what these look like (Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 65; cf. Schuurman, “Creation,” 55).

⁹¹ Bauckham notes that because the ultimate resolution of all contradiction is reserved for the future, the church cannot allow itself to religiously justify the status quo (Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 102). Also see Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 27.

⁹² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 310. For more on Moltmann’s view of modernity, see e.g., Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 66; Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 31; Moltmann, “Theology in the Project,” 1–22; Moltmann, *Experiment Hope*, 27–29; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 65–67.

needs and leaving other things like culture, religion, tradition, morals, and nationality to the personal and private preference of individuals.⁹³ On the other hand, the private subjectivity of individuals is given “free reign” when all relationships other than those of satisfying needs through labour are “relieved of social necessity.”⁹⁴ Because the private personal sphere is free from all social conventions and constraints, it is radically free to choose between a “tremendous diversity of individual variations in matters of taste, evaluation, and opinion.”⁹⁵

The focus of the chapter is how this radical objectification and subjectivity has negatively influenced the self-understanding and mission of the Church. The Church has adapted to the roles that society has given it, rather than standing its ground so that it can critique and transform society (i.e., contradict it).⁹⁶ Moltmann outlines three roles the Church has adapted to. First, and most important, the Church has become “the cult of the new subjectivity.” Objectification has removed any sense of the divine from society and public life, but the Church provides a place and a theology that concerns itself with receiving and being saved by God in one’s “personal, individual and private” selfhood.⁹⁷ Second, the Church has become “the cult of co-humanity.” In contrast to a society where everything is viewed in hollow utilitarian and “businesslike” terms, the Church makes itself into a “Noah’s ark” where people can be intimate and friendly with each other, and thus find refuge for their inner life.⁹⁸ Third, the Church has become “the cult of the institution.” The vast number of options and choices available to the radical subjectivity

⁹³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308.

⁹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308–9.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 309. See Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 66.

⁹⁶ That is, the source of the Church’s self-understanding has largely been society and not theology (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 305; see Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 78).

⁹⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 311, 313.

⁹⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 316, 319, 320.

is overwhelmingly complex, so the Church provides its members with security through the “beneficial unquestioningness” of its stable and institutionalized patterns of conduct for its social life.⁹⁹

The problem in all of this is that by escaping the world the Church is adapting to the world, and by adapting to the world the Church is escaping it. Each of the three roles mentioned above leads Christians away from the world of objects and public life and into the private world of subjective existence and decisions. The Church becomes a “non-worldly phenomenon” in that it acts as a “Noah’s ark” that removes Christians from the outside godless world of social estrangement.¹⁰⁰ Fleeing the world the world of death is the opposite of coming into active contradiction with it: escapism means that corrupt social conditions are not confronted.¹⁰¹ Corresponding to this, by removing itself from the world the Church is actually doing what the world (or “modern society”) wants it to do, and is thus adapting to it. By letting society determine its roles and self-understanding, the Church no longer has “something peculiar to say to the world” and so has lost the ability to contradict it in a healthy way.¹⁰² Normally escapism and adaptation are two opposite but equally negative alternatives to active contradiction, but in this case the Church is doing both.

As a solution to this the Church must become an “Exodus Church” in two ways. First, the Church must “exodus” out of the roles that society has given it into the roles that God desires for it.¹⁰³ Second, the Church must lead all of society in an exodus

⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 321, 322.

¹⁰⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 320, 321. The way the Church has tried to protect itself from the external world is related to the way the Church has tried to protect its faith from modern historical criticism (see Meeks, *Origins*, 10).

¹⁰¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 315.

¹⁰² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 305.

¹⁰³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324.

towards the promised future God has for the world in Christ.¹⁰⁴ What motivates Christians to lead society in exodus is the future horizon before them that causes them “constant unrest” (subjective contradiction) and makes it so that they “cannot put up with” society as it is.¹⁰⁵ Practically speaking, leading society in exodus is done not just by waiting for the promised future, but by actively seeking it.¹⁰⁶ The Church is called to enter into a “conflict-laden, but fruitful relationship” with society by criticizing, transforming, and renewing it (i.e., actively contradicting it) to bring it into correspondence with the promised future.¹⁰⁷

Systematic Section

Theology of Hope is about Christian eschatology, and as such it is about God’s promises, because for Moltmann God’s method of revealing and beginning the future of the world is through promise.¹⁰⁸ With respect to *Theology of Hope*, this thesis argues that in this book God creates and fosters in the world three different types of contradiction (objective, subjective, and active) through promise in order to accomplish his purposes. It would be going too far to say creating contradiction is the only purpose to God’s promises, but it is an indispensable one. Therefore, advancing this thesis by systematically commenting on Moltmann’s theology of contradiction will clarify his concept of eschatology (the major theme of the book).

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 304, 324.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324, 330.

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 326, 330.

¹⁰⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324, 335, 330. Gilkey’s critique of the “school of hope,” of which Moltmann is a part, is surely correct: they tend to reduce salvation to social and political liberation, neglecting the central biblical themes of sin and grace (Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 236).

¹⁰⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15, 85. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, ix.

Objective Contradiction

The Two Realities in Contradiction

In the introductory chapter, objective contradiction was defined as “the objective existence of two opposing realities existing in close proximity to each other at the same time; or, put another way, a situation in which two contradicting states are side by side, confronting and clashing with one another.”¹⁰⁹ In *Theology of Hope*, the two realities in objective contradiction are present reality and future reality—or technically, present reality and the future God has promised. Present reality is marked by godforsakenness, sin, death, suffering, and dissension. The promised future, however, shall be characterized by righteousness, life, glory, and peace.¹¹⁰ These two realities are opposites and are antagonistic to each other. Because they have come into contact (or close proximity) with each other there is friction between them and thus the two other kinds of contradiction are created, as will be further discussed below.¹¹¹

*The Resurrection as Promise*¹¹²

The resurrection is such an unparalleled, paradigmatic, and central revelation of God (and therefore promise of God) that Moltmann states that all Christian eschatology is

¹⁰⁹ See above, page 11 of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18.

¹¹¹ Three things must be noted. First, it is the promised future reality that contradicts present reality, not the promise itself. Promises are vehicles through which God reveals and orients humans towards the future reality (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18). Second, it is only the future reality promised by God that contradicts present reality, not the future in general. Some events and times in the future may be the same as or worse than the present, but the events and times that are promised are guaranteed to be better (see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 85, 100). Third, “objective” in “objective contradiction” is simply meant to contrast with “subjective.” The promised future reality is considered to be in opposition with present reality not because it is already present or physical, but rather because it has to do with the world external to the human mind.

¹¹² For the sake of space the other promises of God that Moltmann discusses will not be covered here. This is not a great loss however, because the resurrection is the exemplary promise of God. God’s other promises are less grand and ground-breaking as the resurrection, but they are still analogous to it in the manner in which they work.

a study of the resurrection and what it means for the future.¹¹³ The cross and the resurrection must be understood together. Death, “nothing,” and “godlessness” are terms Moltmann uses to describe the cross. On the cross “*nihil*” (nothingness) embraced God’s very own ambassador, and it could even be said that it embraced God himself.¹¹⁴ Jesus hung on the cross “godforsaken.”¹¹⁵ In sharp contrast to this, Moltmann uses the terms “life,” “everything,” “the divinity of God,” and “the nearness of God” to describe the resurrection. The cross was utter negativity, but the resurrection was supreme positivity: the two are a “total contradiction.”¹¹⁶

Important to Moltmann is the fact that Jesus is not just the risen one but remains the crucified and risen one. It is a “Docetic” error to hold that the earthly and crucified Jesus was “swallowed up” by the heavenly and resurrected Christ.¹¹⁷ In other words, Moltmann is trying to stress that until the *eschaton* the cross continues to characterize who Jesus is (or the state he is in). It is not that he was the crucified one and is now the risen one; he is both the crucified one and the risen one presently, at the same time. Moltmann calls this Jesus’ “identity in total contradiction,” which is to suggest that “the contradictions between cross and resurrection are an inherent part of his identity.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, for Moltmann it is not just that the event of the resurrection contradicts the event of the crucifixion, but also that the cross and the resurrection in their contradiction continue to define Jesus until the *eschaton*. By speaking this way, Moltmann is not suggesting that Jesus is literally somehow still dying or suffering from hanging on a

¹¹³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 17, 195.

¹¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 198.

¹¹⁵ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 97.

¹¹⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 198, 199. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 199. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 52.

¹¹⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 199–200. See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 34–35.

cross. He has not already fully arrived at being Lord over all things, but is still “on the march” as “the Lord on the way to his coming lordship.”¹¹⁹ To the extent Christ’s lordship is still contradicted he is still “crucified.”

To better understand Jesus’ “identity in total contradiction,” the raising of the crucified Christ must be seen as a promise. The cross represents not just the death of Jesus, but also all of the death, nothingness, suffering, and godforsakenness that permeates the world. Borrowing from Hegel, Moltmann holds that the world is undergoing a “speculative” or “universal” Good Friday in which God seems to be dead and the suffering that Christ experienced on the cross parallels the suffering of the world.¹²⁰

When the cross is seen as representative of the whole suffering world, the raising of Christ from the dead then becomes the ultimate promise for the world. The present reality is characterized by suffering and death, but the resurrection promises a future that will be characterized by righteousness, life, and the kingdom of God. First, reality characterized by righteousness is a reality in which humans are set right with themselves and with all of creation.¹²¹ Second, for Moltmann life means giving thanks and praise in the presence of God, which also means that humans will no longer die and God will not be experienced as dead.¹²² Third, the kingdom of God means his “real” and “historic”

¹¹⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 87.

¹²⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84, 211. Hegel spoke of the speculative Good Friday specifically with reference to the experience of modern humanity. Moltmann similarly is most concerned about dealing with the problems of modernity, but does not mean to suggest that the modern period is the only period to undergo suffering that parallels the cross. For more on the speculative Good Friday see Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 100, 111; Meeks, *Origins*, 35–38. For more on Moltmann’s interaction with Hegel see Gilbertson, *God and History*, 11–18; Fiorenza, “Dialectical Theology, I,” 143–63; Otto, *God of Hope*, 17–27.

¹²¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 204.

¹²² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 208–11.

rule over all things which allows his glory to manifest itself.¹²³ At the last day when all of this is realized, “God will be all in all” (1 Cor. 15.28). This implies that a unity to all things will come when God is in all and nothing is in contradiction to him or his will.¹²⁴

The resurrection is a promise, not a fulfillment or completion, of this unity of all things. For that reason it is also the ultimate cause of objective contradiction in *Theology of Hope*. The fact that the cross and the resurrection form a contradiction in Jesus’ own identity, combined with the fact that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are an “analogy” for the world, means that the world is defined by this contradiction between death and life.¹²⁵ Just as Jesus is not only the resurrected one but both the crucified and resurrected one, so the world is not fully redeemed but is presently the battleground between death and life, old and new.¹²⁶ The dialectic of the cross and resurrection in the world remains an open dialectic that will only find its synthesis in the *eschaton*.¹²⁷ As a “foretaste” and “foreglow” of the *eschaton*, Jesus has brought the future into contact with the present so that it is not far away from it but in tension with it.¹²⁸

Clarification

It is necessary to look at how promise brings present reality and the promised future into objective contradiction. Without careful observation Moltmann’s understanding of the way this process works can remain vague. God’s raising of Christ from the dead is itself God’s promise to creation. The first way this brings objective contradiction is by making Christ both the crucified and risen one, not one or the other.

¹²³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 216.

¹²⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 163. For more on Moltmann’s concept of the *eschaton* see Conradie, “Justification of God,” 91–105; Schuurman, “Creation,” 47; Meeks, *Origins*, 62–63.

¹²⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 180.

¹²⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 222, 223, 226.

¹²⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 200.

¹²⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 85, 281.

His identity is now found “in” the objective contradiction between the reality of death and reality of life that resides in his person.¹²⁹ The second way is that to the extent Christ is the resurrected one, thus manifesting objective new creation, he contradicts the rest of the unredeemed world in its suffering and death.¹³⁰

Third, through the resurrection God has opened up “real, objective possibilities” for the world.¹³¹ That is, because of the resurrection there are now concrete opportunities to transform and direct the world towards the coming kingdom that did not exist before the resurrection. When these possibilities are actualized through action, positive realities such as happiness and freedom can be attained. These positive realities are limited, proleptic instances of the kingdom of God and “eternal life” and are in objective contradiction with the suffering and death in the world.¹³² Fourth, and finally, the *eschaton* itself, which in its totality is completely in the future, has been brought into objective contradiction with present reality. Moltmann states that with the resurrection the “divine lordship” of Christ has “dawned” and “drawn near.”¹³³ Without the resurrection the promised future was far away so that it could not be in tense objective contradiction with the present, but its being brought near makes it close to the present, allowing objective contradiction to occur. The dawn metaphor is helpful: in the middle of

¹²⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 200.

¹³⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 226. Moltmann critiques Pannenberg for not describing the resurrection radically enough. Pannenberg sees the resurrection as an event of history (albeit an extraordinary event) that is simply a prolepsis of the *eschaton*. Moltmann, however, would prefer to emphasize the contradictory nature of the resurrection by saying that resurrection is not an event of history but means something new for history and creates its own history. The resurrection contradicts all world history that does not arise from itself (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 77–84; Gilbertson, *God and History*, 18).

¹³¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 288.

¹³² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 223. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 213.

¹³³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 31, 201, 328. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 139, 198. Moltmann’s language throughout the book suggests this causal direction: the resurrection has caused the promised future to come near, rather than the future’s nearness being the cause (or explanation) of the resurrection.

the night daytime is far away, but at dawn day and night clash because daytime is at hand.¹³⁴

The Source of Transcendence

Scholars have questioned whether he truly sees God as the source of transcendence (i.e., ability to defeat the problems of the world).¹³⁵ Some, including Karl Barth, have proposed that Moltmann simply took Ernst Bloch's philosophy, which Moltmann was undoubtedly indebted to, and dressed it in Christian terminology.¹³⁶ Bloch, however, is an atheist and holds that the ability to transcend comes from human power and hope and that material processes naturally have a forward movement to them.¹³⁷ This discussion is relevant because if these accusations are correct then objective contradiction is not possible, at least in the way it has been treated thus far. If Moltmann is in fact talking about powers of progression immanent in humanity and the world, then there is no place for God's promise of future reality that contradicts present reality.

That these authors critique Moltmann in this way is somewhat surprising because he explicitly denies the idea of humanity and the world progressing on its own. He says that the expected future "does not develop out within the framework of the possibilities

¹³⁴ Moltmann states, "All who believe and hear [God's promise in the resurrection], move from a distant expectation of an uncertain future to a sure hope in a near future of God which has already dawned in that one person [i.e., Christ]" (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 171).

¹³⁵ Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 127–28; Otto, *God of Hope*, 99. Otto's *God of Hope* is particularly worth noting due to its boldly critical stance towards Moltmann. He argues not just that Moltmann's theology is unbiblical but that Moltmann is even an atheist. Nothing in Moltmann's theology is especially Christian or theistic, and any Christian concepts Moltmann does discuss are merely "symbols" used to convey non-Christian messages (see Otto, *God of Hope*, 19, 28, 71, 77–80, 99, 162, 167–71, 185–86, 199). However, Otto's repeated refrain that Moltmann speaks in symbols—"Moltmann says *this* but really means *that*"—proves to be unpersuasive. This accusation of speaking in symbols becomes a way for Otto to reinterpret Moltmann almost any way he wants and to dismiss all counterevidence as itself being symbolic too. Also see Otto, "Resurrection," 85; Otto, "Eschatological Nature," 133.

¹³⁶ Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 42, 58; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 8; Adams, "Sacred and Profane," 301. On Bloch's impact on Moltmann, see Meeks, *Origins*, 16–18; Bentley, "Christian Significance," 51–55; Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 97.

¹³⁷ See Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology, II," 384–99; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 95.

inherent in the present” or from “evolution, progress and advance.”¹³⁸ The only reason we have hope of one day being released from this reality of suffering and death is that the impossible “has been made possible” by the work of Christ.¹³⁹ Christianity “stands or falls” with the reality of the resurrection, and the resurrection is an “eschatologically new” possibility for the world that could not arise from within the world.¹⁴⁰ To be sure, forward-moving transformation of the world is still the desired outcome, but Moltmann is proposing that the stimulus and power for transformation comes from God, not from humans or the natural world.

The convictions that underlie these comments soon gave rise to Moltmann’s distinction between *futurum* and *adventus* in the works that followed *Theology of Hope*.¹⁴¹ Essentially, *futurum* speaks of a future that “will be” and *adventus* speaks of a future that is “to come.” With *futurum*, the present becomes, begets, or gives rise to the future and therefore the future can be extrapolated from the present. But with *adventus*, the future is “something other, something new and transforming” that comes to and arrives in the present, so it is not extrapolated but anticipated.¹⁴² For this thesis, the importance of this concept is that life and transformation do not come from powers and possibilities immanent in the world—if they did that would mean continuity and sameness rather than objective contradiction. Instead, life and transformation come from

¹³⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103.

¹³⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 19–20. See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 44–45.

¹⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 165, 179.

¹⁴¹ For *futurum* and *adventus* in later works see e.g., Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 29; Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 25; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 317; Moltmann, *Experiment Hope*, 52–53; Moltmann, “Theology as Eschatology,” 11–16. Authors commonly discuss *futurum* and *adventus* in the context of discussing *Theology of Hope*. For examples, see Gilbertson, *God and History*, 173–74; Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 111–3; Otto, *God of Hope*, 99. For an example of a statement made in *Theology of Hope* that alludes to *adventus*, see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 227, where Moltmann says that Christ’s parousia is “an arriving future” that is “coming towards us.”

¹⁴² Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 29–30.

God's promises, which bring a contrasting future into contact with the present and thereby create objective contradiction.¹⁴³

Subjective Contradiction

The Nature of Subjective Contradiction

The introductory chapter defined subjective contradiction as “the subjective feeling or emotion caused by objective contradiction.” In the case of subjective contradiction in *Theology of Hope*, it is the subjective feeling or emotion caused by the objective contradiction between present reality and the promised future reality.

Moltmann describes these subjective feelings and emotions sometimes as being negative or uncomfortable and sometimes as being positive. When he is talking about subjective contradiction as being a positive feeling, he usually calls it “hope” and to a lesser extent “expectation.” He states that hope is itself believers’ “happiness” in the present, because they have a firm knowledge of the good things coming to them.¹⁴⁴ Elsewhere Moltmann remarks that hope can sustain and nourish faith when it is in danger of becoming fainthearted when the things faith believes do not seem to be presently true.¹⁴⁵ That hope can have this vivifying effect implies that it would include positive and uplifting emotion. Lastly, hope is contrasted with melancholy and despair, one of which

¹⁴³ Randall Otto and Gerhard Sauter state that the difference between *futurum* and *adventus* proves to be inconsequential in Moltmann's theology. They cite passages in which Moltmann says eschatology is “forward-moving” and “forward-looking” (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16), to think eschatologically is to “think a matter through to the end” (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 257), and both *futurum* and *adventus* perspectives are necessary for Christians (Moltmann, *Antwort*, 212). This criticism is misplaced, however, because it is completely sensible to say that from a human perspective both *futurum* and *adventus* must be taken into account. Humans are not God and therefore they can act, think, and plan based only on the past and present as they strike out into the future; but God is not similarly limited and can therefore bring a startlingly new future that contradicts the present. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 58.

¹⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 32.

¹⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 20.

is lack of emotion and the other of which strongly implies negative emotions.¹⁴⁶ That hope is in contrast to these suggests that it not only has an emotional aspect, but that the emotional aspect is positive.¹⁴⁷

In contrast to this, Moltmann also speaks of subjective contradiction as though it is a negative feeling. Indeed, Moltmann is much more frequent and explicit in describing the unpleasantness of subjective contradiction. Many times throughout the book he describes the subjective feeling that results from objective contradiction as “pain” and “suffering.”¹⁴⁸ Other times he describes the feeling as “groaning,” “sighing,” “hunger,” and “tension.”¹⁴⁹ These words are not as strongly negative as “pain” and “suffering,” but they still do communicate a tangible sense of lack or something being wrong. Even less negative than these are words such as “restless” and “longing.”¹⁵⁰ These two words do have a similar connotation as the previous set of words, having to do with lack or wrongness. However, they are more neutral. It could even be said that one is restless or longs for something in a way that would involve positive emotion and desire.

In light of these different descriptions, it is not completely clear whether Moltmann sees subjective contradiction as a positive or negative feeling. But he likely intends it to be this way. Positive and negative emotions being present at the same time, or an emotion that falls somewhere between positive and negative, or the feeling of being

¹⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 22, 23.

¹⁴⁷ Moltmann would maintain that hope has an aspect of cognitive belief as well as emotion. Hope should not be reduced to only positive emotion. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15–35.

¹⁴⁸ For “pain” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 91, 163. For “suffering” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 158, 161, 196, 197, 207.

¹⁴⁹ For “groan” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 229, 158, 162. For “sigh” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 223. For “hunger” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 224, 225. For “tension” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 224, 104, 107.

¹⁵⁰ For “restless” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 275, 276, 105, 196. For “longing” see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 216, 223, 16.

pulled simultaneously towards negative emotion as well as positive emotion—this is, generally speaking, the most likely subjective response to objective contradiction.

The Source of Subjective Contradiction

The source of subjective contradiction is mentioned in its own definition: it is the subjective feeling or emotion that comes from objective contradiction, and only from there. Objective contradiction is caused by God's promise, and therefore subjective contradiction comes indirectly from God's promise. Alves, one of the few commentators on Moltmann who deals at any length with subjective contradiction, does not agree that human hope, suffering, and longing come from God's promise. He argues that the negativity of the present does not need to be mediated to humans through God's promise or transcendent hope, as Moltmann holds, but rather it is immediate. For Alves, the human being "is aware of the pain of his situation simply because he is a human being and feels in his flesh the inadequacy between his world and himself and his community. [sic.]"¹⁵¹ In other words, that things are not right is already obvious apart from God's promise because suffering abounds, and suffering is felt because it is painful.

Though Alves ultimately disagrees with Moltmann, Alves is correct in his interpretation of him. Moltmann states outright that the tension and contradiction believers feel does not originate from the suffering and death in the world, in and of themselves. It is only because of God's promise that these feelings are felt.¹⁵² At three different points in the book Moltmann says that Augustine's "*cor inquietum*" is not a

¹⁵¹ Alves, *Human Hope*, 59–61. Bloch, who was an atheist, also held this stance. The human longing for the "not yet" was an important part of his philosophy, but he did not suggest this longing must be aroused by God (Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 166). Nevertheless, part of the reason Moltmann was so attracted to Bloch was because he identified with Bloch's "passionate unrest" and "urgent impatience" for world change (Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 43).

¹⁵² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 224.

feeling that all humans have generally, but that it arises specifically in hearers of God's promise.¹⁵³

Moltmann is not claiming that believers are the only ones who suffer or feel restless.¹⁵⁴ There are two ways, however, that the experience of believers is unique. First, a certain kind of suffering and restlessness can be experienced only when one has a tangible feeling of the discrepancy between the old and the new, that which is passing away and that which is doubtlessly coming. Non-believers do not have any certain knowledge of what the future holds, so they can not feel the contradiction between the present and a sure future. Believers do have certain knowledge, through promise, of the future that is coming, and so they groan as the "goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."¹⁵⁵ Second, there is a way that God's promise opens believers' eyes to how terrible suffering really is and to "the deadliness of death."¹⁵⁶ Comparable to how Paul says he would not have known what sin was without the law (Rom 7.7), the goodness of the promised future reveals the depths of how evil suffering and death are. This extra component adds to restlessness and suffering in a way unique to believers who have received God's promise.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 88, 196, 276.

¹⁵⁴ For examples of Moltmann acknowledging suffering and restlessness in non-Christians, see pages 38–39 and 44–45 of this thesis as well as Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 230–38.

¹⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 88, 223, 224.

¹⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 91, 208, 214.

¹⁵⁷ With all this said, it must be admitted that Moltmann sometimes speaks in strong terms that could make it seem like it truly is only believers who suffer, feel restless, and work for change at all. For example, "If we had before our eyes only what we see, then we should cheerfully or reluctantly reconcile ourselves with things as they happen to be. That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope" (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21–22).

Active Contradiction

The Driving Force of Active Contradiction

Subjective contradiction motivates active contradiction because desire for change motivates working for change. In one place Moltmann speaks of promise as command, where the motivation to change reality seems to come not from an internal desire but an external word.¹⁵⁸ Cases like this, however, are quite rare. Far more often than not, when speaking of the Christian's motivation to work for change he speaks of a strong internal desire to do so rather than an emotionally uninvolved obedience.¹⁵⁹ This fact suggests that it should be assumed that subjective contradiction is the driving force of the active contradiction under discussion, even when subjective contradiction is not explicitly mentioned.

The words Moltmann uses for subjective contradiction, like “restlessness” and “hunger,” almost inherently imply that action will surely result from these feelings. Feeling restless leads to movement, and feeling hungry leads to satisfying the hunger. He says that “the whole force of promise” is to keep people on the move “in a tense *inadaequatio rei et intellectus* [inadequacy between the mind and its object]” until the promise is fulfilled.¹⁶⁰ This strongly suggests that though it is the promise that sets the horizon towards which people move, it is the “tense” feeling of discrepancy that motivates people to move. Similarly, a number of times he states that the present reality is something that hearers of promise cannot “reconcile” themselves with, become “incongruous” to, “can no longer put up with,” and cannot be “satisfied” with.¹⁶¹ These

¹⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120–23.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21, 22, 31, 85, 100, 102, 163, etc.

¹⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 102.

¹⁶¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 22, 100, 214, 223. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 230.

terms denote both subjective and active contradiction at once: an emotional feeling of dissatisfaction with reality plus action that is not falling in line with the *status quo*.

It would be untrue to Moltmann to say subjective contradiction is the “cause” or “reason” for active contradiction. If the only reason one set out to change reality was to feel better emotionally, that would be a very individualistic and private reason, which is something Moltmann is trying to avoid. Always of central importance is that the resurrection is a contradiction to the fallenness of the world and is therefore a promise to the whole objective world. God’s promise in the resurrection, along with its future fulfilment, is the cause and reason for active contradiction. Subjective contradiction, however, is helpful and perfectly appropriate as a response to objective contradiction and as a driving, motivating, and catalytic influence towards active contradiction.

The Goal of Active Contradiction

The reality that active contradiction is directed towards is the reality God promised in raising Christ from the dead. It will be a reality defined by complete life, righteousness, and the rule of God, where God is all in all, as discussed above. To further understand what Moltmann sees as the purpose and goal of active contradiction, it will be helpful to note five observations that have been made by scholars. First, some scholars have questioned whether Moltmann does envision an actual goal, an actual *eschaton*, for Christian action and hope.¹⁶² They suggest that for Moltmann the *eschaton* is just a symbol that inspires action and hope, not something that will actually occur in the future. However, despite some comments that may suggest otherwise, Moltmann certainly

¹⁶² Otto, *God of Hope*, 74; Stanley, “Two Futures,” 43; Horton, “Eschatology after Nietzsche,” 49.

believes in a real and actual *eschaton*.¹⁶³ The promise God made to the world through the resurrection will be entirely fulfilled someday. If Moltmann does not believe in an actual *eschaton* then he must believe God's promises are lies. But Moltmann states that to anticipate the non-fulfilment of what we hope for from God is to despair, whereas to hope (which Moltmann endorses) is to anticipate the fulfilment.¹⁶⁴ One of the primary characteristics of God according to Moltmann is his faithfulness to his promises.¹⁶⁵ The dialectic between the cross and resurrection in the world will indeed find resolution with the *eschaton*, which means that active contradiction today has a real goal it is oriented towards.¹⁶⁶ This chapter has shown that a dominant theme in *Theology of Hope* is the contradiction between the promised future and the godless present. The *eschaton* will be the promised future's final and ultimate contradiction of the present, and so to suggest there is no real *eschaton* is to deprive the theme of contradiction of its purpose.

Whereas the above criticism raised the question as to whether Moltmann affirms a real *eschaton*, the second and third criticisms, by Christopher Morse and Eric Trozzo respectively, raise the reverse question as to whether a real *eschaton* presents problems for Moltmann's theology. Morse critiques Moltmann for propounding an understanding of God in which the *eschaton* will necessarily bring about a change in the being of God.¹⁶⁷ God's being will change because if he is now a "coming" God, then with the

¹⁶³ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16, for an example of a comment that suggests otherwise. He says that God has "future as his essential nature," thus implying God will forever be future and never fully arrive. Conversely, for evidence that Moltmann believes in a literal *eschaton*, see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 47–48, 145, 164, 201, 325.

¹⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 22–23.

¹⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 116–17.

¹⁶⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 201, 226. For other scholars on Moltmann who agree with this conclusion, see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 42; Meeks, *Origins*, 59–63.

¹⁶⁷ Morse, *Logic of Promise*, 123.

eschaton he will be a God who has finally come.¹⁶⁸

In response to Morse's critique, Morse fails to take into account what was established above in the discussion about God's divinity being associated with his rule over creation. To say that God is "coming" is to say that the kingdom of life and peace he has promised is still contradicted by present death and suffering, and so it is "coming." That God and his promised future will not always be "coming" but will one day be here is in fact a good summary of what Moltmann believes the Christian's ultimate hope to be.

The fourth criticism, raised by Trozzo, states that Moltmann places too much emphasis on resurrection and new creation rather than on the cross and present suffering (or "the abyss" as Trozzo calls it). In doing so Moltmann mistakenly implies that God is glorified only in strength but not weakness, and he fails to make the future as radically open (i.e., undetermined) as he could.¹⁶⁹ However, Trozzo's criticisms are misplaced for two reasons. On the one hand, to claim that Moltmann—who devotes all of *The Crucified God* and even central portions of *Theology of Hope* to explicitly affirming the importance of the cross—does not emphasize the cross enough is surely odd.¹⁷⁰ And on the other hand, it would be untrue to his theology of contradiction for Moltmann to emphasize the cross without equally emphasizing the resurrection. Trozzo seems to want the resurrection pushed almost entirely out of view so that humans live entirely in the reality of the cross, find God's glory only in suffering, and remain significantly unsure of what the future holds. For Moltmann ongoing suffering with no liberation, or a continuation of

¹⁶⁸ For statements of Moltmann's that would understandably lead Morse to these conclusions, see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16, 58, 119, 227, 280.

¹⁶⁹ Trozzo, *Rupturing Eschatology*, 6–13; 80–82.

¹⁷⁰ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 155–64, 196–202, for arguments for the importance of the cross that are central to his overall themes in the book.

the present without a contrasting future, would mean one reality without a second reality to contradict it. Though Moltmann maintains that the future is open and that God can be revealed through suffering, he also maintains that God's divinity will ultimately be proven at the *eschaton* after he defeats all that contradicts him.¹⁷¹

Fifth, some scholars correctly observe that Moltmann's perspective on the role human actions have in creating the kingdom of God is somewhat ambiguous.¹⁷² It is clear that Moltmann envisions a real and actual *eschaton* that is coming in the future, but it is not clear to what extent the time and shape of its coming depends on human work. On the one hand, Moltmann claims that in order to get to the promised land one must get up and walk there.¹⁷³ He claims that Christian mission is "active," "productive," and "militant."¹⁷⁴ Comments such as these imply that the fulfilment of God's promise is somehow dependent on the work that believers accomplish. On the other hand, Moltmann often speaks in terms of active contradiction being done "in expectation of a divine transformation."¹⁷⁵ The goal of active contradiction is to bring history into "correspondence" with the coming future.¹⁷⁶ In statements such as these Moltmann seems to be saying that the coming future is totally an act of God, and that the most humans can do is attempt to make the world mirror it in some limited sense.¹⁷⁷ In *Theology of Hope*

¹⁷¹ On the future as open see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 260, 269. On God being revealed in suffering see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 25–28. On God's divinity being proven at the *eschaton*, see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 272–81.

¹⁷² Genovesi, *Expectant Creativity*, 102–7; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 45; O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, 152–55.

¹⁷³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120.

¹⁷⁴ Moltmann, "Theology as Eschatology," 45–46.

¹⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84.

¹⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 330. For other passages that emphasize the work of God over humans, see e.g., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 93, 103, 180, 194, 211–12, 223.

¹⁷⁷ For further discussion on this topic, see Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 59; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 45. Fahrenholz believes that over time Moltmann leans more towards emphasizing building the kingdom, whereas Bauckham believes he emphasizes anticipating the kingdom.

Moltmann does not settle this ambiguity as to the relationship between active contradiction and its goal.

The Nature of Active Contradiction

Moltmann does not get into what specific courses of action the Church should take, but he does in various ways describe some of the general features that should characterize active contradiction. His comments will be summarized in five points. First, active contradiction done by the Church should not be for the sake of its own betterment or “sovereignty” but for the sake of the betterment of the world.¹⁷⁸ The Church’s action is oriented in the direction of the future of the risen Lord, and thus it is oriented to Christ’s lordship over all things, not just the Church itself.¹⁷⁹ Second, the Church’s mission includes both the propagation of faith as well as the “historic transformation of life” which seeks to “transform in opposition and creative expectation the face of the world.”¹⁸⁰ If the Church limits its mission to seeking the salvation of individual souls then it will be ignoring the rest of the content of God’s promises, including worldwide *shalom* in the comprehensive sense of the Old Testament. Third, because the cross remains “until the fulfilment of the *eschaton* the abiding key-signature of [Christ’s] lordship in the world,” the Church’s active contradiction will also be strongly characterized by suffering.¹⁸¹ In its concern for the world the Church will work for the freedom of the Earth and humanity only while in solidarity with them, and solidarity with them will result in suffering.¹⁸² Fourth, Moltmann speaks of active contradiction in both

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325–29. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 56.

¹⁷⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 326–27.

¹⁸⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329. C.f. March, “Grateful Reflections,” 53.

¹⁸¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 158, 163.

¹⁸² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 214, 224.

of the senses mentioned in the introductory chapter, of both opposing negative realities as well as engaging in exodus out of the negative realities. In some places he speaks of engaging in the “negation of the negative,” and in others of acting to “strike out in hope towards the future.”¹⁸³ Fifth, he states that “[peace] with God means conflict with the world” and “brings [the hearer of promise] into conflict with the present form of society.”¹⁸⁴ The Church’s relationship with society is a “conflict-laden, but fruitful partnership” that seeks society’s well-being by working to bring it into correspondence with the promised future.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that God’s promise causes objective, subjective, and active contradiction in order to bring the world into correspondence with his coming future. In the inductive section the main topic of each chapter was summarized: eschatology, promise (particularly Old Testament promise), the resurrection, history and mission, and the Church, respectively. Contradiction is an essential element in Moltmann’s discussions of each of these topics. The systematic section described how promise brings present reality into objective contradiction with the promised future reality, which creates subjective contradiction in the hearers of the promise, which propels active contradiction that seeks to bring present reality into accordance with the promised future reality. Contradiction was therefore shown to be integrally related to promise and eschatology, the focus of *Theology of Hope*.

¹⁸³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 215, 100. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120.

¹⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21, 334. Also see Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 50–56; Meeks, *Origins*, 7; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 40.

¹⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324, 330.

ANALYSIS OF *THE CRUCIFIED GOD*

Introduction

This chapter shows that in *The Crucified God* the three kinds of contradiction are created by God through the crucifixion. The inductive section of the chapter shows that the theology of contradiction runs throughout each chapter. The systematic section of the chapter shows that understanding the cross as an event of contradiction clarifies Moltmann's Christology and theology of the cross. All three kinds of contradiction occur simultaneously on the cross, and the subject of each of the three kinds is God himself. Then in a secondary way Christians are called to mirror the way God enters into and suffers contradiction on the cross.

Inductive Section

The purpose of this inductive section is to emphasize the extent to which the theology of contradiction permeates *The Crucified God*. As the systematic section of this chapter will make evident, the three kinds of contradiction manifest themselves in a markedly different way in this book than they did in *Theology of Hope*. Thus, it will be left to the systematic section to clarify and define in detail what in the book should be considered objective contradiction, subjective contradiction, and active contradiction, respectively. In this inductive section, when an instance of contradiction is clearly one of the three kinds it will be labelled as such. But when more detail is needed to explain why an instance of contradiction is one of the three kinds, or to explain exactly which two things are being contradicted, then the instance will simply be labelled as "contradiction." Something can be labelled as "contradiction" when there are two realities opposing one another.

Chapter One: “The Identity and Relevance of Faith”

In the first chapter Moltmann outlines a fundamental dilemma facing the contemporary church. On the one hand, the church wishes to stay relevant to the world outside of its doors, and on the other hand, it wishes to stay true to its Christian identity. Both of these are good desires, but the harder the church works for one, the more difficult it can be to preserve the other. For instance, many Christians have recognized the church’s “lack of contact and blindness” to society and the world, and so have developed a passionate social and political commitment.¹ But to do so they have often felt the need to leave the church—because it is “closed” to the world—and have therefore lost their Christian identity.² In the reverse way, many Christians have championed their Christian identity, and so have passionately defended their traditional beliefs, doctrines, and moral views. But to do so they have had to build a “defensive wall round their own little group,” thereby dissolving whatever interaction with, and relevance to, the world they had.³

The issue at hand here is contradiction, or lack thereof.⁴ Where identity is focussed on at the expense of relevance, Christians withdraw into a “ghetto” from which they are unable to healthily contradict the negative things of this world.⁵ Conversely, where relevance is focussed on at the expense of identity, Christians make a “dishonorable peace with society and become sterile.”⁶ The church cannot contradict the

¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 8–9. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 65–66.

² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 21.

³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 20.

⁴ Moltmann’s discussion of Christianity’s identity-relevance dilemma is an exemplary instance of the way he commonly describes non-contradiction as either assimilation or ghettoization. See above, pages 13–14 of this thesis.

⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 9, 23.

⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 9.

negative elements of this world disconnected from Christ, who alone has the power to defeat the negative elements of the world.⁷

This dilemma finds its solution in the cross of Jesus Christ, because if the church's identity is founded in the cross then it will inherently find its relevance there as well.⁸ In terms of identity, only the cross can distinguish true belief from unbelief and superstition and so define what "Christianity" is.⁹ In terms of relevance, on the cross Christ moved into solidarity with the suffering in order to liberate them, an act of extreme relevance to the world. So on the cross of Christ Christians find both their identity and relevance. Their identity is found in the one who was relevant to the world by suffering for the world; their relevance is found by identifying with (and therefore imitating) the one who suffered for the world.¹⁰

Moltmann expands on this point by describing the Platonic epistemological principle "like is known by like," which acts as a foil to the cross. Early Christian theology incorrectly adopted this principle, leading to the belief that humans can only know God through great and beautiful things in nature and history that are analogous to him. When applied strictly, the principle meant that God can only be known by God.¹¹ But Moltmann maintains that this "analogical principle" must be supplemented by the

⁷ Moltmann does not desire the church to simply join in the social movements of its time. See Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 27.

⁸ More precisely, the solution to the dilemma is a Trinitarian one with a strong Christological accent, as is made clear in chapter six (Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 319).

⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 24. Moltmann is not clear from the outset why the cross ought to be the foundation of Christian identity—that it ought to be is more or less assumed and taken for granted. He essentially begins chapter one by stating: "In Christianity the cross is the test of everything which deserves to be called Christian" (7). He goes on to say that it alone "excludes the syncretistic elements in Christianity" (7), but does not go into any greater detail at this point.

¹⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 25. According to Meeks, identity and relevance for Moltmann are to be kept in a "creative tension" (Meeks, *Origins*, 2), because they do not sit easily with one another. This "tension" corresponds to the objective contradiction of Christ on the cross.

¹¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 26.

“dialectical principle” which, when applied to God, states that God is only revealed in his opposite. On the cross God’s true deity is revealed to humanity in the form of that which is in contradiction to himself: “godlessness and abandonment by God.” Importantly, the “dialectical principle” does not replace the “analogical principle” but rather makes it possible: because God reveals himself in his contradiction he can be known by those who are godless, which then gives the godless hope of being like God.¹²

Chapter Two: “The Resistance of the Cross Against its Interpretations”

In this chapter Moltmann critiques the attempts Christians have made to somehow avoid the contradiction of the cross, and avoid its implications for Christian life. His critiques fall under two categories.¹³ First, he critiques the church’s tendency to pretty the cross with “roses” (i.e., to make it seem beautiful) or to simply become numb and indifferent towards it.¹⁴ Second, Moltmann cites various ways that Christians have dulled the harsh implications of the cross for Christian life.¹⁵

Dulling the harsh implications of Christ’s cross is unacceptable. The call to carry one’s cross cannot be spiritualized because Christ called people to follow him and his way of real suffering for others.¹⁶ By picking up their cross the human being is brought

¹² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27–28. The analogical principle will finally become valid in God’s new creation when everything is in correspondence to him. That is, in the new creation God will be known by those who are like God. Bauckham says that the dialectical and analogical principles correspond to the cross and resurrection: the cross is presence in what is different, the resurrection is a promise that all things will come into accordance with God (Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 71).

¹³ There is a third major category that Moltmann discusses in this chapter: an approach to knowing God that he calls the “*theologia gloriae*.” See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 65–74. More will be said on this topic below.

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 35. Also see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 32–33. In contrast, Jews saw crucified people as cursed and excluded from the covenant, and non-Christians saw crucifixion as embarrassing and perverse (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 32–34).

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 45–46, 58–59. For example, certain traditions have taken Jesus’ call to carry the cross and spiritualized it so that it means Christians are to suffer in their inner being through contemplation or mysticism.

¹⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 54.

into “contradiction” with his or her environment and real pain is felt from the “reality outside” his- or herself. Carrying the cross takes the form of seeking out those that are “ugly and unworthy of love” in order to love them.¹⁷ Furthermore, though Christians are indeed called to suffer, the cross must not be dulled by using it to convince others to passively accept whatever suffering comes upon them. The Son of God underwent an “active suffering,” a suffering that was willed rather than unwilled: he chose to leave his heavenly throne to be with and love humanity. He took up suffering in order to ultimately liberate humanity from suffering, so Christians are called to do the same.¹⁸

This chapter is sprawling and diverse in its topics, but the theme of contradiction runs throughout it. Putting “roses” on the cross is an attempt to take the objective contradiction out of the crucifixion. By making the cross something beautiful, the negative reality of suffering and accursedness is removed, meaning the goodness of the Son of God is not in contradiction to anything. The attempt to spiritualize Jesus’ call to follow him is to take both subjective and active contradiction out of Christian life, to avoid feeling suffering as well as actively loving suffering people. Similarly, suggesting that suffering should be passively accepted takes the tension and unacceptability out of subjective contradiction, as well as removes the mandate to engage in active contradiction against negative things.

Chapter Three: “Questions about Jesus”

Chapter three prepares the way for chapters four and five by discussing what question would be most helpful to arrive at an understanding of who Jesus is. Four questions are laid out as possible answers. The first three questions are “Is Jesus true

¹⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 39–40.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 48–51.

God?”, “Is Jesus true man? [sic.]”, and “Are you he who is to come?” Of the three Moltmann finds the third question to be best because it is the most Jewish.¹⁹ He points out that this question also highlights a difference between Christians and Jews: Christians affirm Jesus is the Messiah but Jews cannot because the world remains unredeemed.²⁰ Moltmann says that this difference can be resolved when one remembers that Jesus is the Messiah, but he remains the crucified One until the *eschaton* when all creation is redeemed.²¹

Though the third question is a on the right track, to make Christ the questioner and humanity the questioned is even better. This is the case in the gospels when Christ asks his disciples “Who do you say that I am?” Two main characteristics of this fourth question make it most ideal. First, it is not asked by any mere human and therefore is not tainted by any biases or prejudices that naturally come along with one’s context. Second, the question is open-ended. Moltmann says that the identity of Christ is not concluded and therefore cannot be spoken of as a “closed reality.” The cross and resurrection raise an open-ended question that can only be answered by a total new creation of the world by God. In this new creation God will wipe away every tear (Rev. 7.17), and the cross will no longer be a scandal but the “basis and the light of the kingdom.” Christ’s question to humans causes them to have faith in the form of anticipation that looks forward to the day of new creation and to the day when Christ’s identity is finalized.²²

¹⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 98. Moltmann dismisses the first question because it begins with a concept of God in which God is “eternal, original, unchangeable being.” This leads to “docetic” interpretations of the cross (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 88). He dismisses the second because it tends to focus on Jesus’ obedient life and teaching, understanding his crucifixion merely as his final act of obedience to God (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 97). Both views minimize the cross, and to that extent they minimize the central example of contradiction in the book.

²⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 100–1.

²¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 101–2.

²² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 103–6.

Contradiction is less obviously widespread throughout this chapter, but it is still present. The third question actually has much to do with contradiction, because how one answers significantly depends on one's perspective on the still-unredeemed world. Jews are "profoundly conscious" of the unredeemed nature of the world but do not yet see anything contradicting it. Christians confess that Christ came to contradict the suffering and death of the world, but too often ignore or minimize the suffering and death in the world that still contradicts Christ. Jesus, the crucified, "cannot be understood without suffering for the unredeemed condition of the world," that is, acknowledging the crucified Christ leads to subjective and active contradiction. Lastly, the fourth question implies contradiction, but it is a contradiction similar to that spoken of in *Theology of Hope*, where the future contradicts the present.

Chapter Four: "The Historical Trial of Jesus"

The cross must be understood both from the perspective of the life Jesus led (looking forwards) as well as from the perspective of the resurrection (looking backwards). The two perspectives go hand in hand and cannot be separated.²³ In light of this fact, chapter four takes the forward-looking perspective, and chapter five takes the backward-looking perspective.

Moltmann provides three ways in which Jesus' life and preaching assist in understanding what took place on the cross.²⁴ First, Jesus preached God's law of grace and the forgiveness of sins to sinners. His preaching "contradicts" the popular Jewish

²³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 112.

²⁴ Before he discusses these three ways he presents an argument for why the cross must be the "basis" of Christology. The fundamental question of Christology is why Jesus' life and message continued to be preached by the Church if he had died, and the answer is the resurrection. But Moltmann says that this question must be dealt with before any progress in Christology can be made. Because it is the cross that raises the question, the cross must also be the basis of Christology. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 120–25.

expectation of what the Messiah would do because (1) he preaches grace instead of judgement for sinners and (2) he preaches in “poverty” and “lowliness” instead of with typical signs of authority. Because only the Judge has the right to give or deny mercy, Jesus put himself in the Judge’s place. Therefore, on the cross Jesus is hung as a “blasphemer.”²⁵ Second, through his preaching against legalism and judgement and in favour of God’s grace Jesus also conflicted with Roman authorities. Moltmann reminds his readers that crucifixion was punishment for “rebels” against the Roman state.²⁶ He further maintains that it was no mere misunderstanding that led to Jesus’ crucifixion: Jesus was truly an “instigator of unrest” and had created at least the “danger of a new popular revolt.”²⁷ Though Jesus was not violent, he truly did challenge Roman political and religious claims, and to that extent was hung on the cross as a “rebel.”²⁸

In his third point Moltmann looks at Christ’s relationship with God, which is the most important factor in understanding the cross. In an unparalleled way Jesus preached the nearness of the dominion of God and demonstrated it. Jesus clearly believed his relationship with God was uniquely immediate because he called God “Father,” thereby bypassing the covenant that mediated Israel with God. But the fact that Jesus was uniquely close with God during his life means that he would feel uniquely abandoned in his death. To Jesus it would be the “torment of hell” to be seemingly left to die by the

²⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 128–31.

²⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 136.

²⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 138.

²⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 138–44. Randall Otto critiques Moltmann for stretching the biblical data in order to make Jesus a political “rebel” (Otto, *God of Hope*, 127–29). For example, the Gospels state that Pilate found nothing wrong with Jesus (John 18:38). That being said, Moltmann is correct that on a deeper level Jesus’ teaching and mission did subvert Roman ideology, as is evidenced by the martyrs of the early Christian church. In this way Jesus was a political “rebel,” even if the Romans did not fully understand Jesus’ identity and mission at the time.

one, the “Father,” who he earlier preached as close and gracious.²⁹ Moltmann takes Christ’s cry of dereliction in the Gospel of Mark—“My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (22.2)—to be proof that Christ not only felt abandoned, but was in fact “abandoned” and “godforsaken.”³⁰ Going even further with this observation, he states that if Christ was the Son of God then what happened on the cross is fundamentally something that happened between Father and Son, that is, “between God and God.”³¹ The cross in fact “separates” and “divides” the Son from the Father.³² Moltmann concludes that this observation requires a “revolution” in theology’s concept of God, which he will discuss further in chapter six.³³

Scholars have accused Moltmann of ascribing sadism or brutality to the Father.³⁴ This accusation is due in part to the strong emphasis Moltmann places on the distinctness of the persons of the Trinity rather than their unity.³⁵ Dennis Jowers argues that traditional theology emphasizes God’s unity and therefore maintains that God’s suffering on the cross is his own act against himself, rather than Father against Son.³⁶ The other reason Moltmann is accused of ascribing brutality to the Father is because of the way he describes what transpired on the cross. He states that the Son was rejected, “abandoned,”

²⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 148.

³⁰ Bauckham correctly states that Jesus’ cry of dereliction is central to Moltmann’s understanding of the suffering of God because it reveals the “theological reality,” what in fact was happening, on the cross (Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 53). Moltmann’s view of Jesus’ cry has been criticized however. First, Luke and John do not mention this cry. Second, in first-century Jewish culture quoting the first line of a Psalm was often done to imply the entirety of the Psalm. Psalm 22 ends hopefully, which means Jesus may not have uttered his cry in despair but in hope. See Gabriel, “Beyond the Cross,” 107.

³¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 151.

³² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 151–52.

³³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 152.

³⁴ Brock, “Little Child,” 42; Sölle, *Suffering*, 26–28; Jowers, “Theology of the Trinity,” 247; Fiddes, *Past Event*, 193; Johnson, “Christology’s Impact,” 153.

³⁵ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 235–49.

³⁶ Jowers, “Theology of the Trinity,” 247.

and “delivered up” by the Father to die a godforsaken death on the cross.³⁷

Moltmann pre-emptively rebuts this criticism in two ways. To begin, he says that the cross causes both the Son and the Father to suffer, but in different ways. The Son suffers dying in forsakenness on the cross, and the Father suffers “the infinite grief of love” for his Son. “The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father.”³⁸ Additionally, it is not only the Father who delivers up the Son, but the Son also delivers up himself. Galatians 2:20 says that the Son “gave himself up,” which means that he actively brought about his suffering on the cross and was not merely a helpless victim. Far from being enemies, the will of the Father and the will of the Son have a “deep conformity” with one another.³⁹ *The Crucified God* is about the contradiction that occurs between God and godforsakenness, not the Father and the Son. The Father’s giving up of the Son and the Son’s giving up of himself is the means by which God willfully and self-sacrificially comes into contradiction with godforsakenness.

The three identities of Jesus—blasphemer, rebel, and godforsaken—relate to Moltmann’s theology of contradiction in two ways. In a secondary way, they (particularly Christ’s relationship with the Jews and Romans) show that Jesus’ life and preaching contradicted unredeemed thought patterns. Jesus was an “instigator of unrest” and behaved “in contradiction to the traditions of his people,” not simply to cause trouble but to contradict everything that opposed God’s coming kingdom and law of grace.⁴⁰ But Moltmann’s main focus is on how Jesus’ life enlightens his crucifixion. Thus, the primary way these three observations advance his theology of contradiction is that they

³⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 148, 241.

³⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 243.

³⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 243. See also Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 49–51.

⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 143, 130.

explain the contradictory state Christ was in on the cross. The Son of God, who is divine and righteous, hung on the cross as a “blasphemer,” “rebel,” and someone who was “godforsaken.” The Son’s divinity and righteousness came into objective contradiction with these things. Most importantly, the Son truly and literally hung “godforsaken” on the cross, which is the ultimate example of two opposing realities coming into close contact with each other.

Chapter Five: “The Eschatological Trial of Jesus”

In this chapter Moltmann inspects the crucifixion from the perspective of the resurrection. He has two main focusses: how “the cross of the risen Christ” impacts humanity, and how it impacts God himself.⁴¹ First, with respect to the cross’ impact on humanity, Moltmann maintains that cross would not be salvific without the resurrection. Moltmann’s point is not simply that Jesus would be a dead man without the resurrection, but that the resurrection reveals “*who*” really suffered on the cross.⁴² The resurrection reveals that Jesus truly is the Christ of God and that he therefore embodies resurrection power, life, and righteousness. The significance of this becomes clear when the identity of Christ is maintained: the crucified Christ is the risen Christ and the risen Christ is the crucified Christ. According to Moltmann, this allows the theologian to say that, in a significant sense, the risen Christ hung on the cross. Moltmann states that “the crucified Jesus is the incarnation of the risen Christ.”⁴³

Bauckham correctly proposes that Moltmann views the cross as the means by which resurrection life can reach godless humanity.⁴⁴ Apart from the cross humanity is

⁴¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 187.

⁴² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 182.

⁴³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 180–82.

⁴⁴ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 85.

too far removed from God to benefit from God's gift of life. But by incarnating himself God came near to humanity. He not only became human, but became a "blasphemer," "rebel," and "godforsaken" human who died humiliatingly on a cross.⁴⁵ By descending as low as possible, the Son of God identified with the most unrighteous and least likely stratum of humanity, meaning that even they are not excluded from resurrection life. It is by this identification with godforsaken humanity that the risen Christ saves them. "Through his death the risen Christ introduces the coming reign of God into the godless present by means of representative suffering." The "reconciliation" and "glory" that is achieved by Christ's resurrection is brought backwards to liberate all of suffering humanity.⁴⁶

These observations also lead one to ask what the "God who raised Jesus" was doing in and during the crucifixion. The following remarks are helpful in understanding Moltmann's opinion:

Creation, new creation, and resurrection are external works of God against chaos, nothingness and death. The suffering and dying of Jesus, understood as the suffering and dying of the Son of God, on the other hand, are works of God against himself and therefore at the same time passions of God.⁴⁷

Here Moltmann is affirming that in the cross God was not merely acting *against* nothingness and death, but rather he was being *affected by* nothingness and death, experiencing them in his own being. Moltmann appeals to 2 Corinthians 5:19 which says that "God was in Christ" during the crucifixion. If God was "in" Christ then God himself suffered: the Son suffers godforsakenness, the Father suffers separation from the Son, and

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 175–76.

⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 169, 184–85.

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 192–93.

ultimately “death comes upon God himself.”⁴⁸

Contradiction is undeniably present and central throughout all of the topics discussed in this chapter. Moltmann’s description of the crucified Christ being an “incarnation” of the risen Christ is a description of objective contradiction.⁴⁹ This objective contradiction is variously described: power revealed in helplessness, glory revealed in death, divinity revealed in godforsakenness, the “coming reign of God” revealed in the “godless present,” and so on.⁵⁰ Next, Moltmann mentions both God and believers undergoing godforsakenness and suffering (i.e., subjective contradiction) due to objective contradiction.⁵¹ Lastly, in a way not present in *Theology of Hope*, God’s objective contradiction with death and godforsakenness is itself also an act of active contradiction against death and godforsakenness. Resurrection life is brought to suffering humanity by identifying with them on the cross.⁵² Moltmann also speaks of active contradiction done by humans who oppose “Pharaoh and Caesar” and the powers of death in the world.⁵³

Chapter Six: “The Crucified God”

One of the primary concepts Moltmann takes aim at, in this chapter and elsewhere, is what he calls “traditional theism,” or more simply “theism.” Theism is that form of Christianity that describes God as unchangeable, immortal, incorruptible, indivisible, immutable, and impassible, as would (according to Moltmann) Greek

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 187–96.

⁴⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 185.

⁵⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195, 185.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 171.

⁵² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 169.

⁵³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195–96, 170–71. “Pharaoh and Caesar” refers to any ruler or political authority who buttresses their political authority by claiming to represent the divine or to be especially close to the divine. See discussion below.

metaphysics.⁵⁴ Theism relies upon “natural theology” and the “*theologia gloriae*,” which for the purposes of this thesis are interchangeable terms. Natural theology begins with the works of God in the world and history and uses these to inductively build towards indirect knowledge of God.⁵⁵

In natural theology Moltmann detects a “heuristic interest” on the part of humans.⁵⁶ He criticizes natural theology not because it is impossible in principle, but rather he criticizes the purpose for which humans inevitably use it. Humans, in their insecurity as finite beings, are interested in “securing” God for “support and stay” against the negativity of the world.⁵⁷ By looking for traces of God’s glorious characteristics in the world, humans intend to ascend out of the world of contradiction towards becoming omnipotent gods themselves.⁵⁸ It is this corrupt desire for “self-exaltation and their self-divination” that makes knowledge obtained through natural theology not only useless but also destructive, because humans turn it into an idol.⁵⁹

The characteristic of the God of theism that Moltmann focusses most of his criticism upon is God’s “*apatheia*.” “*Apatheia*,” as it was used in early Christianity, does not mean what contemporary people mean by “apathy” (i.e., indifference, lethargy), but rather means having freedom from needs, feelings, and external influences. This sort of God has no deficiency in being, never changes (for that would suggest deficiency), needs no services or emotions from humans, needs no friends, cannot suffer, and has no

⁵⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 213, 222, 228, 267.

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 208–10.

⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 209.

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 214.

⁵⁸ In chapter two Moltmann states mystical contemplation as one of the methods humans attempt to ascend, and in the present chapter he describes a process of ascending through the use of humanity’s innate reason or “intelligence” (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 209).

⁵⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 210–12.

emotions (e.g., neither hate nor love).⁶⁰ This God is unable to feel subjective contradiction. Thus, Moltmann's criticism is directed towards the impassible God, but also more broadly towards the God with no emotions or ability to be affected by the world.

Surprisingly, Moltmann says that atheism shares a fundamental, and detrimental, characteristic of theism.⁶¹ Atheism looks at the world and, instead of seeing traces of a good and glorious God, it finds a "deceiver, executioner, sadist, despot, player, director of a marionette theatre."⁶² The fundamental characteristic that atheism shares with theism is that both draw conclusions from observations of the world. The theist finds evidence for a great God, the atheist finds evidence for a sadist, but both draw their evidence from the world.⁶³

Neither theism nor atheism is adequate. Suffering makes it impossible to believe in the traditional omnipotent God but also makes it impossible to give up all hope a greater power.⁶⁴ Suicide, the ultimate expression of atheism, simply "removes the protestor from the game" and "resolves the contradiction" by pushing God aside. But traditional theism resolves the contradiction "with a prohibitive and useless answer," that is, by ignoring, minimizing, or fleeing the contradiction in one way or another.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 267–68, 270. Castello believes that Moltmann's descriptions of God's *apatheia*, and of the God of traditional theism in general, are caricatures and "straw men" that do not accurately represent the traditional doctrines (Castello, "Moltmann's Dismissal," 396). Castello says Moltmann is part of a larger group of contemporary theologians who have mistakenly taken up what Paul L. Gavrilyuk calls the "Theory of Theology's Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy" (Gavrilyuk, *Impassible God*, 1).

⁶¹ Moltmann actually focusses most of his discussion on a type of atheism he calls "protest atheism," but this distinction is not relevant presently.

⁶² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 221.

⁶³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 219–21.

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 225.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 223. Moltmann understands the most serious form of atheism to be "protest atheism," which is not as concerned with the theoretical existence of God as it is with his apparent lack of justice in the face of suffering (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 221). So in the face of the God of theism, who

What is needed to move beyond the impasse of theism and atheism is the theology of the cross, which does not dismiss God on the one hand, or death and godforsakenness on the other, but holds both sides together in objective contradiction.⁶⁶ In contrast to the theistic God with *apatheia*, on the cross God chooses to “suffer this contradiction” and “take upon [himself]” the grief of the contradiction.⁶⁷ In contrast to natural theology, God does not reveal himself in beautiful and good things in the world, but “through contradiction, sorrow and suffering” on the cross. In contrast to humanity’s desire for self-deification, the theology of the cross provides a “descending” knowledge that destroys humanity’s idols and confronts it with the genuine humanness that it has “abandoned.”⁶⁸ Only by acknowledging their alienated state can they be made fully human, as God designed them to be.⁶⁹ Though a theology of the cross preserves atheism’s protest against the world’s suffering, it does not abandon hope in God and therefore it empowers believers to persevere in their protest.⁷⁰

Moltmann’s primary argument for why God must be able to suffer is that if he could not suffer then he would be incapable of love. For Moltmann, the most significant evidence for this is the obvious fact that love and suffering (or openness to suffering) always go together in the daily experience of humans. “This may be called the dialectic of human life: we live because and in so far as we love—and we suffer and die because and in so far as we love.”⁷¹

cannot die or even suffer, suicide shows the human to be superior to God because the human has done something God cannot.

⁶⁶ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 227.

⁶⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 248.

⁶⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 212.

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 231.

⁷⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 223, 225.

⁷¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253. That love requires suffering Moltmann often treats as a self-evident fact. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 222, 227, 248. In one place he gives some biblical support. First John 4:16

Love is incompatible with non-contradiction. A God who cannot love and suffer is a “self-contained group in heaven,” and a “God separated from the world and from man, crouching outside the world.”⁷² A God who is “closed” and “separated from the world” is a God who is not near to the world and in contradiction with its suffering and death. Contrastingly, in suffering love God “voluntarily opens himself up to the possibility of being affected by another.”⁷³ Moltmann says that “the more one loves, the more one is open and becomes receptive to happiness and sorrow. Therefore the one who loves becomes vulnerable, can be hurt and disappointed.”⁷⁴ From this openness God actively places himself in contact with “the other.” On the cross God is “completely with himself and completely with the other,” and he loves “that which is different and other.”⁷⁵ When God enters into the situation of creatures, the “other,” he takes on the contradiction of their death and godforsakenness.

A theology of the cross is impossible without the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of Christ’s two natures does not do justice to the cross; it must be described as something that happened between the person of the Son and the Father in the Spirit. On the cross the Father “delivered up” or “gave up”—terms denoting abandonment—the Son to die on the cross.⁷⁶ Consequently, the Son suffers “dying” (not “death”) in

states that God is love. Romans 8:32, Galatians 2:20, and John 3:16 all associate Jesus’ self-surrender with God’s love for the world. In this way the Bible describes God’s love as suffering. On Moltmann’s use of these passages see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 244. Castelo dismisses Moltmann’s argument from the human experience of love as being guilty of Feuerbach’s critique of religion, that God is humanity’s projection of itself (Castelo, “Moltmann’s Dismissal,” 402). While Castelo may too quickly overlook the merits of Moltmann’s argument, it is true that Moltmann leaves the reader wanting with respect to evidence for his view.

⁷² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249, 251. Also see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 235.

⁷³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 230. Also see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249, 273.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 205, 213.

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 241. Moltmann draws from Rom 8.31; 2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13.

“forsakenness” and the Father suffers grief over the Son’s dying.⁷⁷ The cross creates a “bifurcation” and “deep division” between the Father and the Son.⁷⁸ The bifurcation between the Father and Son opened up a space for the “whole uproar of history” to enter into the life of the Trinity, or “the history of God.” In particular, “all disaster, forsakenness by God, absolute death, the infinite curse of damnation and sinking into nothingness is in God himself.”⁷⁹

The extreme language Moltmann uses to describe the Trinity has led some critics to argue that Moltmann describes “tritheism,” or the existence of three Gods, rather than a Trinity.⁸⁰ These critics find fault with Moltmann’s claim that the Father’s forsaking of the Son resulted in a separation of “God from God [i.e., Father from Son] to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction.”⁸¹ The fact that the divine persons can be so divided implies that they are in fact distinct individuals. Though Moltmann attempts to ward off accusations of tritheism by arguing for a “deep conformity of will” between the Father and the Son that unites them, Bauckham correctly observes that this makes their unity volitional not ontological.⁸² It cannot be denied that his description of the Trinity in *The Crucified God* falls outside the bounds (or at least strains the bounds) of orthodox Trinitarian theology, but it is nonetheless in complete accordance with his theology of

⁷⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 243.

⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246, 244.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 247.

⁸⁰ Hunsinger, “The Crucified God,” 278; O’Donnell, *The Mystery*, 165; Nengean, *Imago Dei*, 143; Molnar, *Immanent Trinity*, 228; Phan, *Cambridge Companion*, 236; Gabriel, “Beyond the Cross,” 106; Youngs, “Emptied God,” 55; Jantzen, “Jesus’ Despair,” 5. Much of this criticism is directed at claims Moltmann makes in his later book *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. As McDougall accurately explains, in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann strongly emphasizes the threeness of God in order to counterbalance traditional western theology that has emphasized God’s oneness at the expense of his threeness (McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 69–70). However, Moltmann makes similarly controversial claims in *The Crucified God* as well.

⁸¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 152. He also speaks of the cross causing a “bifurcation” in God (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246).

⁸² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 243; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 109.

contradiction. If God is to come into contradiction with godforsakenness and fully experience it, somehow God must be forsaken by God. Because the Father forsakes the Son godforsakenness truly enters into the being of God and thus into contradiction with him.

That suffering and death has entered God is beneficial to humanity. Because all death and godforsakenness has been brought into God, then nothing can separate humans from communion with him.⁸³ Furthermore, Moltmann states that God is an “event” and an “eschatological process” that presses forward towards the consummation of all things.⁸⁴ Therefore, if everything has been brought into the inner being of God, it will be carried along with God’s movement towards the completion of redemption. By taking up within himself all things that contradict him, God is able to defeat those things in the process of becoming “all in all,” where nothing is in contradiction to him anymore.⁸⁵

Chapter Seven: “Ways Towards the Psychological Liberation of Man [sic.]”

In this chapter Moltmann attempts to bring his theology of the crucified God into dialogue with the psychology of Sigmund Freud.⁸⁶ However, secondary literature very rarely takes interest in the content of this chapter and so it is rarely discussed.⁸⁷ Similarly,

⁸³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 276, 246.

⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 247, 249.

⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 235, 277.

⁸⁶ His reasons for writing this chapter seem to be fourfold. First, Moltmann holds firmly that theology must always become practical, and psychology (like the theology of *The Crucified God*) deals with liberation from unhealthy thinking (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 291). The following chapter is concerned with humanity on the societal level, so the present chapter is concerned with the personal level. Second, Moltmann recognizes that interacting with the psychology of Freud was becoming increasingly popular in theological circles at the time of his writing *The Crucified God* (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 291). Third, Freud’s critique of religion and his theories in general are each quite accurate with regards to religion that is based on works or idols rather than Christ crucified (e.g., Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 295–98). Fourth, Moltmann suggests that a proper understanding of God based on the humility, weakness, and suffering of Jesus can fight against the thought patterns underlying what Freud calls “repression,” “parricide,” and “illusion” (e.g., Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 303).

⁸⁷ For two significant books on Moltmann’s trilogy that barely discuss this chapter, see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 53–90 and Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 64–80.

though the chapter does have some aspects that relate to his theology of contradiction, they are few and not particularly notable. There will therefore be no analysis of this chapter here.

Chapter Eight: “Ways Towards the Political Liberation of Mankind [sic.]”

When Theodosius and Justinian made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman empire, they succeeded in Christianizing certain aspects of the empire, but this also led to Christianity’s assimilation with some political ideologies of the time. Though many things have changed since that era, Moltmann states that vestiges of this “political religion” still remain in nations to this day.⁸⁸ This political religion was based on two ideas, “one hierarchical and the other with a chiliastic philosophy of history.” The hierarchical idea said that just as there is one God and one church, so there is one emperor and one empire, which thereby put the emperor in a unique place of power over others. The second idea stated that the Roman empire was Christ’s promised kingdom on earth. By associating Christ’s kingdom with the emperor’s the emperor added religious foundations to his political power.⁸⁹

When the church remembers the crucified Christ it is liberated from its role of justifying the current political situation. Remembering Christ’s cross and resurrection “endangers a church which is adapted to the religious politics of its time” and brings it into a position in which it is able to stand in a critical relationship with politics.⁹⁰ This critical distance makes the church “painfully aware” of suffering and oppression in society. Furthermore, it recognizes that situations of suffering and oppression “must be

⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 322–23.

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 325.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 236.

broken through” in action by the power of Christ.⁹¹

The church must actively respond in three ways to the cross of Christ. First, it must criticize the “idols” and “taboos” of political religion, because God’s glory is not expressed in the might of political power but in the cross.⁹² Those in political power must be liberated from their own harmful ideologies, and those who have been alienated under political power must be restored their full humanity.⁹³ Second, the church must enter into community with and support the lowly, because God is “the God of the poor, the oppressed and the humiliated.”⁹⁴ Third, the church must work for “liberations” in multiple spheres of the world: the economic, political, cultural, natural, and “meaning of life” spheres. “Liberation” in just one of them is not enough because they all feed each other; thus “liberations” is needed to combat all of them together.⁹⁵

Systematic Section

The Crucified God is about the cross of Christ (i.e., the Son of God), and therefore its broader systematic theme is Christology. Just as promise was the source of contradiction in *Theology of Hope*, so the cross is the source of contradiction in *The Crucified God*. Analysing the three types of contradiction that flow from the cross clarifies Moltmann’s understanding of the purpose and nature of the cross and, therefore, his Christology. Relatedly, by showing that contradiction provides greater clarity to Moltmann’s theology of the cross and Christology, this section also establishes that contradiction is central to his understanding of the cross and Christology.

⁹¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 317–18.

⁹² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 325, 327.

⁹³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 327, 318.

⁹⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 329. See Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 34.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 329–35.

This section shows that the manner in which the three kinds of contradiction manifest themselves in *The Crucified God* is different than in *Theology of Hope*. In *Theology of Hope*, promise brought present reality and future reality into objective contradiction, which led to humans experiencing subjective contradiction and responding in active contradiction. God was merely the initiator of contradiction, but did not experience it himself. In *The Crucified God*, however, it is God himself who comes into objective contradiction with godforsakenness, God who experiences subjective contradiction, and God who is acting in active contradiction. Furthermore, whereas the three kinds of contradiction occur more or less sequentially in *Theology of Hope*, in *The Crucified God* the three kinds occur simultaneously in the crucifixion. When God comes into objective contradiction with godforsakenness, that inevitably results in experiencing subjective contradiction (i.e., suffering). But in coming into objective contradiction with godforsakenness and experiencing it God is acting to end all suffering, death, and godforsakenness.

Humans are included in this contradiction in a secondary way. It is only Christ who was crucified, and therefore only him who is the primary subject of the three types of contradiction. However, through his teaching, mission, and example Jesus calls believers to follow him and carry their cross. When believers do this they experience the same three kinds of contradiction as Christ on the cross, except to a lesser degree.

Objective Contradiction

The Two Realities in Contradiction

The two realities coming into objective contradiction are God and his opposite or “other.” The way Moltmann speaks of this contradiction differs slightly from chapter to

chapter, but these two realities coming together is the common theme throughout the chapters. Chapter one states that the principle “like is known by like” does not apply to God because on the cross God definitively revealed himself in his opposite, that is, “godlessness and abandonment by God.”⁹⁶ Chapter two similarly states that God is not known by analogies of his divinity in the world (*theologia gloriae*) but by his revelation in the horror of the cross. In chapter four Moltmann says that Christ, the Son of God, is crucified as a blasphemer, rebel, and godforsaken person rather than glorified as the giver of the law, King of kings, and Son of the Father.⁹⁷ In chapter five he argues that the coming God is incarnate in the suffering of Jesus on the cross.⁹⁸ And finally, chapter six states that God’s inner self was in fact in and experiencing the suffering and godforsakenness of Christ, and that all the suffering and godforsakenness of the world entered into the Trinity. All of these statements find their mainspring in the fact that God enters into his opposite (and his opposite enters into him) when Jesus is crucified.

The question remains: what is God’s “opposite”? That is, with what does God stand in objective contradiction? Throughout *The Crucified God* Moltmann uses a number of terms to describe the cross that would seem opposite to the glory of God: “alien,” “ugly,” “profane horror,” “godlessness,” “degrading,” “rejected,” “blasphemer,” “rebel,” “abandoned by God,” “scandal,” “folly,” “torment of hell,” “death,” “suffering,” and “godforsakenness.”⁹⁹ Therefore, the most comprehensive answer would be to say that God came into objective contradiction with a reality described by all of these terms.

⁹⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27.

⁹⁷ For more on Moltmann’s description of Jesus as a blasphemer and rebel, see Otto, *God of Hope*, 127; Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 30.

⁹⁸ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 169.

⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 28, 33, 55, 68, 125, 147, 148, 169, 276.

However, for the purpose of simplicity, it will be said that God comes into objective contradiction specifically with “godforsakenness.”¹⁰⁰ “Godforsakenness” is the chosen term for three reasons. First, Moltmann describes Christ’s “godforsakenness” as being the worst part of his suffering.¹⁰¹ Second, “godforsakenness” encapsulates and summarizes the other terms: suffering, the experience of death, horror, and so on, are all involved in being forsaken by God. Third, the term “god-forsaken” obviously denotes contradiction to God and his presence.

An objection might be raised that Moltmann is not stating God has come into contradiction with his opposite, but is in fact saying the reverse: that suffering is *not* opposed to God. The theistic view of God states that God is immune to suffering, that he is so opposed to suffering he cannot be touched by it. But one of Moltmann’s main agendas in the book is to rebut theism and show God *can* be touched by suffering.¹⁰² This thesis maintains that the two main realities in objective contradiction in *The Crucified God* are God and suffering, but Moltmann seems to state that God and suffering are not contradictory.

In response to this objection, a vital distinction must be made between mutual exclusivity and contradiction. Moltmann’s argument against theism is that God and suffering are not mutually exclusive, that it is possible for God and suffering to coincide. But the claim that God and suffering do not *mutually exclude* one another does not refute the claim of this thesis that God and suffering *contradict* one another. Even if God and

¹⁰⁰ In this thesis the words “suffering” and “godforsakenness” will sometimes be used interchangeably. They both are referring to the reality that God comes into objective contradiction with on the cross.

¹⁰¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 145.

¹⁰² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 227, 214. In her article on Moltmann’s interaction with Albert Camus in *The Crucified God*, Grace Jantzen states that the way Moltmann gets beyond the protest atheism of Camus is by showing that suffering and God are no longer contradictions (Jantzen, “Jesus’ Despair,” 4).

suffering are not mutually exclusive, they can still be realities that oppose and conflict with one another when brought together on the cross. This is evidenced by the fact that God's revelation in the suffering of the cross corresponds to the dialectical principle of knowledge: God is revealed in his opposite.¹⁰³ God is not known by "the guiding thread of analogies from earth to heaven" but by "contradiction, sorrow and suffering," that is, things that are not analogous but opposite.¹⁰⁴ Thus, God can indeed suffer, *contra* theism, but when he does suffer he is in objective contradiction with suffering.

Furthermore, that the reality God comes into contact with is his contradiction is in fact crucial to the good news of the cross. On the cross God "humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and godforsaken can experience communion with him."¹⁰⁵ In other words, if God comes into contact with something that was beautiful and analogous to him, ugly and godforsaken humanity would remain distant from God and unincorporated into his presence. Because God is in the "negative element" and the "negative element" is in God, not even the most negative of things can exclude humanity from God.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Moltmann's argument against theism is *not* that God and suffering are peacefully harmonious (i.e., not in contradiction) with one another. On the contrary, it is vital for him that God and suffering are in contradiction with one another. Rather, his argument against theism is that God and suffering are not mutually exclusive, that is, that God is capable of suffering.

¹⁰³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 25–28.

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 212.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 276.

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 277. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 254. "As the God-man, in his passion, Jesus sustained the contradiction between life and death, identity and difference, and thus achieved reconciliation."

On the cross the Son of God enters into a situation characterized by godforsakenness, but it is also essential to understand that godforsakenness enters into the life of the Trinity. Objective contradiction results from the Son being “in” godforsakenness, but also from godforsakenness being “in” God.¹⁰⁷ The Father “gives up” the Son and thereby abandons him, which creates a “*stasis*,” separation, and “bifurcation” in the Trinity.¹⁰⁸ In the making of this bifurcation “all the depths and abysses of human history,” including all suffering, death, and godforsakenness, enter into the life of the Trinity.¹⁰⁹ Chris E. Green supplies helpful imagery when he states that suffering goes “up” into the Trinity as the Son comes “down” into the human situation, through the cross in particular.¹¹⁰

The Transition to The Crucified God

In trying to understand the objective contradiction that Moltmann describes in *The Crucified God*, it is helpful to understand the relationship between *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*. Though some maintain that *The Crucified God* is a sharp break from its predecessor, most hold that *The Crucified God* is an advancement and complement to *Theology of Hope*.¹¹¹ *Theology of Hope* emphasizes the future: God is a coming God, Christians must orient themselves towards the new creation that is promised. *The*

¹⁰⁷ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 277.

¹⁰⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 152, 244, 246.

¹⁰⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

¹¹⁰ Green, “Groaning Spirit,” 132.

¹¹¹ For those who suggest a sharp break, see Neal, “Minority Report,” 26–43; Avis, *Divine Revelation*, 63; Grenz and Roger, *Twentieth-century*, 185. For a compelling description of *The Crucified God* in terms of advancement, see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 58, 72, 97–99. If the cross and resurrection, death and life, present and future are contradictions of each other in Moltmann’s theology (as the previous chapter of this thesis argues), then it is not surprising that a book that emphasizes the cross might seem to contradict a book that emphasizes the resurrection. However, in emphasizing the contradiction of the resurrection (i.e., the cross) *The Crucified God* is in deep continuity with *Theology of Hope* precisely in its opposite emphasis.

Crucified God, alternatively, explains how the coming God is present and how the power of the new creation reaches those still suffering in the present, a topic especially treated in chapter four.¹¹² “Through his death the risen Christ introduces the coming reign of God into the godless present by means of representative suffering.”¹¹³

Furthermore, the contradiction between the cross and resurrection, between death and life, that is emphasized in *Theology of Hope* gets taken up into the very being of God in *The Crucified God*.¹¹⁴ In *Theology of Hope*, the cross and resurrection is something that primarily happens outside of God. God defeats (i.e., contradicts) death by raising Christ, an act which is external to his inner being.¹¹⁵ In *The Crucified God*, however, God defeats death by taking it into his inner Trinitarian life so that it can be combatted in a dialectical process that will find its resolution in the *eschaton*. Moltmann therefore describes his Trinitarian theology of the cross as “panentheistic” in a “dialectical way.”¹¹⁶ God now contains in himself everything that exists (*à la* panentheism) not because everything already corresponds to him, but because he has taken up all that contradicts him in order to defeat it.

The important point for Moltmann’s theology of contradiction is that in *The Crucified God* objective contradiction takes place in an incarnational way. Moltmann explains:

The dominant theme then [with *Theology of Hope*] was that of anticipations of the future of God in the form of promises and hopes; here it is the understanding of the incarnation of that future, by way of the sufferings of Christ, in the world’s sufferings.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 85.

¹¹³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 185.

¹¹⁴ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 72.

¹¹⁵ See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 145, 165, 174.

¹¹⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 277.

¹¹⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 5.

In *Theology of Hope* future reality lies *beyond* present reality, and when future reality comes into existence it displaces present reality. The metaphor of the dawn is again helpful: as day comes into being it pushes night out of being.¹¹⁸ But the objective contradiction in *The Crucified God* is incarnational because God does not merely displace suffering but enters into it. *The Crucified God* is also, in a sense, “incarnational” in the reverse way in that suffering enters into God.

Subjective Contradiction

Arguments for God’s Suffering Godforsakenness

The nature of God’s suffering has already been mentioned in this chapter and therefore does not need to be presented in detail here. On one level, Christ, the Son of God, suffered from the physical crucifixion itself as well as the emotional weight of being rejected by the people he came to save.¹¹⁹ This suffering was made worse for him because, as Moltmann states, he became sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and a curse (Gal. 3:13) in order to save humanity.¹²⁰ On another level, both the Son and the Father suffered because of their separation. The Son suffered dying in abandonment and the Father suffered as he witnessed his Son die.¹²¹ On yet another level, the Trinity suffers because it takes up all of the world’s suffering and godforsakenness into its inner life.¹²²

There are six primary arguments given in the book for God’s passibility, especially as it relates to his suffering on the cross. First, Moltmann appeals to Abraham Heschel’s work on the Old Testament prophets. According to Heschel, the prophets

¹¹⁸ See page 53 of this thesis.

¹¹⁹ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 48, 55.

¹²⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 241.

¹²¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 241.

¹²² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

believed that God was characterized by *pathos* rather than *apatheia*—not a *pathos* in the Greek sense of irrational human emotions, but rather in the sense of God’s ability to suffer and be affected by the world.¹²³ God’s suffering in the Old Testament foreshadows his suffering on the cross.¹²⁴ Second, Mark’s account of Jesus’ cry of dereliction is an “accurate interpretation” of what occurred on the cross. That is, Jesus not only felt forsaken by the Father but in fact was forsaken by the Father. And because Jesus was the Son of God, it must be said that Jesus’ cry is describing something that took place “between God and God,” that is, within God himself.¹²⁵ Third, 2 Cor 5.19 says that “God was in Christ,” which Moltmann takes to mean that God’s own being was in Christ as Christ suffered on the cross. God suffered in Christ.¹²⁶

The fourth argument is that if God could not suffer than he could not love. Suffering (or openness to suffering) is so bound up with the human experience of love that it is impossible to think of the one without the other. So on the cross God is “love with all his being.”¹²⁷ Fifth, if an eternal, unchangeable God is taken as the starting point for doing theology, then it is understandable how one might conclude that God did not suffer on the cross. However, if one begins with Christ on the cross and builds one’s theology from this event, it becomes difficult to avoid the fact that God suffers.¹²⁸ Lastly,

¹²³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 270. For more on Moltmann’s use of Heschel’s work, see Jaeger, “Abraham Heschel,” 168–73.

¹²⁴ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 274. In the book Moltmann sometimes speaks as though it was only with the cross that God opened himself up to suffering (e.g., Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 24), which would seem at odds with Heschel’s claims. Samuel J. Youngs is correct when he says that, for Moltmann, God suffers in an “empathetic” way with his people before the cross, but on the cross God takes suffering upon himself more directly (Youngs, “Emptied God,” 51). Also see Green, “The Crucified God,” 131.

¹²⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 149, 152.

¹²⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 190. Roland D. Zimany challenges Moltmann’s use of this verse. He says that the verse could justifiably be translated “By Christ, God was reconciling the world.” Also, he says that the verse does not specifically mention the cross, and could therefore refer to Christ’s life (Zimany, “Meaning of the Crucifixion,” 8).

¹²⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 230, 205.

¹²⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 114–25, 7, 205.

for Moltmann the utter severity and pervasion of suffering in the world makes it impossible to believe that God sits in heaven unaffected by it all. Moltmann, quoting Nicolaus Zinzendorf, says that “If I did not find God in Jesus [i.e., in Jesus’ suffering], I would have to take God for the devil.”¹²⁹ All of these arguments establish for Moltmann that in coming into objective contradiction with godforsakenness on the cross, God experienced the suffering of godforsakenness himself.

God’s Suffering is Subjective Contradiction

Suffering in and of itself is not subjective contradiction. Subjective contradiction is the feeling or emotion that comes specifically from objective contradiction. For example, if God were suffering from some flaw or weakness that was inherent in himself, that suffering would not be subjective contradiction. In that case, his suffering would not be the result of two opposing realities coming together, but the result of a deficiency in his own one reality.

Throughout the book Moltmann uses the imagery of “open” and “closed.” To be “closed” is to stay in one’s own reality or world and not venture outside of it. When discussing the church’s identity-relevance dilemma, he says that focussing only on identity makes the church “closed” to society and to the world. It cannot come into contradiction with what is outside of it because it has built a “defensive wall” around its own people and has withdrawn into a “ghetto.”¹³⁰ In an analogous way, some conceptions of God understand him to be a “closed” being. Aristotle’s unmoved Mover is in love with himself and is a “*Deus incurvatus in se*” (God turned inward on himself) because he

¹²⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195.

¹³⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 20–21.

cannot be affected by anything that is not himself.¹³¹ The God of theism is an “alien, hostile, other God” who is “separated from the world and from man” and is “crouching outside the world.”¹³² One could say that this sort of God has also built a “defensive wall” to close himself off from the world and the world’s suffering.

True love, the sort of love embodied on the cross, is associated with openness to reality that is outside or “other” than one’s own reality. Moltmann says that “the more one loves, the more one is open and becomes receptive to happiness and sorrow. Therefore the one who loves becomes vulnerable, can be hurt and disappointed.”¹³³ Again Moltmann says: “If love is the acceptance of the other [i.e., openness to the other] without regard to one’s own well-being, then it contains within itself the possibility of sharing in suffering and freedom to suffer as a result of the otherness of the other.”¹³⁴ The God revealed on the cross is utter love and openness to the “otherness” of the world and its suffering.¹³⁵

Moltmann continually emphasizes that God’s suffering on the cross was not passive, helpless, or unavoidable suffering. Rather, in God’s openness he freely chose to leave the comfort of heaven and enter into the world and its suffering, as the hymn in Philippians 2 states.¹³⁶ The reason suffering people gain hope and dignity from Christ’s suffering on the cross is because in him they do not see another “poor devil” like themselves but rather one who came down out of love for them.¹³⁷ Similarly, on earth Christ actively brought about his own suffering through his actions and his preaching of

¹³¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 222.

¹³² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 251.

¹³³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253.

¹³⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 230.

¹³⁵ For more on God’s openness, see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249, 253, 273–74, 303.

¹³⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 276. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 229–30.

¹³⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 49. See Macleod, “Christology of Jürgen Moltmann,” 41.

the kingdom of grace.¹³⁸ God's suffering on the cross was voluntary, chosen, and active.

God's suffering on the cross is subjective contradiction because it is due to his openness to the world and his free choice to take the suffering of the world upon himself. The godforsakenness that he came into objective contradiction with was not his own godforsakenness, nor was it even the godforsakenness of that which was "similar and beautiful" as compared to himself. Rather, he came into objective contradiction with the godforsakenness of people that were "different, alien and ugly [i.e., opposite and other]" as compared to himself.¹³⁹ God's suffering was not a suffering contained to his one reality but was a result of the conflict between two realities: himself and humanity's godforsakenness. Therefore, the suffering he experienced can be called subjective contradiction.

Criticisms of The Crucified God

Moltmann states that his theology began and grew out of his experiences of suffering as a soldier during World War Two.¹⁴⁰ He maintains that all of Christian theology and Christian life is an answer to Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he says explicitly that the strongest motivators towards writing *The Crucified God* were being grieved by (1) the suffering of friends and humans in general, (2) seeing pictures of what occurred in the concentration camps, and (3) the barriers certain social justice and human rights groups were facing towards the end of the 1960s.¹⁴² Moltmann's descriptions of God and the Trinity in *The Crucified God* cannot be

¹³⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 51.

¹³⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Broad Place*, 16–17; Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 16; Moltmann, *Experiences of God*, 8; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 1.

¹⁴¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 4.

¹⁴² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, ix, xi, 2.

viewed as abstract, detached theological propositions but must be viewed as his specific response to the real problem of suffering in this world. As has been shown above, his intention is to show that God is present with humans in experiences of suffering and also that God will finally defeat suffering in the end.

The event in which God is in solidarity with suffering humans and takes suffering into himself to defeat it is the cross. In order to affirm that God is truly with suffering humans Moltmann denies the traditional doctrine of the two natures of Christ, the traditional distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, any conception of God as a an almighty ruler, the tenets of “theism” like God’s immutability and impassibility, and any attempt to understanding God through “glorious” things.¹⁴³ He denies these and similar beliefs because they all work to keep God in some way above, beyond, or removed from creation and suffering. Instead of being apart from creation and its suffering, God chooses to come into contradiction with it on the cross and experience it himself. Moreover, he does not simply experience suffering but takes it and all of history into his Trinitarian being so that he panentheistically contains everything—everything positive and everything negative—within himself. This extreme way of being with suffering humans is also the way he defeats suffering: by taking it into his inner being he can dialectically defeat it and in the end be “all in all.”¹⁴⁴

However, these sorts of claims are undoubtedly what draws the most criticism compared to anything else said in *The Crucified God*. The purpose for discussing the

¹⁴³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245, 239–40, 250–52, 208–19. Moltmann does not necessarily deny the two natures doctrine entirely. Rather, his point is that the doctrine is not central to what happened on the cross. What is important is the relationship between the Son and the Father, not the relationship between Christ’s two natures. In doing so Christ is perceived in totality, as a united and holistic person (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 205, 245).

¹⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 277.

criticisms here is not to resolve the theological issues but to bring out what light they shed on Moltmann's theology of contradiction. There are four closely related criticisms along these lines. First, some take issue with Moltmann's claim that God suffers. For example, Jowers holds that if God is passible then he must also be ontologically and ethically mutable, Jansen denies that God being love necessitates his ability to suffer and change, and Castelo argues that Moltmann's view puts God's freedom and distinctness from creation into question.¹⁴⁵

This criticism of Moltmann's suffering God highlights his desire to bring God into contradiction with suffering. Impassibility would mean non-contradiction because God would be above and removed from humanity in its suffering. But Moltmann's desire is to show that through the cross God truly enters into suffering and suffering truly enters him (objective contradiction), and that God experiences the suffering in his inner being (subjective contradiction). To a certain extent God would not even be able to adequately actively contradict suffering if he did not experience objective and subjective contradiction first, because humanity would be left alone in its suffering.¹⁴⁶

Second, some scholars criticize Moltmann for making the cross, and in a broader sense the world, necessary to God. He is accused of suggesting (1) that God *must* suffer because he is love and therefore needs the world, (2) that God became Trinity at the cross, and (3) that God requires the world in his process of becoming.¹⁴⁷ The first accusation, about God being love, may be accurate with regards to his later theology, but

¹⁴⁵ Jowers, *Theology of the Trinity*, 251; Jansen, "God's (Im)mutability," 293–301; Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal," 396–406. Also see Klaas, *Christological Debate*, 43; Zimany, "Meaning of the Crucifixion," 8.

¹⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 45–52.

¹⁴⁷ Gabriel, "Beyond the Cross," 99–100; McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 49; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 106–10.

in *The Crucified God* Moltmann's stance is that love makes one "vulnerable" to suffering.¹⁴⁸ Given humanity's condition, love is what propelled God to come into contradiction with suffering, but he does not comment on what God might have needed apart from creation.¹⁴⁹ The second accusation is justifiable based on a select number of extreme statements he makes about the Trinity and the cross, but too much concern should not be made of it because in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* he quickly corrects this mistake.¹⁵⁰

Insofar as the third accusation is based on the second, it is justifiable. However, insofar as it is focussed on his discussion of God panentheistically taking up all of human history into God's history, the accusation is misplaced. Moltmann is opposed to speculating about God in eternity apart from how he has revealed himself, particularly on the cross.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, he is clear that God chose to take on the suffering of the cross out of the fullness of his love not out of a deficiency in being.¹⁵² Therefore the accusation that from eternity God has needed creation to realize or actualize himself is mistaken. God did not come into contradiction with suffering and bring it into himself for his own development. Rather, his purposes were soteriological: God underwent objective and subjective contradiction for the ultimate purpose of active contradiction, to the benefit of creation.

The third major criticism is that Moltmann blurs the Creator-creation distinction

¹⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253.

¹⁴⁹ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 244, 270.

¹⁵⁰ For his extreme statements see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246–47. For later statements that show he does not hold God became Trinity at the cross, see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 50–65.

¹⁵¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 208–18.

¹⁵² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 230, 51.

or dissolves God into history.¹⁵³ Scholars making this criticism find fault with the same concepts that the criticisms above were directed against: God suffers in his inner being, there is no distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, the cross affects the very being of God, God has a history and takes up human history within himself, and so on.¹⁵⁴ Orthodox classical theism has held that God is supernaturally present in creation but transcends creation; God is “present in creation but no way near his creation to imply oneness with divine being.”¹⁵⁵ But according to Isaiah Nengean, Moltmann rejects any “radical separation of God and the universe” and “implies the ontological presence of God in creation.”¹⁵⁶

A full response to this criticism based solely on *The Crucified God* is difficult because Moltmann does not explain in any detail what he thinks of the Creator-creation distinction. He certainly maintains that God suffers, God enters into suffering, and suffering (along with all human history) enters into God. But his focus in saying these things is on the solidarity and empathy God has with humans in their suffering, not on making ontological claims. A repeated refrain throughout the book is that God is not above and aloof to humanity because he has experienced suffering and has taken it into himself.¹⁵⁷ Even the passage in which he states that human history has entered the history of God—probably one of the most concerning passages of the book to his critics—his

¹⁵³ See Nengean, *Imago Dei*, 39; Phan, *Cambridge Companion*, 235, 237; Powell, *German Thought*, 201–202; Kasper, *Revolution*, 146; O’Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, 148; McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 49; Castelo, “Moltmann’s Dismissal,” 401; Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 322; Spence, “Hegelian Element,” 55.

¹⁵⁴ Many scholars level this criticism against Moltmann based on a theme they find not just in *The Crucified God* but throughout his writings, including his later theology. However, it is in *The Crucified God* that Moltmann begins in a significant way to make controversial statements along these lines.

¹⁵⁵ Nengean, *Imago Dei*, 58.

¹⁵⁶ Nengean, *Imago Dei*, 57–58.

¹⁵⁷ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 24, 45–52, 195, 222–23, 270–78, 325–29.

emphasis is on the fact that the history of human *suffering* enters God.¹⁵⁸ None of this is said to rebut the criticism against Moltmann, but simply to show that in this regard his critics are asking questions that Moltmann is not intending to give answers to.

Nonetheless, that Moltmann suggests God becomes partially identical with creation through the cross is unlikely. Though he does not speak at length on this issue, he does provide hints that point in the opposite direction. Moltmann states that God reveals himself in his opposite so that what is opposite to him can have the chance of being “like” him, which implies correspondence but still distinction.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Moltmann says that solidarity with others loses its usefulness if one simply becomes identical with the others.¹⁶⁰ More substantially, a crucial aspect of his description of God’s love is that it is open to what is “other” and therefore becomes vulnerable to suffering.¹⁶¹ The problem with Aristotle’s unmoved Mover is precisely that he can only be in love with himself and cannot love what is outside of himself.¹⁶² Love, a key concept in the book, would lose its meaning if God were in some way identical with the object of his love.¹⁶³ Perhaps Moltmann speaks of God’s relationship with creation as having a closeness and reciprocity that certain scholars feel uncomfortable with, but he seems to maintain the basic distinction between God and creation.

Fourth, according to A. J. Conyers Moltmann unnecessarily treats hierarchy as an inherently evil thing. As stated above, Moltmann’s desire in much of *The Crucified God* is to show that God is not radically above humanity but rather in intimate solidarity with

¹⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

¹⁵⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27–28.

¹⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 16–17. Also see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 20.

¹⁶¹ God’s openness to what is “other” runs throughout the book. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 62–63, 205, 213, 230, 249, 253, 273–74, 303.

¹⁶² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 222.

¹⁶³ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 222–23, 230–31, 243–48.

them in their suffering. God does not rule like a heavenly Caesar or Pharaoh above creation; he takes the form of weakness on the cross.¹⁶⁴ But Conyers claims that while rule and power can be used unjustly, they can also be used justly and for the betterment of those being ruled over.¹⁶⁵ Just as *Theology of Hope* tried to show that the future is open with possibility in front of humanity, Conyers contends that a proper view of God's rule can create an openness to possibility above humanity.¹⁶⁶ Conyers' criticism certainly points out a real weakness in Moltmann's book. In Moltmann's desire to show that God comes down into contradiction with the suffering of the world he neglects the fact that God can remain ruler over the world. Solidarity with humanity does not require a complete abandonment of God's kingly role.

Active Contradiction

God's Active Contradiction

God had a purpose for voluntarily stepping into objective contradiction with godforsakenness and suffering because of it. He came into contradiction with godforsakenness for the benefit of humanity and the world. Moltmann focusses on three major accomplishments of the cross. First, by entering into godforsakenness, allowing it to enter into himself, and suffering because of it, God enters into communion with all of the godforsaken people on earth.¹⁶⁷ According to Moltmann the "suffering in suffering" is feeling alone in one's suffering.¹⁶⁸ It is precisely this level of suffering that God defeats when he goes to the cross, because by embracing godforsakenness even the godforsaken

¹⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 24–28, 32–40, 195, 211–14, 249–52, 325–29.

¹⁶⁵ Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 16, 174–75, 188–201.

¹⁶⁶ Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 193–201.

¹⁶⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 276.

¹⁶⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 46–47.

are now in the fellowship of God. Whereas in *Theology of Hope* Moltmann said that God has “future as his essential nature,” in *The Crucified God* God is in solidarity with those who suffer in the present.¹⁶⁹ In this way God actively contradicts the abandonment of humanity.

Because God is not content with godforsakenness in the world, the ultimate purpose of the cross is not only that God might have solidarity with the world but that he might liberate them from their situation. Therefore, the second major way that the cross liberates is by bringing genuine humanity back to those who have been “dehumanized” by their desire to become powerful and godlike.¹⁷⁰ The cross tears down idols of God as an imperial ruler and humanity’s self-deifying ambitions because on the cross God was revealed as an outcast, failure, and suffering human being.¹⁷¹ The cross is the “critical theory of God and man [sic.]” because instead of saying what *is* (*à la* “pure theory”) it rather says what something is *not*: the idols that humans make are not God, and a prideful and self-deifying humanity is not genuinely human.¹⁷² In destroying idols and self-deifying desires the cross “restores to [humans their] abandoned and despised humanity” because it is only from this place that God can work in humans to make them “beautiful” and “good.”¹⁷³ Furthermore, recognizing God as the crucified God enables humans to

¹⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 57–58. See Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 85.

¹⁷⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 230.

¹⁷¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 212–13. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 68–69.

¹⁷² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 25. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 69. Moltmann developed his understanding of the cross as “critical theory” by drawing largely from Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (Chapman, “Christian Dialogue,” 437; Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 124). Horkheimer and Adorno’s “critical theory” (or “negative dialectic”) was critical in that it identified what was wrong in society and tried to change those circumstances (Loewe, “Dialectics of Sin,” 236–37). Another key source for Moltmann’s understanding of the cross as critical theory is Luther’s critique of the *theologia gloriae* with the *theologia crucis* (see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 70–72; Eckardt, “Luther and Moltmann,” 19–26).

¹⁷³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 71, 214.

love that which is “different and other” to themselves.¹⁷⁴

The third major way that the cross liberates humans from godforsakenness is more universal in its scope. Moltmann maintains that the cross is the way the godforsakenness of all creation enters the life of the Trinity so that it can be finally and utterly extinguished.¹⁷⁵ Bauckham correctly observes that the contradiction between the death of the cross and the life of the resurrection featured in *Theology of Hope* is taken up into the very being of God in *The Crucified God*.¹⁷⁶ By taking up the “negative element” (i.e., the godforsakenness) of the world, God contains within himself all positivity and negativity, all the life and the death of the world. But the negativity and positivity exists “dialectically” in God, which is to say that they conflict with each other in a dynamic way.¹⁷⁷ God is described as an “event,” as a dynamic being on the move, and his movement is towards the resolution of the dialectic so that negativity is defeated and only positivity is left.¹⁷⁸ When only positivity is left God can be described as being “all in all,” meaning that nothing contradicts him and everything corresponds to him.¹⁷⁹ In this way the cross is crucial for bringing godforsakenness up into God so that it can be dialectically defeated by him.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 213.

¹⁷⁵ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 51, 84; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 57, 85; Jantzen, “Jesus’ Despair,” 4. Anne Murphy accuses Moltmann of glorifying suffering by internalizing it in God (Murphy, “Theological Trends,” 157). But this accusation holds no weight because God internalizes suffering only in order to extinguish it.

¹⁷⁶ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 72. Also see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 246.

¹⁷⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 247, 253, 277.

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 244, 247, 252–53. Moltmann also describes God as an “eschatological process” (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 249).

¹⁷⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253, 277, 335.

¹⁸⁰ Burnell Eckardt criticises Moltmann for abandoning any traditional language of atonement (Eckardt, “Luther and Moltmann,” 22). Andrew Gabriel responds that Moltmann does indeed mention Christ dying for humanity’s sins (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 183; Gabriel, “Beyond the cross,” 102). However Eckardt is correct that redemption from sin is not something Moltmann focusses on.

Human Active Contradiction

The majority of this chapter has been focussed on the activity and experience of God. This has been so not because Moltmann is unconcerned with human behaviour but because God is the initiator and model of the three types of contradiction. Moltmann states that it is right for humans to mimic their conception of God and how God behaves.¹⁸¹ In light of the crucified God, Christians must also enter objective contradiction, suffer subjective contradiction, and work in active contradiction.

The outworking of the process humans are called to mirror the process that God underwent almost exactly. First, Christians are called to break down the “defensive walls” they have built around themselves and to discontinue being defined by the principle of “like seeks after like.”¹⁸² Just as God came down from heaven to be in solidarity with godforsaken humanity on the cross, so Christians must be willing to love those who are “different, alien and ugly” compared to themselves.¹⁸³ The “theologian of glory” seeks to “love what is like” but the “theologian of the cross” is “freed to love that which is different and other.”¹⁸⁴ Christianity is to find its identity in identifying with those whom Christ identified with, that is, the poor, lowly, and godless.¹⁸⁵ By doing so Christians enter into a sort of objective contradiction of their own.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 267. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 268, 272.

¹⁸² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 20, 26.

¹⁸³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 28.

¹⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 213.

¹⁸⁵ Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 151–52. See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 329; Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 85.

¹⁸⁶ The parallel Moltmann draws here between God’s contradiction with human godforsakenness and Christians’ contradiction with those who are “alien” and “ugly” probably requires more nuance than he gives it. God is qualitatively different from humanity: God is holy but humans are sinful; God is powerful but humans are weak. Conversely, however, Christians are not qualitatively different from non-Christians. There are times when Christians will be just as sinful as any non-Christian, and it is very possible for a Christian to be as poor or low on the social hierarchy as any non-Christian. In this context Moltmann tends towards black-or-white, us-and-them terms that ignore these nuances.

Second, Christians are called to suffer the feeling of godforsakenness that accompanies solidarity with the different, alien, and ugly. In contrast to the apathy that is the “sickness” of modern times, Christians must love and suffer.¹⁸⁷ The cross opens humans who are “closed” and turned in on themselves, enabling them to love that which is outside of themselves.¹⁸⁸ But this opening to the world around them is “painful” for humans, because if they have faith in the crucified God then they find themselves in “contradiction” with the godforsakenness of their environment.¹⁸⁹

Third, the solidarity and suffering that Christians experience with the “other” is done to actively contradict all that is negative in the world.¹⁹⁰ The “suffering in suffering” (i.e., loneliness) that suffering people feel is defeated when Christians enter into solidarity with them.¹⁹¹ Additionally, Christians critique any ideology that claims power and exaltation signify closeness with God, as well as any political authority that justifies its power with claims of closeness to God. Power and exaltation cannot signify closeness with God because God chose to reveal himself in the helplessness and suffering of Christ on the cross. Political authority cannot justify its power with claims of closeness to God because that sets the political authority above the rest of humanity, giving the political authority the place of God.¹⁹² Only the God revealed in the cross is God, everything else is “non-God.” Christians must be “atheists” towards any “Caesar” or “Pharaoh” that declares himself to be God’s son, commissioned with divine authority.¹⁹³

The final form of Christian active contradiction focussed on in *The Crucified God*

¹⁸⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253. See Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 112.

¹⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 72.

¹⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 39.

¹⁹⁰ See Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 32.

¹⁹¹ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 46.

¹⁹² Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 322–29.

¹⁹³ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 195–96.

is work seeking to defeat the five “vicious circles of death” in the five spheres of life. Christians should seek to replace poverty, abuse of force, “alienation,” pollution, and godforsakenness with “socialism,” democracy, recognition and fellowship with others, peace with nature, and the “courage to be.” No liberation from one vicious circle will be effective unless liberation is sought for in all spheres.¹⁹⁴

Theodicy

Moltmann praises the critical theory of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno because it surpasses the standstill between theism and atheism. The essence of Horkheimer’s critical theory is characterized by a longing that the suffering and injustice in the world would be defeated and the world would be put right. Unlike theism, critical theory does not justify suffering or try to compensate for it with a heavenly world after death. However, unlike atheism it does not give up hope for “the wholly other” or the possibility of suffering being defeated. Whereas atheism must try to come to terms with the existence of suffering, the longing for “the wholly other” makes knowledge of suffering an “unquenchable sorrow.”¹⁹⁵

According to Moltmann, Horkheimer’s critical theory is similar to the theology of the cross in that both revolve around “open questions.” The question of suffering “cannot be answered” and the question of God’s righteousness “cannot be surrendered.”¹⁹⁶ That is, suffering cannot be resolved by rationally explaining it or by accepting it as a fact of life. Moltmann agrees with Ivan Karamazov, from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, who says that no reason could be given that would justify the price of the

¹⁹⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 329–35. Space does not allow for a more in-depth discussion of these five vicious circles, their remedies, or Moltmann’s reasons for making these suggestions.

¹⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 223–25.

¹⁹⁶ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 226.

existing amount of suffering in the world.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the only responsible Christian theodicy is one that does not try to explain the existence of suffering but rather tries to defeat it practically. Rather than accept any attempt to make suffering seem worthwhile, the Christian is called to long and cry out for God's righteousness in the world, because in doing so the Christian echoes Christ's own cry from the cross.¹⁹⁸

Along with his arguments for God's passibility, Moltmann's theodicy is one of the most criticized elements of *The Crucified God*.¹⁹⁹ Jantzen holds that it is a reasonable and important question to ask why so much suffering exists when (or if) God has the power to prevent it.²⁰⁰ This criticism once again highlights the important place Moltmann gives to his theology of contradiction. Traditional Christian theodicies try to justify "why it must be as it is," that is, the reason why God considers suffering on earth to be worthwhile.²⁰¹ Moltmann's problem with this is that the only way to justify suffering is by showing that it is fulfilling or will fulfil some ultimately good purpose. But suggesting that suffering fulfils a good purpose makes suffering itself good. Thus, if suffering is justified then it is less clearly something that can or should be contradicted. In contrast, by not explaining suffering the contradiction persists and the longing for the resolution of the contradiction is strengthened.

¹⁹⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 221.

¹⁹⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 225–26. See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 66; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 105–6.

¹⁹⁹ For criticisms of Moltmann's theodicy, see Jeronic, "Eye of Charity," 49; Jaeger, "Problem of Evil," 12; Jantzen, "Jesus' Despair," 5; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 88; Fiddes, *Creative Suffering*, 137; Bush, "Trinitarian Conflict," 29.

²⁰⁰ Jantzen, "Jesus' Despair," 5. Moltmann hints at an answer when he says: "God is unconditional love, because he takes on himself grief at the contradiction in men and does not angrily suppress this contradiction" (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 247). Perhaps Moltmann believes it is more loving of God to suffer with humanity than for him to end suffering immediately. Nonetheless, Jantzen is correct that Moltmann does not attempt to deal with this question.

²⁰¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 253.

Conclusion

It has been shown that in *The Crucified God* the three kinds of contradiction occur when God contradicts godforsakenness on the cross. The inductive section of this chapter showed that contradiction pervades the book. Whether discussing the identity-relevance dilemma of the church, interpretations of the cross, the cross from both the perspective of Christ's life and resurrection, God's ability to suffer, Christian responsibility in the political realm, and so on, contradiction is essential to each of these. In the systematic section it was shown that on the cross God comes into objective contradiction with godforsakenness, experiences subjective contradiction, and actively contradicts godforsakenness. Furthermore, it was shown that Christians are to mirror this process that God took on the cross. These observations collectively have showed that the theology of contradiction is central to Moltmann's theology of the cross and Christology.

ANALYSIS OF *THE CHURCH IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT*

Introduction

Moltmann's theology of contradiction is equally as significant in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* as it was in the first two books of the trilogy. This inductive section of this chapter shows how pervasive contradiction is in the book. The systematic section explains how the three kinds of contradiction shed light on Moltmann's pneumatology and ecclesiology. New creation comes into objective contradiction with old creation by the Spirit bringing it to the world and the church manifesting it in the world. Because of objective contradiction the church experiences subjective contradiction in the form of unrest, suffering, and joy. Finally, active contradiction takes the form of active opposition to old creation and encouragement of new creation.

Inductive Section

The inductive section of this chapter shows that the theology of contradiction is present and significant in every chapter of *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Chapters one and seven each describe four different marks that identify a healthy church. Chapter two describes particular relationships that the church must always participate in. Chapter three describes a church founded on Christ, chapter four a church seeking after the kingdom of God, and chapters five and six a church conducting its actions by the power of the Spirit. Active contradiction is prevalent in every chapter because the task of every chapter is to explain what the church is called to be and do in relation to the old creation in the world. Subjective contradiction is particularly emphasized in chapters three and five, in which Moltmann explains the dialectic between suffering and joy. And

objective contradiction is made reference to throughout the book as it is the background to both subjective and active contradiction.

Chapter One: “The Dimensions of a Doctrine of the Church Today”

According to Moltmann, “Every doctrine of the church starts from experiences in the church and with the church in the world.”¹ Thus, Moltmann provides four characteristics of the church that are signs of a healthy church in contemporary times.² First, the church must be the church of Christ. The church cannot allow itself to be dominated by the state because it is only where Christ rules and his voice is exclusively obeyed that the church can be a liberating power in the world.³ Second, the church must be missionary. In the past when the church understood itself to be intertwined with the state, it was tempted to be satisfied within the confines of “Christian society” and within the confines of the “religious mandate” (i.e., concerning itself with only the “religious” tasks of the community).⁴ But recently it has recognized its call to go outside of these two confines to non-Christian societies and to all spheres of life.⁵

Third, the church must be ecumenical. The ecumenical movement has helped the church to understand that the boundaries of nations, governments, cultures, and social ideologies do not define the existence or boundaries of itself.⁶ Furthermore, it has emphasized that only when there is peace amongst Christians can the church spread peace to the world.⁷ Fourth, the church must be political.⁸ Following the example of

¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 18.

² See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 121.

³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 4–6.

⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 10.

⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 18, 7–10.

⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 11.

⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 12.

⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 15–18.

Christ it is to take the side of the oppressed and humiliated and be a “critical liberating” force with regards to the world and its politics.⁹

Obedying none other than Christ is what keeps the church from completely assimilating to the world. If the church was to obey primarily the state then Christ’s liberating power could not contradict those parts of the world defined by old creation. Being missionary is a movement of exodus from ghettoization—whether it be the ghetto of “Christian society” or the “religious mandate”—out towards the people and spheres of life that are oppressed by old creation so that old creation can be contradicted. Ecumenism liberates the church from assimilation with any given nation or government so that it can come into healthy contradiction with the nation and government. Furthermore, ecumenism is itself a manifestation of the harmony of the new creation, and thus it stands in contradiction to the disharmony of the old creation. Lastly, a political church is one that works to liberate the lowly from oppression, liberate the oppressors from domination, and critique any dehumanizing political ideologies. In other words, a political church will actively contradict oppression, domination, and dehumanizing political ideologies.

Chapter Two: “The Church in History”

Theology cannot understand what the church is by examining the church in isolation; it must be observed in its relationships with other things.¹⁰ First, the relationship between the church’s faith and its actual experience must be observed. On the one hand it confesses itself to be the “one holy catholic Church,” but, on the other

⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 16.

¹⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 19. One of the relationships Moltmann mentions—between the church and the “signs of the times”—will not be discussed here because it is of less relevance.

hand, its experience of itself is much worse than what it confesses to be in faith.¹¹ The best explanation of this phenomenon is that the church has “sacramental identification:” the “history of Christ and the eschatological future in, with and beneath the word, the bread and the wine.” In other words, theology must see the “coming lordship of God [i.e., the confession of faith] as already present in the historical church [i.e., the church of experience].”¹²

The second relationship observed is the church’s relationship to the history of Christ. With reference to the history of Christ the central question has to do with the purpose of his coming. The Apostle Paul maintains that that the purpose of Christ’s history is the justification of sinners (e.g., Rom 4:25), which in turn has its purpose in Christ becoming lord, which finally has its purpose in God’s final indwelling and glorification in the new creation.¹³ The church, then, being “on the way to fulfilling the history of Christ,” is called to live “in the Holy Spirit” as “the beginning and earnest of the future of the new creation.”¹⁴ Transitioning history into eschatology and eschatology into history is the work of the Spirit, and as part of this work the Spirit creates the church to be an eschatological community.¹⁵

The final relationship examined is that between the church and the Trinitarian history of God. Out of his openness to the world, and willingness to experience it, the Father sends the Son and the Spirit to the world.¹⁶ It is necessary to view the sending of Christ both from its origin, in Christ’s life and mission, and from its future, his lordship

¹¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 20.

¹² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 26–27. See Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 165.

¹³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 30–32.

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 32.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 35.

¹⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 55. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 111.

and glorification.¹⁷ Similarly, the Spirit must be seen from the perspective of his initial leading of people to faith, but also from the perspective of the Spirit's final work of new creation and his present orienting of Christians to that goal.¹⁸

The goal of this Trinitarian movement is the glorification of God. Christ's resurrection and present lordship; the preaching of the gospel to the poor; and the liberation of the oppressed, outcast, and sick are all ways in which "the glory [of God] has already entered into the misery of the present time."¹⁹ In addition, the goal of the Trinitarian history of God is the "unification" of all things, because God does not desire to find rest without his creation finding rest too. By taking suffering and death onto himself in order to defeat it, God works to unite creation with himself so that it participates in his unity and perfection.²⁰ In its mission towards these goals the Trinity creates the church to participate in "the glorifying of God in creation's liberation."²¹

Moltmann's comments on the Trinitarian history of God are relevant to the criticisms raised against his conception of God's relationship to creation/history, discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.²² For example, Moltmann was correctly criticized for statements made in *The Crucified God* that implied God became Trinity at

¹⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 53.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 56–57. Bauckham correctly states that Moltmann's theology of the Spirit in the present book adds a force to his concept of anticipation that was not present in the previous two books of the trilogy (Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 118; see Guttesen, *Leaning*, 98). If the Spirit who will ultimately renew all of creation at the *eschaton* is the same Spirit working in and through the church in the present, then the church is empowered to anticipate new creation in a more realistic way (see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 191; Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 127). Conradie, however, comments that Moltmann does not provide a sufficient explanation for how the present creation relates to the new creation that the Spirit will one day make (Conradie, "Justification of God," 95–98).

¹⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 58.

²⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 62–64.

²¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 65. See Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 165. Meeks states that "Moltmann's basic thesis [in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*] is that the church is a function of God's trinitarian history with creation" (Meeks, "Church in the Power," 301). Whether this is in fact Moltmann's fundamental thesis is debatable, but certainly it is an important theme.

²² See pages 95–100 of this thesis for the discussion.

the crucifixion. But in the present discussion Moltmann shows that he has clearly moved away from this position. He speaks of God being Trinity in his “origin,” apart from history, and he speaks of the Father sending the Son and Spirit before the event of the cross.²³ Relatedly, in the previous book Moltmann denies any distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity. Though he still does not use the terms “immanent” and “economic,” in the present book he differentiates between the “Trinity in the origin” and the “Trinity of the sending.”²⁴ To a significant degree these terms are meant to distinguish God before and after creation, but also to distinguish God in himself and God as he is revealed.

Whereas the above statements made in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* may ease some concerns of *The Crucified God*’s critics, other statements he makes are likely just as concerning, if not more so. He proposes that the *telos* of all creation and God himself is the glorification and unification of God along with creation.²⁵ His theory that God is in the process of “unifying” himself raises the same concerns that led critics to accuse him of tritheism in his previous work. Building off of Franz Rosenzweig’s interpretation of God’s Shekina, Moltmann suggests that the Father and the Son experienced a “separation” on the cross. The Spirit therefore “unites” God as the Trinitarian history presses on towards the consummation.²⁶ Similar to what was concluded with reference to *The Crucified God*, the conclusion must likely be made again that Moltmann falls outside of orthodox Trinitarian theology. If the persons of the Trinity

²³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 53–56.

²⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 54. See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 55, 62.

²⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 57.

²⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 61–62. Rosenzweig, speaking from a Jewish perspective, maintains that in his Shekinah God in some way separates himself from himself to journey with Israel in their wanderings.

need to be “united,” that strongly implies they do not already have a fundamental ontological unity.²⁷

Relatedly, Moltmann’s description of creation being united with God raises concerns about blurring the Creator-creation distinction. He says that Christian hope is directed towards the time when “the unity of God contains within itself the whole union of creation with God and in God.”²⁸ The concern is not that Moltmann sees no distinction between Creator and creation in the present, but that he believes this distinction is gradually lessening and will totally disappear with the *eschaton*. The other area of concern is whether Moltmann sees the world as necessary to God’s self-realization. He says that God is moving towards his glorification and unification, but that God will not be glorified until creation is redeemed and he will not be united until creation is united with him.²⁹ “God is *not perfect* if this means that he did not in the craving of his love want his creation to be necessary to his perfection.”³⁰

Though Moltmann provides little clarification on these issues, tentative responses can be made to these concerns. With respect to the Creator-creation distinction, in both the trilogy and his later theology Moltmann defends the panentheistic presence of God

²⁷ Because Moltmann provides little explanation on the statements he makes here, there is admittedly ambiguity about what he means by God being “united.” On the one hand, he says that the word “*koinonia*” (i.e., fellowship or communion) could describe the Spirit’s work between Father and Son equally as well as the world “united.” Though this articulation may still be somewhat puzzling, it could more easily fall inside orthodox Trinitarian thought. On the other hand, in this same discussion one of the reasons Moltmann gives for why God must be “united” is the “separation” that occurred between the Father and the Son on the cross. This reasoning clearly echoes the statements he makes in *The Crucified God*, which were concluded to be outside orthodoxy (page 82 of this thesis). Moltmann develops in more detail his understanding of the Trinity in his later book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, but still emphasizes God’s “threeness” rather than his “oneness,” possibly to a fault (see Phan, *Cambridge Companion*, 236; McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 69–70).

²⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 61.

²⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 57–64.

³⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 62.

before and after the *eschaton*.³¹ That is, he argues that God exists in creation and creation exists in God, but the two are not identical.³² In regards to the world being necessary to God, the above quote implies that Moltmann believes the world to be necessary to God, but that God initially desired for it to be necessary to him. God will not be glorified until all creation has been liberated, but this is not to be interpreted as having its source in a “deficiency of being” but a “divine fullness of being.”³³ Moltmann keeps both concepts—necessity and choice—in tension, but probably gives God’s freedom and choice slightly more priority.³⁴ Neither of these concerns raised by scholars can be adequately answered because his statements on these topics are marked by paradox and ambiguity. What can be known for certain, however, is that Moltmann passionately opposes a conception of God that has ghettoized himself away from the struggles of creation. Instead, God comes close to humanity to take on its pain, contradict it, and thereby bring everything into correspondence with himself.

Contradiction is a theme that runs throughout Moltmann’s discussion of the church’s three relationships. In his comments on the relationship between the church’s confession and relationship, he combines an eschatological sort of contradiction with an incarnational sort. He says that the future, perfected church is already present in the

³¹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 277; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 98–103. See McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 110; Nenguan, *Imago Dei*, 52.

³² Joy Ann McDougall correctly states that even when Moltmann describes his understanding of how God and the world exist in one another he does not do so with great clarity, and he still leaves himself critically vulnerable to accusations of blurring the Creator-creation distinction (McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 109). The reason for this is that he describes the mutual indwelling of God and the world in terms of *perichoresis*, the same concept he uses to describe the mutual indwelling of the members of the Trinity. Thus, how the relationship between God and the world differs from the relationships between the members of the Trinity remains essentially unanswered. Nonetheless, it is certainly Moltmann’s intention to maintain the distinction, even if he is unsuccessful at doing so.

³³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 60, 56.

³⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 63.

current, imperfect church. Next, the role of the church in its relationship to the history of Christ is to be “the earnest of the future of the new creation” in the present, and an “eschatological community” in its historical context. By the power of the Spirit the church is called to manifest new creation in contradiction to the old creation that surrounds the church.

With reference to the church’s last relationship, Moltmann’s narrative of the Trinitarian history of God in the world is saturated with his theology of contradiction. God’s openness to the world, the Spirit’s final work of new creation and present anticipations of new creation, present instances of God’s glory amidst the misery of old creation, the unification of all things so that nothing opposes God, and the church’s role of presently glorifying God by liberating the world—the opposition of two realities is central to each of these concepts.

Chapter Three: “The Church of Jesus Christ”

Christ’s messianic mission is what determines the church’s existence and tasks.³⁵ So in order to better understand the church Moltmann examines Christ and his mission through the lens of the doctrine of Christ’s “threefold office” as prophet, priest, and king.³⁶ As a prophet Jesus proclaimed the gospel of God’s reign and salvation for humanity, which is not a remote future but something that is dawning in the present because of the very act of proclamation.³⁷ Upon hearing the gospel people are called to repent from their godless way of life and “convert” to the future, which is an anticipation

³⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 66, 68. See Guttesen, *Leaning*, 88; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 122.

³⁶ See Meeks, “Church in the Power,” 302–3; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 117.

³⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 76.

of the coming kingdom “under the conditions of this world.”³⁸ Those who convert then participate in Christ’s mission which leads them into engagement and constructive conflict with society, a conflict that takes place between “the powers of the past and the forces of the future.”³⁹

As priest Christ took upon himself suffering and death in an attitude of love and self-sacrifice. The cross liberates humanity from the compulsion to sin, from the idols of power, and from its own godforsakenness.⁴⁰ The church, who had its “birth” at the cross of Christ, is then called to likewise “take its stand beneath the cross.”⁴¹ As a fellowship liberated from sin the church forgives others and seeks after the will of God “towards new creation.”⁴² As a fellowship liberated from idols of power, it must reject all political religion and idols.⁴³ As a fellowship liberated from godforsakenness, it must lower itself in self-surrender to be “with” the lowest people in society, and not simply “for” them.⁴⁴

As king Christ is the representative in the present of God’s coming, “all-redeeming” kingdom.⁴⁵ God’s coming kingdom is closely associated with the new creation of all things. As Moltmann says, God’s kingdom “brings about a new creation of all things” and in the Lord Jesus “the future of the new creation and the glory of God has already dawned” in the present world.⁴⁶ It must be remembered, however, that Christ does not use his lordship as an overlord but as a servant. In laying down his own lordship Christ liberates humanity from both lordship and servitude, placing them on the same

³⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 80.

³⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 82.

⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 88, 90, 96.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 89.

⁴² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 89.

⁴³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 91.

⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 93.

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 99.

⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 100, 99.

level as brothers and sisters with one another.⁴⁷ Thus in the church there must be no divisions between sexes, classes, nations, or races in the church, and the church's love must be set in opposition to a loveless world.⁴⁸

Moltmann considers it necessary to add two more titles to the traditional three. First he adds the term "Lord of glory" to include the aesthetic dimension of Christ. The primary place in the life of the church that Christ is recognized as the Lord of glory is the celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁴⁹ The Lord's Supper not only remembers Christ's cross but also celebrates Easter and looks forward to Christ's coming, and so is defined by joy and rejoicing. The joy of the Lord's Supper "builds up a tension towards life in this world which can only be resolved through conscious suffering over its lack of freedom and through conscious intervention for more freedom and more open fellowship."⁵⁰ Suffering people are given reason to rejoice in the Lord's Supper, but joy leads back into greater hunger and suffering for the world's freedom. This dialectic of joy and suffering, "resistance" and "consolation," makes the Lord's Supper a "messianic intermezzo" on the way to "the new creation of the world."⁵¹

Lastly, Moltmann adds that Christ is a "friend" to all humans. He offers the unlovable friendship with God and sacrifices himself out of love for friends. As a friend Jesus is someone that desires to participate both in the church's joys and its sufferings.⁵² Because of Christ's open and total friendship to the church, the church is called to have a friendship that "goes out to meet the other" and is open to those outside its borders.⁵³

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 103.

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 106.

⁴⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

⁵⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 113. See Tripole, "Church for the Poor," 646.

⁵² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 115, 117.

⁵³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 121.

There can be little doubt that Moltmann's choice to describe Christ as friend is related to his general dislike for hierarchy. As was discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, A. J. Conyers observes (and criticizes) Moltmann's tendency to deemphasize any notion of a God who is removed from and above humanity.⁵⁴ Moltmann's description of Christ as friend corresponds to the theme of equality that pervades *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, especially in relation to hierarchy in the church.⁵⁵ However, in counterbalance to this tendency, Moltmann refers to a number of ways in which God exerts leadership or rule. For example, Christ rules over the church and the church must follow only his direction.⁵⁶ Even more significantly, the kingdom of God, which is the *telos* of the church and all of creation, is defined by the unopposed rule of God over all things.⁵⁷ Moltmann still opposes a notion of God removed from the pain of creation, but he also wishes to show that the church contradicts old creation in the world due in part to the Lord it serves.

Objective contradiction is what is being referred to when Moltmann says that new creation is already present amidst creation. New creation dawns in the present through Christ's proclamation of the kingdom and through his resurrection. Objective contradiction is also what is being referred to when Moltmann talks about the rich and poor, the high and the lowly being in common fellowship with each other. Harmony is a mark of new creation, whereas division is a mark of old creation. Therefore harmony that occurs in or because of the church objectively contradicts division in the world. In his

⁵⁴ See page 100 of this thesis.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 314–17.

⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 4–6, 98–108. Moltmann qualifies this statement by pointing out that Jesus' method of lordship is servanthood, and therefore the goal of his lordship is a "dominion-free" world (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 103). But this qualification is not to undermine Christ's lordship but to clarify that Christ does not rule through domination.

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 190–93.

discussions of Christ as Lord of glory and as friend Moltmann emphasizes subjective contradiction: Christ's willingness to share in humanity's joy and pain, and the church's experience of joy and pain at the Lord's Supper. Finally, the church's calling to stand in conflict with society, reject political religion and national idols, and to be in solidarity with the poor is a calling to actively contradict forces of old creation in the world.

Chapter Four: "The Church of the Kingdom of God"

In the previous chapter Christ, the centre of the church, was discussed, so in this chapter the kingdom of God, the outer "horizon" which the church seeks, is examined.⁵⁸ Moltmann begins by highlighting the church's relationship with other world religions.⁵⁹ In the past Christian nations would view non-Christian nations as enemies and their religions as superstitions that they must be freed from. Christian nations would therefore try to spread Christianity and make converts.⁶⁰ Moltmann describes this mentality as "exclusive absolutism" and says that it leads to a church that is "invulnerable, inalterable, and aggressive."⁶¹ By its unwillingness to enter into relationship and dialogue, the church attests to an unalterable and apathetic God and reveals an "incapacity to suffer" on its own part.⁶²

Moltmann calls this inadequate outlook towards world religions "quantitative mission," because its goal is to increase the number of Christians. Though Moltmann admits there is a place for quantitative mission, he implies that emphasis should be placed

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 133.

⁵⁹ Moltmann places special emphasis on the church's relationship with the Jewish religion, because the church has its roots in the Old Testament and because Israel, in its refusal to accept Christ, reminds the church that the *eschaton* has not yet come (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 136–49, 350–51). Also see Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 90.

⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 150–52.

⁶¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 161.

⁶² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 161. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 120; Meeks, "Church in the Power," 301, 304.

on “qualitative mission,” which is the “alteration of life’s atmosphere” according to Christ.⁶³ The desire is not to spread the church but to spread the kingdom of God and to “infect” societies with Christian ideas, values, and principles.⁶⁴ Yet this cannot be done in monologue but only in dialogue, not only in giving but also in receiving. Desire for genuine dialogue springs from a God who is himself open and willing to suffer because of the relationships he enters into. In dialogue the church can work with its partners to liberate the whole creation for the coming kingdom.⁶⁵

Scholars have not surprisingly criticized Moltmann for suggesting that conversion to Christianity is not necessary. Martin R. Tripole argues that in the bible Christian mission is done for the purpose of transforming the world by its acceptance of Christ within the Christian community.⁶⁶ Richard Bauckham argues that if the church is the anticipation of the kingdom of God, then a desire to spread the kingdom would entail inviting others into the church community.⁶⁷ Poul Guttesen similarly argues that if the kingdom of God is so integrally tied to the person of Christ as Moltmann suggests, then joining the kingdom must require drawing near to Christ and his teaching.⁶⁸

Responding to these criticisms is difficult because Moltmann leaves the exact relationship between the church and the kingdom of God somewhat ambiguous. That the church is not in and of itself the absolute embodiment of the kingdom is clear.⁶⁹ The kingdom in its fulfilled state is the unopposed (i.e., not contradicted) rule of God over all

⁶³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 158. See Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 167–68; Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 72.

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 158.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 158–62.

⁶⁶ Tripole, “Church for the Poor,” 657–58.

⁶⁷ Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 137–39. Also see Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 71–72.

⁶⁸ Guttesen, *Leaning*, 107–9. See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 82, 99.

⁶⁹ See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 11, 84, 136, 196, 303.

of creation, meaning that it is larger than the church and is thus the church's goal and "horizon."⁷⁰ God has created the church as only one part of his mission towards his glorification and unification; the Spirit also works outside of the church to bring about the kingdom.⁷¹

What remains unclear is whether the church has a special role with regards to the kingdom. On the one hand, the passages that explain that the Spirit works outside of the church do not specify that the Spirit works through the church primarily and through other means secondarily. Moltmann leaves open the possibility that the church is on equal footing with the other workings of the Spirit outside itself. On the other hand, the major topics of the central chapters of the book imply that the church is special. That is, in chapter three he says the church is founded on Christ, chapter four says the church is oriented towards the kingdom, and chapters five and six say the Spirit guides the church. Surely no other group or movement is founded on Christ, the representative of the kingdom; no other group is consciously oriented towards the kingdom proclaimed by Christ; and no other group consciously desires to submit to the guidance of the Spirit, the "earnest and beginning" of the kingdom.⁷² Whether he intends to or not, in this way Moltmann speaks of the church as having a special or primary role with respect to the kingdom.

To finish the chapter Moltmann provides some comments on the kingdom of God and its impact on the present. The phrase "kingdom of God" can refer to God's actual rule in the present as well as the goal of his rule that will be achieved in the future.

⁷⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 99, 190

⁷¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64–65, 133–64.

⁷² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 99, 76–84, 191.

Presently God's rule comes up against "contradiction, resistance and antagonism" but with the *eschaton* his rule will be unopposed.⁷³ God currently rules through promise and the proclamation of the gospel; through the faith, obedience, and fellowship of his people; and through the power of his Spirit.⁷⁴ These current manifestations of God's rule make it so that history and eschatology "cannot be metaphysically divided" but rather intermingle in this "messianic," or mediating, era.⁷⁵ Correspondingly, the church is not yet the kingdom of God but rather anticipates the kingdom of God through its existence and actions, encouraging everything that leads to life.⁷⁶

The contrast between qualitative mission and quantitative mission clarifies what the church is to actively contradict. In principle the Christian's goal is not to contradict the traditions and religions of other nations but rather the enemies common to all humans, such as oppression and death.⁷⁷ Quantitative mission is successfully done only in dialogue with other religions and by openness to suffering because of relationships that are entered into. In other words, if the church were to close itself off from the world it would not experience subjective contradiction because the powers of new creation within it are not coming into contact with old creation. But when the church is open and engages with others it suffers the resistance of old creation. Moltmann's concluding section on the kingdom of God describes the objective contradiction that takes place when the

⁷³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 190.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 190–91.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 192.

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 193, 196. On the church as anticipation but not yet the kingdom, see Guttesen, *Leaning*, 92, 107.

⁷⁷ There is tension here in Moltmann's thought. He says Christians are to oppose death and oppression but not traditions and religions. But what if a tradition or religion propagates death and oppression? In fact, in *The Crucified God* he explicitly says any use of religion to buttress oppressive authority should be opposed (Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 322–29). To make sense of these comments one must remember that Moltmann's focus is specifically on responding to the harms that Western Christian colonialism has caused (see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 151).

manifestations of God's present rule create instances of new creation amidst old creation. The church lives in this "messianic" era in which old is transitioning to new and new is "casting its light" back upon the old, awaiting the day in which God's rule is absolute and only new creation exists.⁷⁸

Chapter Five: "The Church in the Presence of the Holy Spirit"

Chapters three and four cover the origin and hope of the church respectively, and chapters five and six cover the way in which the church lives out its messianic vocation on its path from origin to goal.⁷⁹ In chapter five Moltmann deals with what he calls the "means of salvation," or the ways God bestows salvation to his church: proclamation of the gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and worship.⁸⁰ The first means of salvation Moltmann discusses is the proclamation of the gospel. He states the gospel must be understood in line with the tradition of deutero-Isaiah, in which the announcement of God's coming rule actually begins putting that rule into effect.⁸¹ Similarly, Jesus' message is that the coming kingdom is near and is now breaking into this world, and by proclaiming this Jesus "brings a saving future into the disastrous present."⁸² The appropriate response of the church to the gospel is to "protest" in hope against the negative conditions of this world, encouraging anticipations of new creation in the present.⁸³

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both signs of participation in Christ's messianic mission in the world. Baptism is the sign of a person's beginning to participate

⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 190.

⁷⁹ See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 124.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 198.

⁸¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 216.

⁸² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 217, 221.

⁸³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 222–23.

in the mission, and the Lord's Supper is the sign of a person's being "on the way" in the mission.⁸⁴ Notably, Moltmann defends "believers' baptism" as the only biblical sort of baptism. His reason is that when a church accepts infant baptism it propagates itself from generation to generation by means of birth and tradition. So-called Christian nations make themselves so by baptizing all of the infants born in that nation, thus supposedly making them Christian.⁸⁵ But Moltmann argues that when the citizens of a country become synonymous with the members of the church, the church loses its critical and liberating power for society. Thus, baptism must be a sign of a personal choice to have faith in Christ.⁸⁶

The service of worship is a means of salvation when the gospel is proclaimed, the community responds to its freedom in Christ, believers are baptized, and the Lord's Supper is taken.⁸⁷ Moltmann's comments on worship are very similar to his comments on the Lord's Supper in chapter four. Worship is "the Lord's song 'in a foreign land.'"⁸⁸ As the Lord's song, worship is meant to bring and express joy to the Lord, thankfulness for the liberation he has brought to his people, and hope for the day in which the process of liberation is complete. But it is sung "in a foreign land," which means that God's kingdom has not yet come. Worship is not only a time for rejoicing but also for lamenting and sighing because of the godlessness that pervades the world. Moltmann summarizes

⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 243.

⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 228–30, 224.

⁸⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 241. Moltmann's critique of infant baptism seems slightly at odds with his statement earlier in the book that Christians must focus on opposing death and oppression, not religions and traditions (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 150–63). However, Moltmann clearly does not believe religions and traditions cannot be critiqued. Rather, his goal is to oppose what has historically too often been Christianity's desire to make other peoples take on the Christian religion and western culture. Christians should focus on opposing death and oppression, which are the enemies of people from all religions.

⁸⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 261.

⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 262.

this two-sided element to worship when he states: “Where the nearness of God is experienced in the Spirit, there is also awareness of life’s godlessness.”⁸⁹

Each of the means of salvation is intimately related to the theology of contradiction. Proclamation of the gospel leads to “restless hope” and conflict with the world because inherent in the proclamation is contradiction: it proclaims Christ’s lordship but highlights the world’s resistance to his lordship.⁹⁰ The concept of the gospel itself involves contradiction because it refers to the in-breaking of the future into the present, the existence of new creation amidst the old. Baptism is the “earnest and dawn of the glory of God in the story of a person’s life” and the Lord’s Supper is “an anticipation of [the] eating and drinking in the kingdom of God.”⁹¹ Both are events defined by new creation even though new creation has not fully come. Finally, worship is a time of recognizing the resurrection and the crucifixion, freedom and suffering, new creation and old creation. Recognizing the existence of both elements leads to the subjective feelings of both joy and sorrow.

Chapter Six: “The Church and the Power of the Holy Spirit”

In this chapter Moltmann outlines his proposals for the church’s “ministries and functions, its gifts and the tasks assigned to it.”⁹² His guiding concern is that in its order and ministries the church properly confesses rather than denies the coming kingdom of God, which it is called to represent. But before he comments directly on church order and ministries, he provides a list of qualities that the church’s order and ministries should manifest to the world. By observing the way the church structures and conducts itself, the

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 273.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 210.

⁹¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 234, 248.

⁹² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 289.

world should be able to see the qualities of peace, freedom, Christ's lordship, friendship, and the work of the Spirit. These qualities are each eschatological in that they are "signs," "anticipations," the "in-breaking," and the "earthly form" of God's coming kingdom and new creation.⁹³ The world, as it stands in this present age of old creation, is not defined by these qualities and therefore stands in contrast to the church. In this chapter the quality of friendship is particularly emphasized because friendship means equality between church members, unlike other potential ways of ordering the church.⁹⁴

Additionally, the work of the Spirit is also emphasized because it is the quality that enables the others. The church itself is a creation of the Spirit, and its ministries are due to the Spirit's bestowal of spiritual powers, or "*charismata*," to all of the church's members.⁹⁵ All the Spirit creates—the church, its order and ministries, and the qualities manifested to the world—is eschatological because the sending of the Spirit is eschatological. Prophecy is made in the Old Testament that the Spirit will be given out to God's people in the last days.⁹⁶ So the pouring out of the Spirit "means the new creation of all things for the eternal life of the kingdom" and the "reviving presence of the future of eternal life in the midst of the history of death."⁹⁷

The major foil and example of non-contradiction Moltmann uses in this chapter is what he calls the "state church."⁹⁸ The state church is characterized by two unhealthy relationships. First, the state church's relationship to the public social order of a nation is

⁹³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 293, 291, 294. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 117, 124, 135; Conyers, *God, Hope, and History*, 127.

⁹⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 291–94, 314–16.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 294.

⁹⁶ E.g., Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:27.

⁹⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 294–95.

⁹⁸ According to Moltmann it was Emperor Constantine who first blended the church with the state (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 318; Rasmussen, *Church as Polis*, 78–79).

one of assimilation and compromise.⁹⁹ When Christianity becomes a state church it is integrated into the social order and allies with political rulers and the state universities.¹⁰⁰ State churches are given boundaries that are determined by geographical territories or regions, and are responsible for caring for all of the people in their given area. Becoming a Christian is not something one voluntarily chooses but rather is what happens when one is born in that nation and is baptised as an infant.¹⁰¹ Secondly, relationships within the state church are characterized by separation and hierarchy. In state churches there is a level of special ministers or pastors and a second level of lay people, where the first level provides ministries and care for the second level. It is a church “for” the people rather than “of” the people.¹⁰² According to Moltmann this phenomenon creates passive and apathetic church members.¹⁰³

The structure and ministries of the church are meant to be defined by the qualities mentioned above and to anticipate God’s coming kingdom. In contrast to the state church’s assimilation with the nation’s political power, the church’s various ministries have their single basis in the one ministry of service to the kingdom of God.¹⁰⁴ Christ, not any political or religious authority, is the one who gives assignments to his church.

⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 320. See Guttesen, *Leaning*, 228.

¹⁰⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 319.

¹⁰¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 318.

¹⁰² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 318–19, 92. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 129.

¹⁰³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 299. In the preface to the book Moltmann says that the book’s practical intention was to “point away from the pastoral church” and the “national and established churches,” which he treats as basically synonymous (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, xx; see Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 121). His critiques in this regard are largely critiques of the Protestant church in Germany (Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 125; Meeks, “Church in the Power,” 303).

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 302–3.

Church membership must be based on the voluntary decision to follow Christ, not by birth into a certain nation and infant baptism.¹⁰⁵

In contrast to the state church's separation of ministers and laypeople, the church's members must all be equal to each other "in dignity and rights."¹⁰⁶ This fact follows from Christ being the head of the church: the various assignments of the people find their common ground in the one assignment of the kingdom that Christ gives to all Christians. Thus, all Christians are called and commissioned and are given a gift from the Spirit, not just a special level of ministers.¹⁰⁷ Though some people will be assigned to roles of leadership, all decision-making must be done in dialogue with the congregation as a whole because the whole congregation has been called.¹⁰⁸ As equals, members of the church are to be a fellowship of friends who care for each other and give of themselves to each other.¹⁰⁹

The central concept of this chapter is that the church must manifest the qualities of new creation in contradiction to the qualities of old creation that are present in the world.¹¹⁰ As the "power of the resurrection" and the "reviving presence of the future" the Spirit creates the church and gives it powers of new life.¹¹¹ The church's order and ministries flow out of these powers. The state church is non-contradiction because in assimilating with society it loses its power to contradict society. By taking on the

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 325. Rather than large state church Moltmann recommends small "grass-roots" communities of believers (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 328–35).

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 308.

¹⁰⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 298, 329.

¹⁰⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 310.

¹⁰⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 314–16. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz correctly observes that in this and the previous chapter Moltmann does not explain in any specificity the mechanics of what he suggests for the church's means of salvation or its ministries (Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 104).

¹¹⁰ See Müller-Fahrenholz, *Kingdom and the Power*, 86; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 133; Wagner, "Mission and hope," 462.

¹¹¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 295.

characteristics of society, such as the tendency towards hierarchy and abusing power, it loses the characteristics of new creation, such as freedom. It is an instance of non-contradiction also because in creating two levels it makes the supposedly “lay” people apathetic and passive. They become people to be cared for rather than people who have been given gifts from the Spirit to be used for the kingdom of God in contradiction to old creation.

Chapter Seven: “The Marks of the Church”

In the concluding chapter Moltmann comments on the four marks of the church as laid out by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. It describes the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.”¹¹² The church is “one” because it gathers for one baptism and a common Lord’s Supper and people come from different ethnicities, societies, and religions come together in love.¹¹³ Not for itself is the church “one,” but rather for the sake of the “the peace of divided mankind [sic].” The church’s unity is not simply a fact but also its task that it must strive for, in order to “represent the unity in Christ and the Spirit that makes all things new in the midst of the conflicts” of the world around it.¹¹⁴ Moltmann also stresses that unity is not something that can be regimented or forced. Rather, while unity is strived for the unique gifts, tasks, and weaknesses of each member must be accepted.¹¹⁵

The word “catholic” refers to “what is general, universal, linked with everything, compared with the particular and individual.”¹¹⁶ At the present time the church is related

¹¹² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 337.

¹¹³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 342.

¹¹⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 345.

¹¹⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 343.

¹¹⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 348.

to the whole by its mission, which in tendency and direction moves outward to encompass the whole. It is not yet catholic but seeks catholicity. In this sense the church is the “beginning of the kingdom of God on earth,” but when everything has been consummated the church “will itself *be the whole* and realize its catholicity.”¹¹⁷

Moltmann cautions against interpreting the church’s call to catholicity as a call to keep out of conflict between persons or groups. To the contrary, the church must be in solidarity with the oppressed on earth, and in that way the oppressor too will be saved by being brought down.¹¹⁸

Christ’s activity in the church sanctifies it and thereby makes it holy and sets it apart. The church’s holiness is not something that separates it from the rest of the world, however, because the church recognizes it is still sinful and is holy only because of grace.¹¹⁹ Through constant reformation the church is a witness to the worldwide reformation that will take place on the last day, and that is “already present in the Spirit.”¹²⁰ Moltmann suggests that the church can only sanctify itself by participating in the helplessness and poverty of Christ, who became poor in order to make humanity rich. The discomforts that result from the church being in solidarity with the poor are “birth pangs of the new creation in the midst of the creation that is still enslaved.”¹²¹

Finally, the apostolicity of the church is unique compared to the other three marks of the church. The church’s unity, catholicity, and holiness will continue on into eternity, even after the *eschaton*. But the church’s apostolicity has its goal in the coming of the

¹¹⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 349.

¹¹⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 351–52.

¹¹⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 353.

¹²⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 355.

¹²¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 355–56.

kingdom of God, and so will come to an end when the kingdom comes.¹²² The church is apostolic in that it bases its teaching on that of the apostles, but it is apostolic also because in every generation it is commissioned to carry out the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. Yet, because it is proclaiming the gospel the church must expect forces of unfreedom in the world to “contradict and resist” it.¹²³ Suffering will inevitably result from its commission, and therefore suffering should in fact be proof that the church is fulfilling its commission.¹²⁴

Moltmann’s treatment of the four marks of the church is steeped in the theology of contradiction. Christ, who is on a “messianic” mission, and the Spirit, who is an “eschatological gift,” make the church what it is and therefore give it these four marks.¹²⁵ Because the church is created eschatologically, it is defined by and filled with powers of new creation. God’s new creation will be characterized by unity, catholicity, and holiness, and so to the extent the church is so characterized it represents new creation in the present. Its existence as representative of new creation brings it into objective contradiction with those aspects of the world characterized by old creation. Furthermore, the church does not simply exist passively with these four marks, but rather it strikes out in mission to seek the fulfillment of the four marks. Seeking unity, catholicity, holiness, and the spread of the gospel in the world is active contradiction against old creation. Acting in this way leads to suffering on the part of the church because of the contradiction it comes up against.

¹²² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 357.

¹²³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 361.

¹²⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 361.

¹²⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 339.

Systematic Section

The Church in the Power of the Spirit is a book about pneumatology and ecclesiology. Moltmann's pneumatology and ecclesiology are better understood by observing his theology of contradiction because contradiction is essential to his concept of the Spirit and the church. The Spirit is the power of new creation, and the church is the primary space in which the Spirit creates new creation. Thus it is in and through the Spirit and the church that new creation comes into objective contradiction. This objective contradiction leads to subjective feelings of both suffering and joy, and it leads to actions that contradict old creation.

Objective Contradiction

The Two Realities Being Contradicted

The promised future reality and present reality are clearly the two realities being contradicted in *Theology of Hope*, and God and godforsakenness are clearly the two realities in *The Crucified God*. However, in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* the two realities being contradicted are not as obvious. This is not because contradiction plays less of a role, but rather because Moltmann mentions many realities that contradict one another.¹²⁶ He mentions, for example, peace contradicting violence, God's coming glory contradicting present misery, love contradicting lack of love, resurrection contradicting death, unity contradicting division, freedom contradicting captivity, and friendship contradicting broken relationship.¹²⁷ Because of the repeated emphasis Moltmann places

¹²⁶ In the preface to the paperback edition of *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Moltmann himself confesses that "I did not succeed in gathering everything together into a single focus as wholly as I had in the two previous books [*Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*], because this doctrine of the church had to cover too many different themes" (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, xiv). It is this relative lack of focus that contributes to the difficulty in discerning two primary realities in contradiction.

¹²⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 12, 210, 58, 191, 98, 100, 339, 105, 314.

on Christ as the church's sole foundation and lord, one could justifiably state that Christ's lordship and other authorities are the two realities in contradiction.¹²⁸ Alternatively, one could sensibly suggest the church or the Spirit as being primary, because they are the main subject matter of the book and Moltmann does speak of them as forces of contradiction.¹²⁹

To a degree it is a matter of semantics what terms should be used for the two primary realities in contradiction, but this thesis uses the terms "new creation" and "old creation." There are two reasons for this choice. First, "new creation" is a term that Moltmann frequently uses in the book in the context of contradiction.¹³⁰ Second, other realities that Moltmann speaks of as forces of contradiction can in one way or another be shown to be subservient to or included in new creation.

For example, Moltmann holds that the common messianic mission of the lordship of Christ, the church, and the Spirit are each directed towards new creation, and that each brings new creation into the present. In discussing the purpose of the history of Christ, Moltmann concludes that if "the justification of sinners is the meaning of the history of Christ, then the meaning of the justification of sinners is the liberating lordship of Christ over the dead and the living, i.e., the new creation in him."¹³¹ Through Christ's resurrection the glorification of God that will characterize the new creation "has already entered into the misery of the present time."¹³² So it is true that Christ's lordship contradicts other authorities, but because his lordship anticipates and manifests new

¹²⁸ E.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 5, 15, 48, 66, 68, 105, 133, 301–2.

¹²⁹ E.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 35, 67, 34, 56–57.

¹³⁰ E.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, xiii, 3, 31, 32, 35, 56–57, 99, 100, 113, 191, 193, 206, 223, 291, 294–95, 339, 354.

¹³¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 31.

¹³² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 58.

creation, one can summarize this contradiction by saying new creation contradicts old creation.

Similarly, the Spirit is the vessel of new creation and the church is the space and community in which new creation primarily is manifested. Moltmann calls the Spirit the “power of futurity,” one who sets people “in the powers and movements of the new creation,” the “manifesting and the newly creating power,” the “earnest” and “advanced payment” of new creation, and the one who “fills everything with the powers of the new creation.”¹³³ Because the new creation will be defined by God’s glory and the unification of God with all things, the Spirit’s task in the present is to glorify God and unify all things.¹³⁴ Flowing out of this mission, the Spirit creates the church to be “the initial fulfilment of the new creation of all things and the glorification of God.”¹³⁵ Moltmann says that there is a tension between the history of Christ and contemporary history, and that the church “is” this field of tension.¹³⁶ New creation, which is anticipated and manifested in the history of Christ, comes into contradiction with “contemporary history,” or the world, in the field that is the church. Moltmann helpfully sums up the relationship between new creation, the Spirit, and the church when he says, “The experiences and powers of the Spirit mediate the presence of the history of Christ and the future of the new creation. What is called ‘the church’ is this mediation.”¹³⁷ In other words, the Spirit brings the powers of new creation to the church, making the church the sphere that the powers of the new creation meet the powers of the old.

¹³³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 34, 57, 191.

¹³⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 60.

¹³⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 294.

¹³⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 67.

¹³⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 35.

It has been established that the many realities in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* that contradict what is negative in the world can be summarized by the term “new creation.” The term “new creation” is not vague because it entails all the concepts that it summarizes: peace, freedom, the lordship of Christ, and so on. What is left to establish is what exactly new creation comes into contradiction with. Although “old creation” seems the natural term to oppose “new creation,” Moltmann does not use it. When talking about unity, for example, he speaks of division, and when talking about resurrection he speaks of death, but when talking about new creation he does not specify the opposition.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, this thesis uses the term “old creation” to describe that which new creation contradicts. “Old creation” does not refer to all the creation that currently exists, but only those aspects of present creation that specifically oppose peace, freedom, the lordship of Christ, and other qualities that characterize the new creation.¹³⁹

The Form of Contradiction

The content of the contradiction in this book is similar to that of *Theology of Hope*, but the form is similar to *The Crucified God*. In *Theology of Hope*, the promised future is in objective contradiction with the present. Similarly, in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, new creation exists in the future and contradicts old creation, which pervades the present. However, there is a difference in the form the contradiction takes. In *Theology of Hope* future reality does not exist in or alongside of present reality but rather it displaces present reality. As something future the promised reality is something

¹³⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 100, 98.

¹³⁹ Moltmann states that the church does not affirm the current state of the world but it does affirm creation itself (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 274). Maintaining that new creation is contradicting old creation should not be interpreted to mean there is something inherently wrong with this creation; what is wrong is the evil that humans choose and spread on the earth.

totally removed from present reality, and when the promised reality becomes present reality, the reality that was once present becomes nonexistent.¹⁴⁰ But this is not the case with *The Crucified God*. When God comes into contradiction with godforsakenness he does not displace it but rather he enters into it. The form of this sort of contradiction is preserved in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.

This form of the contradiction is seen in the numerous times Moltmann speaks of one thing being “in the midst of” another thing. For example, because of Christ’s resurrection the “future of the new creation and the glory of God” has dawned “[in] the midst of the history of death.”¹⁴¹ A church that is united and composed of friends “is the constitution of new life in the midst of the old, of true life in the midst of what is false.”¹⁴² Statements such as these suggest that instances of new creation do presently exist in the world, but old creation persists to exist and therefore it surrounds the instances of new creation.¹⁴³ Even when the phrase “in the midst of” is not used, the same form of contradiction is present throughout the book. Because of the resurrection God’s glory has entered into the misery of the present time; through the proclamation of the gospel the future dawns in the present; through the liberating rule of God the kingdom is present in history; the Spirit is the “earnest and beginning” of new creation in this world; and baptism and the Lord’s Supper celebrates the dawn of the coming kingdom in the

¹⁴⁰ One could justifiably say that the resurrected Christ is an instance of the future in the present. However, in *Theology of Hope* Moltmann perceives the resurrected Christ to be primarily a *promise* or a *sign* the points towards the future. His emphasis was not that the future was in fact made present.

¹⁴¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 99.

¹⁴² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 292–93. For other examples of “in the midst of,” see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 295, 345, 355–56.

¹⁴³ One of the sections of the book where Moltmann makes this point clearest is his discussion of the relationship between the church of faith and the empirical church (see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 22–27). He says that the “history of Christ and the eschatological future” are present “in, with and beneath the word, the bread and the wine.”

kingdom of the world.¹⁴⁴ This form of one thing being in another is due to the fact that the Spirit enters into the world, and that the church is present in the world amidst old creation. New creation does not erase all old creation at once but rather enters incrementally through the Spirit into the church, and from the church into the world.

Subjective Contradiction

The Nature of the Subjective Contradiction

In *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* there are three major feelings that result from the objective contradiction between new and old creation. The first is the feeling of unrest, which was emphasized in *Theology of Hope*. Moltmann maintains that the Spirit's bringing of new creation naturally causes Christians to restlessly long for the full and undisputed presence of new creation in the world. Moltmann states that the current unrest evident in the world points to the unrest that is inherent in the church because of the forward-moving mission of Christ and the Spirit. The "upheavals" taking place in the world draw attention to "that great upheaval which it [the church] itself describes as 'new creation.'"¹⁴⁵

The celebration of the Lord's Supper "builds up a tension towards life in this world" because it acknowledges both the joys and sorrows of life.¹⁴⁶ The church does not run from suffering and it does not ignore the new creation in the world, which creates a conflict that expresses itself in a longing for joy to defeat sorrow. Similarly, proclamation of the gospel creates and is strengthened by a "restless hope" that results from the

¹⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 58, 76, 191, 289. For similar examples, see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 80, 99, 192–93, 196, 202, 216–17, 261, 291–94, 339, 344, 349.

¹⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

discrepancy between the proclamation and present reality.¹⁴⁷ The proclamation speaks of Christ's death and resurrection as Lord, but reality shows that Christ is not yet fully lord. In Moltmann's words, peace with God "brings discontent with an unpeaceful world."¹⁴⁸ Due to its restlessness, the church cries out and "sighs" with humankind over the suffering present in the world and cannot "put up with" oppression.¹⁴⁹

The second feeling is suffering, which was emphasized in *The Crucified God*. Moltmann repeatedly says that the church is called to suffer and will inevitably suffer if it is following its calling. He holds that wherever people carry their cross and give of themselves, "there is the church."¹⁵⁰ The church is graciously allowed to experience the power of Christ's resurrection, but only if it has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings.¹⁵¹ Praying for this world that is full of injustice and oppression, as well as engaging in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel to the world, is bound to result in suffering for the church.¹⁵² The Spirit cannot spread new creation in this world easily because new creation comes up against the resistance of the old, which causes pain and struggle for the church.¹⁵³

The third feeling is joy. Joy Ann McDougall correctly points out that *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is the first book in the trilogy to emphasize the joy of God and of humanity, and to even make this joy the *telos* of everything.¹⁵⁴ Moltmann argues that the purpose of the history of Christ is the justification of sinners, the purpose of the

¹⁴⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 210.

¹⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 210.

¹⁴⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 1, 65, 119, 287.

¹⁵⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 65.

¹⁵¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 82.

¹⁵² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 284, 361.

¹⁵³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 193. Also see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 361.

¹⁵⁴ McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 66.

justification of sinners is the liberating lordship of Christ, and the purpose of the lordship of Christ is that God would become “all in all” in the new creation.¹⁵⁵ Thus everything finds its goal in doxology, in joyful praise and thankfulness.¹⁵⁶ Though it is crucial that the church participates in the sufferings of Christ, by doing so the church is also able to participate in the joy of Christ.¹⁵⁷ Christ is called a “herald of joy” because he brings “joyful news” (i.e., the gospel) about the dawn of the rule of God in history.¹⁵⁸

Important for Moltmann is that joy and suffering are dialectical, until the *eschaton* they go together and cannot be separated.¹⁵⁹ This fact comes out most prominently in his discussions of the Lord’s Supper and the church’s worship when it gathers. For example, the Lord’s Supper is a celebratory “feast” in which the church expresses its hope “in song and laughter, in the play and dance of joy.”¹⁶⁰ However, this joy in the feast is never meant to be a “passing euphoria” or a way to flee the real world.¹⁶¹ The joy of the feast seizes people and “wakes their hunger for freedom” and “builds up a tension towards life in this world which can only be resolved through conscious suffering over its lack of freedom.”¹⁶² Yet just as joy leads to suffering, suffering also leads to joy. The new creation that is anticipated in the Lord’s Supper is not a fantasy or an unreal possibility, but rather it is a real possibility that is coming to the world. The helpless discover their

¹⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 30–31.

¹⁵⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 32.

¹⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 65.

¹⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ Bauckham states that the dialectical feelings of joy and suffering flow from Moltmann’s fundamental dialectic between the cross and resurrection (Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 126). This statement is in no major disagreement with the arguments set forth in this thesis. However, this thesis comes from the perspective that the cross-resurrection dialectic is but one of many manifestations of his broader theology of contradiction. Additionally, whereas the only dialectic Bauckham observes in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is the joy-suffering dialectic, this chapter shows that contradiction—or “dialectic,” in his words—permeates the whole book.

¹⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

¹⁶¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111–12.

¹⁶² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111.

power in the Spirit, those who only know how to lament are led to anticipate, and pain and grief is taken up into “hope for the redemption of the world.”¹⁶³

Though apathy plays far less of an important role in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* than in *The Crucified God*, it is worth noting that Moltmann does mention it. Importantly, apathy is always mentioned in association with the state church or pastoral church. In the preface to the book he states that the crisis that he considers to be apparent in the contemporary state churches is due to the apathy of their members.¹⁶⁴ Elsewhere he states that when a church loses sight of the coming new creation and loses its unity, “hierarchical” episcopates grow and create passive and apathetic members.¹⁶⁵ Finally, he maintains that when the church entered into cooperation with the state and became an institution of the empire the church sacrificed its messianic hope and therefore its passion.¹⁶⁶ When the church becomes no longer defined by new creation it also loses feelings of subjective contradiction.

The Source of Unrest, Joy, and Suffering

As with the previous books, it is necessary to show that the three feelings outlined above come particularly from the contradiction between new and old creation. If the church’s joy and suffering did not come from objective contradiction, then they would be regular joy and suffering, not subjective contradiction. Unrest clearly is a result of objective contradiction. As outlined above, it is the tension between the existence of new creation alongside old creation that causes a restless longing for new creation to triumph.

¹⁶³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111–13. For Moltmann’s comments on the church’s worship, which shares this same suffering-joy dialectic, see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 262–74.

¹⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, xx.

¹⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 299.

¹⁶⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 319.

If only new creation existed then only joy would be felt, and if only old creation existed then only despair would be felt.¹⁶⁷

Joy and suffering require slightly more explanation, for three reasons. First, they are two feelings but they are experienced together. New creation evokes joy and old creation evokes suffering, and when new and old creation come into contradiction they evoke both feelings. Second, joy and suffering are experienced specifically by the church because it is the vehicle that manifests new creation. New creation comes into objective contradiction with old creation to the extent that the church is in contact with old creation. Thus, as the representative of new creation the church rejoices when new creation advances and suffers when old creation puts up resistance. Third, the church has joy or suffering sometimes because of objective contradiction and sometimes because of active contradiction it engages in. Often its joy and suffering is due to knowledge it has of new and old creation being in contradiction, but other times joy and suffering are due to its own actions that it takes.¹⁶⁸ This is once again because the church is the representative of new creation, making objective and active contradiction correlated to each other. Objective contradiction increases when the church steps out into the world to spread new creation, and subjective contradiction arises as successes and tribulations occur. In cases such as these the distinction between objective and active contradiction is blurred.

¹⁶⁷ In Moltmann's theology of contradiction, hope is a response to objective contradiction; usually hope itself does not objectively contradict old creation. This is especially clear in *Theology of Hope*: without God's promise bringing the future into close contact with the present, humans would have no basis for hope (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 88, 196, 224, 276).

¹⁶⁸ For joy and suffering being due to objective contradiction see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 109–13, 261–74. For joy and suffering being due to the church's own actions see Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 193, 361.

The dialectical feelings of joy and suffering covered in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* derive specifically from knowing and experiencing objective contradiction, and can therefore be appropriately called subjective contradiction. There are many potential reasons for why someone might feel joy, but the joy Moltmann talks about is a direct result of the powers of new creation (e.g., freedom and resurrection life) confronting old creation.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, many things can cause suffering, but in this book the church suffers particularly because it knows and experiences the evils in this world that resist the Spirit's bringing of new creation.¹⁷⁰ The church is not joyful merely because of happy events, but because it is in touch with "the depths" of life and knows that these evils are guaranteed to pass away. And the church is not suffering merely because of sad events, but because it is in touch with "the heights of life" and so is keenly aware of how deep the depths truly are.¹⁷¹

Active Contradiction

The Mission of the Trinity

Before discussing the active contradiction that the church engages in, it is first necessary to speak of the active contradiction that the Father, Son, and Spirit engage in.¹⁷² From the beginning of the world God was open to the world and desiring to be in two-way interaction with it, not because of a deficiency in the divine nature but rather because of its fullness of being.¹⁷³ In his openness God sends Christ as the Messiah, and

¹⁶⁹ See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 111–12.

¹⁷⁰ See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 262, 193.

¹⁷¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 262.

¹⁷² Meeks believes the theology of the Trinity that Moltmann proposes in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is the most significant development in his theology in the book (Meeks, "Church in the Power," 304).

¹⁷³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 56. Moltmann states that God is not yet at rest or even "perfect" in the sense that he will only attain rest and "perfection" when creation has come to rest and been perfected too (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 62–63).

he sends the Spirit as the bringer of new creation to the world.¹⁷⁴ In this way it must be said that the Trinity's active contradiction creates the objective contradiction between new and old creation in the world. The mission of both Christ and the Spirit is to glorify God and "unite" all things with God. The Old Testament speaks of God coming in glory on the final day, thus for Christ to be raised from the dead in glory means that the glory of God's final coming is being anticipated through the resurrection. Additionally, when humans are united with Christ they are thereby united with God.¹⁷⁵ In line with Christ's mission, the Spirit also works in the world to glorify Christ and the Father, and the Spirit unifies creation with God just as he unifies the Son and the Father.¹⁷⁶

The church exists in the transition time between the sending of the Son and Spirit and the final glorification of God and unification of all things. In its mission towards its goal, the Trinity through the Spirit creates the church.¹⁷⁷ The church's mission is not created by or for itself but is rather part of the Trinity's mission in the world.¹⁷⁸ The Spirit creates the church to be "the beginning and earnest of the future of the new creation," and "initial fulfilment of the new creation of all things," and so bestows on the church *charismata*, or spiritual gifts.¹⁷⁹ These "*energies* of new life" are given to the church so that the powers of God's new creation can spread over the whole world¹⁸⁰ However, Moltmann also alludes to the fact that the Spirit spreads new creation and has "saving efficacies" outside of the church.¹⁸¹ In other words, the church is only one part of the

¹⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 53, 56–57.

¹⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 58–59.

¹⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 60.

¹⁷⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64.

¹⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64–65.

¹⁷⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 32, 294–95.

¹⁸⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 295.

¹⁸¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64–65. See Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 138–39; Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 86. Though Moltmann alludes to saving efficacies outside of the church, they are certainly

Trinity's mission of liberation and healing in the world. This means that the church can partner with other groups or religions, for example, to co-operatively work for the coming kingdom of God.¹⁸²

The Church's Active Contradiction

In light of the objective contradiction between new and old creation, and spurred on by its feelings of unrest, suffering, and joy, the church is to work to actively contradict old creation. Moltmann states that the church is called to "testify by means of word, deed and fellowship to the liberating lordship of Christ, to the ends of the earth and to the end of time."¹⁸³ This sentence provides a helpful categorization of the types of active contradiction that Moltmann deals with in the book: words, deeds, and the church's fellowship. First, the church is to spread new creation and oppose old creation by proclaiming the gospel. One of the four main marks of the church in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is that the church is apostolic.¹⁸⁴ This means not only that the church's doctrine is founded on the teaching of the twelve apostles, but also that the church has the continuing commission to spread the message that the first apostles were given.¹⁸⁵ Proclaiming the gospel is not the task of just the twelve apostles, or of just certain people called to be preachers, but rather it is the calling of every member of the church to do so.¹⁸⁶

not his focus in the book. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is a book on ecclesiology with a heavy accent on pneumatology, and therefore his focus is what the Spirit does through the church specifically. As a result this thesis speaks of the church as the "primary" place where new creation meets old creation.

¹⁸² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 134, 163.

¹⁸³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 360.

¹⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 337.

¹⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 358.

¹⁸⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 312.

When it comes to proclaiming the gospel, the church is to take Christ as its example. Christ was a “herald of joy” and brought news to the people that was genuinely worth rejoicing over.¹⁸⁷ This news had to do with the dawning of God’s rule on earth, and the freedom for all people that is the ultimate outcome of God’s rule.¹⁸⁸ Though it is a message for all people, it is to be preached especially to “the poor,” which is the phrase Moltmann chooses to summarize all those people who are broken, captive, blind, downtrodden, etc.¹⁸⁹ In response people are to entrust themselves to the gospel and thereby turn away from the old creation of “oppression, death and evil” to the coming new creation of “life, righteousness and freedom.”¹⁹⁰ Proclaiming the gospel as Christ did opens people, religions, and societies up for “the truth of what is to come” and “brings a saving future into the disastrous present.”¹⁹¹

The second type of active contradiction Moltmann discusses is the church’s deeds in and for the world. Any action that encourages life and opposes death is active contradiction against old creation.¹⁹² The church is to work for the end of violence and suffering, to fight all that humiliates humans, and to “sanctify all things for the new creation.”¹⁹³ It must seek to bring all things into correspondence with God.¹⁹⁴ While also

¹⁸⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 76.

¹⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 76, 78.

¹⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 79. Rasmusson considers Moltmann’s use of the term “poor” to be too general and relative. Moltmann does not sufficiently discuss the fact that whether one is “poor” or “rich” is relative based on one’s perspective, as well as the fact that one can be poor in one category of life but simultaneously rich in another (Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 77).

¹⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 80.

¹⁹¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 196, 221. See also Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 82, 358. It is important to note that for Moltmann the goal of proclaiming the gospel is not to convert people to Christianity but rather to spread the “germ of hope and liberation” and orient people towards the coming kingdom (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 84). In its mission to orient people to the kingdom the church is to be content with people of other religions remaining in their respective religions (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 162–63).

¹⁹² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 196.

¹⁹³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 100, 210, 339.

¹⁹⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 210.

dealing with relatively smaller issues, the church is to engage the most serious problems facing the world: famine, the domination of lower classes by higher classes, “ideological imperialism,” atomic wars, the destruction of the environment, and so on.¹⁹⁵ The church must be sure that it acts in all spheres of life, leaving no area untouched by new creation.¹⁹⁶

Three particular spheres that Moltmann concentrates on are the economic, political, and cultural spheres. In the economic sphere the church must oppose the now-widespread insatiable desire for more goods as well as the mentality that makes humans mere laborers and purchasers.¹⁹⁷ That everyone is treated justly and people have healthy fellowship with one another is the priority.¹⁹⁸ In the political sphere Christians are called to work for human rights, which are those rights that protect humans from being treated in an unfair or dehumanizing way, particularly by those with power. Additionally, the church is to witness to God’s right to rule the world through its own obedience to God and through its work to bring the world into correspondence with God’s rule.¹⁹⁹ Lastly, in the cultural sphere Moltmann sees issues such as racism and sexism to ultimately derive from a desire to justify oneself. In response the church can show people that they are justified by grace.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 152.

¹⁹⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 10. In *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, a book written early in Moltmann’s career, he says that violent opposition to oppression can be justified, but he provides a number of strong qualifications to this statement (Moltmann, *Religion*, 142–43; Weibe, “Revolution as an Issue,” 109–11). However, in a much later book, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, he defends non-violent resistance to one’s enemies, as Jesus preaches on his Sermon on the Mount (Moltmann, *The Way*, 127–30).

¹⁹⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 173.

¹⁹⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 174–75.

¹⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 99–100, 104, 192.

²⁰⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 187.

Despite Moltmann's criticisms of modernity and his stance that the church must contrast with society, Arne Rasmusson accuses Moltmann of assimilating too strongly with modernity. The church cannot "take sides" with certain secular movements (e.g., liberation, ecological, feminist, human rights) as Moltmann suggests because the church is led by Christ.²⁰¹ Moltmann too readily buys into the optimism of modernity that it can change societies, and he allows modernity to "set the agenda" for the church's action.²⁰² However, Moltmann would surely respond that Rasmusson may be drawing the line of contradiction between church and world/modernity, rather than between new and old creation. Though there is some truth to Rasmusson's accusation, Moltmann is justified (theoretically, at least) in supporting certain secular movements. According to the theology of contradiction set out in the present book, the church is called to promote new creation wherever it exists, whether inside or outside of the church.²⁰³ If a secular movement is fighting for the life and liberation of creation, then it is moving in the direction of the kingdom of God and can therefore be supported.²⁰⁴

One of the primary deeds the church is called to is to enter into solidarity with those that are oppressed and suffering.²⁰⁵ To some extent this means solidarity with all humans and all creation, because all humans suffer and all creation remains unredeemed.²⁰⁶ But mostly Moltmann means those who are particularly underprivileged

²⁰¹ Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 215.

²⁰² Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 57, 88.

²⁰³ See Schwietzer, "Douglas Hall's Critique," 19–24.

²⁰⁴ See Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 293–94. Scott Paeth critiques Moltmann for the opposite reason than Rasmusson. Because Moltmann presents only a shallow analysis of civil society, and the church's role as an institution within civil society, Paeth believes Moltmann's church will never be fully incarnated in society and so remain ghettoized (Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 47, 55, 113, 173–75). Paeth's critique, however, is unrealistic because Moltmann is a theologian and not a sociologist, and so would have to become an expert in a subject in which he is not trained in order to discuss what Paeth desires him to discuss.

²⁰⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 17, 104, 352.

²⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 1, 212.

in some way or another. Solidarity with these people means actually suffering with them, sharing in their joys as well as their pains.²⁰⁷ In the same way that Christ became “poor” in order to make humans “rich,” so the church can only benefit others if it is first willing to enter into the situations of others and bear their “otherness.”²⁰⁸

Moltmann takes Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 as one piece of evidence that the church is called to care for the poor. If the church exists where Christ is present, then Jesus’ identification with “the least of these” must mean that the church has inherent solidarity with the impoverished.²⁰⁹ However, Martin R. Tripole calls Moltmann’s interpretation into question based on exegetical grounds.²¹⁰ When Jesus refers to the “least ones” or “brethren” in the gospels he is referring to his disciples, and when Jesus refers to the “poor” his focus is on spiritual poverty. Regardless of who is exegetically correct, Tripole’s criticism highlights the two realities Moltmann perceives to be in contradiction. An interpretation of Matthew 25 that says Jesus was only referring to his disciples would have a tendency towards sectarianism and could suggest that the church contradicts the rest of the world. Conversely, Moltmann would prefer to see the church intimately allied with the poor and the rest of the world against enemies common to all humans, such as death and oppression. In this case the line of contradiction is drawn not between church and world, but between new and old creation.

The final way the church can actively contradict old creation and extend new creation is through its own fellowship. Whereas proclaiming the gospel and deeds of justice and political action are things the church goes out into the world to do, its

²⁰⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 18, 115.

²⁰⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 356, 161.

²⁰⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 121–23, 126–30.

²¹⁰ Tripole, “Church for the Poor,” 645–53. Also see Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 130–31.

fellowship is done when the church gathers. Yet, Moltmann makes it very clear that though the church's fellowship is not something it does out in the world *per se*, it is still to be open to the world and can have a significant impact upon it. Because the Spirit, who is the bringer of new creation, creates the church, works in the church, and unites it with the "history of Christ," the church will naturally be a community that contrasts with the world of old creation.²¹¹ "Through its order, its ministries and its organizations the church either confesses or denies the thing that it has to represent."²¹² The church's very existence and the way it conducts its own internal activities defeats old creation by being visible to the rest of the world, and being an example of an alternative way.

Moltmann frequently emphasizes that the church is to be a united fellowship of friends, and that it cannot be divided into factions or into hierarchical levels, as happens in the world. It is important that the church continue to encourage the ecumenical movement, and that different churches, denominations, and traditions enter into dialogue and recognize their common goal.²¹³ By being united the church can "document peace" and "incarnate hope" in "a divided and estranged world."²¹⁴ Another front that the church must fight division is the tendency to develop hierarchies, which is how non-Christians exercise rule over others.²¹⁵ A church "for" the people, in which ministers care for the religious needs of the laypeople, must be replaced by a church "of" the people, in which all of the people are playing an active role.²¹⁶ All church members are "office bearers," all are "priests," all have the same goal, all have the same rights and dignities, all have

²¹¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 28.

²¹² Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 290.

²¹³ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 11.

²¹⁴ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 12, 84, 345.

²¹⁵ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 305.

²¹⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 93, 305.

been commissioned, and all are apostolic.²¹⁷ Positively, Moltmann encourages that the church be composed of a fellowship of friends. Friends “live in mutual concern for one another and mutual self-giving;” place no importance on social, cultural, ethnic, or religious differences; and they consider one another to be of equal status.²¹⁸

One of the main problems of state churches is that they have assimilated to the secular government and society.²¹⁹ Rather than being firmly defined by Christ as its origin, the kingdom of God as its horizon, and the Spirit as its empowerment for the journey in between, the state church allows itself to be defined by non-Christian forces. But when the church does define itself by Christ, the kingdom, and the Spirit, as well as those marks set out in chapters one and seven, it inevitably becomes a critical presence and voice. The church is to be “alienated from its environment in Christ’s way,” which does not mean ghettoizing itself from its environment but rather being noticeably distinct from the world so that it can liberate the world.²²⁰ To be critical of the world is not to be harsh or hateful towards it but, out of compassionate concern for the world, to be opposed to the old creation that is in it. Moltmann calls this “critical solidarity”: on the one hand the church does not accept the status quo, but on the other hand the church stands with the world as an ally.²²¹ Political religion—political authority that buttresses itself with religion or religion that assimilates with politics—is often mentioned as something the church must critique.²²²

²¹⁷ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 298, 301–2, 306, 358.

²¹⁸ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 314, 342, 117–18.

²¹⁹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 91, 106, 153, 222, 290, 318, 321, 325.

²²⁰ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 67–68.

²²¹ Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 1.

²²² E.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 153, 178, 225.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Moltmann's pneumatology and ecclesiology, as laid out in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, falls in the pattern of the three kinds of contradiction. The inductive section showed that the theology of contradiction is present in all seven chapters of the book, and that it characterizes essentially all of the main topics covered. The systematic section described each kind of contradiction as it occurs in the book. The definitive case of objective contradiction occurs between new creation, which is brought by the Spirit and manifested by the church, and old creation. New creation is characterized by such qualities as full life, holiness, and freedom, whereas old creation, as described in this chapter, is characterized by the opposite. The three feelings of subjective contradiction that result from this objective contradiction are unrest, suffering, and joy. In response to the objective and subjective contradiction, the church is called to set out with the Spirit's power to actively contradict the old creation in the world.

CONCLUSION

Review

The stimulus for this thesis was that though it is common for the dialectical nature of Moltmann's writing to be alluded to in the secondary literature, it is highly unusual to speak of it in any detail.¹ This thesis sought to correct this lack by outlining Moltmann's theology of contradiction in a detailed, comprehensive, and systematic way. This thesis argued that in Moltmann's trilogy God creates and fosters in the world three different types of contradiction (objective, subjective, and active) through three different means (God's promises, Christ's crucifixion, and the work of his Spirit in and through the Church) in order to accomplish his purposes. In addition, there were two secondary outcomes it sought to create. First, the thesis intended to show that contradiction is not only an *existing* theme in Moltmann's theology but it is an *important* theme. Second, it intended to provide suggestions for ways in which the church could develop in health and faithfulness to God.

In order to show that these aims have been reached, it will be helpful to review each body chapter. The inductive section of the chapter on *Theology of Hope* covered the book's six chapters and showed that contradiction was present in each. Many occurrences of contradiction were present in *Theology of Hope*'s introductory chapter, such as the contrast between doctrine statements and hope statements, or between the feeling of hope and the feelings of despair and presumption. In the next chapter, on revelation, Moltmann explains that God reveals himself through promise, which means that the origin and goal

¹ For allusions to the dialectical nature of Moltmann's theology, see, e.g., Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology, I" 384–99; Meeks, *Origins*, 7–9, 35–38; Prooijen, *Limping But Blessed*, 83, 98–103; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 2, 35–37.

of the revelation are in opposition to one another. The third chapter deals with God's promises to Old Testament Israel and says that, unlike "epiphanies of the eternal present," God's promises put its hearers in contradiction with present reality. Christ's resurrection, dealt with in the fourth chapter, is shown to be the quintessential promise of God because in it God promises to definitively defeat all suffering and godforsakenness in the world. In the next chapter he explains that attempts to "end history" in history are misguided because they grasp for the end of conflict whereas the resurrection creates Christian mission that begins conflict. The final chapter shows that the church can neither withdraw into a ghetto nor totally assimilate with society, but must contrast with society in order to help it.

The systematic section detailed the source of contradiction in *Theology of Hope* as well as how the instances of contradiction can be categorized into three different kinds. God's promises, especially in Christ's resurrection, are the means that God uses to create objective contradiction between present reality and the future reality that is promised. Because God's promises are central to Moltmann's eschatology and contradiction is central to God's promises, contradiction is central to Moltmann's eschatology. Before God makes a promise, the reality of the future is something unknown and distant, but God's promise brings the future close to the present like day is close to night at dawn.² Present reality and promised future reality are in objective contradiction because present reality is defined by suffering and death whereas the promised future reality is defined by life and peace.

² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 31.

When these two realities come into conflict the subjective feelings that naturally result in people are feelings such as restlessness and longing. It was clarified that these feelings come specifically from the objective contradiction caused by God's promises, and they do not arise otherwise. Finally, the systematic section states that for Moltmann the church is driven by objective and subjective contradiction to better the world and suffer for the world, having the unopposed lordship of Christ as its goal.

The next chapter of this thesis was on *The Crucified God*, and it was similar in shape to the one before it. How pervasive contradiction is in the book is highlighted in the inductive section. Chapter one outlines the church's need to be in healthy contradiction with the world, a state it cannot have if it entirely assimilates in order to be relevant or entirely ghettoizes in order to maintain its identity. Chapter two reviews ways that the church is tempted to make the crucifixion more comfortable than it really is in order to mask the incredible conflict and suffering that it entailed. Admittedly chapter three is not as relevant to Moltmann's theology of contradiction—though it does discuss how Christians compare to Jews in their consciousness of the unredeemed nature of the world. Chapter four shows the contradictory state Christ was in as a blasphemer, rebel, and godforsaken man on the cross; and chapter five explains how the resurrected Christ is present in the crucified Christ. By far the largest chapter of the book, chapter six contains multiple examples of contradiction. For example, it states that God is present in suffering and suffering is present in God, God actually experiences suffering, and God reveals himself through his opposite. The two final chapters of the book provide ways in which the church can work for both psychological and political liberation in the world because of the cross.

The systematic section of this chapter showed that the crucifixion is the source of contradiction in *The Crucified God* and that the contradiction in the book can be categorized into the same three types. Because it brings God and godforsakenness together in objective contradiction, the crucifixion is in this book the means by which God creates contradiction. Therefore Moltmann's Christology, which is significantly focussed on Christ's crucifixion, strongly involves contradiction. In this book it is God himself who is one of the realities that enters into objective contradiction, and what he comes into contradiction with was called "godforsakenness." The shape of the contradiction is such that God is "in" godforsakenness and godforsakenness is "in" God, rather than God being removed from godforsakenness and against it.

By coming into such intimate contact with godforsakenness God actually experiences it in his inner being, rather than being the God of *apatheia*. The godforsakenness God experiences is considered subjective contradiction because it results specifically from his coming into contact with godforsakenness. However, simultaneous to God's coming into contact with godforsakenness and suffering it God also is working to overcome it. Christians are to model the three aspects of God's movement in their own lives: enter into godforsakenness, experience it, and work to overcome it.

The final body chapter of this thesis was on *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. To begin the inductive section, it was shown that in the first chapter Moltmann argues the church must be characterized by the lordship of Christ, a missional and ecumenical mindset, and political action. Each of these characteristics would either lead the church into action against old creation in the world or give the church an identity that

contrasts with old creation in the world. The second chapter discusses four important relationships the church is in, the most important point being that the Trinitarian history of God himself involves unifying all things so that nothing opposes God. Christ is the innermost centre of the church, explains the third chapter, and because he manifested new creation through his roles as prophet, priest, king, lord of glory, and friend, the church must do the same now. According to the next chapter the eschatological kingdom of God is the church's outer horizon, and therefore the church's mission is to expand the kingdom rather than propagate itself. The church's aim must be to contradict that which opposes God's rule—such as famine and atomic war—rather than other religions and world processes themselves.

Chapter five of the book outlines the “means of salvation” that are given to the church through the Spirit on its way from Christ's commission to the kingdom of God. Proclamation of the gospel brings new creation into the old, baptism and the Lord's supper symbolize turning to the new, and worship acknowledges the contradiction between the new and old through joy and suffering. Chapter six discusses ways in which the church's inner behaviour and qualities must oppose the behaviour and qualities of the surrounding world, something that cannot be said about the state churches. Finally, the last chapter suggests health in the church will be marked by unity, catholicity, holiness, and apostolicity, each of which will make the church act and exist in opposition to old creation in the world.

In the systematic section of the chapter on *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* it was shown that the three kinds of contradiction are caused by a source that has two aspects to it. That is, God initiates contradiction in the world by the sending of the Spirit

and the life of the church. The Spirit brings new creation to the church, and the church embodies new creation amidst the old creation in the world.³ Moltmann's pneumatology and ecclesiology thus has contradiction at its centre.

New creation is characterized by positive qualities such as freedom and peace, whereas old creation is characterized by negative qualities such as inequality and division, so the two objectively contradict each other. Witnessing and experiencing this objective contradiction in the world leads the church to feel unrest, suffering, and joy. Suffering and joy receive the most focus: suffering corresponds to old creation, joy corresponds to new creation, and they lead back and forth into each other in a dynamic and dialectical relationship. The active contradiction of old creation that the church is called to derives from the active contradiction of old creation that the Trinity is engaged in. The church carries out this calling by proclaiming the gospel, practically working against death and things that lead to death, and managing its own behaviour and life so that it reflects new creation.

To conclude, the two components of the main argument of this thesis were successfully shown: there are three types of contradiction, and they are initiated through three different means. This thesis defined objective contradiction as two objective, opposing realities existing side by side; subjective contradiction as the subjective feeling or emotion created by objective contradiction; and active contradiction as an action which aims to oppose or defy the negative reality objectively contradicting the good reality. All three of these kinds of contradiction were shown to exist throughout the trilogy.

³ It was noted that Moltmann speaks of the Spirit manifesting new creation in ways that are outside of the church (e.g., Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 64–65), but this is not Moltmann's primary focus in the book.

Additionally, it was shown that the ultimate source of these kinds of contradiction was either God's promises, Christ's crucifixion, or the Spirit working in and through the Church.

It was stated above that one of the primary reasons for this thesis was the significant absence of any material focussing on Moltmann's theology of contradiction. The goal of the thesis is to contribute to the secondary literature on Moltmann by supplying a study of his theology of contradiction in a way that is systematic, comprehensive, and detailed—at least in regards to Moltmann's trilogy. It was also stated above that there were two additional outcomes that this thesis hoped to achieve: to show that contradiction is significant to Moltmann's work and to show how his theology of contradiction can aid the church. As to the second outcome, comments will be made in a section below. As to the first outcome, that contradiction is both pervasive throughout the trilogy and central to the main systematic theological categories of trilogy shows that it is indeed an important theme.

Suggestions for Further Study

Moltmann's "Systematic Contributions to Theology"

The Church in the Power of the Spirit, published in English in 1975, completed Moltmann's trilogy of books in which he sought to speak of "*the whole of theology in one focal point*." So, for example, *Theology of Hope* was not simply about eschatology, it was about all of theology through the lens of eschatology and the resurrection. After that point he went on to write a series of "systematic contributions to theology" that dealt with the

classic topics of systematic theology in the conventional way.⁴ That is, he dealt with the topics of systematic theology as topics in themselves, not as lenses through which to view the whole of theology. In addition to these systematic contributions he has written other, smaller works, often on the topic of political theology.⁵ The claims of this thesis were limited in scope to Moltmann's trilogy, so it would therefore be of interest to discern whether his theology of contradiction continued in his later works.

A cursory read through his later works shows that the three kinds of contradiction probably do persist, but further study is needed to show to what extent. Working in reverse order, there is no doubt that active contradiction continues to exist. Commentators on Moltmann commonly point to the fact that praxis is central throughout his writings, that theory must always automatically be translated into action.⁶ The major theological focus of any book of his (e.g., his social doctrine of the Trinity in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*) inevitably leads seamlessly into implications for Christian action.⁷ Subjective contradiction, in terms of feelings of restlessness, suffering, and joy, is likely to be present in most of his works, but usually only in a few paragraphs scattered throughout the book.⁸ It is difficult to comment at all on the presence of objective contradiction

⁴ This series includes *The Trinity and the Kingdom* on the doctrine of the Trinity, *God in Creation* on the doctrine of creation, *The Way of Jesus Christ* on Christology, *The Spirit of Life* on pneumatology, and *The Coming God* on eschatology.

⁵ These works include books such as *Religion and Political Society*, *Passion for God's Reign*, *God for a Secular Society*, and *On Human Dignity*.

⁶ E.g., Meeks, *Origins*, 136–40; Willis, *Theism*, 136–37; Heinitz, "Eschatological and the Political," 369; Bauckham, *Messianic Theology*, 14, 46; Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, 46.

⁷ E.g., Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 191–202, 212–22; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 255–68, 276–92. Also see Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 109.

⁸ For the restlessness, hungering, and groaning of humans see Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 75; Moltmann, *Source of Life*, 11, 73, 111, 133; Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 98; Moltmann, *The Way*, 193. For the connection between love and suffering see Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 55; Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 41, 48. For God's suffering and joy, and humans' participation in them, see Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 67–69; Moltmann, *The Trinity*, 22–25; Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 117, 126, 336; Moltmann, *Source of Life*, 19–21.

without more in-depth study. If *The Way of Jesus Christ* is taken as an example, it is safe to say that one of the most prominent realities discussed is the kingdom of God. What is not immediately clear, however, is whether it is an essential characteristic of the kingdom to be in a contradictory couplet with another reality.

The fundamental issue is discerning, not just whether contradiction merely exists, but whether contradiction is a fundamental theme to his later books. As stated, in any of Moltmann's writings one could probably find negative realities that must be actively opposed, subjective feelings of discontent with the world, and even objective realities that contrast each other. But more study is required to discern whether these contradictions are inherent to and influential in the texts themselves or whether the contradictions are being read into the texts. To take *Theology of Hope* as an example, it was shown that part of the very definition of God's promises is their contradiction to present reality. This contrast between present and future, experienced reality and promised reality, runs through the very backbone of the entire book.

A basic reading of *The Way of Jesus Christ*, as an example, does not quickly grasp a similar "this in contrast to that" shape or theme that runs throughout. It is possible that a more in-depth reading would reveal such a shape and theme. Another possibility is that because his systematic contributions do not follow the methodology of "*the whole of theology in one focal point*," the theme of contradiction does exist but it is not focussed into one, easily noticeable contrast. Multiple small contrast may exist throughout, rather than being one definitive contrast. Alternatively, it is possible that as Moltmann's theology has matured he has preferred to move away from describing his main themes as

“this in contrast to that.”⁹ Perhaps he does focus on the kingdom of God throughout his works—which is very possible—but he does not define it by what it opposes.

The Desire for World-Change

Karl Marx’s eleventh thesis against Feuerbach states, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.” Douglas Meeks correctly observes that this statement is one of the most influential and guiding statements on Moltmann’s work, always present in the background of his theology.¹⁰ For present purposes, what is revealing about this comment is that Moltmann believes it should be a primary goal of the church to change the world. Specifically, he does not mean that Christians must change the world through evangelization or individual acts of service, such as delivering food to the hungry. Though he is not opposed to those things, he emphasizes that Christians must work to shape the systems and structures of nations and societies.¹¹

What would be of interest, however, would be to analyze the trilogy for precisely how Moltmann comes to the conclusion that Christians are called to try to transform the world. Why, biblically speaking, does he believe Christians should take an active part in, for example, the political sphere?¹² This question is interesting because it is, perhaps surprisingly, not incredibly clear what Moltmann’s reasons are for prescribing actions

⁹ Joy Ann McDougall seems to side with this position (McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love*, 26, 29–30, 44, 154).

¹⁰ Meeks, *Origins*, 136. See also Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84; Moltmann, *Religion*, 138; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 11; Paeth, *Exodus Church*, 26.

¹¹ In the trilogy see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 34, 196–97, 325–37; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 21–24, 72–73, 136–45, 317–37; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 15–18, 163–89, 279–87. In the secondary literature see Harvie, *Ethics of Hope*, 33–36, 87–97; Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 100–12; Guttesen, *Leaning*, 233; Meeks, *Origins*, 129–53; Wagner, “Mission and Hope,” 458; McSwain, “Community Transformation,” 263, 266; Heinitz, “Eschatological and the Political,” 369, 373–74.

¹² Because of the central place that Moltmann places politics in the church’s calling, political action will be the main example of world-transforming action in this discussion.

towards world-change. To be fair, he does give some brief reasons throughout the trilogy, but they are either so general, surface-level, or weak that one gets the impression they are not his fundamental reason for supporting political action.¹³

Moltmann's fundamental reason for supporting political action may possibly come from his theology of contradiction. For Moltmann, it may be that the Christian's responsibility to transform the world does not come from any particular command made or example set in the Bible. Instead, for him the Christian's responsibility to put the world right may flow immediately and inevitably from the fact that something is wrong in the world and humans long for it to be put right. That is, objective and subjective contradiction may so self-evidently necessitate active contradiction that Moltmann does not feel obligated to ground active contradiction in any explicit command or commission given in the Bible.

In *Theology of Hope* Moltmann plainly says that world-transforming mission derives from promise, which in the language of his theology of contradiction means that active contradiction derives from objective contradiction.¹⁴ The Christian's responsibility to transform the world comes directly from God's promise (particularly in the resurrection) that the world will be transformed, not from any command to do so. Relatedly, Moltmann says that hearing God's promises make it so that Christians "can no longer put up with" or cannot "reconcile" themselves with current reality as it is.¹⁵ These

¹³ Space does not allow for a full overview of these arguments, so only one will be stated here as an example. Because Christ is Lord over all spheres of life and his kingdom is going to redeem all spheres, Christians must now work for liberation in all spheres, including politics (Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 10). But the problem with this argument is that it still begs the question why it is the responsibility of Christians to change the systems and structures of the world rather than allow God to do it apart from human-help, whether now or at the *eschaton*.

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 225. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 195–97, 329–30.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 214, 22. Also see Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 100, 223, 230.

statements suggest that subjective contradiction forcibly propels Christians to transform the world; the desire to change the world is so strong that no command or commission is needed. Similar observations can be made about *The Crucified God* and *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.¹⁶

In light of the importance Moltmann places on ethics in his theology—especially political and social action—it would be beneficial to know how he arrives at his ethical conclusions. Why should Christians try to transform political systems rather than, say, convert non-Christians and take care of peoples' basic needs? Does Moltmann base his ethical conclusions on any clear and significant teaching, command, commission, or example given in the Bible? Or are they based merely on the fact that God has created objective contradictions in the world and humans desire these contradictions to be resolved? Answering these questions would be an interesting topic for further study.

Resources for Church Life

Through his theology of contradiction, Moltmann is skilled at instilling a healthy level of restlessness in his readers. The three kinds of contradiction each play an important role. His comments on objective contradiction are a reminder that the world is not as it should be. Christians can get so carried away in the routines of their lives that they begin to embrace the status quo and forget that anything should be changed in the world. But Moltmann's comments forcefully jolt his readers into the awareness the world is not characterized by rest and peace but rather battle and contradiction. In a sense every page of the Bible contains the reminder that the world is not as it should be, that there are opposing realities existing in the world. But in particular one might mention the

¹⁶ In particular, for instances of subjective contradiction seemingly demanding active contradiction, see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 317–18, 39, 224–25; Moltmann, *Church in the Power*, 287, 111, 113.

awareness in the Bible that God's reign and kingdom are currently contested but will one day be fully present.¹⁷

Moltmann's treatment of subjective contradiction is a reminder about the attitude that Christians are to have. Apathy can overtake Christians when they lose concern over the objective contradiction in the world or when they try to anesthetize themselves from its sufferings and conflicts. Alternatively, losing sight of the world's conflicts can lead Christians into an equally negative contentment with the world. Without a doubt, Christians are to be thankful for and content with what they have, but that does not mean they must be happy with the unredeemed state of the world.¹⁸ Restlessness and the dialectical feelings of suffering and joy are appropriate feelings for Christians to have in light of a world defined by objective contradiction. The longing and discontentment Moltmann espouses correspond with aspects of the Bible such as the psalms of lament, the hunger for righteousness of the Beatitudes, creation's groaning for redemption, and the church's cry for Christ's return.¹⁹

Possibly the greatest strength of Moltmann's theology of contradiction is its power to lead readers beyond mere contemplation into action. By establishing that the world is not as it should be, and also establishing that longing for change is an appropriate response, the direction of his theology of contradiction drives towards action. In the section above it was questioned whether all of the specific actions recommended by Moltmann are biblical, but what is unquestionably biblical is that all Christian

¹⁷ God's reign and kingdom is a major theme that runs throughout the Bible, and so it cannot be reduced to any particular collection of verses. But for a sampling of relevant passages, see, e.g., Isa 51:1–16; Matt 6:10; Matt 11:12; Matt 16:18; Eph 6:12.

¹⁸ On thankfulness see Eph 5:20. On contentment see Phil 4:11–12.

¹⁹ For psalms of lament see Pss 4, 5; for the Beatitude see Matt 5:6; for creation's groaning see Rom 8:18–25; for the church's cry see Rev 22:20.

thinking and belief lead to action. After Jesus completes his earthly ministry and is crucified and resurrected, he says that his followers must respond by going out to make disciples.²⁰ After Paul describes Jesus' resurrection and the Christian hope of resurrection he concludes that good works are all the more appropriate and meaningful.²¹ Therefore, in its final form Moltmann's theology of contradiction is an outstanding corrective to Christians who either see no need to act in the world or are unmotivated. Christians are called to ever-greater actions of love towards God and neighbor.²²

²⁰ Matt 28:16–20

²¹ 1 Cor 15:58

²² Matt 22:37–39

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