

EXPERIENCE, LANGUAGE, AND DIALOGUE
IN
POSTMODERN THEOLOGY:
A STUDY
OF
JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD

By
DANIEL L. LEISTER, M.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

(c) Copyright by Daniel L. Leister, February 1995

JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1995):
(Religious Studies)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Experience, Language, and Dialogue in Postmodern
Theology: A Study of Jürgen Moltmann's Theological
Method.

AUTHOR: Daniel L. Leister, B.A. (Regis University)

M.A. (University of Colorado)

SUPERVISOR: Professor J.C. Robertson

NUMBER OF PAGES: 330

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines key aspects of Jürgen Moltmann's writings in order to determine the extent to which non-biblical language and experience determine his theology. He employs various hermeneutical frameworks to create a postmodern political theology. This theology is intended to replace the modern subjectivist interpretations of certain biblical themes, such as the eschaton, the crucifixion of Christ, and the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Moltmann draws on a number of sources to help him rearticulate these themes in a way that, he believes, is more meaningful and politically relevant in the modern context.

This study of Moltmann's theology was suggested to me by George Lindbeck's model of religion, which I employ as a heuristic device in the analysis of Moltmann's writings. Lindbeck synthesizes the ideas of language philosophers, cultural anthropologists, and narrative theologians to construct, what he calls, a postmodern cultural-linguistic understanding of the relationship between experience and

language in religions. This model of religion attempts to show that religious life and experiences are determined by the language of the each tradition. Lindbeck believes that this view of religion has implications for theological method. In the Christian context, he believes that the language contained in the Bible and Christian doctrines should be understood as the source of religious experience. Christian theologians should not, then, base their theologies on extra-biblical descriptions of the nature of religious experience. To do so would be to allow them to eclipse the possible religious experiences generated in genuine attempts to live out the story of the Bible.

There are aspects of Moltmann's approach to theology that seem to correspond to Lindbeck's demand that the language of the Christian tradition should be the leading partner in the dialectic between extra-biblical experiences and ideas. But Moltmann's theology seems, in key places, to be more heavily informed by non-biblical interpretive frameworks than permitted by the cultural-linguistic model of religion. I conclude, then, that Moltmann's theological method is not, for the most part, consistent with Lindbeck's recommendations for theological method.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people I want to thank for their encouragement and guidance during my years at McMaster. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a teaching assistant for David Kinsley. The experience in teaching Eastern religion and phenomenology of religion has been a boon to my teaching career. Travis Kroeker engaged me and my McMaster colleagues in many evenings of theology and libations. I am grateful to Gerard Vallée for all his help and encouragement during the course of this dissertation. My thanks also to Clark Pinnock, who has given me challenging and useful feedback and to Peter Widdicombe for coming on board in the latter stages of this work.

I am especially grateful to John Robertson, my director. He has been patient and encouraging in the course of my graduate work. Now that I am a professor, I can see that my teaching assistantship with him was a most valuable apprenticeship. His high standards, dedication to students, excellence in teaching, and love of ideas have become the model for my own classes and research. He has provided me and my family with unbelievable opportunities.

I have made many life-time friends from Canada and Germany during my years at McMaster. I am deeply grateful for their friendship. Thanks to my colleagues in Humanities at Alverno College, Milwaukee for their patience and support, especially my Religious Studies colleagues, Margaret Earley, Shannon Schrein, and Harry Fleddermann.

All of my graduate work at McMaster University in Canada and my year at Tübingen University were made complete by my friend and wife, Susan. She embraced the entire sojourn with not only support and patience, but much more: enthusiasm, creativity, and a sense of adventure. Her support allowed me the freedom to embrace the rigours of graduate-school life as a challenge and opportunity. I lovingly dedicate this work to her. By far the greatest gifts we brought back to the United States are our two Canadian daughters, Elizabeth and Claire.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.	1
I. LANGUAGE, EXPERIENCE, AND DIALOGUE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: AN EXAMINATION OF LINDBECK'S MODEL OF RELIGION	
Introduction.	20
1. Language and Experience in Lindbeck's Model of Religion.	20
2. The Problem of "Absorbing" the World: Responses to Lindbeck	38
3. Preliminary Observations of Moltmann's Theological Method	51
II. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MODERN EXPERIENCE	
Introduction.	57
1. Experience in the Dialectical Critique of 'Religion'	58
2. The Critique of Modern Subjectivism.	70
3. Moltmann's Appropriation of the Philosophy of Hope	85
4. Natural Theology and Historical Experience.	99
Conclusion.	113
III. MARXISM, CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN MODERN CULTURE	
Introduction.	116
1. The Christian Struggle with Politics in Western History.	118
2. Marxist-Christian Dialogue.	127
3. The Theology of the Cross and Christian Political Identity.	141
4. Moltmann and Tillich: A Political Theological Comparison.	159
5. Conclusion.	170

IV. MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE IN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGY

Introduction.	173
1. The Continuing Search for Religious Experience and the Rejection of Barth's Critique of Mysticism	174
2. Moltmann's Rejection of Subjectivist Mysticism	177
3. The mysticism of the Passion of God.	189
4. The Trinity in the Modern World.	204
5. Experience and Holy Spirit.	218
Conclusion.	230

V. ECUMENISM IN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGY

Introduction.	233
1. Moltmann's Rejection of "Anonymous Christianity" and Christian Triumphalism.	235
1. Ecumenism Among the Christian Confessions. . .	244
2. Dialogue with Judaism.	254
3. Dialogue with the World Religions.	265
Conclusion.	271

CONCLUSION.	274
---------------------	-----

APPENDIX.	296
-------------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY.	317
-----------------------	-----

ABBREVIATIONS

Jürgen Moltmann: Works frequently cited

CG	<u>The Crucified God</u>
CPS	<u>The Church in the Power of the Spirit</u>
EH	<u>The Experiment Hope</u>
FC	<u>The Future of Creation</u>
FOH	<u>Future of Hope</u>
GC	<u>God in Creation</u>
HD	<u>On Human Dignity</u>
HP	<u>Hope and Planning</u>
RRF	<u>Religion Revolution and the Future</u>
SL	<u>The Spirit of Life</u>
TH	<u>Theology of Hope</u>
TKG	<u>The Trinity and the Kingdom of God</u>
WJC	<u>The Way of Jesus Christ</u>

Karl Rahner: Works frequently cited

SM	<u>Sacramentum Mundi</u>
TI	<u>Theological Investigations</u>

Ernst Bloch: Works frequently cited

PH	<u>The Principle of Hope</u>
----	------------------------------

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation analyzes key aspects of Jürgen Moltmann's theology in order to answer one basic question: To what extent does he allow non-biblical ideas and concepts of experience to determine his theology? This question was suggested to me by the work of George Lindbeck of Yale University on the relationship between Christian language and non-Christian concepts and experiences. Lindbeck believes that the particular language of every religion creates unique experiences and understandings of life, or particular worldviews. As we shall see, he believes that this model, which he calls a "cultural-linguistic" model of religion, has implications for postmodern approaches to theology. In his view, theologians who assume this model of religion will not allow non-biblical experiences or language, especially those characterized by modern subjectivism, to determine their theology. The conclusion of this dissertation suggests that Moltmann bases his theology on a method that is not uniformly consistent with Lindbeck's model of religion and, thus, offers a postmodern

method that allows for broader use of philosophical and experiential interpretive frameworks than those permitted by the cultural-linguistic model of religion.

The reader might wonder about the plausibility and value of a study, such as this, which attempts to analyze the work of a German theologian through the theoretical lens of a North American. This suspicion might be supported by a first glance at an important difference between Moltmann's and Lindbeck's approaches to theology. Moltmann is a theologian who is mainly interested in reinterpreting Christianity in political categories that are highly critical of modern culture. The entire analysis of Moltmann in this dissertation will make this abundantly clear. Any other theological task, such as methodology, is beside the point for him, and so receives limited attention in his writings. Lindbeck, on the other hand, is committed to the articulation of a specific model of religion which could have implications for theological method. The major difference between the two, in other words, is that Lindbeck is committed to methodological rigour, while Moltmann is not.

There are, however, some very important commonalities between Moltmann and Lindbeck which warrant a

study such as this. Both theologians are committed to the formulation of, what both refer to as, "post-modern" theology. Lindbeck believes that his model of religion can act as a basis for "postliberal" theologies, a term that he equates with "postmodern."¹ Lindbeck is advocating a theological method that transcends "the acids of modernity" which is rooted in modern Kantian and Schleiermachian subjectivism and individualism. He asserts that "the modern mood is antipathetic to the very notion of communal norms."² He believes that religion "is likely to contribute more to the future of humanity if it preserves its own distinctiveness and integrity than if it yields to the homogenizing tendencies associated with liberal experiential-expressivism."³ As we will see below,

¹Lindbeck states that "the type of theology I have in mind could also be called "postmodern" . . . but "postliberal" seems best because what I have in mind postdates the experiential-expressivist approach which is the mark of liberal method." See George A. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 135. Gordon Michalson, makes the observation that Lindbeck's main theological "purposes have to do with the 'postliberal' theological outlook announced in the title, the articulation of which seems to be Lindbeck's overriding aim." Gordon E. Michalson, Jr., "The Response to Lindbeck," Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 110.

²See Doctrine, 19-22, 77, 127. See also George Lindbeck, "Reform and Infallibility," in Cross Currents 11 (1961): 350.

"experiential-expressivism," a product of modern thinking, is the name Lindbeck gives for the model of theology that emphasizes the religious experience of individuals, at the price of underestimating the communalizing function of religious language.

Moltmann's theology, like Lindbeck's, is also decidedly "postmodern."⁴ He characterizes modernity, first of all, as a culture of self-absorbed individualism. This is very clear, for example, in his 1965 publication The Theology of Hope, where he asserts that modern individuals see each other only as possible sources for the satisfaction of personal needs, "everything else that makes up man's life- culture, religion, tradition, nationality, morals, etc. -is excluded from the necessary social relationships and left to each man's individual freedom."⁵ Christians in the modern world who adopt this attitude, he asserts, become

³Doctrine, 128.

⁴Throughout the dissertation, I attempt to show that Moltmann's entire theological project is critical of modern visions of human nature and culture. Though he rarely uses the term 'postmodern', his theology can be identified by this term. Moltmann does use the term in The Way of Jesus Christ, to characterize his christology. See WJC, xvi.

⁵Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications Of a Christian Eschatology (London: SCM Press, 1967), 308.

unconcerned for others and politically indifferent. Secondly, modernity, for Moltmann, is marked by economic, political and social injustices. His theology is a challenge to Christians to shun subjectivism and become politically engaged in the task of working against these problems. In his 1973 work, The Crucified God, he outlines the contemporary issues which must evoke a Christian response. They are the "vicious circles" of poverty, force (governmental oppression), racial and cultural alienation and industrial pollution. He states that "today we are making the world hell So in the present people become perplexed, disheartened, and many men lose all sense of purpose."⁶ In the second phase of his writings, Moltmann is engaged in addressing the ecological problems created by modern industrialism. In his 1989 work, The Way of Jesus Christ, he states that the ecological "crisis is certainly visible in the natural environment; but it is actually a crisis of this modern system of domination itself."⁷ Modern use of science and technology, he believes, subjugates and

⁶Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, (London: SCM Press, 1985), 329-332.

⁷Jürgen Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions (San Francisco: Harper Collins Pub., 1989), 67.

exploits nature for human purposes: "The fundamental values of modern culture, which give birth to and govern sciences and technologies, are the acquisition of power, the consolidation of power, and the pursuit of profit."⁸ These are some of the major problems with the modern world, as Moltmann sees them, and undergirds his creation of postmodern theology.

But there is another significant factor in the background of both Lindbeck and Moltmann that makes plausible a study such as this: Both Lindbeck and Moltmann have their theological origins in the work of Karl Barth. Chapter II takes a close look at Moltmann's early allegiance to Barth's dialectical tradition. In particular, we will see that Moltmann assumes this tradition's critique of religion and religious experience in 19th and 20th century liberal theology and the biblical-revelational starting point for theology. Lindbeck's work is also, to a significant extent, influenced by Barth, especially Barth's commitment to the biblical text as the focal point of theology. Lindbeck states that

Karl Barth's exegetical emphasis on narrative has been at second hand a chief source of my notion of intratextuality as an appropriate way of doing theology

⁸WJC, 67.

in a fashion consistent with a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion.⁹

I will show in several places in this dissertation that, as Moltmann's theological career progressed, he distanced himself from the Barthian dialectical tradition. He attempts, for example, to recapture the usefulness of articulating theories of religion (even though his writings on this are meager) and finds himself intensely interested in the nature of religious experience, including mysticism. Contrary to Barth, Moltmann comes to the position that theology cannot adequately be done without a well-articulated idea of religious experience. In doing so, he sometimes seems to violate the Barthian and Lindbeckian prohibition against supplanting intratextual, biblical life and experience with extrabiblical experiences, ideas and forms of life. Lindbeck states that according to Barth,

in order fully to hear the word of God in scripture, theologians and the Christian community at large are called upon to engage in a close reading of the entire canon in its typological and Christological narrative unity in ways that are imaginatively rich, conceptually exact, argumentatively rigorous, and forever open to the freedom of the word, to new understandings. . . . The shaping of experience, the warming of the heart, is important, but the projecting of our experiences onto

⁹See Doctrine, 135.

the text by pietistic allegorizing must be eschewed.¹⁰

This dissertation attempts to find out the extent to which Moltmann's theology departs from Lindbeck's recommendation that the language of the biblical text dominate in the theological enterprise, rather than extra-biblical ideas and concepts of experience. Has Moltmann, in reality, "projected experiences" and ideas onto the text to such an extent that they dominate and overshadow the language of the Bible? In other words, in Moltmann's theology, does the language of the Bible or extratextual experiences and philosophies act as the primary frame of reference for Christian life and experience?

Analyzing Moltmann's theological method through the lense of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm is interesting and important for several reasons. First, it demonstrates two different methods for the creation of postmodern theology: Lindbeck's, which deemphasizes experiential and philosophical interpretive frameworks in order to give a prominent role to language and Moltmann's, which advocates the formulation and employment of experiential and philosophical frameworks in order to

¹⁰George Lindbeck, "Barth and Textuality," in Theology Today 43 (October 1986): 362.

clarify and nuance biblical language. Second, using Lindbeck's model of religion helps us track Moltmann's own progress in theological method from his early dialectical approach to his explicit rejection of dialectical theology's dismissal of experience. Third, it illuminates the possible relationships that can exist between experience, philosophy and the particular biblical and doctrinal language of the Christian tradition. Hence, coming to the seemingly simple conclusion that Moltmann's theology is not uniformly consistent with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm will produce a worthwhile illumination of the nature of postmodern theology, help us trace the development of Moltmann's own theological method, and permit us to examine the implications behind emphasizing either language or experience in the theological enterprise.

I want to note two points about my examination of Moltmann's theology. First, it is not my intention to do a systematic analysis of one or another theological theme that runs through Moltmann's writings. An overly narrow and systematic analysis would only lead to a simplistic reduction of his wide-ranging and creative approach to theology. He can only loosely be classified as a "systematic theologian," an approach which he himself has abandoned in

order to "avoid the seductions of the theological system and the coercion of the dogmatic thesis."¹¹ I have opted, instead, to examine particular aspects of Moltmann's method which will help us answer the questions raised by Lindbeck. The focus will be on religious experience, Moltmann's critique of modernity, his appropriation of Marxism and his approach to ecumenical dialogue. We will, of course, examine the way that these inform various aspects of Moltmann's theology, such as his eschatology, theology of the cross, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and his doctrine of creation. But my stated purposes is to examine the extent to which non-Christian language and experience determine Moltmann's theology, not to give a complete analysis of his eschatology, theology of the cross or any other aspect of his theology. I have concentrated my analysis on the philosophical, experiential, and theological sources employed by Moltmann to do this, rather than on the biblical texts he uses. As I will show in Chapter I, Moltmann does, however, consider himself a "biblical theologian." He states, for example, that he "seeks to think upon theology that is *biblically founded*, eschatologically oriented and

¹¹TKG, xii.

politically responsible."¹² But he also asserts that "the naked positivity of the Bible and the affirmation of the church's proclamation of revelation are not enough . . . the hermeneutical situation must be sought in which this talk of God appears meaningful and necessary"¹³ I have chosen to focus on select and important sources he appropriates to formulate his hermeneutical frameworks.

Second, throughout this dissertation I refer to two phases in Moltmann's theology. There is an "earlier" or "first" phase, which includes numerous articles and three major books, The Theology of Hope, The Crucified God, and The Church in the Power of the Spirit.¹⁴ Moltmann states that these works were intended "to look at theology as a whole from one particular standpoint."¹⁵ In what I will

¹²A.J. Conyers, God Hope and History (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), p. 222.

¹³See HP, p. 3.

¹⁴Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology (London: SCM Press, 1974), The Church in the Power of the Spirit (London: SCM Press, 1977). For a good bibliography on Moltmann's writings and the various secondary works written on his theology through 1987, see Dieter Ising, et. al., Bibliographie Jürgen Moltmann (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987).

¹⁵See Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (London: SCM Press, 1980), xi.

call the "second" or "latter" phase, he no longer claims to integrate all of theology under a single perspective. This phase, which runs from the late 1970's to the present, consists of numerous articles and, to date, four major books, The Trinity and The Kingdom of God, God in Creation, The Way of Jesus Christ and The Spirit of Life.¹⁶

In Chapter I, we will analyze Lindbeck's writings on the nature of religion in order to clarify the analytic framework which we will apply to Moltmann's theology. I will focus mainly on Lindbeck's programmatic and controversial book, The Nature of Doctrine, in which Lindbeck attempts to articulate a definition of religion for "postliberal" or "postmodern" theologies. In this book, he argues for the priority of religious language over experience by asserting that one can "no more be religious in general than one can speak language in general."¹⁷ The language of each religious tradition, he believes, creates the experiences and worldview of its members. Because of this, Christian theologians must not eclipse, substitute or

¹⁶Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

¹⁷See George Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 23.

overshadow the language of the tradition with "extrabiblical" experiential or philosophical interpretative frameworks.¹⁸ He calls his idea of religion a "cultural-linguistic" model, in which every particular "culture" is understood to be created by the unique "language" of a group of people. With the aid of philosophy of language, anthropology of religion, and narrative theology, he has attempted to show that the story, and so the language, of any religious tradition defines a unique worldview.¹⁹ According to Lindbeck, religious experiences are also particular to each different faith because they arise from the living out of their particular story. Because this is the case, asserts Lindbeck, Christian theologians must not attempt to define the general, universal nature of religious experience for the purposes of interpreting biblical experience. Christian biblical identity and its concomitant experiences must not be eclipsed or confused by such extra-

¹⁸'Extrabiblical' is Lindbeck's term, which I use throughout this dissertation. It refers to philosophies, experiences, and, worldviews alien to the Bible. See Doctrine, 118.

¹⁹Throughout this dissertation, I will use the terms 'worldview', 'lifeworld', and 'culture' interchangeably. All three express the experiences, thoughts, and understandings of life and morality created by the language of a religious tradition.

biblical interpretive frameworks.

Chapter II examines Moltmann's views on the nature of religious experience in the first phase of his theology. We will examine several important influences on his view of religious experience. The thought of Karl Barth, Hans Joachim Iwand and Ernst Bloch are especially important in this regard. Moltmann inherited Barth's polemic against human religious experience, formulated by the 19th and 20th century liberal theologians. With Barth, Moltmann eschews modern liberal visions of religious experience and affirms revelation as the focal point of Christian life and theology. Iwand, who was also influenced by the Barthian "dialectical" tradition, is also critical of liberal theology. Moltmann appropriated Iwand's "theology of nature" contained in his idea of "historical revelation" to help him construct his own theology of "historical experience."²⁰ Historical Christian experiences, for Moltmann, are created in the course of living out the biblical word of God as revealed in the Bible. At first reading, it seems that Moltmann's polemic against religious experience and his understanding of historical experience may seem to conform to the cultural-linguistic view of

²⁰See TH, 106.

religion. After all, both Barth and Iwand reject, what Lindbeck would call, extra-biblical notions of experience and affirm the notion that Christian life and experience is created by the revelation of God in the language of the Bible. However, I will argue that, in the final analysis, Moltmann's vision of Christian experience, which he claims is biblical, is strongly influenced by the "philosophy of hope" articulated by Ernst Bloch. This use of Bloch, a Marxist-atheist, makes it difficult to determine conclusively whether Moltmann's theology of hope is consistent with the cultural-linguistic demand that extra-biblical language takes a subordinate position to biblical language in his theology.

Chapter III examines Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist concepts in his attempt to address the problem of Christian identity and political engagement in the modern world. In this chapter, we will attempt to find out if Christian language takes precedence over Marxist language in Moltmann's theology or, conversely, if the Christian identity he attempts to articulate is a predominantly Marxist vision expressed in the language of the Christian tradition? Lindbeck believes that theologians can "absorb" extra-biblical concepts like Marxism, but that they should

not be allowed to eclipse the unique worldview offered by the language of Christianity. Does Moltmann go beyond "absorbing" elements of Marxism into the Christian worldview, to the extent that Marxist language, rather than Christian language, determines his vision of Christian life? In order to answer this question we will examine his criticism of church-state relations in Christian history, his dialogue with Marxists, and the way that Marxist ideas inform his theology of the cross.

In Chapter IV, we will revisit Moltmann's continuing interest in religious experience. Here, we will examine the dialectic between religious language and mystical experience in his theology in the attempt to discern whether the experiences he articulates are products of Christian language or extra-biblical concepts. Mysticism begins to have an important function especially in the second phase of in his theology. This interest is a radical departure from the predominantly polemical stance against mysticism in his earlier theology. Beginning with the assumption that understanding God's experience of human beings is as important as understanding the human experience of God (a reversal of Schleiermacher's theological approach), Moltmann takes up the mystical views of God in the work of Jewish and

Christian mystics in order to show the intimate presence of God in the struggles of Judeo-Christian history. Here Abraham Heschel's and Gershom Scholem's mystical views of the Shekinah help determine Moltmann's formulation of a new concept of God. He takes up their idea that the Judeo-Christian God suffers with the chosen people and accompanies them in their wanderings through history. This God, according to Moltmann, is not an "apathetic God" but a "pathetic God," in the sense that God feels for and suffers with people. Moltmann believes that the death of Jesus on the cross is an extension of the Jewish pathetic (as apposed to a-pathetic) indwelling Shekinah. In order to develop the theme of the suffering of God on the cross, Moltmann further appropriates the passion mysticisms of Miguel Unamuno, Teresa of Avila, and other Christian mystics. We will also examine the importance of passion mysticism for his concept of the Trinity.

In Chapter V, we will investigate Moltmann's attempt at ecumenical dialogue in order to determine if it conforms to the cultural-linguistic model. Since the appearance of his 1980 book, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, Moltmann has based his theology on, what he calls, an "ecumenical

methodology."²¹ This method concentrates mostly on dialogue among Christian confessions and with Judaism, though he also begins a limited dialogue with Buddhist, Hindus, Taoists, and others. In Moltmann's view, the questions and problems of Catholics and Protestants must be settled in dialogue with each other and not in private withdrawals into confessional enclaves. He offers a number of possible ways to forge a common identity among the various Christian confessions, which include his own formulation of a common Christian confession, an ecumenical identity in the face of human suffering, and in the common Christian task of working for social justice. Moltmann further believes that a powerful, constructive Christian identity can only be forged if theology goes back to its Jewish roots to rediscover the Hebrew Bible's view of God, the Jewish messianic roots of Jesus, and the common task of working toward God's promised future. Finally, Moltmann has employed the thought of Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism, though in a preliminary and limited way, to help formulate a Christian position on ecological matters. As in the other chapters, we will again be examining Moltmann's thoughts on ecumenism in light of Lindbeck's theological method. Does it conform to the

²¹TKG, xii-xv.

cultural-linguistic recommendations that dialogue partners should confirm their own particular language as the source of their worldview and experiences? Or does Moltmann follow a method that allows other languages to influence Christian identity in a more radical fashion?

CHAPTER I

LANGUAGE, EXPERIENCE, AND DIALOGUE IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: AN EXAMINATION OF LINDBECK'S MODEL OF RELIGION

Introduction

This chapter analyzes Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion, the framework used for the examination of Moltmann's theology. We will look at the important philosophical, theological and anthropological ideas that lie behind Lindbeck's work. In addition we will look at some important responses to his influential book the Nature of Doctrine. I will also formulate the issues and questions that will guide our analysis of Moltmann's theology.

1. Language and Experience in Lindbeck's Model of Religion

Lindbeck has been committed to pluralism and inter-religious dialogue for most of his theological career and it is in this context that his interest in religious language arises. Born to Lutheran missionary parents in China, he

was exposed to cultural and linguistic diversity since childhood.¹ His vast ecumenical interests include dialogue with Roman Catholics (he was appointed as Lutheran observer at Vatican II), a post-modernist restructuring and reunification of the Christian confessions, and Christian reappropriation of the Hebrew Bible.² In all of these endeavors he remains staunchly committed to the original Lutheran task of being "a reform movement within the Catholic church of the West."³ The reformation Lindbeck wishes to accomplish is, in his words, a "postmodern" move away from "nearly 2,000 years of modern and premodern Christian self-understandings."⁴

In The Nature of Doctrine, Lindbeck attempts to show that the new post-modern Christian "self-understanding" must be based on the life-world and experiences generated by the language of the biblical story itself, not extra-

¹George A. Lindbeck, "Confession and Community: An Israel-Like View of the Church," in How My Mind Has Changed, eds. James M. Wall and David Heim (William B. Eerdmans Pub. 1991), 32, 33.

²See "Confession," 40ff.

³"Confession," 36. Lindbeck believes that this Lutheran reform attitude "can best contribute to the goal of wider Christian unity." He states that "this goal and strategy has guided all my work."

⁴"Confession," 41.

biblical interpretations of the Bible. His inspiration for writing The Nature of Doctrine comes from a problem he observed among partners in ecumenical dialogue. He observes that partners in the dialogue, after years of disagreement, suddenly are seeing that their doctrinal differences are reconcilable, without, however, finding it necessary to relinquish these differences.⁵ For Lindbeck, scriptural and doctrinal differences in identity result from differences in religious language.⁶ The thought of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the theologian (and Lindbeck's colleague) Hans Frei helped Lindbeck account for, and defend, doctrinal and scriptural differences among religions.

Geertz states that every religion is characterized by "a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods" which allows each cultural group of people to formulate "a general order of

⁵See Doctrine, 15.

⁶D.Z. Phillips believes that Lindbeck has oversimplified the complex nature of ecumenical discussion by narrowing the problems involved to one theological concepts such as "faithfulness or unfaithfulness to doctrines." See D.Z. Phillips, "Lindbeck's Audience," Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 134

existence."⁷ In language that echoes that of Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures, Lindbeck characterizes religions

as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world.⁸

Lindbeck distills two important points about the nature of religion from this Geertzian-based definition of religion. First, every religion generates an experience of the world which gives its members an orientation to life. The language of myths and narratives construct a worldview, a way of life and thought, which allows people to make sense of their existence. Second, these experiences and orientations to life are unique to each religious group.⁹ Since the language of myths and narratives are unique to each culture, their experiences and orientations to reality differ from culture to culture. According to Lindbeck,

it seems implausible to claim that religions are diverse objectifications of the same basic experience. On the contrary, different religions produce fundamentally divergent depth experiences of what it is to be human.¹⁰

⁷Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 90.

⁸See Doctrine, 32, 33.

⁹Doctrine, 37, 115.

¹⁰Doctrine, 41.

The thought of Wittgenstein also helped Lindbeck account for the way language differences create unique cultures. Wittgenstein states that "words have those meanings we have given them"; the meaning is not somehow independent of the way people use any given word.¹¹ A word has a meaning only because a group or community of people agree on its usage. Words will have different meanings and different uses because each culture has its own unique vocabulary and grammar, or as Wittgenstein would say, their own "language game".¹² Lindbeck takes up Wittgenstein's notion and asserts that each religion has its own unique vocabulary and grammar or language game. He combines the uniqueness Geertz finds among different cultures and that Wittgenstein finds among linguistic groups and defines religions as unique and distinct "cultural-linguistic" entities:

Religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. . . . Just as a language (or

¹¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1965), 27,28.

¹²Milton Munitz states that for Wittgenstein, "the term 'language game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the uses and applications of languages are normally part of some wider activity or 'form of life'." See Milton K. Munitz, Contemporary Analytic Philosophy (New York: MacMillan Pub., 1981), 286,287.

"language game," to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life . . . [religious] doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments or experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends, and the institutional forms it develops.¹³

Lindbeck further views particular religious groups as "intratextual" entities. Behind intratextualism is the conviction that meaning is to be found within the language of a particular tradition's text, rather than outside of the text in some interpretive framework or explanation of universal human religious experience independent of the particular tradition. A distinct universe of meaning, in other words, is contained in the scriptural language of each religion.¹⁴ Since, as Lindbeck believes, all "meaning is constituted by uses of a specific language,"¹⁵ then all terms of a particular religion are best understood only within their own text. In other words, religious terms, such as "God," "grace," "Christ," and so forth, are best

¹³See Doctrine, 32, 33.

¹⁴Lindbeck also appeals to Geertz's use of "thick description," a term Geertz borrows from Gilbert Ryle. See Interpretation, 6.

¹⁵Doctrine, 114.

understood within the story in which they appear.¹⁶

Conversely, religious terms lose their unique meaning when defined through non-biblical language systems, like existentialism, modernism, Marxism, and depth psychology.¹⁷ Lindbeck believes that the scriptural and dogmatic language of a religious tradition *determines*, indeed *should determine*, the experiences that a person has. He asserts that by attempting to describe Christian religious experience through extra-biblical interpretive frameworks, theologians have supplanted experiences that could be generated from the living out of the Christian biblical story with experiences that are not necessarily biblical.¹⁸

Lindbeck gets much of his inspiration for intratextualism from Hans Frei's arguments concerning the nature and role of "realistic narrative." Before the modern

¹⁶As an example of this, Lindbeck asserts that Hans K  ng's search for the historical Jesus is "the closest thing we have to a criterion which stands over against us, judging and correcting us, rather than [Jesus] being ruled or normed by some contemporary world view or set of values." See George Lindbeck, "The Bible as Realistic Narrative," in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 17 (Fall, 1980): 81-85, and Lindbeck's review of Jeffery Stout's "Ethics after Babel," in Theology Today 46 (April 89): 59-61.

¹⁷See Doctrine, 119ff.

¹⁸Doctrine, 36-38.

period, Frei asserts, the Bible had been read "realistically," as literally and historically true and descriptive of real events. Frei states that the Bible was understood as "at once literal and historical, and not only doctrinal or edifying. The words and sentences meant what they said, and because they did so they actually described real events and real truths."¹⁹ Frei's use of the term 'literal' has nothing in common with fundamentalist literal readings of Scriptures. Frei uses 'literal' to refer to the "reality" of an event or character within the context of a story. This realistic reading of the Bible was thought to have created a picture of the world that challenged the reader to "fit himself into that world."²⁰ Unfortunately, asserts Frei, the "realistic narrative" of the Bible has been "eclipsed" by methodological consideration that lie outside of the text. This eclipse began with 17th and 18th

¹⁹Hans Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 1.

²⁰Frei states that since the biblical string of narratives "was the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader." It was a person's duty to "fit himself into that world . . . in part by figural interpretation and in part of course by his mode of life. He was to see his dispositions, his actions and passions, the shape of his own life as well as that of his era's events as figures of that storied world." See Eclipse, 3.

century theologians who used the Bible to confirm that particular historical events were "under God's providential design."²¹ In this usage, the Bible does not create history but rather confirms other, non-biblical views of history. Frei states that "all across the theological spectrum the great reversal had taken place; interpretation was a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story."²²

Recovery of the realistic narrative in certain pivotal texts of the Bible, in Frei's view, does not mean that one finds in the texts events that actually (really) happened. Rather, in a realistic reading of texts, miracle accounts, for example, can also be "history-like," which does not mean "factually true," but rather indispensable to the development of a biblical character or story.²³ Intratextual approaches to the Bible allow internal elements- like miracle accounts- to convey a unique biblical

²¹Eclipse, 4, 5.

²² See Eclipse, 130.

²³Frei states that "realistic narrative is that kind in which subject and social setting belong together, and character and external circumstances fittingly render each other." See Eclipse, 13-15.

message without the need of extra-biblical hermeneutical elements. In other words, the Bible should be read like a story, in which all the elements- characters, miracle accounts, conversion stories, actions of God, angels, demons and symbols -are allowed to contribute their own part to the meaning of the whole. Frei states for example that

miraculous accounts are history-like or realistic if the depicted action is indispensable to the rendering of a particular character, divine or human, or a particular story.²⁴

Taking up Frei's ideas, Lindbeck asserts that when theologians allowed extra-scriptural matters to guide their reading of the Bible, "scripture ceased to function as the lens through which theologians viewed the world."²⁵ For both Lindbeck and Frei this is a lamentable fact, because one who lives by the story of a religious text sees the world through the lenses given by the text, and is thereby provided a vision of reality and context of meaning in life.

Lindbeck is not entirely against the theological work of incorporating different philosophical frameworks, such as Marxism and Whiteheadianism, into the worldview of the Bible. On the contrary, he believes that "it may, in

²⁴See Eclipse, 13-15.

²⁵See Doctrine, 119.

fact, be an obligation [to do so]."²⁵ His method for incorporating ideas into the biblical frame of reference is, in my opinion, his central recommendation for theologians. What Lindbeck means here is that the worldview given by the Bible should become the dominant interpretive frame for theologians (or anyone else in the Christian tradition).²⁷ In his view, this is a reversal of the usual way in which, especially, modern liberal, experiential-expressivist theologians have conducted biblical interpretation. Their interpretive frame, whether existentialist, Marxist, or Freudian, have become the dominant interpretive framework for life and experience and the Bible is interpreted in these contexts. In the process, biblical reality becomes Marxist, existentialist or Freudian realities. However, Lindbeck asserts that when the Bible remains the central interpretive frame for theologians, they can safely

²⁶See "Barth," 369. Lindbeck also states that "authentically biblical process or liberation theology cannot be excluded a priori . . . The heuristic value of large scale systems . . . can be retextualized and redescribed within another web of belief- for Christians, the biblical one." See "Barth," 169. Lindbeck further states that "a scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe. It supplies the interpretive framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality." See Doctrine, 117.

²⁷Doctrine, 118.

incorporate Marxism, existentialism and many other extrabiblical ideas into the biblical language world without falling into the danger of eclipsing, subverting or overshadowing the meaning of the biblical story. In Lindbeck's words

it is the [biblical] text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text. There is always the danger, however, that, the extrabiblical materials inserted into the biblical universe will themselves become the basic framework of interpretation.²⁸

Theologians are in error when the biblical realities are translated into extrabiblical realities in our contemporary "biblically-illiterate" world.²⁹ It is clear, then, that Lindbeck wants theologians to use non-Christian sources in theology, though not at the expense of compromising with the contemporary world, which seems, in his view, in need of hearing and living out the unique, powerful Christian prescription for human existence. For this reason, Lindbeck believes his cultural-linguistic model of religions is superior to, what he calls, the "experiential-expressivist" model. This model, which Lindbeck believes was developed by Schleiermacher and is

²⁸Doctrine, 118.

²⁹See "Barth," 365.

still employed by Tracy, is, in Lindbeck's view, the most widely employed theological model, and so receives most of his critical attention.³⁰ Lindbeck asserts that in the experiential-expressivist model, doctrines "function as non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations."³¹ For experiential-expressivists, in other words, the different doctrines of different religions merely express a common core religious experience. If one understands the core nature of religious experience shared by all religions then one has gone a long

³⁰Lindbeck also identifies two other models: the "cognitivist" model is one in which church doctrines function "as informative propositions or truth claims about objective reality." Theologians who follow this model, asserts Lindbeck, believe they have the doctrinal truth about reality, and so it would be inconsistent for them to recognize any other truth claims about the same reality. See Doctrine, 87. Contrary to Lindbeck's statement that these theologians believe that "if a doctrine is once true it is always true," Brian Gerrish believes that cognitivists leave room for reappraising and revising doctrines. He thinks Lindbeck's characterization of them is set up falsely in order to strengthen his case. See B.A. Gerrish, "Review of Lindbeck's Nature of Doctrine," Journal of Religion 68 (January 1988): 87. Unfortunately Lindbeck does not explain the third model, which he believes is used by Rahner and Lonergan. He merely asserts that "Rahner and Lonergan . . . resort to complicated intellectual gymnastics and to that extent are unpersuasive." See Doctrine, 17. David Tracy has also noted Lindbeck's "unargued," "puzzling and begrudging comments . . . on Rahner and Lonergan." See David Tracy, "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection," The Thomist, 4 (1985): 467.

³¹See Doctrine, 16.

way toward understanding his or her own religion. The implication, as Lindbeck sees it, is that the doctrines and scriptural language of different religions have little or no impact on the character of religious experience.

Ultimately, then, for the experiential expressivists, no religion is unique:

Religiously significant meanings can vary while doctrines remain the same, and conversely . . . doctrines can alter without change of meaning Buddhist and Christian might have basically the same faith although expressed very differently.³²

Lindbeck believes that this is a reversal of the proper relationship between religious language and experience. He thinks that language is the "leading partner" in the dialectic of language and experience.³³ Religious language, in his view, actually creates religious experience. Since, as we have said above, the meaning of language varies among different religious groups, then so do the experiences. The cultural-linguistic model shifts the focus from "religion in general" to "the focus . . . on

³²Doctrine, 17.

³³Karl Rahner and David Tracy, Lindbeck believes, understand the theological concept of the *verbum internum* as a certain type of experience manifested in all religions. In contrast, Lindbeck says it is "a capacity for hearing and accepting the true religion, the true external word, rather than . . . as a common experience diversely articulated in different religions." Doctrine, 33-35.

particular religions."³⁴

According to Lindbeck, the focus on individual religions in the cultural-linguistic model of religions has implications for ecumenical dialogue. He believes that ecumenically minded theologians would do well to understand the doctrines of each Christian confession as "second order" discourse.³⁵ Second order discourse, in contrast to first order discourse, is not statements about ultimate and objective reality nor expressions of inner experiences. Rather, second order discourse acts as "rules" for understanding and living the worldview given by the language of the scriptural texts. Doctrines, states Lindbeck, should be understood as "communally authoritative rules of discourse attitudes, and action."³⁶ Doctrines of each Christian confession function much like grammatical rules. Just as grammar helps people organize the particular words of a language, doctrines help organize and give coherence and meaning to the symbols of a religion. In Lindbeck's

³⁴Doctrine, 23. For a response to Lindbeck's views on ecumenism, see Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecumenical Dimensions of Lindbeck's 'Nature of Doctrine'" and D.Z. Phillips, "Lindbeck's Audience," in Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 121-154.

³⁵Doctrine, 80.

³⁶Doctrine, 18.

words, "faithfulness to a doctrine, then is more like following a rule (like a grammatical rule) than like believing a first order claim about ultimate reality or responding to a symbolic claim about an inner experience or feeling."³⁷

Lindbeck believes that Christians understand God, Jesus, and other subjects of the Bible differently in each different culture or historical period.³⁸ Doctrinal language is an expression of the interpretation of the changing and culturally diverse world through the biblical frame of reference. It is important to emphasize that for Lindbeck it is precisely the world that is interpreted anew through the biblical frame of reference, not the reverse. The biggest mistake a theologian can make is to interpret the biblical world through a non-biblical framework. But properly understood, doctrines can offer the new articulation of the Christian story in each new historical moment and in each culture.

The rule theory of doctrine helps Lindbeck address a problem in ecumenical dialogue. Throughout the years, he

³⁷Gordon E. Michaelson, Jr., "The Response to Lindbeck," Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 108.

³⁸Doctrine, 21.

has observed that dialogue partners have been willing to agree in areas in which they traditionally disagreed, but without having changed their doctrines.³⁹ In his view, to see each disagreement as resolved without changing doctrines seems to render doctrines meaningless. According to Lindbeck, doctrines are not meaningless, because, as we have shown above, they are the rules for life for each Christian confession. Lindbeck believes that it is contradictory to say that dialogue partners agree about some aspect of Christianity when their doctrines say otherwise. The cognitive propositionalists, who see doctrines as statements about objective reality, would require a dialogue partner to give up any doctrine that did not agree with their own. Experiential expressivists render doctrines useless because they see all doctrines as individual expressions of the same core religious experience, "making meaningless the historical doctrinal affirmations of unconditionality, irreversibility, or infallibility, and thus leave nothing to

³⁹Lindbeck states, for example, that Protestant and Catholic churches claim "basic agreement on such topics as the Eucharist, ministry, justification, or even the papacy, and yet they continue- so they claim- to adhere to their historic and once-divisive convictions." Doctrine, 15.

discuss."⁴⁰ Further, Lindbeck asserts that the cognitive propositionalists and experiential expressivists identify the normative form of the religion with either the truth claims or the experiences of a particular world.⁴¹ Lindbeck's rule theory of doctrines, which is consistent with the cultural-linguistic model of religion, affirms the important function of doctrines within a religion while avoiding doctrinal capitulation or rendering them meaningless.⁴² It provides, in other words, the possibility

⁴⁰Doctrine, 91. Agreeing with John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Peter Slater observes that Lindbeck does not adequately consider the fact that language is improvisational. Slater states that "his description of relations between Christian and other religions is of synchronic wholes, each using a different language game, such that we cannot know whether we mean the same or not when we engage in interreligious dialogue." See Peter Slater, "Lindbeck, Hick and the Nature of Religious Truth," Studies in Religion 24/1 (1995): 64, 65.

⁴¹Doctrine, 84. Peter Slater states that Lindbeck's intratextual focus on individual religions does not allow for the adjudication between statements of "truth" for different religions. For example, in the context of Buddhist\Christian dialogue a statement such as "God created the world" is neither true nor false. Slater states that, according to Lindbeck's vision, "the statement can only be meaningful to Christians" because the meaning has to do with a particular kind of life that is created, not with truth: "doctrines of creation, redemption and the rest are construed as rules for ensuring coherence in worship and social practice." See "Lindbeck," p. 69.

⁴²Doctrine, 16, 17.

for "doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation."⁴³

2. The Problem of "Absorbing" the World: Responses to Lindbeck

Given the above analysis, we are faced with the question, what is the distinction between "incorporating" or "absorbing" non-biblical ideas into the biblical world and "translating" the biblical world into extra-biblical categories? The distinction is central to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion.

The question is important, though, in my view, difficult to answer. Various sympathetic and unsympathetic responses to Lindbeck's The Nature of Doctrine do not seem to give a clear answer. William Werpehowski, for example, observes that the cultural-linguistic "process includes some flexibility regarding use of available philosophical concepts and categories. The theologian is always free to 'annex' extra-biblical ideas for Christian purposes, so long as he or she secures their meaning within the new Christian

⁴³Doctrine, 16.

context."⁴⁴ Following Lindbeck's lead, Werpehowski gives some useful suggestions on how theologians might do this in the process of dialogue with non-Christians. He proposes an "ad hoc" apologetics that does not depend on some mutually agreed upon extra-biblical experience.⁴⁵ He proposes an approach that emphasizes finding common ground shared by Christians and non-Christians.⁴⁶ Christians, in the course of conversation with others, can give an account of how their worldview is relevant to a belief or practice shared by people outside the biblical frame of reference.⁴⁷ Through the conversation, Christian beliefs can be changed by "the non-Christian's unique contribution to the conversation."⁴⁸ Thus, part of Werpehowski's conclusion is that the cultural-linguistic idea of religion leaves some room for alteration of the Christian worldview in the course of conversation:

Hence, apologetics is not anything like a therapeutic impartation to non-Christians of rational unity from a

⁴⁴See William Werpehowski, "Ad Hoc Apologetics," in Journal of Religion 66 No.3 (July 1986): 289.

⁴⁵"Ad Hoc," 285.

⁴⁶"Ad Hoc," 298, 299.

⁴⁷"Ad Hoc," 287.

⁴⁸"Ad Hoc," 299.

Christian vision splendidly isolated and already and always quite in order.⁴⁹

Bruce Marshall's interpretation of the cultural-linguistic implications for dealing with non-biblical ideas resonates with Werpehowski's. But he is more generous about the degree to which Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm allows for "absorption" of alien idea into the biblical world. He attempts to show that Lindbeck's model of religion allows Christians to change their fundamental understanding about what constitutes the "plain sense" of the Bible. "Plain sense" refers to "'what a participant in a community automatically or naturally takes a text to be saying on its face insofar as he or she has been socialized in a community's convention for the reading of the text as Scripture.'"⁵⁰ According to Marshall, the important implication of this definition is that the plain sense governing a community's understanding of the Bible can change in the encounter with alien ideas and worldviews. He believes that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm allows

⁴⁹"Ad Hoc," 299.

⁵⁰Marshall takes this quotation from Kathryn Tanner. See Bruce D. Marshall, "Absorbing the World: Christianity and the Universe of Truths," in Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck, ed. Bruce D. Marshall (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 72, 73

Christians to absorb non-Christian ideas, even to the point that the plain sense of the Bible is changed for a community:

Encounters with external truth claims can lead Christians, and under some circumstances, whole Christian communities, to change their established beliefs When supported by persuasive arguments, alien truth claims can lead Christians to change the way they identify and specify the plain sense of Scripture and therefore what beliefs cohere with the plain sense.⁵¹

These interpretations of the flexibility of Lindbeck's paradigm in the appropriation of non-biblical ideas can be contrasted with evaluations that are more wary of the implications of the cultural-linguistic model in the encounter with non-Christian ideas. William Placher, for example, is more ambiguous about the fruits and dangers of Lindbeck's and others' postmodern theologies. On the one hand, he believes that postliberal theology, undergirded by Lindbeck's theory of religion, is more relevant to contemporary theology because "academic theologians in the United States just now are more in danger of losing authentic pluralism by trying to find a common essence of religion."⁵² On the other hand, Placher acknowledges that

⁵¹See "Absorbing," 93.

⁵² See William C. Placher, Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation (Westminster:

the focus on particular doctrinal communities, formed by their own specific language, runs the danger of ethical and veritcal relativism.⁵³ James Gustafson goes further in his criticism and sees Lindbeck's model of religion as one more "sectarian temptation" which insulates Christian theologians from criticism, and so from real transformative conversation with non-Christians.⁵⁴ He is much more certain than Placher that Lindbeck's vision for theology is perniciously relativistic and unable to deal with nonbiblical ideas. As he bitingly asserts against Lindbeck,

sectarian tendencies in theology falsely assume that a cultural-linguistic community with a particular history and set of narratives is, can be, or ought to be isolated from the society and culture of which it is a part. Theologians in universities who succumb to the temptation have no right to accuse their colleagues in other fields of being excessively specialized, in-bred, and dogmatic if their own work is not open to correction and rethinking in light of other disciplines which investigate life.⁵⁵

John Knox Press, 1989), 155.

⁵³Placher states that "questions about truth and relativism arise naturally enough for postliberal theology. After all, Lindbeck says that Christian doctrines describe the rules of the Christian community- suggesting that other communities might have other sets of rules" See Unapologetic, 163.

⁵⁴See James M. Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University," CTSA Proceedings 40 (1985), 83.

⁵⁵"Sectarian," 91.

The wide range of interpretations of Lindbeck's work, in my view, makes it difficult to decide what constitutes absorption or appropriation into the biblical world and what constitutes translating the biblical world into non-biblical categories. The answer it seems is open to individual interpretations of Lindbeck. Our analysis of Moltmann's theology will be a test case for Lindbeck's paradigm.

David Tracy's response to Lindbeck suggests some alternative relationships between language and experience or non-Christian ideas. Tracy's method for theology offers an interesting variation on Lindbeck's position that the language of the Christian tradition should dominate in the dialectic between language and extra-biblical ideas and concepts of experience. Tracy's work seems to suggest that theology can maintain a reciprocal relationship between language and experience.

Recall from what was written above that Lindbeck locates Tracy in the experiential-expressivist camp. This is because Tracy has gone to great lengths to describe the nature of religious experience. Following in the tradition of the great liberal theologians like Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto and Paul Tillich- theologians Lindbeck labels

experiential expressivists- Tracy distinguishes religion "from a moral, an aesthetic, a scientific or a political perspective" and attempts to define religion as a set of particular and unique "experiences" shared by all human beings.⁵⁶ He finds this religious dimension of experience in human "limit-experiences":

All significant implicitly religious characteristics of our common experience (the religious dimension) will bear at least the "family resemblance" of articulating or implying a limit-experience, a limit-language, or a limit-dimension.⁵⁷

Limit-experiences transcend our ordinary personal, scientific, and political experiences and so cannot be "adequately described as simply another human activity."⁵⁸ The reason for this is that they "bear on the human desire

⁵⁶David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 92.

⁵⁷See Blessed, 93. Tracy later added a caution to the attempt to conflate specifically religious language with scientific language: "Scientific and theological understanding may not be necessary conflictual, but neither may they be conflated into the grammar of a single discourse. Attempts to do so usually seek to 'fit' religious symbols into some larger patterns of scientific discourse. Especially in the 19th century, religious world views derived from the supposedly value free descriptions of science tended to be unwarrantedly 'optimistic' in character." See David Tracy "Introduction" in Cosmology and Theology, David Tracy and Nicholas Lash (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 3.

⁵⁸Blessed, 108-109.

for liberation and authentic existence" and so are "expressive of certain limits to our ordinary experience."⁵⁹ On the one hand, limit experiences, like death, manifest human "finitude" and dependency on others and on nature. They indicate human "contingency", the limits of our ability to be the masters of our own existence. On the other hand, there are certain limit-experiences which contrast with finitude and contingency. Such "positive" limit experiences include "'ecstatic experiences'- intense joy, love, reassurance, creation."⁶⁰ "Boundary situations" and "ecstatic experiences" are religious, Tracy believes, because they point to the fact that our situations are not always of our own making and because they inform, transform, and are central to all other dimensions of life.

The formulation of such a definition of experience as a starting point for understanding the Christian Scriptures is precisely what Lindbeck is against. But Tracy, too, understands the important function of language in theology and its relationship to experience, a point completely overlooked by Lindbeck in his criticism of Tracy. He shows that it is the limit-experiences of human existence

⁵⁹Blessed, 92.

⁶⁰Blessed, 105.

that are dealt with in Scriptural texts or, to use Tracy's term, "religious classics." Theologians investigate "religious classics" (e.g., the Bible, Koran, etc.) where the "fundamental questions of the meaning of existence are at stake."⁶¹ The innate limit-experience of religion enables and compels the theologian to find the scriptural truths which "resonate to those limit-to experiences disclosive of a religious dimension to existence."⁶² There is a sort of "conversation" about human limit-experiences between the texts and the investigator that involves a game-like give and take.⁶³ Tracy states that the theologian in a

⁶¹David Tracy, The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1981), 160. Tracy believes that more work should be done exploring the limit dimension of experience in other religions. He states that "whether this Western limit language is applicable outside its Western context is an open question for contemporary comparative philosophy of religion." See David Tracy, "The Origins of Philosophy of Religion," in Myth and Philosophy, eds. Frank Reynolds and David Tracy (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 32.

⁶²Analogical, 163.

⁶³This notion of a game-like engagement with a text comes from Hans-Georg Gadamer's work in hermeneutics. Gadamer believes that one must take up what is said in a text in such a fashion that it speaks and finds an answer in the words of one's own language. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 163. See also Gadamer's, Truth and Method (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 102-110

personal search for wholeness, enters the text as one enters a "conversation, the back-and-forth movement of authentic fundamental religious questions and answers expressed in classic religious texts."⁶⁴ Classics are classics precisely insofar as they disclose "a reality we cannot but name truth," which addresses the limit dimension of our existence:

A religious classic may be viewed as an event of disclosure, expressive of the "limit-of" . . . side of religion. Like all classics, religious classics will involve a claim to meaning and truth . . . as the event of a disclosure-concealment of the whole of reality . . . It [the religious classic] must resonate to those limit-to experiences disclosive of a religious dimension to existence.⁶⁵

Lindbeck asserts that because experiential-expressivists- like Tracy -employ an experientially-based understanding of religions, they "seem to maintain a kind of privacy in the origins of experience and language that, if

⁶⁴See Analogical, 165.

⁶⁵Analogical, 163. Tracy cautions against erroneous and destructive textual interpretation and believes that Marxist or Nietzschean critical theory can act as "aids to try to locate and undo the illusions, the hidden, repressed, unconscious distortions, present in the pre-understanding of the interpreter and in the classic texts and traditions." See David Tracy, "Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm," in Paradigm Change in Theology, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracy (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 45.

Wittgenstein is right, is more than doubtful".⁶⁶ Lindbeck asserts that all language- and thus all symbol systems- are formed in "interpersonal relations," and so cannot impart inherently private experiences. He believes that the focus on individual experience is more appealing to modern people because it is easier than learning the language of the religion, which is the same as "mastering a set of skills" in order to "acquire a culture".⁶⁷ According to Lindbeck, Tracy's method contributes to this contemporary cultural problem.

Tracy refutes Lindbeck's charge of individualism. He too believes that theologians must avoid the danger of privatization that arises in the dialogue with others because reflection upon religious symbols should provide "disclosive and transformative possibilities for the whole

⁶⁶Doctrine, 38.

⁶⁷Doctrine, 22. James Gustafson criticizes Lindbeck on this point. If to become religious is to learn a distinct language, then science and religion are two different and irreconcilable language systems and, thus, two different ways of construing reality. Since these two languages have nothing to do with each other, religion is insulated from any criticism from the sciences. See "Sectarian," 85. Mark Corner also states that "The Nature of Doctrine appears to be a book that forecloses the possibility of allowing . . . [a] powerful critique of religion like Marxism that Christianity cannot choose to ignore." See Mark Corner, "Review of The Nature of Doctrine," Modern Theology, 3:1 (April, 1986): 113.

society."⁶⁸ He further believes, like Lindbeck, that modernity is the root cause of religious individualism. In his view, modern culture has overlooked the communal aspect of religion by leaving ethical reflection in the hands of clergy, scientists and politicians and by making it into "a private consumer product."⁶⁹

Tracy's refutation of this charge of individualism offers a variation on the dialectic between language and experience proposed by Lindbeck. Concern about "individualism" and "privatization" is central to Tracy's theology as well as Lindbeck's, and both deal with the problem through the dialectic of language and experience. But whereas Lindbeck gives priority to the language of Christian doctrine and scripture, Tracy asserts that many theologians "maintain the richer and broader understanding of experience forged by the great liberals . . . only by dialectically relating it to recent understandings of language (and, thereby, inevitably, also to history and society)."⁷⁰ Tracy, in other words, gives equal weight to

⁶⁸Analogical, 12.

⁶⁹Analogical, 13.

⁷⁰See "Lindbeck's Program," 464. John Cobb also criticizes Tracy's explication of the "cultural intellectual situation" because it cannot adequately speak to problems

language and experience in theological method. It is true that Tracy has written much about the nature of religious experience, but he disagrees that he gives experience precedence over language. Tracy asserts that Lindbeck misunderstood him about the relationship between language and experience and that it was Lindbeck who "abandoned half of the dialectic" by abandoning experience.⁷¹ Tracy asserts that one is able to describe experiences that one can call 'religious', but that these experiences are nuanced and take on a uniqueness when expressed in the language of different theologies and religious traditions.⁷² Thus, he seems to take the position that there is a reciprocity between religious language and symbols and experiences.

Here, then, are possible alternative to Lindbeck's views on the dialectic between biblical language and non-

like "nuclear holocaust nor eco-catastrophe." Further, Cobb states that despite Tracy's polemic against privatism, this intellectualized approach "presents fundamental and systematic theology as essentially unaffected" by what the political and liberation theologians are saying. I find it difficult to agree with Cobb on this point, since Tracy continually asserts his solidarity with Moltmann, Metz and other political theologians. See Cobb's review of The Analogical Imagination, in Religious Studies Review 7:4 (October 1981): 282.

⁷¹See "Lindbeck's Program," 464.

⁷²"Lindbeck's Program," 463.

biblical philosophies and concepts of experiences. One can a) agree with Lindbeck that a theologian should allow Christian language to play the leading role in the articulation of the Christian worldview, as in the cultural-linguistic model. One could b) use philosophical concepts and views of experience to the point where they overshadow Christian language and theology becomes an expression of extra-biblical ideas articulated in the language of the tradition, as is the case with those who Lindbeck places in the experiential-expressivist camp. Or c) one can follow Tracy's position that there is a reciprocity between language and nonbiblical concepts and experiences.

The questions that we will ask in each step of this dissertation is, which model most nearly represents the view of religion that undergirds Moltmann's theological approach? Does his theology assume something like the cultural-linguistic model of religion? Does the language of the Christian tradition dominate extra-biblical ideas and experiences in Moltmann's theology. Or, is it more accurate to say that Moltmann's theology is a combination of both Christian language and extra-biblical language and experience?

3. Preliminary Observations of Moltmann's Theological Method

There are two important points to keep in mind about Moltmann's theological method as we examine his writings and attempt to answer the above questions. He insists that a) theology must be biblically based, and b) he attempts to develop a political hermeneutic for interpreting important biblical themes. In this dissertation I have chosen to focus on Moltmann's hermeneutical frameworks rather than the specific biblical texts he interprets. But there is no doubt that Moltmann considers himself a biblical theologian. In 1988, for example, he writes concerning his approach to theology that "if I were to attempt to put together an outline of my theology in a few phrases, I should have to say at the least that I seek to think upon theology that is *biblically founded*, eschatologically oriented and politically responsible."⁷³ The biblical themes of God's promise of a just future, the creative act of God, the Trinity and Christology have been especially important to Moltmann's political theology.

Moltmann asserts the importance of biblical theology over against certain theologies that eclipse or

⁷³A.J. Conyers, God Hope and History (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), 222.

obscure this essential message of the Bible with an overemphasis on interpretive frameworks. Here, Moltmann's approach to theology appears to be consistent with the cultural-linguistic focus on the text rather than extra-biblical interpretive frameworks. Moltmann's beliefs about this are summed in his statement that among theologians

there is a greater preoccupation with philosophical theology, sociology of religion, and anthropology. That is unfortunately not based on the fact that the Bible is well known Without biblical theology, however, theology cannot be Christian theology.⁷⁴

At first reading, Moltmann's assertions about the centrality of the Bible in theology and his suspicion of philosophical, sociological and anthropological theories might seem to mean that Moltmann is sympathetic to Lindbeck's vision of religion and that he does not want nonbiblical ideas to influence Christian life and experience. But Moltmann, himself, has not been shy about employing the thought of Karl Marx, Ernst Bloch, feminists, mystics, Jewish philosophers, and others in the attempt to develop a political hermeneutic, which, he believes, is necessary in order to understand the Scriptures. Thus, despite his assertions about the necessity of theology being biblical, he is no biblical positivist. He does not

⁷⁴See EH, 7.

believe, in other words, that the biblical message can be clearly understood without an interpretive framework. He states, for example, that "the naked positivity of the Bible and the affirmation of the church's proclamation of revelation are not enough . . . the hermeneutical situation must be sought in which this talk of God appears meaningful and necessary"⁷⁵ More strikingly, Moltmann states that "it is impossible for [Christian theology] to reduce itself to a biblical language game within its own area of influence."⁷⁶ Moltmann means by this statement that Christian theology cannot ignore the political situation in which it finds itself and that it can only define its political contributions effectively with a proper hermeneutic of the Bible. The articulation of a political hermeneutical framework is central to his theology and should be, in his words, the "field, the milieu, the environment and the medium in which Christian theology should be articulated today."⁷⁷

Moltmann, then, is not denying the importance of hermeneutical devices. His own "political hermeneutics," as

⁷⁵See HP, 3.

⁷⁶HP, 31.

⁷⁷See EH, 102, 103.

he calls it, is meant to replace modern hermeneutical frameworks that, for him, do not do justice to the Bible. But this brings us back to the main question of this dissertation. Does Moltmann allow his experiential and philosophical hermeneutical frameworks to determine his theology? Or does he construct his theology in a way that conforms to Lindbeck's demand that the language of the Bible and Christian doctrine be the main determinant of Christian life and experience?

The analysis of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model in this chapter suggests three aspects of Moltmann's theology that we can analyze in order to answer these questions. First, I will examine Moltmann's views on religious experience. There are two ideas about religious experience that are of particular importance in Moltmann's theology: a) the experience of hope and the historical experiences it creates and b) mystical experience. The experience of hope is articulated especially in Moltmann's revelational eschatology. We will examine this dimension of his theology in light of the above questions. Is his eschatology, in reality, an expression of Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope in biblical language? If this is the case, are the experiences that arise from this theology less

the product of the language of biblical eschatology and more those of Bloch? Or is it more accurate to understand Moltmann's eschatology as a product of the interaction of biblical language and Bloch's ideas? Second, I will examine Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist concepts and the way they inform, especially, his theology of the cross and his views on Christian identity. Is his theology of the cross much more of a Marxist vision explicated in the language of the cross? Or does Moltmann's approach conform to the cultural-linguistic demand to allow such concepts only to be absorbed into the Christian worldview, but not to determine it? Is Moltmann's theology of the cross better characterized as a creative interaction of Christian and Marxist concepts? Finally, we will look at Moltmann's approach to ecumenical dialogue. Does he allow dialogue with others to inform the Christian worldview, but not determine it, as Lindbeck would recommend? Does he think that the identities of dialogue partners should change in the encounter with others, and, if so, does he violate the limits of the cultural-linguistic model of religion?

We turn now to an analysis of Moltmann's views on Christian experience and eschatology.

CHAPTER II

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MODERN EXPERIENCE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the concept of Christian religious experience in the first phase of Moltmann's theology.¹ I will focus on four important factors influencing his thought on experience. They are dialectical theology's critique of human experience, Moltmann's rejection of modern subjectivism, Bloch's philosophy of Hope, and Iwand's views on historical revelation. All of these factors work together to determine Moltmann's views on Christian religious experience. The

¹As we will see in Chapter IV, in 1980 Moltmann's views on religious experience change dramatically. He states in 1980, for example, that in "the search for religious experience . . . the Christian faith cannot choose to distance itself from religion." This statement is representative of a shift in his theology away from the dialectical theology critique of experience toward an emphasis on mystical experience, which continues in his most recent major contributions to theology. See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Challenge of Religion in the 80's," Christian Century, 97 (1980): 465-468.

result is a view of experience that is non-subjectivist and realized only in the course of creating a more just human history. But is Moltmann's view of experience a unique product of Christian language, as advocated by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model for theology? Or is it the case that Moltmann allows extra-biblical concepts of experience to determine his views on religious experience? The answer, I believe, is ambiguous. That is, there are aspects of Moltmann's theology which seem to assume something like the cultural-linguistic model of religion and aspects that depart from this model.

1. Experience in The Dialectical Critique of 'Religion'

There are two traditional European and North American schools of theology that have contrasting views of the function and nature of religious experience: "liberal theology" and "dialectical theology." Moltmann was schooled in the dialectical tradition of theology, which is heavily critical of the liberal school and its emphasis on human religious experience. The liberal school of thought is represented by Schleiermacher, Otto, James, Tillich, and Tracy. Each of these liberal theologians formulates his own concept of human religious experience in an attempt to show

the contemporary relevance of Christianity and to make it understandable to those suspicious of or confused about Christian tradition and experience. Schleiermacher sees human religious experience as a 'feeling of absolute dependence', for Otto, it is the experience of '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*', for James, it is 'mystical experience', for Tillich, it is 'ultimate concern', and for Tracy, it is limit-experiences. Each one believes that the ability to explicate the nature of religious experience will aid in the attempt to understand more clearly the Christian faith.

Recall that in the Introduction I showed that Lindbeck's emphasis on the textual world of religions was inspired by Barth's emphasis on the scriptural narrative.² Moltmann also inherited from Barth's dialectical school of theology a suspicion of certain philosophies and theologies that accentuated the human element over divine revelation in the scriptural texts. Barth (and other dialectical theologians who influenced Moltmann, such as Friedrich Gogarten, Emil Brunner, Eduard Thurneysen and Rudolph Bultmann) are much more concerned with distinguishing

²See "Introduction," 6.

Christianity from secular society and from non-Christian religions by grounding theology in faith in God's revelation in the "Word" of Scripture rather than in human experience. They believe that concentration on mere human experience subverts the textual origins of the Christian faith. The dialectical theologians assert that all human religious endeavour and experience must be dialectically related to the primacy of the biblical "Word" of God in Scripture, because all human experience, including religious experience, shares in the general sinfulness of fallen humanity. They thought that their views were vindicated by the violent wars of early and middle 20th century Europe. The need to maintain Christian distinctiveness from the decay of Europe, they believed, far outweighed any need for finding common ground with the wider culture through human religious experience.

Throughout Moltmann's early writings (from his earliest publications until the late 1970s) the word 'religion' carries much of the Barthian polemical power against concepts of human religious experience conceived by the "liberal" theologians mentioned above. 'Religion', for the dialectical theologians and for Moltmann captures, what they believe to be, the fallen nature of all human beings.

The term refers to any human thoughts, acts and experiences that have not been redeemed by the revelation of God as given in the Bible. For example, Moltmann states that

the Christian religion can not be understood through the general religiosity of human hearts, which always creates its own gods and idols, it can only be understood as a contradiction to this religiosity.³

Given this view of human "religiosity," it is no wonder that theological concepts of religious experience, formulated outside of the Scriptures, were rejected by dialectical theologians and by Moltmann. Both Barth's and Moltmann's experiences of worn-torn Europe in the early and middle parts of this century confirmed for them that human existence and all its experiences are fundamentally depraved.

Barth himself was educated in the "liberal"

³Jürgen Moltmann, Einführung in das Studium der evangelischen Theologie, ed. Rudolf Bohren (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), 109,110. In many other places in his writings, one can find Moltmann's polemical use of the term 'religion'. For example, when Christianity is thought of as a "Religion und Religionsgemeinschaft" it is because it has been mistakenly understood under the "history of religions, psychology of religion and philosophy of religion." In his view, these modes of thought confuse Christianity with other forms of human religiosity, and so fail to capture the unique call, promise, experience and mission of Christianity. See Einführung, 110. Moltmann also states that "Jesus did not bring a new religion," nor was he a "founder of a religion" ("Religionsstifter"). See Jürgen Moltmann, "Der Gott der Hoffnung," in Gott Heute, ed. Norbert Kutschki (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1967), 124.

tradition of 18th and 19th century theology, whose chief architect was Schleiermacher. But the atrocities of WW I made Barth radically reconsider liberal theology's emphasis on human religious endeavors and experiences.⁴ His reflections on these matters were first expressed in the 1919 (and 1922 second edition) publication of his book Epistle to the Romans and were reconfirmed and intensified by the 1933 Nazi rise to power. In 1934, for example, Barth participated in the denunciation of the proposed principles of an "Evangelical Church of the German Nation" that would make it "a tool of the Nazi party." This denunciation was formulated in the famous "Barmen Declaration" which "affirmed the sovereignty of the Word of God in Christ over against all idolatrous political ideologies."⁵ The very

⁴James C. Livingston, Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 324, 325. One of the more distressing things for Barth was that "almost all of [his] theological teachers whom [he] had greatly venerated" supported the war effort of Wilhelm II. See Karl Barth, The Humanity of God (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960), 14.

⁵See Christian, 326. Barth was involved in the Swiss socialist movement, which saw God as sovereign over the world. Members of this movement thought God could "make more of his will known through . . . an atheistic movement like that of social democracy- than through ecclesiastical activities and the churchly forms of piety." The danger of identifying the Kingdom of God with "a mundane social reality" caused Barth to withdraw from the movement, though he retained "the notion of the unconditioned sovereignty of

need to draft such a statement of resistance further confirmed the ambiguous, sinful and suspect nature of all human endeavour and experience, including "religious experience."

The term "religion" in Barth's usage refers to merely human, desperate, self reliant, and futile attempts to understand God without the aid of God's revelation. In Barth's view, religion, like all other human experiences and endeavours, is "limited," "uncertain," "ambiguous" and just one more "lust" and "passion."⁶ The celebration of religion only serves to entangle human beings in the "dangerous web" of existence they have already spun for themselves; people's attempt to reach perfection through religious activity will always be marked by an ambiguous outcome. Barth states that

moving within the frontier of human possibility, I have no alternative but to appear as, and actually to be, a religious man. At best I might hope to be a St. Francis, but I am certainly a Grand Inquisitor, I might set out to be a Blumhardt, but I shall assuredly be a

God over against both the church and the world." See Paul Tillich, "What is Wrong with the 'Dialectical' Theology," The Journal of Religion XV,2 (April 1935): 128,129.

⁶Barth states that Religion "is after all no more than a human possibility, and as such a limited possibility: and because limited, peculiarly dangerous." Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, trans. from the 1922 edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 230.

Brand.⁷

In Barth's view, only God's revelation in the word of the Bible, not reliance on human religiosity, can save human beings from the destructive situations- such as the first and second World Wars -that they have made for themselves. The most that the practice of human religion can do is to show human beings that they must wait "in order that God can confront us on the other side of the frontier" or boundary, which marks the separation between God and human beings.⁸ This initiative of God is a revelation of God's "grace," an act in which God crosses over the abyss to human beings.⁹ There is then a "Yes" and a "No" in revelation. The "Yes" is the confirmation of human

⁷See Epistle, 232. Other theologians, like Hendrik Kraemer, come close to such a position: "When surveying the whole range of human striving toward spiritual expression, the obvious statement to be made is that all religions, all philosophies and all world views are the various efforts on the part of man to apprehend the totality of existence, often stirring in their sublimity and as often pathetic or revolting in their ineffectiveness." See Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 44.

⁸Epistle, 242.

⁹Barth asserts that "grace is man's divine possibility and, as such, lies beyond all human possibility, including religion. In this act of grace initiated by God, religion, which functioned as the indicator of human sinfulness is dissolved." Epistle, 242.

experience by God through his revelatory grace; and the "No" is the rejection of human religious endeavour without God's revelation. Even though in the positive moments of "religion the Spirit veritably enters in our behalf," as long as people live, they participate in this "dangerous game" of Yes and No.¹⁰

Barth criticized the 19th century "romantic psychologists," as he referred to his mentors and teachers, for reversing the proper relationship of human experience and revelation. They attempted to "represent religion as the human capacity [in Schleiermacher's words] by which 'all human occurrences are thought of as divine actions'" and "'the solemn music which accompanies all human experience'."¹¹ By doing this, Barth believed, theology fell victim to the predominant anthropological "interest or

¹⁰Epistle, 231, 234, 240. Paul Tillich asserts that dialectical theology is a misnomer for Barth's theology because "a dialectical theology is one in which a 'yes' and 'no' belong inseparably together. In so called 'dialectical' theology they are irreconcilably separated." Mystical experience and all other forms of "natural" attempts to know God are impossible, since the initiative to say 'yes' is always God's. Against this Tillich asserts that the very "question about the divine possibility is a human possibility In order to be able to ask about God, man must already have experienced God as the goal of a possible question." See "'Dialectical' Theology," 137.

¹¹Epistle, 258.

even the demonism of the age" by choosing "openly to identify itself with that demonism."¹² The theologians of the 19th century, in his words, "discerned and declared not the religion of revelation but the revelation of religion."¹³ In other words, they established the basic goodness of human religiosity, human endeavour and human experience before talking about God's initiative and about God's "No" to human endeavour. For Barth, this is the greatest danger to theology, which should have been avoided at all costs:

[19th century theologians] fell prey to the absolutism with which the man of that period makes himself the centre and measure and goal of all things. . . . The real catastrophe was that theology lost its object, revelation, in all its uniqueness, . . . with that it lost its "birthright" and "identity".¹⁴

¹²Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, 12 vol., eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1956), 293.

¹³Dogmatics, Vol. I, 284.

¹⁴Dogmatics, Vol. I, 293,294. It is important to note Barth's respect for the 19th Century theologians in his later writings. He saw their strength in the breadth of their scientific and humanistic education and in their ability to wrestle "with the challenging issues of their times . . . and this was its strength- [19th century theology] exposed itself to the world." Even though Barth criticizes, for example, Ludwig Feuerbach "because it is the essence of man that he emphatically and enthusiastically confirms," he also applauds him for his anti-spiritualism, concreteness and socialism. See Humanity, p.18.

Like Barth, Moltmann's thought is heavily influenced by his observations of human brutality in 20th century war-torn Europe. But because Moltmann was involved in fighting for Germany during WW II, his experiences were perhaps even more alienating than those of Barth. It is understandable, then, that the dialectical tradition, in the early part of his theological career, could help Moltmann make sense of the ambiguity of human endeavour and human experience. He was part of a generation of young German theologians who returned from imprisonment three years after the close of WW II to witness the destruction which had taken place in Germany and to learn of the atrocities suffered by European Jews at the hands of German Nazis. With other young theologians of the time he studied what was sometimes called "*Trümmertheologie*" or "theology of the ruins" in which he "found God as the only enduring reality in the collapse of the human world . . . and security in faith during the homelessness of this time."¹⁵

Moltmann began his theological studies in Göttingen with Otto Weber, Hans Joachim Iwand and Ernst Wolf, "all of

¹⁵Jürgen Moltmann, Umkehr zur Zukunft (München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1970), 8. Throughout this dissertation, whenever a quotation is cited with the German title the translation is my own.

[whom] were nurtured in the spirit of Karl Barth."¹⁶

Moltmann reports that until 1957 he so admired Barth's theology that he believed nothing else could be said about Christian systematic theology.¹⁷ Even though Moltmann later abandoned this notion, many of the concerns of Barthian dialectical theology, including the suspicion of human religiosity, remained an important part of his theological endeavour. He states that

in a time in which the old spirit of the 19th century reawoke to a new cultural protestantism, to a new confessionalism, to a new exegetical historicism and the religiosity of pure interiority that is always coupled with it, the protests, comments, interrogations and instructions of Karl Barth . . . from the years 1919 to 1923 seem surprisingly up to date.¹⁸

In his earlier writings, Moltmann often employs the word 'religion' with the same polemical force as Barth. Religion is the futile "self assertion of man" desperately

¹⁶Meeks states that for Weber, Iwand and Wolf the "task of theology was not apologetically to explain Christian truth claims to an increasingly secular and technological society, but rather polemically to say something new, both judging and promising to this society." M. Douglas Meeks, Origins of the Theology of Hope (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 19.

¹⁷Moltmann states here that "he had the impression that, after Barth there could be no more systematic theologies written, since Barth had said everything." See Umkehr, 9.

¹⁸Jürgen Moltmann, Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), ix.

in need of a faith "response to God's self-revelation," states Moltmann, with a dialectical tone. He states that

the 'dialectical theologians' Karl Barth Emil Brunner, Friedrich Gogarten and Rudolph Bultmann have emphatically shown that faith is not to be equated with religion. . . . The criticism of religion levied by early dialectical theology had in view the relationship between faith and religion theologically in such a way that man was presented with a general alternative: religion as the self assertion of man, who feels himself lost- or faith as man's response to God's self-revelation.¹⁹

Also echoing Barth's critique of 19th century theology's anthropological point of departure, Moltmann asserts that, given the fact of human moral weakness and injustice, theology which accentuates human "Vorfindlichkeit" (presuppositions) and "Gegebenheit" (datum) and "religiösen Erlebnis" (religious experience) is dangerous and naive. Moltmann states, for example, that 19th century theology

could celebrate 'religion' as the 'possibility to present all events in the world as the business of God, as holy music', which accompany all the works of human beings. But now one sees through the playing down of all this aesthetic harmlessness. The reality of religion is not aesthetic harmlessness, but rather 'war and outrage, sin and death, the devil and hell'.²⁰

It is clear, given the above information, that

¹⁹Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 154.

²⁰See Anfänge, XV.

Moltmann's approach to theology, at least in this early phase of his thought, assumes a critical stance against the liberal tradition's focus on human religious experience. Thus, this aspect of his theology does not contradict the cultural-linguistic criticism of experientially-based theologies. Moltmann's early identification with the dialectical school of theology show consistency with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion, which rejects human experience as a theological starting point. But it must be pointed out that during this early phase of his work, Moltmann takes up the Barthian critique of religion in a particular way. He reserves the term 'religion' for two destructive developments in the history of Christianity that are relevant for the issue of religious experience: a) subjectivist Christianity, which he sees as politically irrelevant; and b) politically repressive Christianity that has allied itself with secular politics. In the next chapter, we will look more closely at Moltmann's polemic against "political religion." Here, we must deal with his critique of subjectivist religious experience.

2. The Critique of Modern Subjectivism

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm is highly

critical of modern subjective experience. Moltmann, too, is extremely critical of modern subjectivism and individualism, which he thinks perverted Christianity. The individualism that proceeds from modern subjectivism, Moltmann believes, was inherited from the thought of modern philosophers, such as Feuerbach and Kant, who greatly influenced theology. It is easy to see what Moltmann objects to in Feuerbach's philosophy. In The Essence of Christianity, Feuerbach attempts to show the essential nature of human religious experience and the way in which theologians have obscured it. He believes that the task of religion is practical, having to do with individual human salvation and human welfare in general.²¹ He asserts that at one time in the history of human religiosity the belief in God was not a hinderance to this task of salvation. But the practical role of religion was lost with the advent of theoretical theology. He believes that, because of human suffering, theologians began to look beyond the horror of this

²¹Feuerbach states that "the essential standpoint of religion is the practical or subjective. The end of religion is the welfare, the salvation, the ultimate felicity of man; the relation of man to God is nothing else than his relation to his own spiritual good. . . . Religion is the relation of man to his own nature, - therein lies its truth and its power of moral amelioration." Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, 1957), 185, 197.

existence and theoretically reified God, separating God from the inner nature of human beings.²² Theoretical views of God radically separated God from individual existential concerns, creating a sort of "alter ego for human being," an understanding of self rooted in a heavenly projection. Such is the effect, for example, of Anselm's theoretical proofs for the existence of God.²³ Feuerbach laments that theology made the inner, subjective truth of religion irrelevant with its focus on the ultimate religious task of believing in an existing object-God in which individuals find meaning and identity, a very dangerous thing to do since it can result in bizarre views of God.²⁴

²²Feuerbach states that the initial identification between God and human beings was "involuntary harmlessness" and so practically there was "no essential distinction between God and man." See Essence, 197.

²³Essence, 187, 195. "The proofs for the existence of God have for their aim to make the internal external, to separate it from man." Feuerbach believed that atheism overcomes such a view because people inevitably come to the conclusion that God is not an object of the senses. See Essence, 199-201. Freud, who was influenced by Feuerbach, takes up this idea and states that God is an "illusion" of human beings. He states that God and all religious doctrines that are not verifiable through the senses are "illusions and insusceptible of proof." See Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1961), 31.

²⁴"Whether under this God thou conceivest a really divine being or a monster, a Nero or a Caligula, an image of thy passions, thy revenge, or ambition, it is all one, - the main point is that thou be not an atheist." See Essence, 202.

Moltmann's main criticism of Feuerbach's philosophy has to do with its accent on the individualistic search for inner meaning. Moltmann does agree with Feuerbach's assertion that "'suffering precedes thinking'" about God. He believes that theological investigation proceeds from the suffering and perplexity of human existence. In his words, "actual misery lies behind this question" about God.²⁵ And Moltmann concurs with Feuerbach that projections of God outside the world are forms of escapist, irresponsible religiosity.²⁶ But Moltmann thinks that Feuerbach's attempts to deal with the suffering of human existence are inadequate, and the inadequacies stem from the individualistic nature of his philosophy. Here he agrees with Karl Marx that Feuerbach's emphasis on the *individual subject* perpetuates the "modern antithesis of 'subjectivity and objectification'" and so ignores the individual's reliance for human development and meaning on the processes

²⁵See, HP, 32.

²⁶Moltmann agrees with Feuerbach that Christian "faith can have nothing to do with fleeing the world, with resignation and with escapism." See TH, 21. Moltmann also sees Feuerbach as one who "takes the Old Testament ban on idols seriously" in his attempt to abolish projections of God. See Ernst Bloch, Man on His Own (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 28.

of history.²⁷ In the course of abolishing God, asserts Moltmann against Feuerbach, "humans come to themselves" but become so-called creative subjects at the expense of the world, which "becomes the projection and object of our subjectivity It is no longer able to reconcile our subjectivity with itself."²⁸

Moltmann refers to this as a deification of human beings, a kind of "mysticism" or immediate relationship between God and human beings, which does not take revelation into account. He states that

Feuerbach derived man's picture of the gods from his own sensual presence as so far manifested- namely, from the abstract, nonhistoric species 'man'. . . . Feuerbach inherited only the mysticism of Christianity, but not the Christian eschatology. This mysticism of an immediate relationship between God and man apart from any historic mediation in Jesus of Nazareth was itself already a dissolution of the Christian faith.²⁹

Moltmann is saying, in effect, that people cannot realize full humanness except through faith in Christ. If this faith is authentic, it will manifest itself as politically relevant and will not be subjectivist. The inability of Feuerbach's atheistic "existentialism" to overcome this

²⁷TH, 72, 73.

²⁸TH, 170.

²⁹RRF, 150.

split between subject (human beings) and object (the world), Moltmann contends, confirms the world "as it is," with all of its injustice and suffering. He states that Feuerbach's

humanism represented itself as the consistent fulfillment of the humanization of God through Christianity and the Lutheran Reformation. His critique of the heaven of religion led to the justification of the earth as it is.³⁰

Moltmann also rejects the individualism that, he believes, is inherent in Kant's philosophy.³¹ The question Kant raised for himself was how could knowledge be both synthetic and a priori? His answer was that there are universal categories of the mind that allow us to shape and understand the objects given to our senses.³² Space and

³⁰See, FOH 40,41.

³¹Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, trans. P. Carus (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 3-12. Kant's thought is a response to David Hume, who, Kant believes, gave the most cogent criticism of modern epistemology and metaphysics. The idea of a law-like universe generated psychological, theological and political philosophies about the world. The hope that people would live up to their law-like nature collapsed with the corruption and poverty brought by industrialism, the new oppression of Napoleon after the French Revolution, and Voltaire's observation that the Lisbon earthquake cast a shadow of doubt over the idea that creation was orderly and law-governed.

³²Hume countered the modern mechanistic law-like view of the universe with the observation that the world is particular, contingent and subject to change, thus casting assertions of universal knowledge of anything in a suspicious light. Kant attempted to salvage the modern idea

time, for example, are human a priori "transcendental" dimensions of the mind, through which human beings are able to have any knowledge at all.³³ Sense experiences arranged as space and time are given over to categories of the mind (like cause and effect) which continue and complete the process of knowledge. Kant's philosophy had an important and immediate consequence: the discrimination between noumenal objects- like God, and the soul -which cannot be encountered through the senses, and phenomena, which are experienced through the senses. Kant asserted that noumena must be understood in light of the "practical," moral dimension of human consciousness.³⁴

of universal and necessary knowledge while attempting to be true to Hume's insistence that all knowledge is contingent and based upon sense data. Kant said, "There are two stems of human knowledge . . . , *sensibility* and the *understanding*, objects being given by the former and thought by the latter." Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," in Philosophical Classics, vol 2, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), 376.

³³"The matter only of all phenomena is given us a *posteriori*; but their form must be ready for them in the mind a *priori*. . . . Space is a necessary representation a *priori* forming the very foundation of all external intuitions. . . . Time is the formal condition, a *priori* of all phenomena whatsoever." See "Critique," 377-382.

³⁴"As far as its matter of object is concerned, religion does not differ in any point from morality . . . its distinction from morality is merely a formal one: that reason in its legislation uses the Idea of God, which is derived from morality itself, to give morality influence on

Moltmann agrees with Kant that the old philosophical pursuit "of looking for the eternal truth of transient things" has rightly been replaced by investigation of the things in the world "in order to own them and to change them."³⁵ We live, says Moltmann with Kant, in an "operational" rather than static universe, which makes ethics "the fundamental category for Christology."³⁶ But Moltmann is critical of the subjectivist implications of Kant's philosophy and theology. He believes that Kant spawned a theory of revelation that devolved into politically irrelevant subjectivity. According to Kant, since revelation and all other theological concepts are related to the practical aspect of reason, revelation has nothing to do with disclosing truths about the future of human history or about sensible states of affairs, but rather must be "considered in the sphere of the moral

man's will to fulfill his duties." See Immanuel Kant, The Conflict of the Faculties, 61. See also Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Lewis White (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Publ., 1956), 3-16.

³⁵See FOH, 3.

³⁶Moltmann states that "modern thought is scarcely any longer thought which wonders and contemplates, but is operational thought. Thus for many theologians since Kant, ethics in the broader sense of the word has replaced metaphysics as the fundamental category for christology." See CG, 93.

reason, of the practical ability to be a self."³⁷

Revelation and eschatology are understood and interpreted in terms of present personal experience: the revelation event is eschatology as the present in-breaking of "God's self" to a person's self.³⁸ Moltmann states that the implications of Kant's position is that if "revelation happens to man's self, then its goal is that man should attain to his authenticity and primordiality, that is, to himself."³⁹ In Moltmann's final analysis then, the view of religious experience in Kant's philosophy is subjective, individualistic and historically irrelevant, and is an articulation of the pervasive experience of modern individuals. But Moltmann insists that the Christian worldview is, however, quite otherwise.

It is interesting that Moltmann thinks Kant's idea of revelation is a major influence on Barth and asserts that Barth inherited the Kantian idea of personal revelation

³⁷Moltmann also believes that Kant's "starting point in moral practice, the consciousness of God, one's own personal existence or the identity of the self had power both to provide and obstruct insight." Moltmann states for example that "within the context of practical reason, Jesus becomes 'the personified idea of the good principle'[for individuals]. The uniqueness of his death and resurrection cannot be talked about within Kant's schema." See TH, pp.

³⁸See TH, 46.

³⁹TH, 46.

through his mentor and teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann.⁴⁰

According to Moltmann, Herrmann, following Kant, believed that God's revelation "cannot be objectively explained, but it certainly can be experienced in man's self."⁴¹ Barth accepted Herrmann's idea of God as an "unknowable self" or "subject," who is revealed to individual human subjects.⁴²

According to Moltmann, even though Barth emphasized revelation and was critical of theology that took its stand on human religiosity, the early Barth's own view of the revelation-religion dialectic remained mired in the Kantian, subjectivist tradition.

The point of this section is that Moltmann's criticism of religious experience is specific. He is attacking modern ideas of religious experience that emphasize mere subjectivity and individualism. But I think

⁴⁰According to Moltmann, Barth also became "better acquainted with the real orientation of the ideas of Plato and Kant" in the second edition of The Epistle to the Romans through the influence of his brother, Heinrich Barth. See TH, 50, 51.

⁴¹TH, 52.

⁴²Moltmann states that in Barth's opinion religious experience "can only be a pointer towards the ground that is really grounded in itself, that 'is never in any sense "object," but is always unchangeably subject.' It is the sovereignty of the self-existent God in contrast and in counter to all propositions of man's consciousness." TH, 54.

it must be pointed out that Moltmann's criticism of Kant, Feuerbach, Barth and any existentially based theologies is overstated. Are these thinkers really so hopelessly individualistic that they are uninterested in communal-historical involvement? Kant's two ethical maxims- that every human being has the duty to follow the a priori moral imperative to act only in ways that are universally applicable and to treat people as ends and not means -were formulated precisely against ever changing and capricious ways of acting toward others.⁴³ It is true that the existentialists turned to subjectivity in order to find solutions to the problem of meaninglessness brought about by industrialism.⁴⁴ But Kierkegaard thought, for example, that his emphasis on passionate reflection by the individual was necessary for the restructuring of a "true community" of passionately existing individuals.⁴⁵ And Heidegger's

⁴³Moltmann states that "the conditions of possible experience which were understood by Kant in a transcendental sense must be understood instead as historically flowing conditions." See TH, 50.

⁴⁴The masses of people who uncritically appropriated the values of industrialism were referred to by Nietzsche as "the herd," by Heidegger as "they" and by Kierkegaard as the "public".

⁴⁵He states that "contemporaneity with actual persons, each of whom is someone, in the actuality of the moment and the actual situation gives support to the single

characterization of the modern view of technology as "enframing," the treating of the environment as "standing reserve," meant that people need to create more "authentic forms of existence through the possibilities which we project onto the world."⁴⁶ Paul Tillich has shown that existentialism is revolutionary and transformative of history in intent and Rudolph Bultmann thought that the biblical "self understanding" he advocated was always to be mediated in history.⁴⁷ Given the possibilities for the extrapolation of a social ethic in these philosophies and theologies, it seems Moltmann may be overstating his case against the subjectivist tendencies in such thinkers.

Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 134.

⁴⁶Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 298.

⁴⁷Tillich states that "Marx belonged to the Existentialist revolt, insofar as he contrasted the actual existence of man under the system of early capitalism with Hegel's essentialist description of man's reconciliation of himself in the present world." See Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 136. Bultmann states that "my neighbour is the man with whom I am constantly associated in my concrete historical existence. This means that the concept of the neighbour depends on the conception of human existence as a mutual inter-relationship which conditions my existence from its very beginning . . . an existence which makes its concrete historical demands." See Rudolph Bultmann, Faith and Understanding, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 113.

Nonetheless, he observes that individualism and political irrelevance has been, at least, one of the results of modern and existential philosophies and theologies.

This is where Moltmann understood Christianity to be situated in 1965 when he wrote his Theology of Hope. It had taken on the character of modern subjectivist culture in which, according to his quotation of Alexis de Tocqueville, each person

'living apart, is a stranger to all the rest; his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, he is close to them but he does not see them; he touches them, but he does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone.'⁴⁸

Moltmann believes that the church today is catering to this culture, which is so caught up in the "modern system of needs" that all other aspects of life and the objective world are "excluded from the necessary social relationships and left to each man's individual freedom."⁴⁹ In the modern world, claims Moltmann, Christian communities have "become a sort of Noah's Ark" for alienated individuals unable to cope with the moral problems posed by the complexity of modern

⁴⁸TH, 319.

⁴⁹TH, 307.

society.⁵⁰ Further, he states that Christianity which is engaged in "religious otherworldliness"- the personal mission of attaining heaven -has abandoned the true earthly mission of Christ.⁵¹

Up to this point, I have attempted to point out two important facts about Moltmann's thoughts on religious experience, both of which seem to be consistent with the cultural-linguistic model of religion. The first is that Moltmann is suspicious of human experience, including liberal theology's emphasis on religious experience. Because of this, he embraces the revelation of God in the Scriptures as his theological starting point. This certainly resonates with Lindbeck's idea that the textual world, not extra-biblical concepts of experience, should dominate in the theological enterprise. The second point is that the modern world, with its focus on individual experience is, for Moltmann, inherently destructive and riddled with injustices. We have seen that Lindbeck

⁵⁰Moltmann believes that the church feels it has to minister to the "inner life" of these special interest groups because the complexities of the modern industrial world "transcend [their] intellectual range and can no longer be mastered morally." TH, 320.

⁵¹Jürgen Moltmann, Das Reich Gottes und die Treue zur Erde (Wuppertal-Barmen: Jugenddienst-Verlag, 1963), 14.

articulated his cultural-linguistic model so that it could serve as a basis for postmodern theologies, that is, for theologies critical of modern subjectivism. At least from what we have seen so far, Moltmann's approach to theology seems consistent with the cultural-linguistic paradigm, at least when we consider the polemic against religious experience and individualism shared by Moltmann and Lindbeck.

But now, we must examine Moltmann's appropriation of Bloch's philosophy of hope to see if it constitutes a contradiction of the cultural-linguistic model. To state it in question form, is Moltmann's use of Bloch's philosophy of hope a translation of the biblical world into an extra-biblical idea? Such a move would violate Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic prohibition against permitting the worldview created through Christian language to be eclipsed or overshadowed by non-biblical language. To state it another way, we will try to decide if Moltmann legitimately appropriates Bloch's ideas in accordance with the cultural-linguistic model of religion. That is, does he allow the philosophy of hope to inform Christianity without radically reinterpreting it?

3. Moltmann's Appropriation of the Philosophy of Hope

The idea that the modern world is marked by individualism and destructiveness, prompted Moltmann to think about the Christian tradition and its experiences in ways that emphasize the differences between Christianity and modernity. Ernst Bloch's philosophy of human hope pointed Moltmann toward, what seemed to him to be, the central, unique source of Christian experience that could address modernity: the biblical theme of eschatologically-grounded hope in a humanly-constructable, just future. It is worth giving some considerable space to Bloch's ideas so that we can discern the extent to which they are, or are not, alien to the biblical world, from which Moltmann explicates his theology. This will aid us in determining the degree to which Moltmann's use of Bloch does, or does not, overshadow the biblical frame of reference.

Bloch was born to a Jewish family in Ludwigshafen, West Germany in 1885. Here, he witnessed the contradiction between his proletarian neighbourhood and the bourgeois "opulence of Mannheim," next to which his home was situated. But his vivid childhood imagination was able to transform "the dismal, flat industrial hinterland of Ludwigshafen into

an almost numinous, hallucinatory landscape."⁵² Bloch was well travelled and had associated (however uneasily) with some prominent individuals in philosophy, including Max Weber, George Lukacs, Theodore Adorno and Walter Benjamin. In 1938 he emigrated to the United States where he wrote his famous work, The Principle of Hope. Despite having attained American citizenship, he returned to Leipzig, East Germany and took up a teaching position. In 1961 he was in West Germany lecturing when the Berlin Wall was erected. Twelve years of being branded as an overly-religious, personalistic mystic by East German Communist professors and politicians made the prospect of returning there unpalatable. He finally secured a permanent teaching position in Tübingen where he taught formally and informally until he died in 1971 at the age of ninety-two.

Bloch criticized the Western philosophical tradition for emphasizing the past over the present.⁵³ According to

⁵²Ernst Bloch, The Principle of Hope, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, 3 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), xix.

⁵³Bloch here is referring to such ideas as Plato's epistemology as the remembering of one's previous existence in the realm of the Forms, and Freud and Jung's fascination with past events repressed by the mind. In these and most other philosophers' works, the metaphysical result is that, in Bloch's words, "Beingness simply coincides with Beenness." See PH, vol. 1, 8.

him, in Western philosophy "what has been overwhelms what is approaching, the collection of things that have become totally obstructs the categories Future, Front, Novum."⁵⁴ Bloch's task, as he saw it, was to remedy this situation by developing a philosophy, proceeding from human hope, which is forward looking and concerned with creative new possibilities for people and for the material world.

Bloch was intrigued by the idea that both Moses and Jesus revolutionized the religion into which they were born. He states, for example, both men "entered into the religion which bears their name, as historical individuals by their appearance they changed a previous religious content."⁵⁵ Bloch believes that with the religion which Moses started, "a leap in religious consciousness occurred." Not only did it become the first "religion of opposition" through the God of the Exodus, but also, the idea and content of salvation

⁵⁴Bloch explains his view of the human and material realms in his ontology of the "Not-Yet." Human consciousness is the "Noch-Nicht-Bewußtsein" (Not-Yet-Consciousness), the forward looking, hopeful, creative consciousness of human beings. The objective world, where possibilities are always dependent upon human creativity, he calls the "Noch-Nicht-Gewordene" (Not-Yet-Become). The future space lying ahead of human beings, in which possibilities for humans and for material existence await, is called by Bloch the "Novum." PH, vol. 1, 3-18.

⁵⁵PH, vol. 1, 190.

were altered. That is, through an enslaved nation, religion became oriented toward alleviating human misery by looking forward to and working in the world toward a better human situation:

Suffering and rebellion stand at the beginning here, from the outset they make the religion a path into the open future. . . . Through Moses the content of salvation changed. . . . Instead of a finished goal there now appears a promised goal that must first be achieved; instead of the visible nature god there appears an invisible god of righteousness and the kingdom of righteousness.⁵⁶

Bloch believes that the God of the exodus, experienced by Moses, found its most powerful expression in the religion founded by Jesus of Nazareth. He states that the "the apocalypticist Jesus is steeped from top to bottom in this exodus idea" and thus did not see God as one who "found that everything in the world was good."⁵⁷ The religion of Jesus was a religion of justice since "it began definitely as a social movement among those that labour and are heavy laden" and so gave the people who followed this religion "a sense of their worth and a hope."⁵⁸

⁵⁶PH, vol. 3, 1234.

⁵⁷PH, vol. 3, 1270.

⁵⁸Bloch's admiration for Jesus' eschatological vision is evident in this context: "Christianity . . . operates as if an essential nature of religion had finally come forth here. Namely that of being a not static, apologetic myth."

However, Bloch's words of admiration for Moses and Jesus (and indeed for a whole raft of religious leaders, with whom Bloch is fascinated) must not obscure the fact of his thorough-going atheism. In Bloch's view, religion is always a product of human imagination: "words of salvation" in a religion "are always spoken by human beings. And men in the hypostases of gods spoke nothing but longed-for future." The "more mature" a religion becomes, in Bloch's view, the more it becomes human centred and eschatologically oriented.⁵⁹ Bloch believed that with the advent of Moses, and the fullest expression of his religion in the work of Jesus, the absolutely necessary human element was injected into religion and so religion was wrested from the transcendent realm. Bloch celebrates in Jesus

the most powerful element in the religious sphere: the elimination of God himself in order that precisely religious mindfulness, with hope in totality, should have an open space before it and no ghostly throne of

but human eschatological explosively posited messianism. It is only here . . . that the only inherited substratum capable of significance in religion lives - that of being hope in totality, explosive hope." PH, vol. 3, 1193.

⁵⁹Religions, precisely as human institutions, are engaged in a "specific venturing beyond, the more mature religions become" the more they prove "to be that of the most powerful hope of all, namely that of the *totum of hope which puts the whole world into rapport with a total perfection*." PH, vol. 3, 1192.

hypostasis.⁶⁰

Bloch's philosophy of hope is an investigation into, what he believes is, the most important dimension of human existence. The fundamental temporal category of hope is the future, on which human beings project possibilities for a new future. He believes that religions that emphasize the apocalyptic and eschatological are the most vibrant and the most historically responsible. Such is the religion of Moses and Jesus, with whom the most powerful and creative atheism came into the world.

Moltmann appropriated Bloch's hope-filled, atheistic understanding of religion with both boldness and reserve. His use of Bloch is bold because, as Moltmann admits, his work constitutes ideas that lie outside of the biblical frame of reference. He states in his 1967 introduction to

⁶⁰PH, vol. 3, 1191. See 1271, 1274. However this human orientation to religion does not negate the experience of religion which causes people to see and understand God as "the Other." He agrees with Rudolph Otto, who cites the "utterly different as a sign of the religious object and the 'shuddering numinous' as the aura of the saint." Bloch also agrees with Barth's position "that the divine says a constant 'No' to the world" and that "the reality of religion is man's horror at himself." In Bloch's view, this 'utterly different' exposes a depth dimension to human beings, despite the fact that it has been projected onto the heavenly realm. The further human beings penetrate into this 'Other', the more they "are charged with reverence for depth and infinity." See PH, vol. 3, 1169.

Bloch's philosophy of religion that theologians

can hardly be concerned to appropriate alien elements at the very time when we are discarding everything we have for so long jealously and uncritically guarded as our property and privilege.⁶¹

As we have seen, the use of "alien elements" is supposed to be highly regulated by theologians who follow Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm. It could be, however, that Moltmann's appropriation of Bloch is more like a Lindbeckian "absorption" into the biblical world, rather than a subversion of spiritual language. Consider, for example, Moltmann's assertion that a certain wariness must accompany the appropriation of "alien elements." The influence of the dialectical tradition prompts Moltmann to approach Bloch's atheism and naturalism with a caution typical of his dialectical mentors. This may indicate some consistency between Moltmann's theological approach and the cultural-linguistic paradigm. Moltmann states, for example, that

however stimulating Bloch's utopian materialism may be for a new dialectical theology of nature and society, theologians are not going to engage in a possible remystification of nature [and] . . . theologians will not be so carried away as to overlook the cross in hope, and the faith that is the ground of their assurance.⁶²

⁶¹Jürgen Moltmann, "Introduction" to Ernst Bloch, Man on His Own, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 26. Emphasis mine.

⁶²See Man, 27.

The "remystification of nature" alluded to by Moltmann is a trust in the unfolding of human history without the revelation of God. Moltmann seems to be saying, to use the language of Lindbeck, that Bloch's work must be at the service of the biblical language of the cross and is to be understood within that frame of reference and not the reverse. But is this what Moltmann does in his appropriation of Bloch's ideas?

Moltmann first read Ernst Bloch's The Principle of Hope in 1957 and was captured by the idea that the experience of hope was at the heart of the Christian religious experience. For him, Bloch's theme of hope made "all the different threads of biblical theology, the theology of the apostolate, hope for the kingdom of God and the philosophy of hope all [come] together."⁶³ He asserts that in both the Christian's personal life and communal existence human hope manifests itself in face of the fear that confronts human beings.⁶⁴ Human hope, he believes, comes to expression in the world religions, where it helps people face the finitude of human existence and muster the

⁶³Jürgen Moltmann, Experiences of God (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 11,12.

⁶⁴See "Gott," 116.

courage to surmount the adversities of history, especially the threats posed by modern industrial society. Here, in the thought of this creative Jewish atheist, Moltmann found his sought-after, socially-responsible, philosophical undergirding for Christian revelation and experience.⁶⁵

Taking up Bloch's ideas, Moltmann came to believe that human hope, has its fullest expression in the Christian religion. The other non-Judeo-Christian world religions, in Moltmann's personal view, have an "ambivalent relationship to hope" and for the most part express hope ineffectually.⁶⁶ In contrast, the religion of Israel, believes Moltmann, has a different kind of hope, one which confronts the horror of history with "hope in the coming God" by pointing "to the kingdom of God as the goal and fulfilment of history."

⁶⁵"Die gegenwärtige Konsumhaltung in unseren hoch industrialisierten Ländern ist geschichtlich gesehen eine Illusionshaltung, die sich bitter rächen wird. Sie zeigt, daß die Kategorie Zukunft bei uns auszulaufen droht. . . . Es hoffe der Mensch so lange er lebt das ist eine allgemeine Tatsache," wrote Moltmann in agreement with Ernst Bloch that hope was the basic experience, the "substratum" of all religions. See "Gott," 117, 118.

⁶⁶See EH, 15. Greek religion, for example, cannot give people the control over history and freedom they seek. Greek religion's attitude toward hope, as Moltmann interprets it, is expressed in the legend of Pandora's Box where "hope is an evil" which prevents people from tackling the suffering of human existence by deceiving them with illusions.

Israel's hope was even a criticism of, what Moltmann calls, "mythical religions." These religions "abandoned an eternal-return hope for a future possibility of hope."⁶⁷ In his view, religions of the "eternal return" could only foresee the possibility that human life and nature are caught in a circular process characterized by suffering, in which people could only hope to better endure in the next cycle. The hope of Israel could foresee options for the creation of a more just, viable existence.

If Christians read the Scriptures with the eyes of Bloch they will find, asserts Moltmann, "the God of hope" in which the future is seen as "God's mode of being with us."⁶⁸ The future promised by God is already anticipated and experienced in the present in Jesus Christ. In words echoing those of Bloch, Moltmann says that Jesus represents "the not-yet-realized future of the kingdom . . . bringing eschatological freedom into the misery of the present."⁶⁹

⁶⁷Thus, writes Moltmann, "where there is hope, there is, therefore, religion as well as criticism of religion." In primal religions, the "eternal return of the same" that Eliade saw in Greek and primal religions is a form of hope that could merely provide "a counter-environment to daily struggle" through the attempt at a ritual reenactment of "the memory of a sacred origin." EH, 17-19.

⁶⁸See RRF, 210.

⁶⁹RRF, 212.

Christian hope is realized "under the conditions of history" and is conceived as in the process of coming."⁷⁰ When Christians are obedient to Christ in everyday life through "imitation of Christ," then history experiences "already the anticipation of the kingdom of freedom."⁷¹

As we have seen, Bloch accepts the apocalyptic-messianic character of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures but rejects any concept of God or transcendence as illusory. Moltmann criticizes this lack of a concept of transcendence as a self contradictory element in the philosophy of Bloch:

A concept of history without a concept of transcendence, an eschatology of the world without resurrection, a principle of hope, that does not reach beyond economical planning, development and progress misses the openness of reality and the desires of needy human beings.⁷²

The problem is, in Moltmann's view, that Bloch's atheism

⁷⁰RRF, 217.

⁷¹RRF, 215.

⁷²Jürgen Moltmann, Im Gespräch mit Ernst Bloch: Eine theologische Wegbegleitung (Munich: Kaiser Traktate, 18, 1976), 26,27. Concerning his conversations with Bloch, Moltmann later states, "I admit however that our discussions sometimes posed the oversimple alternative: transcending without transcendence in his [Bloch's] scheme- transcending with transcendence in mine, hope against God in his, hope with God in mine." See A.J. Conyers, God, Hope, and History (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988), 207.

cannot adequately speak to the problem of human finitude.⁷³

It seemed to Moltmann that Bloch failed to realize that putting full faith in historical progress without faith in transcendence misses the fact that the historical process on which Bloch depends could often turn out "differently than planned and hoped."⁷⁴ Moltmann believes that humanity needs a concept of the future which counters death and the Nihil which can only be found in the "resurrection" and "*creatio ex nihilo*."⁷⁵ This kind of hope emanates from the cross of Christ, in which human beings can find in the "deepest abyss of God-forsakenness" (God's self nihilation) that God

⁷³"Hier ist Bloch's Ansatz weiter als viele seiner Endformeln. Hier sind die Hoffnungen, von den er ausgeht, größer als die Heimat der Identität, der er zuführen will. Gespräch, 27,30,31.

⁷⁴"Die Möglichkeit, auch nach im marxistischen 'Glauben an die Geschichte' naturrechtlich zu denken hängt auch bei Bloch daran, daß es eine Analogie zwischen Rechtsentwurf und der auf eine bestimmte zukunft hin offenen Tendenzwirklichkeit der Geschichte gibt." Concerning human rights, for example, Bloch saw an "*anologia entis*" between concepts of rights and a certain future which will be the outcome of the movement of history toward this future. Moltmann sees this analogy as a surprisingly unclear "*Umdeutung der anologia entis zur anologia historae*." Gespräch, 43,47.

⁷⁵"But a future that also overtakes the jaws of death and its herald of nothingness, rescues itself from death. Such a future must be grounded in an event, that can be spoken about as resurrection, and cannot be content with anything less than new being, which devours death in victory." Gespräch, 47.

"revealed his creative power."⁷⁶ It is through the cross that God identifies and befriends human beings and makes them the source of hope in the "fight for the renewal of the world."⁷⁷ The power to affect change, then, is not found in "present reality or the future's open possibility," contrary to Bloch's claim, but in "the gravity of the negative and the deadliness of death [which] need not be made harmless in order to activate the world transforming power of Christian hope."⁷⁸ Only a belief in a transcendent God, who can create even out of negation and nothingness, can fulfil the hope for a better human existence. It takes the belief in, and presence of, such a God to actualize creative possibility within the destruction and negativity of human history. It is through human endeavour, most especially by Christians' endeavour, that this creative possibility is made actual.

In summary, Moltmann learned from Bloch the primacy of the religious experience of hope, in which the future is the dominant temporal dimension. He learned from Bloch that Moses and Jesus opened the hope for a better future for the

⁷⁶See RRF, 17.

⁷⁷RRF, 18.

⁷⁸See EH, 35.

oppressed, a future which can be created by human beings in the processes of history. But Moltmann, of course, rejects Bloch's atheism and insists that a theological view of hope and the future must be grounded in the revelation of God. Christian religious experience, then, is an experience of hope, made possible by faith in the revelation of the God of the future in Christ. Because of the pervasive eschatological tenor of the Bible, Christianity offers a future-oriented, creative contrast to the present. Underlying this theology is the assumption that present culture is inherently corrupt. It seems to Moltmann that a temporal realm that contrasted with the corrupt present offers the best hope for Western culture.

Given Moltmann's qualified use of Bloch, it is very difficult to determine whether Moltmann's theology of hope, as I have described it, qualifies as a theology consistent with the cultural-linguistic caution against allowing extra-biblical ideas to determine the Christian worldview. On the one hand, the philosophy of hope certainly has a pervasive influence on Moltmann's ideas. On the other hand, Moltmann's qualified appropriation is an attempt to remain true to, what Moltmann believes, are essential biblical themes- belief in the divine, *creatio ex-nihilo*, and the

crucifixion of Christ. We will pursue this further in the conclusion. Here, I just want to point out the ambiguity that arises in the analysis.

4. Natural Theology and Historical Experience

We saw above that Moltmann inherited dialectical theology's criticism of human religious experience. Dialectical theology rejects any such notions of "natural theology": any theology, that is, which claims that God can be known through nature, including human experience.⁷⁹ For dialectical theologians, knowledge of God comes only through faith in God's revelation in Christ. However, Moltmann was able to maintain an interest in "natural theology," and so religious experience, through his work with Hans Joachim Iwand. Iwand formulated a type of natural theology that, he believed, could be consistent with dialectical theology's emphasis on revelation and contradiction between God and

⁷⁹In general, natural theology is concerned with the human ability to know the nature of the divine through creation. This knowledge, which one could characterize as a search for the "absolute ground of the whole of reality," should help Christians answer the existential questions of human purpose and responsibility. For Christians, the "absolute ground" of everything is the God of the Hebrew and Christian biblical tradition, who is revealed in creation. See Karl Rahner, ed. Sacramentum Mundi (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), "Natural Theology," by Klaus Reisenhuber.

human beings. According to M. Douglas Meeks, "Iwand begins with the Barthian emphasis on the contradiction between God and man."⁸⁰ As one schooled in the Barthian tradition, Iwand stresses "the contradiction between God and man," while affirming the idea that Jesus is "mediated to human beings through the biblical world of promise."⁸¹ But unlike Barth, Iwand does not dismiss natural theology. He believes that, since God is involved in the historical struggles of human beings, Christians should be able to find events in human history which have revealed God's saving work.⁸² Put another way, Christianity should be able to see foreshadows of the coming glory of God in its own historical background. Iwand is influenced here by Calvin who saw the world as God's "theatrum gloriae." In this view, natural theology becomes "a reflection of the coming theology of glory upon the reality of the world we now experience."⁸³ Even though it is not the starting point of Christian theology, natural theology, as Iwand sees it, is a preview of this coming glory of God. Because of this, natural theology, understood

⁸⁰See Origins, 31.

⁸¹Origins, 32, 33.

⁸²Origins, 32.

⁸³Origins, 32

as the revelation of God's saving work in history, is, in Meek's words the

adumbration of the very goal which is known through the hope of Christian faith. As such, natural theology can serve, not as an apologetic link between the 'Cultural despisers of Christianity' and theology, but as a bridge which conducts the mission of the church into the world.⁸⁴

The negative dialectic between God and human beings remains in Iwand's theology, but since God is believed to have created and sustains this world, theologians should be able to find "correspondences and analogies" between God and humans in history.⁸⁵

It is this historical aspect of Iwand's theology that influenced Moltmann's thoughts on "historical experience." Moltmann, like Iwand, accepted the Barthian contradiction between human experience and God but believed that there must be a way to articulate some sense of continuity between God's revelation and human experience. If this were not possible, then revelation would remain an abstract concept, with no basis in human experience. In order to avoid this abstraction of God from human experience, the revelation of God, in Moltmann's view, must

⁸⁴Origins, 32.

⁸⁵Origins, 32.

always be talked about in terms of human beings' experience of the world, never in other-worldly terms:

If God is not spoken of in relation to man's experience of himself and his world then theology withdraws into a ghetto and the reality with which man has to do is abandoned to godlessness.⁸⁶

But the experience that Moltmann is talking about here is not the experience of individuals in their subjectivity. This was another idea he learned from Iwand. The mediation of God in human experience, for Iwand, is not realized through the subjective experience of individuals, but in the working out of God's history with human beings. Iwand rejected the Kierkegaardian "anthropological starting point" for theology because revelation and salvation are not found merely in individual human experience, but is

extra nos in the eschatological history of God himself. . . . The gospel legitimizes itself within the history created by the events it proclaims and not from the knowledge of man and the world experienced externally.⁸⁷

Moltmann takes up Iwand's views on experience, and connects them with Ernst Käsemann's and Gerhard von Rad's work on the Old and New Testament texts on God's promise for

⁸⁶See TH, 89. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁷Origins, 32, 33.

the future of human beings.⁸⁸ This biblical concept is understood by Moltmann as a revelatory, historical, and hope-filled experience and it is the basis for Moltmann's views on the experience of God's revelation in history. He states that "beneath the star of the promise of God it becomes possible to experience reality as 'history'."⁸⁹ The revelation of God of the promise "binds man to the future. . . . The promise takes man into its own history in hope."⁹⁰ This hope and future are open to new possibilities, which calls for human commitment and creativity. The Barthian critique of human experience still finds expression here for Moltmann, as it did for Iwand. For he states that the new future created by people open to the promise of God "stands in contradiction to the reality open to experience now and heretofore."⁹¹ All present experiences, which are marked by

⁸⁸TH, 85. See also 155,156,158 for Moltmann's analysis of Käsemann's work and 100ff for his analysis of von Rad's works.

⁸⁹TH, 106. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁰TH, 103.

⁹¹TH, 103. Emphasis mine. "'Promise' does not in the first instance have the function of illuminating the existing reality of the world or of human nature. . . . Rather, it contradicts existing reality. . . . Revelation recognized as promise and embraced in hope, thus sets an open stage for history." See TH, 86.

injustice, suffering and violence, are contradicted by the promise of God that leads people to a completely different experience of history. All of this means, for Moltmann, that revelation creates our experiences of history. This stands in sharp contrast to liberal theology, in which human experiences can be understood prior to revelation.⁹² There are, then, four important dimensions to Moltmann's views on historical experience. They are revelation, contradiction, hope and history:

the God who is present in his promises is for the human spirit an ob-ject (Gegen-stand) in the sense that he stands opposed to (entgegen-steht) the human spirit until a reality is created and becomes knowable which wholly accords with his promises and can be called 'very good'. Hence it is not our experiences which make faith and hope, but it is faith and hope that make experiences and bring the human spirit to an ever new and restless transcending of itself.⁹³

This idea that it is "faith and hope that make

⁹²See Christopher Morse, The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.), 89.

⁹³See TH, 120. Emphasis mine. Concerning the contrast between the word of God and human experience, Moltmann also states that "the modern age has made man an iconoclastic word against God. . . . The real God is an iconoclastic word against man: Out of a knowledge of God an iconoclastic attack goes out against the images of man in which man reflects himself, justifies and divinizes himself." See Jürgen Moltmann, Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 107.

experiences" which contradict human experience seems consistent with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion. Lindbeck asserts that Christian language is prior to experience, because it creates experience. As Christopher Morse states "experience [for Moltmann], as with Barth, is properly to be viewed as the predicate of revelation and not as its subject."⁹⁴ Moltmann's idea that "a reality is created and becomes knowable which wholly accords with God's promises" also puts the "language" of promise first, as the origin for Christian experience. But Moltmann's views of revelation are very much determined by Bloch's philosophy. Has Moltmann then used Bloch to such an extent that he transgresses the limits set by the cultural-linguistic paradigm? Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic basis for theology is supposed to guard against interpreting the Scriptures through preformulated interpretive frameworks. For now, I will defer attempting to answer this question. At this point, it is sufficient to point out that Moltmann's early theological approach at least raises the possibility that Moltmann employs a method which violates the cultural-linguistic prohibition against using any framework that predetermines the experiences and meanings of Christian

⁹⁴See Logic, 89.

biblical language.

Moltmann's view of experience, with its emphasis on the biblical language of hope and the contradiction of human experience spawned some hard criticisms and, perhaps, misunderstandings of Moltmann's ideas among North American theologians. Some North American theologians were extremely critical of, what they took to be, Moltmann's complete dismissal of any ordinary human experience for his future-oriented concept of revelation.⁹⁵ The ensuing conversation is instructive for our cultural-linguistic analysis of Moltmann.

James Gustafson, for example, stated against Moltmann's position that "a religious basis for hope which is immune from all possibilities of either support or of negative evidences lacks the credibility" for a true concept of hope.⁹⁶ Langdon Gilkey attempted to show that precisely common, present (rather than merely future-oriented) religious experiences, such as "ultimacy and sacrality" and "contingency and relativity" denied by Moltmann, are

⁹⁵See Logic, 82, 83.

⁹⁶James Gustafson, "The Conditions for Hope: Reflections on Human Experience," Continuum 7 (Winter 1970): 541.

nonetheless presupposed in his eschatology.⁹⁷ Van A. Harvey asserts that Moltmann capriciously both denies and employs common historical reasoning from analogy in his discussions on the resurrection.⁹⁸ Hans Frei was more sympathetic to Moltmann's attempt at postponing "the ticklish problem of the verification of Christian claims . . . from the present- either in claims of subjective experience or outward evidence in nature and history -to the dimension of eschatological history," though he did not see the absolute need for American theologians to exchange some of their empirical methods for Moltmann's historical method.⁹⁹

⁹⁷See Langdon Gilkey, "The Universal and Immediate Presence of God," in FOH, 98,102. Gilkey further states that "man experiences the passage of time into the future, the impingement of possibilities on the present, and the call to refashion the world according to justice and love- the main categories of eschatology in Moltmann's view- as already a religious being." See FOH, 106.

⁹⁸Van Harvey states that "Moltmann, in order to clarify this unique event [of the resurrection] without analogies [from experience], is forced to appeal to just those non-unique, experiential connections between hearing and identification that enable us to grasp how the disciples could have recognized Jesus." See Van A. Harvey, "Secularism, Responsible Belief, and the 'Theology of Hope'," in FOH, 144.

⁹⁹Frei states that "it does not seem divinely ordained that we swap an empiricist for an historicist, dialectical or ideological outlook before we can do theology. If it is then heaven (literally!) help the theologian on the current anglo-American scene." Hans Frei, Review of the Theology of Hope, in Union Seminary Quarterly

I believe that Frei rightly characterized much of the dialogue between American and German theologians at the time as "increasingly tenuous" because of the question of revelation versus experience.¹⁰⁰ Frei recognized what Moltmann was attempting to do in his rejection of present experience for a future-oriented, historical, creative concept of experience: He was attempting to ground theology in experience, while remaining true to the biblical\revelational starting point in theology.¹⁰¹ It was not clear to other North American theologians just what sort of experiences could be realized in Moltmann's concept of revelation, because his revelational claims seemed to lack any verification from ordinary experience. They seemed to see in Moltmann what is commonly misunderstood about Barth, namely, that he was anti-philosophical, that he denied

Review 23 (Spring 1968): 267,268.

¹⁰⁰Frei states that Moltmann, "unlike some Anglo-American theologians, is not prepared to jettison the concept [of revelation]." See, Frei's Review of Theology of Hope, 267.

¹⁰¹Frei states that "in post-Kantian German Theology, there is always some sort of material affirmation concerning human being and its connection with wider reality that forms the necessary presupposition for Christian theology and for making Christian affirmations meaningful. The Theology of Hope is no exception." See Frei's Review of Theology of Hope, 269.

"faith as an imminent state," and obliterated "all spontaneous response in human faith."¹⁰² According to Frei, North American theologians came to this misunderstanding of Barth through a "misapprehension . . . mainly due to Emil Brunner's" reading of Barth.¹⁰³ Whether or not this interpretation of Barth prejudiced the North Americans' view of Moltmann (though it seems likely), the fact remains that their critique of Moltmann is similar to traditional criticisms of Barth.

Moltmann responded that the North American theologians focused on the "religious experience of the present" and perceived his theology to be a denial of all common present experiences. He countered that he was not denying all human experiences or advocating a "world-denying and science-opposing" theology, but rather was "trying to relate Christian theology critically to the negative and dangerous aspects of the modern world."¹⁰⁴ Toward this end (as we saw above) he offered an historically grounded

¹⁰²Hans Frei, "Niebuhr's Theological Background," in Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr, ed. Paul Ramsey (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 41-44.

¹⁰³See "Theological Background," 43. See also 45: "British and American commentators . . . almost to a man understood the controversy from Brunner's perspective and so read Barth through Brunner's eyes."

¹⁰⁴See FOH, 156.

theology of human experience as an alternative to their "natural theology . . . or Paul Tillich's ontology, or the neo-positivist concept of science."¹⁰⁵ In rejecting their "anthropological model" of transcendence he denied that he was returning to "'biblicism' or authoritarian understanding of the word."¹⁰⁶ But echoing the thought of Barth, Moltmann asserted that he was rejecting "religious liberalism for which 'the Word' . . . is a merely symbolic expression for already available experiences."¹⁰⁷ Moltmann believed that his views on the "experience of God in hope" in the eschatological transcendence of history created new possibilities in history in ways that, in his words, an existential "inner relationship of the self to the *Urgeheimnis*" cannot.¹⁰⁸

Frei is correct to point out that Moltmann's dialectics, which is at the root of his concept of

¹⁰⁵FOH, 156.

¹⁰⁶FOH, 157.

¹⁰⁷FOH, 157, 158.

¹⁰⁸FOH, 158, 159. Moltmann further clarifies that he is not totally negating the "present and experienceable 'immanence' . . . because "both concepts belong together, reciprocally defining each other and mutually relating to each other." See "The Future as a New Paradigm of Transcendence," in RRF, 177.

experience, "comes from the use of that which Hegel shared with Marx rather than with Kierkegaard and the early Barth."¹⁰⁹ As such, it is politically oriented: his polemic against modernism addresses the needs and concerns of particular groups of people with particular concerns, namely, the student protests of the 1960's, the fight for racial equality and the suffering of those on the periphery of capitalism.¹¹⁰ As Moltmann saw it, only a unique Christian experience, one that is politically grounded and that contrasts with the present status quo, could bring the change that he sought. As I have shown throughout this chapter, it was not correspondence and familiarity with contemporary experiences of the world that Moltmann sought, but rather critical contradictions and new possibilities.

It is also worth noting that Moltmann's attempt at formulating a unique concept of Christian religious experience is easily perceived, by some North American theologians, as an attempt to close down dialogue with non-Christian and other theologians. Some theologians saw his

¹⁰⁹See Frei's review of Theology of Hope, 268. Meeks has shown that Moltmann inherited his interest in Hegel from Iwand. See Origins, 35.

¹¹⁰See Jürgen Moltmann, "Politics and the Practice of Hope," The Christian Century (March 11, 1970): 288-291.

work as just one more Barthian-influenced assertion of Christian superiority. Harvey Cox, for example, expressed his uneasiness with Moltmann's theology "in a world of so many different religions."¹¹¹ Van A. Harvey stated that Moltmann's theology of hope is "uncomfortable with pluralism [of ideas]" among theologians.¹¹² There is no doubt that Moltmann was seeking the uniqueness of the Christian experience over against common experiences and modern institutions. He responded that Van A. Harvey attempted to let "subjective faith peacefully coexist with the pluralism of the secularity of the modern world and of the modern university, but loses thereby also any legitimation to call this mystery Christian." Christianity loses, in other words, its own uniqueness if it conforms to the modern world.¹¹³ He further asserted that resurrection faith must understand the world "not relativistically as a country club for all possible games of culture, but as a battlefield between God and the idols, the powers of life and the agents

¹¹¹See FOH, 79.

¹¹²"There is no pristine community of Christian faith. . . . Men are not only confronted with the choice between Christianity and other world views; they are confronted with a choice among different versions of Christianity." FOH, 148.

¹¹³FOH, 161.

of death."¹¹⁴ The Christian experience of revelation is and must remain, for Moltmann, decidedly and uniquely Christian and critical of the modern world. There is no disagreement here between Moltmann and Lindbeck on this point.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Moltmann's views on religious experience in the early phase of his theology. The examination was done to determine whether or not the experiential dimension of Moltmann's theological method assumes something like Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion. In the cultural-linguistic model, experience must not be the main interpretive frame of theology. The model assumes that Christian experiences are created by living out the worldview provided by the specific language of Christianity. According to Lindbeck, such an approach to theology allows for the creation of post-modern theologies, because it rejects modern experiences as a basis for Christian theology. Does this approach characterize Moltmann's method?

The information in this chapter seems to suggest an ambiguous answer. Certain aspects of Moltmann's views on

¹¹⁴FOH, 164.

experience are consistent with the cultural-linguistic model. I showed that dialectical theology's critique of human experience provided Moltmann with a basic starting point for theology. However, I also pointed out that what Moltmann really objected to is modern experience. The examination of Feuerbach and Kant was meant to show why Moltmann maintains this objection. He objects to it because modern experience is subjective and individualistic. Moltmann believes that modernism has determined Christianity and he set out to explicate a theology that would provide an alternative theology.

We have also seen that Moltmann is not entirely against the attempt to explicate the nature of religious experience. We saw that he embraced something called "historical experience," which is a combination of the ideas of Bloch and Iwand. Historical experiences are the experiences created in history, as Christians live out the promise of God revealed in history. This seems consistent with the cultural-linguistic model, which posits that Christian experiences are created by living out the worldview created by Christian language of the Bible. However, given Moltmann's appropriation of the work of Ernst Bloch, we are still left with a larger question: Does his

appropriation of Bloch constitute a translation of the Biblical worldview into an alien set of ideas? It is clear that Bloch helped Moltmann radically rethink the nature of God's revelation. In my view, Moltmann rejects the modern interpretive lens and replaces it with the Blochian lens, but he does not replace the basic modernist method. In other words, Moltmann is quite willing to interpret the Bible through philosophical and experiential interpretive devices. Allowing biblically foreign ideas to influence theology is not forbidden by the cultural-linguistic model, but using frameworks for the interpretation of Scriptures most certainly is. This latter approach is clearly Moltmann's preferential method. We have seen it in this chapter and it will be made even clearer in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

MARXISM, CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN MODERN CULTURE

Introduction

In this chapter, I will continue to explore Moltmann's theology in light of Lindbeck's observations and recommendations about theological method. The main question of this chapter is, in his attempt to explicate Christian distinctiveness and political engagement, does Moltmann's theology conform to the cultural-linguistic method advocated by Lindbeck? In order to answer this question, we will examine, what Moltmann calls, the "identity-relevance" dilemma for Christians in the modern world.¹ This dilemma involves Christians' attempt to create a more just society without confusing their identity with non-Christian political movements and institutions. But how is Christian identity maintained in Moltmann's theology? Is it a matter of allowing the language of the Bible to create the life-

¹See CG, 7ff.

world, experiences and thought patterns for Christians, as suggested by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic method? The answer yields some ambiguity when one considers Moltmann's use of Marxist theory to explicate the function and identity of Christians in the modern world. We will examine Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist thought and its implications for the distinctiveness of Christianity. I will show that Marx's views on alienation in capitalist societies and his critique of religion inform much of Moltmann's political theology, raising a question about whether it is biblical language or Marxist language that determines the identity of Christians. I will look also at Moltmann's critique of Paul Tillich, in order to highlight Moltmann's concerns about maintaining the distinction between modern individualism and Christian identity. How do Moltmann's and Lindbeck's criticisms of Tillich's theology differ and how are they similar? The answer to this question throws some light on the similarities and differences between the cultural-linguistic recommendations for theology and Moltmann's theological method. It shows that Lindbeck's criticism of Tillich turns on his use of an experiential framework but Moltmann's criticism does not. Moltmann does not disapprove of the formulation and use of

an experiential interpretive device, as long as it does not lead to a subjectivist theology. In other words, Moltmann's criticism is that Tillich uses the wrong idea of experience.

1. The Christian Struggle with Politics in Western History

I demonstrated in Chapter I that the identity of Christians in the modern world was one of the motivating factors behind Lindbeck's creation of the cultural-linguistic model of religion. One of the reasons why theologians should emphasize Christian language, according to Lindbeck, is because it defines them over against prevailing cultural self-understandings and trends. The distinctive language of Christian Scriptures and doctrines maintain the uniqueness of the tradition. Lindbeck states for example that

in the present situation, unlike periods of missionary expansion, the churches primarily accommodate to the prevailing culture rather than shape it. Presumably they cannot do otherwise. They continue to embrace in one fashion or another the majority of the population and must cater willy-nilly to majority trends. This makes it difficult for them to attract assiduous catechumens even from among their own children, and when they do, they generally prove wholly incapable of providing effective instruction in distinctively Christian language and practice. . . . [Christians] will need for the sake of survival to form communities that strive without traditionalist rigidity to cultivate their native tongue

and learn to act accordingly.²

This quotation shows that any theology consistent with the cultural-linguistic focus on language must resist accommodations to popular trends and explicate a theology that maintains Christian language as the dominant frame of reference for living. Does this approach characterize Moltmann's method in his attempt to explicate the nature of Christian identity over against modern culture? Or does he employ extra-biblical ideas to help him formulate a theology which resist accomodation to "majority trends"? An examination of Moltmann's views on Christian identity and his reliance on Marxist ideas will help us address these questions.

One must understand Moltmann's concerns about Christians' "political identity" in order to understand why he turns toward Marxist language to interpret key Christian concepts, like the cross of Christ, in the process of explicating a postmodern theology. When Moltmann uses the term 'political identity', he is referring to Christianity's perception of its cultural role outside the confines of merely ecclesiastical concerns. It refers to the way Christians view their contribution to the alleviation of

²Doctrine, 134.

modern social problems, such as economic inequality, war, ecological destruction, distribution of power and questions of justice, which affect not only Christians but everyone in society.³

Moltmann sees a dilemma for Christians concerned about their political involvement in the modern world. On the one hand, Christians must maintain their distinctive self-understanding so that they do not confuse their identity with non-Christian institutions and ways of life. In his 1973 work, The Crucified God, Moltmann states that

when a Christian community feels obliged to empty itself in certain social and political actions, it must take care that its traditional religious and political identity is not exchanged for a new religious and political identity. . . . Otherwise a church, which seeking for an identity and not preserving its distinctiveness, plunges into a social and political movement, once again becomes the 'religion of society'⁴

On the other hand, Moltmann believes that the concern to maintain their distinctiveness should not prohibit Christians from engaging in political action for the sake of political change. He states that "a church which cannot

³Moltmann states that "the freedom of faith is lived out in political freedom. The freedom of faith therefore urges men on towards liberating actions, because it makes them painfully aware of suffering in situations of exploitation, oppression, alienation and captivity." See CG, 317.

⁴CG, 17.

change in order to exist for the humanity of man . . . becomes an insignificant sect on the margins of a society undergoing rapid social change."⁵ Moltmann characterizes this two-sided dilemma as the "crisis of relevance and the crisis of identity":

The Christian life of theologians, churches and human beings is faced more than ever today with a double crisis: the *crisis of relevance* and the *crisis of identity*. These two crises are complementary. The more theology and the church attempt to become relevant to the problems of the present day, the more deeply they are drawn into the crisis of their own Christian identity. The more they attempt to assert their identity in traditional dogmas, rights and moral notions, the more irrelevant and unbelievable they become.⁶

According to Moltmann, this identity-relevance dilemma has been especially evident in Christianity's

⁵CG, p 12. Anne Carr states that "human rights [in Moltmann's view] must become the guideline for the political action and resistance of Christians. And 'open identity' is the guide for a Christian cultural stance in confrontation with racism, sexism, etc., as he describes the social side of justifying faith in the Christian community." See Anne Carr, Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit, The Journal of Religion 58 (April 1978): 213-214. Others are less positive about this identity. Eugene Frick states, that "one pivotal question lingers unanswered in Moltmann's messianic ecclesiology. Is the identity of the church best understood when the church is depicted as a religious social institution, among others, seeking economic, political and cultural liberations? Do we uniquely need such a church so defined by these roles and missions?" See Eugene G. Frick, Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit, Horizons 4 (Fall 1977): 259.

⁶CG, 7.

historical struggle with, what he calls, "political religion."⁷ Political religion is the identification of secular political institutions and movements with the Christian faith. Moltmann's war experiences in Nazi Germany, as we saw in Chapter II, made him especially critical of state-supported Christianity. These experiences taught him that "every militant political religion unavoidably leads to a struggle between church and state."⁸ Moltmann sees his new political theology as an alternative to that of Carl Schmitt, the "theoretician of the national socialist dictatorship," who wrote a theology of the Nazi state.⁹ As a church theologian Moltmann is intensely interested in "demythologizing" civil and political religions and "in liberating from these religious powers the

⁷Jürgen Moltmann, "Christian Theology and Political Religion," in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed., Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame Indiana.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 41.

⁸"Christian Theology," 41.

⁹According to Moltmann, Schmitt attempted to show a relationship between influential political ideas and theological concepts and used this to write a Christian Nazi theology: "Schmitt himself defended political dictatorship through the existentialist category of being/nonbeing. . . . What Schmitt named political theology was nothing more than the theory of a political religion necessary for the support of the state." See "Christian Theology," 43.

church, Christians, and especially the people."¹⁰

In Moltmann's view, the history of Christianity's struggle with secular politics, culminating in modern society, has been extremely problematic. He observes that before Constantine Christianity was not a political religion, in the sense of a state-supporting religion. In fact, Christians were persecuted for their refusal to worship the Roman political gods.¹¹ Unfortunately, asserts Moltmann, Christianity became politically repressive after it became the religion of the Roman Empire.¹² For example, after Constantine, Christianity could proclaim that "Jewish synagogues were considered sacrilegious and all non-

¹⁰"Christian Theology," 41.

¹¹Moltmann asserts that the terms *theologia civilis* and *genus politikan* of Stoic philosophy divided the divinities into three classes, one of which was "the gods of the state religion". Following the Stoics, the Romans affirmed the gods of the state, believing that "there were no godless states, no stateless gods. City and community, polis and civitas, law and justice, nomos and dike were religious ideas." See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Cross and Civil Religion" in Jürgen Moltmann, et al, Religion and Political Society (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 22.

¹²Moltmann states that "Theodosius and Justinian raised Christianity into a state religion resembling the religion of earlier Rome." See "Cross," 23. See also Jürgen Moltmann, "The Revolution of Freedom: The Christian and Marxist Struggle," in Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue, ed. Thomas W. Ogletree (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 58.

Christian religions were regarded as species of atheism."¹³ He believes that in its subsequent history, Christianity has been marked by the struggle to extricate its political identity from government. But this attempt resulted in a number of problems. According to Moltmann, Christianity devolved into repressive clericalism when clerics gained the absolute power over the church once held by political figures. The Reformation, in its efforts to free Christianity from clericalism, also devolved into political repressiveness as it became the state religion of various countries.¹⁴ He further believes that as a reaction to this oppression, modern bourgeois Christianity abandoned political involvement, freeing itself from political repression but rendering it politically irrelevant. In other words, in the modern world, the Christian church has turned inward on the concerns of its members, abandoning the rest of society. Of utmost importance to Christians today, according to Moltmann, are the unquestionable ideologies of the church institution to which they pledge allegiance. Other institutions, such as political institutions, have become meaningless and irrelevant for members of the

¹³"Cross," 23.

¹⁴See "Revolution," 59.

Christian faith. The result of this, Moltmann asserts, is that Christianity lost its political significance:

The Christian religion is dismissed from the integrating centre of modern society and relieved of its duty of having to represent the highest goal of society.¹⁵

Moltmann wants to recover authentic political involvement in the modern world. But given his criticism of contemporary society and the destructive historical relationship between church and state, he approaches this involvement cautiously. He asserts that the most important criterion for Christian political involvement in the modern world must be critical engagement, not confirmation of the religious and political status-quo:

The new political theology . . . began with the existence of the Christian church in modern society which claimed that religion is a private matter. . . . In light of the religious legitimation and self-justification, the new political theology is therefore not affirmative but critical.¹⁶

On the one hand, Moltmann wants Christians to take part in political movements that are critical of the ills of modern society, such as "the peace movement, the third world

¹⁵See TH, 311. See also Jürgen Moltmann "New Frontiers of Christianity in Industrial Society" in RRF, 108 ff and "The Rose in the Cross of the Present" in HP, 134 ff.

¹⁶"Christian Theology," 43.

movement, and the ecological movement."¹⁷ On the other hand, he wants to avoid the darker side of Christian political involvement that has marked the history of Christianity since Constantine. This is the religious-political involvement "in the new patriotism" in which "in the name of national security constitutions are rescinded, illegal acts justified, human rights suppressed, and political opponents liquidated."¹⁸

This desire to distinguish Christian identity from political institutions and modern culture, is a major motivation of Moltmann's theology. I think it is clear that Moltmann agrees with Lindbeck that Christianity should not confuse its identity with non-Christian institutions. After all, the cultural-linguistic method confirms the distinction between Christian language and that of other institutions. But does Moltmann's theological solution to maintaining

¹⁷According to Moltmann, "the service of peace must become the content of life in the community of Jesus Christ". See Jürgen Moltmann et. al., Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship, Luce Program on Religion and the Social Crisis, ed. Carlton T. Mitchell (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 15-31. See also Jürgen Moltmann and Glen Stassen, Justice Creates Peace, Publication of Baptist Peacemakers International Spirituality, ed. Robert C. Broome, no. 13 (Kentucky: Baptist Peacemakers, 1988), 1-16.

¹⁸See "Christian Theology," 44, 45.

Christian identity conform to the cultural-linguistic method, or does he take a different approach? In order to answer these questions we need to examine Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist ideas, which undergird his theology of the cross and theology of the church.

2. Marxist-Christian Dialogue

Recall that in chapter I attempted to show that the answer to this question depends upon how one interprets the extent to which Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model allows for the appropriation of alien elements. We saw that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model permits degrees of "absorption." Absorption, as Lindbeck uses the term, is the legitimate incorporation of extrabiblical ideas, like Marxism, into the framework of the biblical texts. As we saw in Chapter I, he specifically states that "it may, in fact, be an obligation" to use Marxist ideas.¹⁹ Appealing to the work of Barth, Lindbeck states that "Christians are commanded to bring all thoughts into captivity to Christ. Theologians who find some system of thought useful are thereby mandated to transform and absorb it into the

¹⁹See "Barth," 369.

intratextual world."²⁰ But he adds an important proviso: "it is the [biblical] text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text."²¹ This is important for Lindbeck: the alien philosophy must not become the dominant framework of interpretation, the new lens, or new worldview for Christians in the process of appropriation. As he states, "there is always the danger, however, that, the extrabiblical materials inserted into the biblical universe will themselves become the basic framework of interpretation."²² We will have to judge whether Moltmann "absorbs" Marxist ideas into the Christian world or eclipses the biblical world, so that it becomes "the new basic framework of interpretation" for his theology.

For a number of years, Moltmann maintained an interest in Marxist writings and dialogue with Marxists. These writings and conversations have had a continuing effect on his theology. They gave him the concepts for addressing the alienation and injustice of modern culture and contributed to the formulation of Christian political identity. There seemed to Moltmann to be sufficient

²⁰"Barth," 369.

²¹Doctrine, 118.

²²Doctrine, 118.

theological reasons and common ground for Christian-Marxist dialogue. He states, for example, that since Christ died for all people, Marxist-atheists no less than Christians, Christians should view Marxists as "brothers of the same need and the same grace and hope."²³ Christians and Marxists, he believed, have gained nothing in the past by refusing to see each other in terms of their greatest achievements rather than in terms of Stalinism or the Inquisition.²⁴ Moltmann believed that a mutually beneficial Christian and Marxist "ecumenical dialogue" was possible if

behind the conflict between the different answers of the churches and ideologies, it detects and brings to awareness the deeper community of asking and seeking, a community bonded by man's poverty and existing for the sake of a wider future.²⁵

In 1967 Moltmann took part in the Marxist-Christian dialogue in Marienbad, Czechoslovakia. There he found that the typical positions of Marxists and Christians had become reversed: Marxists were interested in talking of transcendence and Christians in immanence.²⁶ In other

²³Jürgen Moltmann, "Begegnung mit dem Atheismus," in Umkehr zur Zukunft (München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1970), 15.

²⁴See Jürgen Moltmann, "Chancen für eine kritische Solidarität von Christen und Marxisten," in Umkehr, 26.

²⁵See "Revolution," 50, 51.

words, Christians in the dialogue took a greater interest in matters of political responsibility and revolution.

Moltmann accepted the idea that Christianity could mount a revolution against the injustices of modern industrial society. He uses Marx's language to describe the role of Christianity in the industrial world:

The immanent significance of hope for salvation is visible wherever the emancipation of men from the chains of slavery takes place in history. On the other hand, the hope for salvation out of this hostile world of history is the transcendence of all attempts to make this world the homeland for all people. . . . The Christian beyond is not a compensation or "the opium for the people" any more, but is the power and the ferment of emancipation here and now.²⁷

Moltmann praised the humanistic Marxists who had gone beyond dogmatic ideology to "a critical philosophy" and thought that Christians should follow this lead and turn theology away from dogmatism to criticism of repressive political structures."²⁸

Moltmann has been criticized for his use of Marxist ideas, but it must be pointed out that he was extremely

²⁶See Jürgen Moltmann, "Marxisten und Christen in Marienbad," in Evangelische Theologie 27 (January 1967): 399.

²⁷See RRF, 63. See also "Revolution" 68. See also "Politics and the Practice of Hope," The Christian Century (March 11, 1970): 290.

²⁸RRF, 65.

critical of Marx's emphasis on the primacy of reason, the inevitability of human progress and the virtues of scientific analysis.²⁹ He is not alone in his criticism of Marx here. Marx's uncritical employment of scientific economic models prompted some existentialist thinkers, such as William Barrett and Jean Paul Sartre, to label him a "scion of the Enlightenment" who subordinated concrete human beings to abstract concepts.³⁰ Nicolai Berdyaev also accused Marx of being an abstract thinker, for whom "class is more real than man."³¹ Moltmann, also was critical of these aspects of Marx's thought and believed that Marxists needed a self-critical mechanism in order to remind them that scientific theories, such as dialectical materialism, should never be absolutized to the point of promoting political repression and power mongering. Unfortunately, asserts Moltmann, there is a difference between the "hope of

²⁹For a criticism of Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist ideas see Michael Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 255ff.

³⁰Melvin Rader, Marx's Interpretation of History (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 138.

³¹Rader defends Marx by stating that those who see in Marx the "mass-anonymity of collectivism, the machinations of bureaucracy, and the technological standardization of life" completely ignore the fact that Marx's writings "represent a sustained polemic against abstraction." See Interpretation, 138, 139.

Marxism" and the "historical forms it has taken on" as a result of the dogmatism of its scientific theories.³² Too often Marxism became the chief vehicle of political bureaucracy through solidified, stunted and repressive dogmas, a fact attested to by state controlled Marxism in Russia and Eastern Europe. Moltmann is adamant that Christianity avoid identifying with these aspects of Marxism.

Moltmann asserts that Christianity, unlike repressive state-controlled Marxism, carries within its tradition the necessary elements of self-criticism. "The prophets and Reformation, the repentance and new birth," he writes, "belong as an immanent part of the system of Christian faith."³³ Moltmann also believes that Christianity is unlike Marxism in that it preserves within itself a transcendent element rejected by Marxists.³⁴ We saw in Chapter II that Moltmann believes the future offers the possibility of "historical transcendence" for Christians. Marxist atheism lost any sense of this historical transcendence by forcing the realization of its

³²"Chancen," 27.

³³"Chancen," 28.

³⁴"Chancen," 28.

goals in the present and by getting caught up in a materialistic, managerial, objectification process in which the present is everything. Moltmann believes that despite all that Marxist thought may be able to teach them, Christians must not get involved with the "methodological and hypothetical Marxism of science" when it takes on repressive and anti-transcendence forms. In the face of such repressive positivism, Moltmann thinks that Christians must be careful to keep questions of religious meaning separate from those of Marxist social science.³⁵

Despite these criticisms, Moltmann believes that there are aspects of Marxism that can powerfully confront the problems of modern society. Marx's concepts of alienation and his critique of religion are especially influential in Moltmann's theology. For Marx, alienation occurs when people cannot creatively participate in culture. He believes that the modern capitalist system prohibits people from realizing their essential being through

³⁵Moltmann believes that Christianity too is affected today by "moral and scientific positivism," which tempts religions to put production and consumerism before questions of meaning. "Chancen," 28,29.

engagement with the objective world.³⁶ Alienated people feel cut off from a world which frustrates their creative potentialities. In Marx's view, capitalist institutions are breeding grounds of alienation. People are alienated from the products of their work, because employers, rather than the workers, own the products. It follows that people in this situation are also alienated from nature, since the objects they create are fabricated from materials of the natural world. Nature, in other words, has actually turned against people, since goods are produced under conditions of alienation. People in capitalist society are also alienated from other people because competition prohibits people from acting for the sake of others. In the words of Marx, "estrangement of man from his essential being means that a man is estranged from others, just as each is estranged from his essential humanity."³⁷

Marx's critique of religion is directed against

³⁶Commenting on Marx, Erich Fromm states that "alienation (or estrangement) means . . . that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in the grasp of his world, but that the world (nature, others and himself) remains alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object." See Concept, 44. See also 202.

³⁷See Interpretation, 110.

Feuerbach and Hegel. Marx thought Feuerbach ignored the revolutionary and practical importance of human activity, despite the fact that Feuerbach tried to rescue human identity and creativity from illusory religious projections.³⁸ He asserted against Feuerbach that religion is a "social product" and "social life is essentially practical [Therefore] all mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice."³⁹ Even though Feuerbach attempted to release human beings from abstract theological concepts in order that they might recover their authentic nature, his ideas struck Marx as abstract, non-practical and individualistic. This characterization of Feuerbach's thought prompted Marx's famous dictum that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change

³⁸Marx states that "in the Essence of Christianity, [Feuerbach] regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuine human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical form of appearance." Since alienation is a product of human beings, they have the power to both create or overcome it. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, On Religion (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 69.

³⁹Marx thought Feuerbach's view of the human essence, which Feuerbach found in religion, was an abstraction of individualism. In contrast Marx asserted that "in reality it [the essence of humanity] is the ensemble of social relations." See On Religion, 71.

it."⁴⁰ Marx maintained, against Hegel, that religion is symptomatic of the rift between essence and existence. In modern society human beings attempt to find their essence in the illusory expression of 'religion' because their concrete existence is experienced as suffering and alienation.⁴¹

Moltmann believes that Marx was accurate in his observation that religion is "the lonely cry of the oppressed," who experience a chasm between their essence and existence because of the alienating conditions of modern society. Religious people, Moltmann asserts, must rebel against alienation. He agrees with Marx that Feuerbach's anemic personalistic vision of religion as an "inner light," must become, in Moltmann's words, "a consuming flame turned outward" toward social political change, and so to freedom.⁴² Moltmann states that

it is not only criticism of religion but also

⁴⁰On Religion, 72.

⁴¹Religion is the "fantastic realization of the human essence, because human essence does not have a true reality" and the "expression" of human misery, the "protestation" against affliction, but "taken as mere conceptions, they are the opium of suffering people." See RRF, 94. See also Frederic L. Bender, Karl Marx: The Essential Writings (London: Westview Press, 1986), 45ff.

⁴²RRF, 94,95. See also "Christian Rehumanization of Technological Society," The Critic, (May/June 1970): 16. See also "Begegnung," 21.

realization of religion when Karl Marx says: 'The critique of religion ends with the categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is a humiliated, an enslaved, a forsaken and despised being'⁴³

Referring to Marx's critique of religion, Moltmann asserts that religion, properly understood, can close the chasm between essence and existence opened by modern industrialism. He agrees with Marx that religion is a by-product of alienation but that it can engage in the necessary revolutionary work to overcome alienation. He states that religion

originates in the concrete experience of the difference between essence and existence. It will be placed on its feet when its conceptions are no longer an escape from this painful difference Religion must, rather, be conceived of as direction for the overcoming of this difference in a revolutionary manner.⁴⁴

Moltmann takes up this spirit of Marxism and interprets the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition as a religion of freedom. The story of the Exodus from Egypt and the resurrection of Jesus Christ both point to deliverance into freedom in history. Moltmann states that

at the starting point of the biblical faith, we see the creative symbols of freedom: the exodus of Israel from bondage in Egypt, and the resurrection of the crucified Christ into the coming kingdom of God- a deliverance in

⁴³RRF, 94, 95.

⁴⁴RRF, 94, 95.

history and a deliverance from history.⁴⁵

The new freedom for which Christians hope and work in creative participation in history with God captures for Moltmann the real nature of Christianity. He characterizes the nature of this religious experience in terms which contrast with those of Schleiermacher:

Thus, faith should no longer be described, in the terms of Schleiermacher, only as a *schlechthiniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl*- i.e., as "the feeling of absolute dependence" in religious submissiveness- faith can, on the contrary, be described as a *schlechthiniges Freiheitsgefühl*, as "the feeling of absolute freedom" in spiritual communion with the creative God."⁴⁶

Moltmann is quick to point out, however, that "Christian freedom is a freedom of struggle" and not something which Christians have already achieved.⁴⁷ The struggle for freedom must be understood in terms of the "active dialectic" between the yet unachieved "realm of freedom" and God's promise of a free world. Christians must begin to work in the unfree present realm in order to realize this future. They are to follow the example of Jesus who set "sinners free through his word, . . . liberate[d] the sick by his wondrous works" and signalled

⁴⁵RRF, 67, 68.

⁴⁶See "Revolution," 52.

⁴⁷See "Revolution," 52.

the freedom from death's power through his death on the cross. The work for freedom which Jesus performed, claims Moltmann, is "not a special one, different from that freedom for which all mankind is longing" and is "no private affair, but is always freedom for others."⁴⁸ This freedom is like the Marxist concept of freedom, in which the rift between essence and existence is closed by the necessary protest against suffering and the work toward a more meaningful existence.

The political demands of Marx prompted Moltmann to ask further whether or not even a lack of interest on the part of Christians in political affairs confirms the political status quo.⁴⁹ Politically disinterested faith dismisses politics as a merely human, earthly affair and attempts to bring people to understand God's other-worldly transcendence and to "learn to see the good in the world," despite the presence of suffering. Moltmann asserts that such a faith is "spiritual, religious and very personal . .

⁴⁸"Revolution," 54,55.

⁴⁹According to Moltmann there are two kinds of faith: one which has an impulse and motivation for political affairs, and one which is not interested in political affairs. Jürgen Moltmann, "Zwingt der Glaube zum politischen Handeln," in Dialog mit dem Zweifel ed. Gerhard Rein (Berlin: Kreuzer Verlag, 1969), 140.

. . It is only influential in politics, if at all, only insofar as it calls for restraint against political radicalism."⁵⁰ Moltmann is very critical of this dimension of politically uninvolved faith because it tends to see all political situations as the same: it "makes political affairs [for its members] unnerving and leads back to a childish irresponsibility" in socio-political matters.⁵¹

I am attempting to show that much of Moltmann's theology is influenced by the Marxist protest against alienation and the call to create a life of freedom through a revolution against conditions of suffering in modern industrial culture. In my opinion, one cannot underestimate the extent to which these Marxist ideas influenced Moltmann's theology. For all of his writings call for a Christian revolution against the alienating conditions of modern industrial society. An examination of Moltmann's theology of the cross, in my opinion, will show us how these Marxist concepts contribute to his views on Christian

⁵⁰See "Glaube," 141. There is, for Moltmann, both a positive and negative side to this type of faith. It is positive because it does not hold politics or political figures as absolute. It is negative, in Moltmann's estimation, because it views all political situations in the same light, whether good or evil.

⁵¹"Glaube," 142-143.

identity. Moltmann believes that the crucified Christ, properly understood, is the solution to the problem of Christian political relevance and resistance against state religion:

As far as I am concerned, the Christian church and Christian theology become relevant to the problems of the modern world only when they reveal the 'hard core' of their identity in the crucified Christ and through it are called into question, together with the society in which they live.⁵²

3. The Theology of the Cross and Christian Political Identity

There are four significant points to be made about Moltmann's view of Christian identification with the cross of Christ. First, in Moltmann's view, in order to understand adequately the crucifixion of Jesus, one must understand the conflict his ministry provoked with Jewish and Roman authorities. Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer when he preached the message of God's acceptance to those outside the conventions of the laws established by the Jewish and Roman leaders.⁵³ When he preached to those

⁵²CG, 7,25

⁵³Moltmann states that "the history of Jesus which led to his crucifixion was rather a theological history in itself, and was dominated by a conflict between God and the gods; that is between the God whom Jesus preached as his Father, and the God of the law as he was understood by the guardians of the law, together with the political gods of

outside of the law- the outcasts, law breakers, the sick- Jesus, in effective, deified himself: in the eyes of the Jewish and Roman authorities, he had arrogated to himself the role of judge of the laws because only God could judge the laws God set down. The claim to authority made by Jesus had no legitimate basis in Jewish or Roman law and so could be easily refuted by putting him to death in a way that God would never have to endure.⁵⁴ There seemed no better way to disprove Jesus's divinity than by making him suffer an undignified death.

In Moltmann's view, the fact that Christ's death was a political death resulting from his opposition to the dominant political powers is an extremely important and fundamental aspect of the cross. It means that Christianity is founded upon a protest against, and resistance to, state powers. Moltmann gets this idea of political resistance and freedom in Christ's suffering from the Frankfurt School's understanding of Marx. Moltmann states that his theology of the cross is a turn toward the Frankfurt School's "questions of 'negative dialectic' and the 'critical theory' of T. W.

the Roman occupying power." CG, 127.

⁵⁴CG, 128-130.

Adorno and M. Horkheimer."⁵⁵ Negative dialectics finds hope in the midst of human suffering and critical theory stands against the social structures that cause suffering.

Moltmann takes up these Marxist ideas in his theology of the cross and its criticism of the modern world. He states that the identification of Christianity and modern institutions ignores

the 'dialectic of the Enlightenment' (Horkheimer and Adorno) in the modern world, the misery of the modern age characterized by the names of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and the conflicts which modern capitalism and the white man have produced. . . . Yet even a theory of world-accepting Christianity, which saw Christianity as a religious culture, would not be able totally to conceal the alien nature of the crucified Christ in a 'Christian' culture.⁵⁶

In Moltmann's view, Christians must consider this political dimension of the cross when they reflect on their own political involvement. They can then resist the danger

⁵⁵CG, 5.

⁵⁶CG. 68. Brian Fay states that "critical social science is an attempt to understand in a rationally responsible manner the oppressive features of a society such that this understanding stimulates its audience to transform their society and thereby liberate themselves. . . . Marx and his followers have attempted to provide a scientific theory of capitalism, and to do so in such a way that this theory would itself be a catalyst in the overthrowing of capitalist society and the ushering in of communist society." See Brian Fay, Critical Social Science: Liberation and Its Limits (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987.), 4.

of losing their identity and relevance to dominant political structures. Echoing the philosophy of the Frankfurt School in his theology of the cross, Moltmann states that

the more the churches become departments of bourgeois religion, the more strongly they must suppress recollection of the political trial of Christ and lose their identity as Christian churches [Christians will] do well to recall the political crucifixion and divine resurrection of the Christ who was executed as a 'rebel' The consequence for Christian theology is that it must adopt a critical attitude towards political religions in society.⁵⁷

We saw above that, according to Moltmann, the main interest of Christ was with the people on the periphery of society. This leads us to the second significant point for Moltmann about identification with the cross of Christ. Identification with the cross of Christ is the identification with a God who experienced a voluntary "emptying" of self on the cross through suffering and abandonment for the sake of the oppressed. This, also, should be a model for Christian life. Christians must find their identity in "self-emptying"; the abandoning of old familiar, self-concerned ways in favour of social involvement "for the sake of others."⁵⁸ The significance of the crucified Christ is "that in him God has identified

⁵⁷CG, 326.

⁵⁸GC, 16,17.

himself with the godless and those abandoned by God."⁵⁹

Moltmann asserts that those who are abandoned by society (the poor, the criminals and those who suffer oppression) can more readily identify with a God who knows what it means to suffer; they cannot identify with an unfeeling, aloof God. The poor and oppressed are empowered by identification with the crucified God when they take up Christ's mission of protesting against suffering and working to throw off the chains of oppression.⁶⁰

A theology of the suffering of God on the cross is the best answer, in Moltmann's view, to the problem of theodicy raised by Marxists and other "protest atheists," that is, atheists who reject God because of the existence of evil. The Marxist atheist, according to Moltmann, doubts that the world is grounded in a divine being because he or she sees "the grimace and absurdity of nothingness" rather than a divine grounding for the world.⁶¹ Moltmann, along with atheists, rejects the idea of a God who is aloof from human suffering, but asserts the necessity of belief in God. History, he believes, has shown the failure of total human

⁵⁹CG, 19.

⁶⁰CG, 267ff.

⁶¹CG, 219.

self-reliance. The fact that the Enlightenment reliance on humanity alone has not produced the just world for which people have been hoping is, according to him, the most glaring proof of this. Moltmann wants to find a middle way between atheism- total human self-reliance- and traditional Greek theism -total reliance on a God who does not know suffering.⁶² The middle ground seems to lie in the cry of Christ on the cross, which Moltmann sees as a protest against God's own suffering. God enters into human history and experiences human suffering, but refuses to accept it passively and "cries out" against it. The teachings and actions of Jesus against suffering during his life and death empower Christians to fight against suffering in the form of injustice, oppression and poverty. Suffering human beings can easily identify with God in God's suffering, but can also identify with God's ability to overcome suffering.⁶³

How does Moltmann's theology of the cross contribute to a clarification of Christian identity and play out in political involvement? Moltmann states that, if Christians "unburden" themselves from identification with governmental

⁶²We will examine Moltmann's views on the passion of God in detail in Chapter IV.

⁶³CG, 317ff.

powers, then they are free to engage in "critical" political action.⁶⁴ Since Christians who identify with the cross no longer have to worry about losing their distinctiveness to political groups, they can more confidently "dialogue with socialist, democratic, humanistic, and anti-racist movements."⁶⁵ When Christians, whose spiritual identity is formed by the cross, participate in these political movements the real presence of God, Moltmann believes, can be seen in the world.⁶⁶

Here Moltmann insists on the concrete presence of God in human affairs. It does not take long for anyone studying his theology to realize that he categorically denies any other-worldly or non-historical concept of God. One can only understand Moltmann's view of God when one

⁶⁴Moltmann states that "The model of unburdening says that church and faith must be freed from politics so that at the same time politics may be freed from religion The distinction between the two realms which is constantly necessary in every new situation is thus not a-political, but to the highest degree a political critical action." CG, 318, 319.

⁶⁵Moltmann states that "The model of unburdening says that church and faith must be freed from politics so that at the same time politics may be freed from religion The distinction between the two realms which is constantly necessary in every new situation is thus not a-political, but to the highest degree a political critical action." CG, 318, 319.

⁶⁶CG, 317.

abandons, what he believes are, all other-worldly concepts of a transcendent non-historical God.⁶⁷ When Christians work with others to break the "vicious circles of death"-poverty, force, racism, industrial pollution of nature and meaninglessness -the real presence of God can be seen within history.⁶⁸ Moltmann calls this a "sacramental presence of God":

A theology of liberation cannot get by without corresponding materializations of the presence of God, unless it means to remain idealistic In the vicious circle of poverty . . . God is present as bread In the vicious circle of force God's presence is experienced as liberation for human dignity and responsibility. In the vicious circle of alienation his presence is perceived in the experience of human identity and recognition. In the vicious circle of destruction of nature God is present in joy in existence and in peace between man and nature. In the vicious circle of meaninglessness and god-forsakenness, finally, he comes forward in the figure of the crucified Christ, who communicates courage to be.⁶⁹

In summary, Moltmann asserts that these four dimensions of the theology of the cross- the crucifixion as a political event, Christ's identification with the

⁶⁷I attended a Christology Societät given by Moltmann in 1989 at Tübingen University in which Moltmann was asked why he did not mention that his concept of God was "obviously inherited" from Karl Barth. Moltmann responded that Barth's concept of God was transcendent in the non-historical sense, while his concept of God is "completely historical."

⁶⁸See CG, 332ff.

⁶⁹CG, 337,338.

suffering and politically abandoned, the cross as a response to "protest atheism" and the possible political implications for identification in the cross -provide Christians with a vital, tenable political identity. This identity must be maintained in distinction from all political parties and governmental powers so that Christians can effectively address the ills of modern society. I have shown Moltmann's assessment of modern culture in a number of places in this dissertation. It is clear that his theology of the cross is formulated to address these problems. I think it is also clear that his theology of the cross is very much influenced by Marxism. Criticism of the modern structures that cause suffering, the focus on the oppressed and alienated, and the need to free the alienated from oppression are all ideas that he appropriated from Marxism and subsumed into his theology of the cross. Is the biblical story of the crucifixion of Christ really a story about political oppression and revolution? Not every theologian would interpret the story in this manner. Has Moltmann gone beyond the bounds of the cultural-linguistic framework by allowing an extra-biblical concept determine the biblical story? I believe the question is legitimate and reveals something important about his theological approach, namely,

that it may permit the employment of non-biblical ideas that transcend cultural-linguistic limits.

Moltmann's theology of the church, which is based on Moltmann's theology of the cross, is also an attempt to recapture a more feasible Christian political identity and distinctiveness. In the face of the political turmoil and crises of our times Moltmann believes that members of the Christian church are forced to ask, "Where do you come from? Where are you going? Who are you?"⁷⁰ These questions take Christians back to their Christological roots to find their true identity.⁷¹ As shown above, the church in its history has too often understood itself according to the predominant "spirit of the age, the political and economic circumstances, and the cultural and social conditions in which the churches are living."⁷² The solution for the church is not to retreat from concerns of the world. He believes that the tension between Christ's politically critical mission and the historical presence of the church must be held together:

It must be a matter of the strangeness of his mission, his cross and his promise; for in no other way could the

⁷⁰See CPS, xiii, xiv.

⁷¹CPS, 66.

⁷²CPS, 66.

church's alienation from its environment (an alienation which he brings about) be legitimated nor would it be a hopeful alienation. It is only when the church is alienated from its environment in Christ's way, that it can perceive and show in an alienated world that the kingdom which Christ has promised is our home. It is this conflict which is at issue whenever the church in its contemporary environment dares to appeal to Christ and is prepared to hear his voice and no other.⁷³

According to Moltmann, Christians must strive to understand the correct relationship between Christ and the church in order to understand more fully its political identity and mission. This relationship, he believes, has not been adequately understood in the past. For example, in stating that "the church has its true being in the work of Christ,"⁷⁴ the Heidelberg Confession meant that Christ gathers together the elect for eternal life. What is missing in this idea, asserts Moltmann, is the idea of "service," an omission which implies an "unworldly hope" in salvation.⁷⁵ In contrast, if Christ is understood as "the

⁷³CPS, 67, 68.

⁷⁴CPS, 69.

⁷⁵"[In the Heidelberg confession] the whole human race only seems to be material for the election and gathering of the community of the saved, as if mankind were there for the church and not the church for mankind. We also miss the call to service for the world and, finally, the vision of hope for the new heaven and the new earth. The fact that the Johannine eschatology of 'eternal life' was chosen suggests that we have here the misunderstanding of an unworldly hope." CPS, 69. For a further explanation of the theme of "service" see also Jürgen Moltmann, Hope for the

eschatological person," the church's mission takes on a world transforming role.⁷⁶ As shown in the previous chapter, Moltmann believes that Christians must strive in the present to realize the promised eschatological future of peace and justice. It is only in light of this eschaton that the significance of Christ's actions become a motivating force for the church. But the significance of Christ's activities are lost

if we only start from the presence of the church and inquire back to its founder, beginning, origin or head. In the light of the eschatological person of Christ, the church does not live from the past; it exists as a factor of present liberation.⁷⁷

Moltmann claims that when the church is understood in trinitarian terms the problem of viewing the hierarchy as the central focus of the charismata and the church community

Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979) and Jürgen Moltmann, Diakonie im Horizont des Reiches Gottes: Schritte zum Diakonentum aller Gläubigen (Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984).

⁷⁶Dulles criticises eschatological models of the church that portray the church as a this-worldly, temporary institution which is primarily the work of human beings. He does agree with Moltmann that "the Church has the task of introducing the values of the Kingdom into the whole of human society . . . But it seems likely that, as Rahner suggests, the parousia will not occur until human effort 'has gone to its very limits and so is burst open by salvation from above by developing its own powers.'" CPS, 70,71. See also Avery Dulles S.J., Models of the Church, (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 121,103.

⁷⁷CPS, 74,75.

as being of secondary importance is eliminated. He claims that the focus on the hierarchy was justified through Greek philosophy's monotheistic view of God as it came to expression in Augustinian theology: "one God- one Christ - one bishop- one church." I will examine Moltmann's criticisms of Augustine and trinitarian theology in more detail in the next chapter. For now, I want to point out that, in Moltmann's view, the only alternative to Augustinian monotheism is a renewed theology of the Trinity, in which a "trinitarian understanding of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit" can give clarity to the church's mission as it carries out the work of Christ.⁷⁸ Christ's

⁷⁸CPS, 200-202. Stephen Sykes takes issue with Moltmann's assumption that a non-hierarchical doctrine of the church, based in a non-hierarchical concept of the trinity, necessarily translates into a non-hierarchical and just political order. Sykes states that Moltmann "insists that the doctrine of the universal monarchy of the one God, or even a monadic conception of the triune God, is always dangerously available as a source of legitimation for earthly rulers, dictators, and tyrants. . . . However, the conceptual independence of these modes of thought [the political and theological] needs to be taken seriously." See Stephen W. Sykes, "The dialectic of Community and Structure," in Love: The Foundation of Hope, ed. Frederick B. Burnham et. al. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 122. See also Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, eds., Who Has the Say in the Church (New York: the Seabury Press, 1981); Jürgen Moltmann, "Hans Küng, Rome and the Gospel," Christian Century 20 1980: 188ff; Jürgen Moltmann "Küng and die Unfehlbarkeit," Evangelische Kommentare 13 (1980): 65ff.

mission reveals God's plan for the future of the world.⁷⁹ But it is the Spirit which "reveals Christ," allows "messianic acts" to take place, "completes the divine history," and "is the power of the new creation of the world." On the basis of this understanding of the work of God revealed in Christ and carried out by the Spirit, Moltmann is able to give a trinitarian account of the church as sacrament:

In the framework of the trinitarian concept of the church we therefore understand the proclamation, the 'sacraments' and the charismata as the 'signs and wonders' of the history of the Spirit who creates salvation and brings about the new creation, and who through Christ unites us with the Father and glorifies him.⁸⁰

Moltmann believes that the trinitarian eschatological and messianic church has implications for each member's individual life, sense of personal meaning, and consequently for one's sense of identity. Since one's way of life, one's "personal meaning," influences one's dealings with the world, the Christian's inner life must be understood in the messianic light of Christ's gospel. When theology is thus oriented it sees its work "not merely in

⁷⁹CPS, 203.

⁸⁰CPS, 206. See also Jürgen Moltmann, "The fellowship of the Holy Spirit-Trinitarian Pneumatology," Scottish Journal of Theology 37 (1984): 293, 294.

the context of the history of thought, but also as part of the history of life.⁸¹ The rebirth into this kind of life must be seen as a rebirth into an eschatological reality and rebirth in the Spirit. Rebirth in the Holy Spirit brings people into the trinitarian life of God by making people "heirs of eternal life in hope," since they are reborn into "renewal and rebirth of the world in the future of the son of man."⁸²

This process of rebirth into the new life of Christ's future in a transformed world is what Moltmann calls a "two-sided hermeneutic" of the life for people in the Christian church. The one side consists of the past memory of a person accumulated out of the wealth of his or

⁸¹CPS, 276.

⁸²CPS, 279. Douglas Meeks believes that Moltmann's view of the church, as the locus of the trinitarian presence of God working in history, has great implications for practical theology. Referring to the work of the Spirit, Meeks states that for Moltmann "the congregation, as it is created and formed by God the Holy Spirit, is placed in the world to mediate God's righteousness and freedom Because each person is gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit, each person has a ministry and is a minister. Where the Spirit is active there will be experimentation and innovation." See M. Douglas Meeks, "Moltmann's Contribution to Practical Theology," in Hope for the Church, 72. George Hunsinger states that Moltmann "seemed to be introducing the process of human history as necessary to God's self-Actualization." George Hunsinger, Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit, Theology Today 35 (April 1978): 99,100.

her experiences.⁸³ The other side of the hermeneutic deals with the future. When the Christian's new life is lived in light of the future hope of salvation, past memories acquire new meanings and are significant in a new way when vital decisions are made. This hermeneutic becomes actualized only by the "rebirth of the whole":

The hermeneutics of the history of an individual life are hermeneutics of the cyphers of rebirth. It is only one part of the hermeneutics of the Spirit's history, but it is a necessary and irremissible part Rebirth we have described . . . is able to reconcile the personal as what is uniquely one's own with the common element of what is uniquely other, because it orients both sides of life, the individual and the collective, to the new creation of the whole.⁸³

Thus, the work of Christ is carried out by church members empowered by the Spirit. Moltmann believes that the church of Jesus Christ must be seen as a church for the world, since Christ's mission was a mission to the world.⁸⁴ Unfettered by church-state relations, the church is free to

⁸³CPS, 282.

⁸⁴"The Reformation subjected all human rules and statutes to the yardstick of the gospel of Christ. . . . What the Confessing Church declared . . . in opposing the state's claim to lordship, must also be said today in opposing the claim to domination asserted by unjust and inhuman social systems: and it must be said through the theological concept of the church. The theological conception of Christ's church is therefore always at the same time a political and social concept of the church." CPS, 5.

criticize modern society and engage in its missionary activity. This critical mission is the work of salvation in the political and economic sphere and "social process of the world."⁸⁵ When it understands its identity in Christ, the church becomes a "revolutionary church" which makes a "fundamental choice for socialism" in its attempt to work for the liberation of the oppressed:

Reading the Bible with the eyes of the poor is a different thing from reading it with the eyes of the man with a full belly. If it is read in the light of the experiences and hopes of the oppressed, the Bible's revolutionary themes- promise exodus, resurrection and Spirit- come alive.⁸⁶

This Christological identity and mission of Christians, I believe, successfully speaks to Moltmann's concerns about the need for Christians to maintain an

⁸⁵CPS, 16.

⁸⁶CPS, 17. A. D. Galloway states that Moltmann has "taken insufficient account of the fact that although the criterion of the centredness of the Church in Christ must be given priority it cannot be entirely divorced from the question of those concrete structures and boundaries which distinguish the Church from the world." Wary of the track record of socialist politics, Galloway also says of Moltmann's socialism, that "I sympathize with his compassion; but I doubt his political wisdom." I do not believe that this latter statement takes into consideration Moltmann's theology of the cross, which stands critically over every political system, nor his criticism of aspects of Marxism and repressive socialism. See A. D. Galloway, Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit, Scottish Journal of Theology 32 (1979): 173-175.

identity distinct from modern culture and to be politically relevant. The protest against alienation, the option for socialism, the criticism of modern-bourgeois culture and the call to a praxis that seeks revolutionary changes in modern society are all given expression in Moltmann's Christology.

I think there is also little doubt that this identity and mission is a product of Marxist categories, which, at least, raises the possibility that Moltmann transgresses the cultural-linguistic check on the absorption of alien elements. According to the narrower reading of the cultural-linguistic model, which would severely limit the extent to which something like Marxism could be absorbed into the textual world, it is possible that Moltmann does exceed Lindbeck's limits. However, according to the more generous reading, which permits a radical reunderstanding of the "plain sense" of Scriptures, Moltmann may be within the bounds of the cultural-linguistic model. In my opinion, Moltmann's goes beyond merely finding analogous concerns and experiences between Christianity and Marxism. Rather, Marxist ideas play a major role in his reading of the cross of Christ and the corresponding mission of the church. One could possibly make the case, then, that Moltmann's basic method allows for greater use of extra-biblical interpretive

devices, like Marxism, than is permitted by the cultural-linguistic paradigm.

Now, I want to compare Moltmann's theology with Paul Tillich's, another theologian interested in Marxism, in order to highlight and further examine Moltmann's concerns about modern individualism.

4. Moltmann and Tillich: A Political-Theological Comparison

Before beginning our comparison of Moltmann and Paul Tillich, I want to point out that Lindbeck and Moltmann share a critique of, what they see as, Tillich's penchant toward individualism. Recall that Lindbeck believes that the theories of religion developed by experiential expressivists, among which he lists Tillich, are inherently individualistic. In Chapter I, we saw that Lindbeck believes that the appeal to experience as the basis of religion contains a tendency toward "privatization." The description of interior experiences by liberal theologians, in his view, are based on private experiences of individuals. He claims, in contrast, that language, which should determine the worldview of Christians, is always formed communally.⁸⁷ This is the basis for Lindbeck's

⁸⁷See Chapter I, 26. See also Doctrine, 38.

criticism of Tillich. Tillich, in his view, has allowed a concept of experience ("ultimate concern"), rather than Christian language, to determine his theology. In the conclusion of this chapter, we will examine more closely how Moltmann's critique of Tillich's individualism differs from the critique inherent in the cultural-linguistic model proposed by Lindbeck. Here, I want to point out that Moltmann's critique of Tillich, like Lindbeck's, is aimed at the subjectivist concept of experience in his theology.

We have seen above that Moltmann's theology of the cross and theology of the church are heavily influenced by the Marxist demands to change the conditions of human suffering. One would assume that Moltmann would, then, find solidarity with a theologian like Paul Tillich, whose theology is also heavily influenced by Marxist ideas. But this is not the case. Moltmann is extremely critical of Tillich's theology in some of his most recent writings, especially in his 1989 work, Theology Today.⁸⁸ Moltmann's criticism of Tillich's subjectivist theology highlights and further clarifies Moltmann's suspicion that modern individualism can easily creep into theology and obscure the

⁸⁸Jürgen Moltmann, Theology Today (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1988), 78ff.

Christian identity and political relevance in contemporary culture.

Moltmann and Tillich share some similar experiences that influenced their theological careers. Tillich's thought, like Moltmann's, is heavily influenced by his alienating and violent war experiences. Tillich's theological education was interrupted by the outbreak of WW I in Europe when he enlisted to fight for the "German Fatherland," like many young men of his generation. There was for Tillich, however, a deep sense of contradiction in the war which contributed to his two nervous breakdowns. As a military chaplain it was Tillich's duty to spur on his fellow soldiers to fight bravely, "to realize their brotherhood in arms and to see in every work a service to the great German Fatherland."⁸⁹ But the contradiction became more apparent for him as he began to think about the exploitation of ordinary people at the hands of the powers he had always taken for granted: the German aristocracy, the army and the church.⁹⁰ He became suspicious of bourgeois tendencies in Ritschlean theology, which paid absolute

⁸⁹Ronald H. Stone, Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 34.

⁹⁰Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought 2 Vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 47-48.

political homage to personal ethics and to progress.⁹¹ Like Moltmann, Tillich believed that unjust political regimes and bourgeois individualism were destroying Germany.

Tillich, like Moltmann, turned to the thought of Marx, among others, to overcome individualism, and to address the relationship between theology and culture. In their biography of Tillich, Wilhelm and Marion Pauck wrote that when Tillich entered the war he was politically naive but "when he returned to Berlin four years later he was utterly transformed. The traditional monarchist had become a religious socialist."⁹² The problems of modern culture are described by Tillich, as by Moltmann⁹³, in the Marxist

⁹¹Tillich's theological education was rooted in a rejection of Ritschlean theology which was prominent in the early 1900's. He viewed Ritschlean theology as "bourgeois," individualistic and so unable to speak adequately to the questions of culture: "I would venture to assert that the theologies of Kaehler and Dorner and our group who sought at that time to renew classical German Philosophy were much more passionately devoted to culture than was the naively conventional Ritschlean bourgeois view." James R. Lyons ed., The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), 105.

⁹²Tillich referred to the experiences of the war years as a "personal kairos," or "special time," a powerful inbreaking of the Ground of Being into his life. Moments of kairos in human history presents the opportunity for lasting transformations of individuals and society. See Life Vol. 1, 41.

⁹³See RRF, 94, 95.

terminology of the split between essence and existence.⁹⁴ Marxist "existentialism"- as Tillich unabashedly refers to Marx's thought -is the protest against the dehumanization of people in industrial society.⁹⁵ The task of Christianity is to accept the existential protest and work to "heal" the rift between our true natures and our actual situation.⁹⁶

The concept of freedom is important in Tillich's theology, as it is in Moltmann's. And, like Moltmann, Tillich thought that freedom is never something fully achieved but is an ongoing struggle. Tillich understood human beings as capable of "finite freedom" in contrast to

⁹⁴Tillich asserts that industrialism, which is marked by human self-reliance through technology, has resulted in loss of self transcendence and belief in sin or "necessary estrangement". When modern industrialism is seen as the god that can save humankind from its ills, people are caught up in the *demonic*- the belief that a transitory world order is absolute. Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 43.

⁹⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, Existence and the Christ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 27.

⁹⁶Tillich asserts that Christians believe creation is essentially good but that human beings, as part of creation, are fallen from their essential goodness. All Christians, according to Tillich, hold out the hope for salvation, the "healing" of the split between essence and existence. These "Considerations of human nature are present in all genuine theological thinking: essential goodness, existential estrangement and the possibility of something, a "third," beyond essence and existence, through which the cleavage is healed and overcome." See Culture, 119.

God, who is infinite freedom.⁹⁷ In order for people to actualize their potential and experience freedom, three things are required in the social order: historical self-determination; equality (all people must have the opportunity to exercise creative freedom); and community (a person can only actualize his or her creative freedom in relationship to others). Tillich believed that these cannot be realized under capitalism, leaving socialism as the only political alternative, a view shared by Moltmann.⁹⁸ He maintained until the end of his life that demonic possibilities in uncontrolled capitalism were a lasting threat that could only be overcome by certain universally applicable aspects of socialism. These aspects of socialism include the "prohibition to treat a person as a thing, instead of encountering him as a thou" and the prohibition against denying a person the possibility of actualizing

⁹⁷Clark A. Kucheman, "Professor Tillich: Justice and the Economic Order," The Journal of Religion, 46 (January 1966): 168.

⁹⁸Tillich states that "the coming form of human society must be a socialist one if it is to be adequate to the actual necessities as well as to the moral demands of the situation." Tillich admitted that some of his socialist critiques of capitalism were good only until the 1940's. Several factors, including the strength of the American labour movement and the growing strength of democracy, rendered some of Marx's analyses incomplete. See "Justice," 168.

his/her material, political, psychological and spiritual potential.⁹⁹

Moltmann applauds Tillich's attempt to show the relevance of the Christian message for the modern world. He admires Tillich's attempt to avoid the conservatism of the past and liberal atheism of the present through his theology of culture and theology of the church.¹⁰⁰ He also found some limited value in the thought that the church bears witness to Jesus Christ "with an existential claim, i.e., as the 'courage to be'."¹⁰¹ Moltmann was also intrigued by the thought that expressions of religion outside of the church are forms of a "latent church"- the non-ecclesial and non-Christian cultural expressions of religion -insofar as they

⁹⁹"The fundamental principles applied by socialism to a particular kairos can be extracted out of this unique situation and applied to our own as well as to any other particular kairos in history. . . . In negative terms the principle would be the prohibition to treat a person as a thing, instead of encountering him as a thou." "Justice," 190, 191.

¹⁰⁰Moltmann says that while Tillich's "theology is 'a function of the church'" it is also a function of culture because "for him the culture with which human beings respond to the questions of their basic situation at all times . . . is the real vehicle of the religious and the most universal manifestation of the absolute." See Theology, 78.

¹⁰¹Theology, 82. Moltmann asserts that the Tillich's existential courage to be "has therapeutic power That is particularly significant for men and women of the modern world." See 85, 86.

express ultimate concern.¹⁰² This latter observation is most interesting, given our attempt to understand what Moltmann's reading of Tillich might reveal about the extent to which Moltmann's ideas resonates with the cultural-linguistic model. It is important to show that Moltmann does not reject Tillich's idea of ultimate concern out of hand as Lindbeck does in his critique of experiential expressivism. Tillich was not willing to abandon the project of 19th century liberal theology. Tillich asserted against dialectical theology that "in order to be able to ask about God, man must already have experienced God as the goal of a possible human question."¹⁰³ Following Augustine, Tillich affirmed the presence of God in the soul, which he calls the experience of the "unconditional." The experience of the unconditional is characterized by "ultimate concern" which

¹⁰²These thoughts of Tillich seem to resonate with Moltmann's demand for a self critical and world critical church. Moltmann states that "'members of the latent church' . . . must be recognized by members of the 'manifest church' The manifest church must reckon with the existence of the latent church in culture, listen to its criticism, take over its inspiration and criticize its errors. Theology, 83.

¹⁰³Paul Tillich, "What is Wrong with Dialectical Theology," Journal of Religion 15 (April 1935): 137. See also Ronald Modras, Paul Tillich's Theology of the Church: A Catholic Appraisal (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976), 24.

embraces all other concerns and involves questions of human meaningfulness and is experienced as revelational "grasping".¹⁰⁴ In contrast to Lindbeck, Moltmann responds positively to Tillich's idea of ultimate concern. He states that

Tillich's mediation between faith and the experience of divine grace and justification must be regarded as successful. For him, 'faith' is not a dogmatic conviction or a religious feeling, but is a matter of the whole person being 'grasped' by 'what concerns us ultimately. . . . It has therapeutic power. That is particularly significant for men and women in the modern world.¹⁰⁵

This quotation indicates that Moltmann does not dismiss Tillich's idea of ultimate concern as a subversion of Christian language and the Christian worldview. In this sense, his reading of Tillich is inconsistent with the cultural-linguistic model. It seems that it is not Tillich's formulation of a general concept of experience that Moltmann objects to but the dangers which are inherent in this particular idea of experience. That is, Moltmann,

¹⁰⁴Tillich states that "revelation is first of all the experience in which an ultimate concern grasps the human mind and creates a community in which this concern expresses itself in symbols of action, imagination and thought." 'Religion' for Tillich is the experiential reception of revelation. Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1957), p. 78.

¹⁰⁵Theology, 86.

in addition to his positive observations of Tillich's thought, is also critical of, what he views as, Tillich's hopeless individualism. Despite Tillich's critique of Ritschlian individualism, Moltmann thinks that his version of 19th century liberalism keeps Tillich mired in the individualism that he tried to reject. Because of this, despite Tillich's deep roots in Marxist socialism, his protest against modern alienation and his demand that Christianity work for freedom, Moltmann sees Tillich's method of correlation as subjectivistic and politically irrelevant:

[Tillich] can only communicate 'justification by grace through faith alone' by means of inward personal experience, and not also to the world which produces such experience According to the traditions of the bible however, only a new world which is righteous because it has been made righteous accords with the God who is the Creator and righteous one The social, political and cosmic dimensions of righteousness and the kingdom of God do, however, retreat in Tillich's mediating theology behind the stress on human personality.¹⁰⁶

Tillich and Moltmann, then, have a common grounding in Marxist philosophy. But Moltmann's criticism of Tillich turns on the problem of Christian experience and political identity. Tillich, like so many other theologians has, in Moltmann's view, succumbed to Augustinian and modern

¹⁰⁶Theology, 86.

individualistic anthropologies and, in so doing, has lost the true Christian political identity to extra-biblical modes of understanding human nature.¹⁰⁷ I believe that Moltmann's characterization and criticism of Tillich's social ethic is overstated. At the heart of Tillich's theology is the demand that Christians work to change the conditions that cause human suffering and alienation.¹⁰⁸

But what is important here is that it is not Tillich's general method to which Moltmann objects. Rather, it is the danger of individualism inherent in Tillich's concept of experience. This is fundamentally different from Lindbeck's critique of Tillich and all other "experiential expressivists." According to the cultural-linguistic model of religion, any theological method which employs an experiential interpretive device is fundamentally flawed because it eclipses the language of the tradition. And as

¹⁰⁷Moltmann's criticism of Tillich's theological over-emphasis on subjective experience is also noted by Randall B. Bush in Recent Ideas of Divine Conflict: The Influences of Psychological and Sociological Theories of Divine Conflict Upon the Trinitarian Theology of Paul Tillich and Jürgen Moltmann, Distinguished Dissertation Series, vol. 9 (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), 181.

¹⁰⁸See Daniel L. Leister, "The Social Ethic in Paul Tillich's Theology" (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1986).

we saw in Chapter I, Lindbeck classifies Tillich as one such experiential expressivist. But Moltmann's criticism of Tillich does not make this assumption. It is not the liberal method employed by Tillich to which Moltmann takes exception, but the fact that Tillich uses the wrong concept of experience in the modern setting. This fact suggests a fundamental difference between Moltmann's postmodern theological method and Lindbeck's. That is, whereas Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion rules out experiential interpretive frameworks, Moltmann's postmodern approach to theology necessitates the formulation of a proper experiential framework.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that Moltmann's political theology reveals both consistencies and inconsistencies with the cultural-linguistic model of religion. On the one hand, we saw that Moltmann and Lindbeck agree that Christianity must maintain its distinction from modern culture. I showed this in the examination of Moltmann's thoughts on the Christian relevance\identity dilemma. We further confirmed that Moltmann and Lindbeck agree that Christians must not assimilate the individualism of modernity. This was made

clear in our analysis of Moltmann's critique of Tillich's theology.

On the other hand, despite these agreements, we raised the question about the extent to which Moltmann's approach to theology departs from the cultural-linguistic model of religion. The question was raised in our analysis of Moltmann's appropriation of Marxist ideas. I showed that Marx's concept of alienation in modern industrial society, his critique of religion, and call for revolutionary change are important influences on Moltmann's theology. The examination of Tillich's critique of Moltmann also suggested that Moltmann's approach to theology is not consistent with the cultural-linguistic model of religion. I attempted to show that, unlike Lindbeck, it is not Tillich's method to which Moltmann takes exception, but the specific concept of experience that Tillich employs, which, in Moltmann's eyes runs the risk of subjective individualism.

Hence, while it is difficult say with certainty whether or not Moltmann's theology exceeds the cultural-linguistic limitation on the "absorption" of extra-biblical ideas, Moltmann's reliance on Marxist categories, in my opinion, plays much more of a determining role than the model allows. Someone with a more generous interpretation

of Lindbeck's paradigm might disagree, and assert that Moltmann's absorption of Marxism stays within the bounds set by Lindbeck. However, such an interpretation, in my view, disregards the main purpose for Lindbeck's formulation of the model: to act as a guide for postmodern theologies that articulate a Christian worldview and set of experiences which flow from the particular textual language of Christianity, not-extra-biblical frameworks. Further, it ignores the fact that Moltmann does not reject the formulation and use of experiential and philosophical frameworks for interpreting the Christian Scriptures. Even though Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion permits a limited use of extra-biblical ideas, it clearly does not advocate the interpretation of biblical language through extra-biblical frameworks. We will continue to examine Moltmann's pursuit of an experiential framework in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

MYSTICISM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN THE MODERN WORLD

Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine Moltmann's interest in mystical theology and the way it informs his concept of God. The Christian language with which we will be dealing in this chapter is the crucifixion of Jesus, the Trinity and the Spirit. The experiences Moltmann appeals to come, especially, from the passion mysticism of certain select Christian and Jewish figures, such as Teresa of Avila, Miguel Unamuno, Gershom Scholem, and Abraham Heschel, each of whom have something to say about God's willingness to suffer in and with creation. First, I will show how Moltmann further distances himself from dialectical theology's critique of religion. We will then have to examine the type of mysticism that he rejects. Finally, we will examine Moltmann's experience-based concept of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit and the way they speaks to the problems of the modern world. In the conclusion, I will

once again examine the extent to which Moltmann's ideas on experience correspond to Lindbeck's.

1. The Continuing Search for Religious Experience and the Rejection of Barth's Critique of Mysticism

As we saw in Chapter I, dialectical theology's critique of religion influences Moltmann's assessment of the experiences that arise from modern culture. Modern experience, for him, is individualistic, destructive, and alienating. Christian experience, as Moltmann formulates it, is anti-individualistic, hope-filled, and created in the process of working for human justice. But with his new interest in mysticism, he came to believe that the critique of religion seems to be more of a burden to his theology than a help. There is a contradiction inherent in the attempt to formulate a mystical theology within a theological tradition that utterly rejects any talk of religious experience. Moltmann came to recognize this as he continued his exploration of religious experience. In 1980, he makes a statement that signals his radical break from this tradition:

in the search for religious experience . . . the Christian faith cannot choose to distance itself from religion. Christianity is now challenged by a revitalization of religion. Those critics of the church

who had reckoned with "a death of religion" (Marx, Lenin) miscalculated. Those who had hoped for a "religionless Christianity" (Bonhoeffer) were disappointed If the religious phenomena we experience today witnesses to anything, it is the profound truth of Berdyaev: "Man is incurably religious."¹

Moltmann takes up the challenge of the search for religious experience with a caution that is characteristic of his dialectical theology background. Christianity, he states, "must bring its healing and liberating power to these various religious phenomena," but it must not "identify" with them.² Nonetheless, in his search for a fresh understanding of Christian experience, Moltmann makes very clear that he also distances himself from the past Protestant critique of religious experience and begins to look more closely at the theological possibilities in mysticism. In a 1984 article comparing the mysticism of Teresa of Avila and Martin Luther, Moltmann states that some Protestant theologians had dismissed mysticism as "nonsense and women's business," a view which he believes left many Christians with a "colorless world, without transcendence or

¹Jürgen Moltmann, "The Challenge of Religion in the 80's," Christian Century, 97 (1980): 465-468.

²"Challenge," 465.

light from above."³ His critique is directed especially at the dialectical theologians, who thought that mysticism was irreconcilable with the Gospel, the sacraments and Christ. But now Moltmann can ask, "is the Protestant faith then fundamentally opposed to mysticism"?, and emphatically answers, "that is out of the question!"⁴ This question and answer bring him boldly to the assertion concerning the common root of the separate Christian confessions: "the one fellowship of the Spirit has always existed through all the years of schism, that is, the movement, the experience, and the theology of mysticism."⁵

³Jürgen Moltmann, "Teresa of Avila and Martin Luther: The Turn to the Mysticism of the Cross," Studies in Religion, 13/3 (Summer 1984): 267.

⁴See "Teresa," 267.

⁵"Teresa," 266. While discussing his interest in mysticism at his Tübingen home in 1989, Moltmann strongly recommended that I read Walter Capps' 1976 comparison of Moltmann's thought with that of the mystic, Thomas Merton. There, Capps draws out similarities between Moltmann and Merton, but could not have anticipated the prominent role that mysticism would come to play in Moltmann's theology. Capps states that "after being political theology, Moltmann's theology also became a manner of deep religious inwardness, and Merton's contemplative temper has provoked large and profound social and political responses. . . . The prime difference is that Merton is a mystic and Moltmann is not." See Walter Capps, Hope Against Hope: Moltmann to Merton in One Theological Decade (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 159-160. See also Moltmann's statements concerning the centrality of mysticism in some more recent writings, e.g., "Theology in Transition- to What?" and "The

We will have to find out if Moltmann's search for religious experience and repudiation of dialectical theology's critique of mysticism means that Moltmann is, to use the terms of our interpretive framework, an experiential expressivist, or whether his views are informed primarily by the language of the Christian tradition. But before we examine the specific sources of mysticism which Moltmann uses we need to examine the type of mysticism that he rejects.

2. Moltmann's Rejection of Subjectivist Mysticism

Moltmann's schooling in the dialectical tradition, with its rejection of all human experience, naturally made him suspicious of mysticism in the earlier phase of his writing. But one of his central criticisms of human experience has remained constant in his theology, namely, the critique of individualism. In his view, Western mysticism has had a tendency to be subjectivist and disconnected from political matters. Certain forms of mysticism, he observes, are irrelevant to the political problems facing modern people. An analysis of his critique

Interlaced Times in History," in Paradigm Change in Theology, eds. Hans Küng, David Tracy (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 223, 339.

of Gerhard Teerstegen, Augustine and Karl Rahner will clarify Moltmann's suspicion of subjectivistic mysticism.

In one of his first published articles, Moltmann criticizes the subjectivist nature of Gerhard Tersteegen's mysticism of the cross.⁶ He claims that Tersteegen's "reformation theology is, in reality, a reformation that takes place in the heart of the individual" and has nothing to do with the reformation of the church.⁷ Tersteegen talks, instead, of a subjective "*Erweckung*," a process whereby God and the soul become one. This union between God and individuals is the only means by which people can have knowledge of the divine. They must, in other words, become like God to know God because only like beings can know each other. If humans and God were radically distinct, then no

⁶This article appears prior to Moltmann's interest in political theology and is concerned with questions of importance to the Reformed tradition, i.e., the nature of reform, the question of whether Tersteegen was more influenced by philosophy or biblical matters and other questions. See Jürgen Moltmann, "Grundzüge mystischer Theologie bei Gerhard Tersteegen," Evangelische Theologie 16 (1956): 205-224.

⁷Moltmann states that "here the program of his Christianity is not the overcoming of ecclesiological misunderstanding, but to help with the overcoming of the misunderstandings in the history of salvation external to the rules and support of the faith in general Not the '*ecclesia semper reformanda*' but the "revival" of general and subjective religious experience is what Tersteegen wanted to help with." See "Tersteegen," 206, 207.

knowledge of the divine would be possible.⁸ In order for people to understand God they must return to the inner part of the soul where God dwells away from the world.⁹ In Moltmann's view, this interior mysticism is a result of neo-Platonic influences, which prompted Moltmann to ask whether biblical considerations are eclipsed by philosophical considerations in Tersteegen's thought. Moltmann states that

it is curious and also suspect, that he is able to speak in long verses of philosophical concepts, without mentioning Biblical concepts. He speaks of nature before he speaks of God.¹⁰

Tersteegen was aware of this problem and attempted to solve it, according to Moltmann, through a mystical theology of the cross. For Tersteegen, the destruction of Jesus on the cross is a biblical symbol of the destruction of old habits and ways of life. But with this destruction emerge new possibilities for human life in the Christian

⁸Moltmann states that "Tersteegen held both firmly together: God and the soul are basically one thing, because only like is able to know like." "Tersteegen," 211.

⁹"Wie im Neuplatonismus die Emanationen in einer regressus-Bewegung auf das All-Eine begriffen sind . . . -so drängt die Tersteegensche "Seele" zur Gottheit zurück, um darin zu versinken." "Tersteegen," 211.

¹⁰"Tersteegen," 214, 215.

church¹¹ But the new life which Tersteegen's mysticism of the cross proposes seemed to Moltmann too individualistic, making Tersteegen a Leibnitzian "child of his time":

It is the religious autonomy of the individual that he preaches This human being exists in his/her self as a "windowless monad", in whom God is reflected in solitariness, as Leibnitz taught and Tersteegen is able very strikingly to formulate.¹²

Moltmann also thinks that Augustine's mysticism is inadequate in the modern context. The problem, as he wrote about it in his 1965 work, The Theology of Hope, was that the mystical experience described by Augustine promised a union with the divine that is realized too easily.¹³ It seemed to Moltmann that this union is assured without having to be mediated in the real struggles of human existence. This conflicts with Moltmann's insistence that religious experience should be grounded in historical praxis. As we

¹¹"Tersteegen," 219.

¹²"Tersteegen," 224.

¹³See TH, 62. Augustine states that it would be unfortunate "if in human experience there were no intermediate stage whereby man might strive to rise above his earthly life and reach likeness to God. . . . [But] God . . . has used the mutable creation . . . to remind the soul of its original and perfect nature and so has come to the aid of individual men and indeed the whole human race. That is the challenge of the Christian religion in our time." See Louis O. Mink's introduction to St. Augustine, Of True Religion, trans. J.H.S. Burleigh (South Bend Indiana: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1959), 18,19.

have seen throughout this dissertation, Christian experience, for Moltmann, must be realized in the course of changing human society; if it is not, then it is not authentic Christian experience. In Moltmann's view, Augustine seemed to be saying that, through a life of prayer and meditation, one could realize union with God without necessarily taking part in the work of creating a more just and livable world. In other words, there seemed, in Moltmann's view, to be the danger of a disjunction between the realm of spirituality and the realm of physical existence in Augustine's theology:

The identification of the hiddenness of God and of man's self, or his soul . . . presupposes already in Augustine that for himself man is immediately given and that he therefore can be immediately certain of himself, whereas the world . . . [is] accessible to him only through the mediation of the senses.¹⁴

In Augustine's mysticism, it is possible that people could enjoy the blissful experience of the presence of God, even while war, unemployment, genocide, and destruction of nature witness to the fact that the world is dangerous and in need of redemption. For Moltmann, this is unacceptable. The present unjust condition of human society means that the revelation of God can only be realized fully if people are

¹⁴See TH, 62.

working to change the ills of modern culture. In Moltmann's eyes, it makes matters worse that this unmediated knowledge of God, for Augustine, is the most secure knowledge we have.

Moltmann states that

in Augustinian mysticism, however, the correlation of knowledge of God and self knowledge could be taken as immediate and unmediated In the Reformers, too, as already in Augustine, this concentration on the knowledge of God and of self leaves no room over for any consideration of God's world."¹⁵

Moltmann sees many of the same problems in Karl Rahner's theology. His critique is aimed at the mystical anthropology that forms the foundation of Rahner's theology. In Rahner's anthropology, human beings, at the very core of their existence, are creative beings, who are continually setting and accomplishing new goals. Rahner calls this character of human nature the "infinite horizon" of a person which "permeates everyday activities Man experiences himself as infinite possibility because in practice and in theory he necessarily places every sought-after result in question."¹⁶ The ability to "transcend" all present accomplishments and move toward new goals means that people

¹⁵TH, 63.

¹⁶Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 32.

are "self-transcending" beings.¹⁷ The fact of transcendence in human life is an indication of the presence of the divine. According to Rahner this "transcendental experience is always divine experience in the midst of everyday life."¹⁸ It is, in other words, the mystical experience of God. Rahner's mystical anthropology is derived from the existentialism of Hegel, Buber, Heidegger and many others. As we have seen repeatedly throughout this dissertation, Moltmann thinks that modernism and existentialism define all of reality "in anthropocentric terms, . . . is aimed at subjective utility" and is disinterested in communal affairs.¹⁹ Rahner's existential mystical anthropology is,

¹⁷Rahner states that "we must emphasize again and again that the transcendence meant here is not the thematically conceptualized "concept" of transcendence in which transcendence is reflected upon objectively. It is rather the a priori openness of the subject to being as such, which is present precisely when a person experiences himself as involved in the multiplicity of cares and concerns and fears and hopes of his everyday world." See Foundations, 34,35. See also Karl Rahner, The Spirit in the Church (London: Burns and Oates, 1979), 4,5, and TI vol. 18, 233-240.

¹⁸See Life, 15.

¹⁹Moltmann says that the modern world is marked by the "turn to anthropology" (Martin Buber's phrase), modern man's revolt into subjectivity (Heidegger). . . . The modern world detached itself from the orders and rhythms of nature, and is now constructed solely according to human notions and interests." Hegel took this up theologically early on: "This new [human] awareness is the principle of subjectivity . . .

in Moltmann's eyes, subject to the same critique.²⁰

Since this mysticism is the basis of Rahner's view of grace, christology, the Trinity, and cosmology they are all judged inadequate by Moltmann. "Grace," in Rahner's theology, is the act of God sustaining people as they work toward ever new goals. People experience grace- the workings of the Spirit of God -when, in pursuit of their creative goals, they persist to live with courage and determination and when failure and absurdity seem to constitute the nature of their existence.²¹ The potential to carry on amidst the absurdities of life indicates that the divine "self utterance" is alive in creation and resides in all human beings as their "darkest mystery."²² This mystical grace is communicated to people in the mystery of the incarnation- the God-man Jesus -which must be understood in the same way as we understand the experience

. Nature is becoming their object." See WJC, 55-58.

²⁰WJC, 62,63.

²¹Rahner states the following: "Let us take, for instance, someone who is dissatisfied with his life, who cannot make the good will, errors, guilt and fatalities of his life fit together This man surrenders himself to God . . . to the hope of an incalculable ultimate reconciliation of his existence in which he whom we call God dwells." See Life, 18,19.

²²See TI, vol. 6, 116,117.

of God in all human beings. In other words, if we can understand how God was present in the life of Christ we have come a long way in understanding how the divine is present in all human beings. Rahner states that

Christology is the end and beginning of anthropology . . . Of the God whom we confess in Christ we must say that he is precisely where we are, and can only be found there."²³

Further, Rahner states that

if God himself is man and remains so forever, if all theology is therefore eternally an anthropology, if man is forbidden to belittle himself because to do so would be to belittle God; and if this God remains the insoluble mystery, man is forever the articulate mystery of God.²⁴

This view of grace and christology, Moltmann asserts, follows the medieval Christian idea that grace does not destroy but presupposes and perfects nature (*gracia non desturit, sed praesupponit et perfecit naturam*). This means that to be Christian is already to be steeped in the perfection of personhood. Moltmann believes this sense of Christian perfection in Rahner's theology contains the same problem as Augustine's mysticism: it is realized too easily in the inner life of an individual, without being mediated in the struggles of human history. Moltmann states that

²³TI, vol. 4, 116,117.

²⁴TI, vol. 4, 116,117.

Rahner

sets christology in the framework of anthropology, as its perfecting The incarnation of God is 'the uniquely supreme case of the actualization of man's nature in general'. . . . [The] 'Idea of Christ' is therefore already in the general makeup of human existence By virtue of the idea of Christ, everyone can recognize the Christ in Jesus, if they discover in Jesus the unique, supreme and perfect fulfillment of human existence in its complete commitment to God.²⁵

Here is the point. For Moltmann, the mysticism of Tersteegen, Augustine and Rahner all are inadequate in the modern context. All of them are subjectivist and offer the promise of union with God that could sidestep political, social and cultural matters. Moltmann adamantly asserts that Christian religious experience is incomplete if it is not being expressed in the work to change the conditions of suffering, as we have seen repeatedly above. Christian experience and this mission must of necessity go together; if they do not, the experience is not Christian experience as it should be understood. The mysticism of these theologians offer union with God which, in Moltmann's estimation, could too easily result in a self-fulfilling, personal relationship with God that leaves everyone else and the world out of account. Of course, this is Moltmann's

²⁵See WJC, 61, 62.

characterization of Tersteegen, Augustine and Rahner. He ignores, for example, any of Augustine's writings on social ethics and those of theologians who have been able to deduce a social ethic from his work.²⁶ It also needs to be pointed out that Rahner's ecclesiology contains a compelling social ethic, not at all indifferent to social-political responsibility, as suggested by Moltmann.²⁷ Rahner believes that if we really are beings oriented to the eternal goal of God then our whole being, including our communal dimension, must be included. This means that our communal dimension, which is manifested in the Christian church, must be

²⁶Paul Tillich states, for example, that "the Augustinian interpretation of sin as love turned away from God to self can be accepted by Protestant theology. . . . Love of one's self and one's world is distorted if it does not penetrate through the finite to its infinite ground." Tillich also states that "when Augustine spoke of *"massa perditionis,"* "a mass of perdition," he expressed the insight, in opposition to Pelagius, that man in his estrangement is a social being and cannot be isolated into a subject able to make free decision." See Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp 48, 56.

²⁷Travis Kroeker points out the seeds of a political theology in Rahner's later ecclesiology: "Rahner discusses the practical mission of the church, not so much in the context of Christology as in his more recent reflections on ecclesiology and particularly on the relation between church and the world." Peter T. Kroeker, "Karl Rahner's concept of Revelation: A Convergence of Traditional, Biblical and Contemporary Theology" (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1983): 125.

considered when we think about salvation.²⁸ The Church is the place where the revelation of Christ receives its normative and official thematization: The Church confronts the Christian in his/her subjectivity as an "objective norm" which is authoritative and brings one out of personal religiosity.²⁹ Nonetheless, Moltmann is concerned that these mystical theologies could too easily slip into irrelevant subjectivism.

I think we can say, at this point, that Moltmann and Lindbeck have something in common, namely, that they both reject concepts of experience that are subjectivist and individualistic. Recall in Chapter I that I showed Lindbeck thought experiential expressivists tended to focus on subjective experience, rather than communally formed language. But the similarities may end here because Moltmann continues to search for a concept of mystical experience that is relevant to the concerns of contemporary

²⁸Rahner was against early 20th century religion of private interiority with its escape from the rigours of historical existence and love of neighbour in political and ecclesial existence. See Foundations, 323.

²⁹"Because revelation and dogma primarily exist as the faith of the church, dogmatic theology from the start is ecclesiastical science." See Rahner, Karl, ed. Sacramentum Mundi (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968-1970), s.v., Karl Rahner "Dogma," 108.

culture. He does not search the Scriptures first for this experience but appeals to those in the Judeo-Christian tradition who have cultivated a passion mysticism. He uses their views on experiences to reunderstand the biblical picture of God. Does this mean he is an experiential expressivist? Is the mysticism that he uses to undergird his theology predominantly informed by the language of the Scriptures? We need to analyze the mysticism to which Moltmann appeals in order to answer these questions?

3. The Mysticism of the Passion of God

Moltmann embraces mystical theologies that affirm God's passionate involvement with human beings. He believes that if God can be understood to be affected by the suffering of all created beings- to be passionately involved in their existence -then Christians too might share in the experience of God and embrace the sufferings and needs of other human beings. For this to happen, people's experience of God must be shaped by God's experience of people. An analysis of Moltmann's appropriation of some key Christian and Jewish mystics will illustrate his meaning.

Moltmann believes that Miguel de Unamuno's mysticism of the cross captures the nature of God's passion for

people. Unamuno sees the suffering of God in the cross of Christ as an alternative to the "modern concept of God," which posits a God who is "incapable of suffering anything."³⁰ He proposes a sort of metaphysics of suffering underlying existence to support his views of the passion of God. He writes that the "tragic sense of life" is the "fundamental existential experience" of human beings.³¹ The ultimate tragedy in human existence lies in the contradictory fact that people seek life even though they are destined to die. God too, according to Unamuno, has chosen to enter into this tragic situation of suffering and death experienced by all human beings. Christ experienced the tragedy of suffering and death, which, according to Moltmann, is the foundation upon which "Unamuno developed

³⁰Miguel de Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations, Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno, trans. Anthony Kerrigan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 184. Moltmann claims, however, that "Unamuno does preserve 'natural theology's' universal claim; he applies that claim to the theology of the cross, using it to evolve his universal theology of pain, which we might describe as panentheistic." See TKG, 37, 38.

³¹TKG, 36. Unamuno states that "some readers may see a basic contradiction in everything I am saying, as I long on the one hand for unending life, and on the other hand claim that this life is devoid of the value assigned to it." See Tragic, 17.

his theology of the infinite sorrow of God."³² This is an alternative to the concepts of God which attempt to assert that God "knew neither love nor hate" and so is "a God without sorrow," who cannot know the suffering of people.³³ In contrast, Unamuno believes God has entered into the suffering of human existence, "participates" in the world and is in the same evolutionary process that "comes about through the experience of pain."³⁴ By entering into the suffering of the world, God can also share in the "deliverance" from the contradiction in the world.³⁵

Moltmann also embraces the idea of the suffering God in the mysticism of Teresa of Avila and Martin Luther. Their mysticisms of the cross are an alternative to what Moltmann refers to as "transcendental meditation," the attempt to "empty the soul of all images . . . in order to sink oneself into God."³⁶ Meditation on the suffering of Christ prevents Christians from falling into this easy identification with God. He believes that Teresa's

³²TKG, 37.

³³See Tragic, 184.

³⁴See TKG, 39.

³⁵TKG, 39.

³⁶See "Teresa," 271, 272.

meditations on the suffering of Christ will help Christians avoid this. He quotes Teresa's rejection of "transcendental meditation" for the meditation on the humanity of Christ:

It is said for the more advanced all images obstruct and inhibit perfect contemplation, even those dealing with the humanity of Christ [But] to divorce oneself completely from Christ . . . I cannot allow.³⁷

Luther also rejected meditation that posited a "direct relationship between God and the soul" by rejecting all attempts to conform to Christ through "*imitatio Christi*" or "'role model Christology'."³⁸ Luther came to realize the impossibility of gaining Christ-likeness and turned instead to meditation on the suffering of Christ which teaches people not to fear death and to bear our sufferings as Christ did.

According to Moltmann, the mysticism of the cross of Teresa and Luther leads to Christian responsibility for the world. As one grows more in knowledge of God and the self through meditation on Christ, one finds oneself in a

³⁷"Teresa," 272.

³⁸"Teresa," 273. However, one wonders how Moltmann can reconcile this rejection with these words of Luther as he comments on Romans 8:14. "[God] pours himself and his dear son Christ into us and draws us into himself, so that he is completely *vermenschet* (i.e., incarnated) and we are completely *vergottet* (i.e., deified)." Bodensieck, Julius, ed. The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, s.v. "Mystical Union," by August Kimme, 1689.

relationship of friendship with God. Along with this friendship there comes naturally a sharing in the "rule and responsibility of God for the world."³⁹ Moltmann points out that the theme of friendship and responsibility was important in the Gospel:

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus was called 'a friend of sinners and tax collectors' (7:34). This was meant to be an insult, but it also nicely expresses Jesus' unbiased attitude with respect to these downtrodden and despised people: he came and offered them his friendship.⁴⁰

Moltmann also finds the Jewish mystical writings of Abraham Heschel and Gershom Scholem helpful in his attempt to formulate the passion of God. Heschel contrasted the Hebrew Bible's prophetic "understanding" of God with mere theoretical knowledge of God. In his view, the prophets' knowledge of God is relational and not abstract and theoretical. Their knowledge of God was more like a knowledge in "fellowship," which is a sharp contrast to

³⁹"Teresa," 276. Moltmann, like others, are attempting to give a praxis orientation to Spanish mysticism, which can be subjectivist. Ignatius of Loyola, for example, gave a praxis orientation to Spanish mysticism, providing "a real corrective . . . to every mysticism seeking to enclose itself in a purely contemplative style of life." Rahner, Karl, ed. Sacramentum Mundi (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968-1970), s.v., "Mysticism," by E. Ecole Fracaise, 150. See also similar comments about Spanish mysticism by Heribert Fischer in the same article, 141.

⁴⁰"Teresa," p. 277.

knowledge of God obtained by "syllogism, analysis, or induction," in other words, by naked, abstract reasoning.⁴¹ The prophet understands God in terms of God's "pathos" or intimate concern for human beings. This "pathetic God" (in the special sense of the term) reacts to human actions in history and so is not the "Wholly Other" God, whose being is antithetical to human existence. Rather, this God has a covenant of reciprocity and grace with human beings:

God "does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath. . . . The prophets encountered . . . not the numen, but the fullness of God's grace."⁴²

Heschel contrasts this "pathetic" God of the prophets, with the "apathetic" and fear eliciting concepts of divinity among the world religions in order to further illustrate and highlight God's involvement with the chosen people. The God of the prophets is not like Plato's God "of the Good," who is different "in nature from everything else"

⁴¹Heschel states that the "prophets received their knowledge of God either through the moment of revelation or through intuitive contemplation of the surrounding world To the prophet knowledge of God was fellowship with him, not attained by syllogism analysis or induction, but by living together." See Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1955), 222, 223.

⁴²Prophets, 224, 227.

nor Aristotle's "self sufficient God" on whom we are dependant, but who is not dependent upon us.⁴³ Further, Heschel asserts that the idea of a "self sufficient and Wholly Other" divinity can be found in the "indifferent" God of Hinduism, the "impersonal" and "non-communicative" Tao, the "omnipotent" and "absolute" God of Islam, and "threatening" gods of Primitive (sic) religions.⁴⁴ In contrast to these gods of "fear and trembling," "mysterious perfection" and "absolute will," the people of Israel are in a relationship with a concerned, loving, and involved God. Heschel believes that it would be easy to become an unconcerned and apathetic human being if one's God were

⁴³Prophets, 232. In "Philebus" Plato states that God "differs in nature from everything else in that the being who possesses it always and in all respects has the most perfect sufficiency and is never in need of any other thing." Aristotle states in "Eudemian Ethics": "One who is self sufficient can have no need of others, nor of their affection, nor of their social life This is especially evident in the case of a god."

⁴⁴Heschel borrows from Heinrich Zimmer who states that the Hindu god "permits and takes benign delight in the differing illusions that beset the beclouded mind of *Homo Sapiens* . . . , he is also at the same time supremely indifferent, absolutely unconcerned." Similarly, the Tao Te Ching says, "Heaven and earth do not act from any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with." Heschel states of the Primal Gods that "the power of the gods is felt as a constant threat Their dealings with man are not motivated by considerations for his welfare." Prophets, 234-236, 241.

unconcerned and apathetic. This is not the case with the God of the religion of Israel. Rather, this religion is characterized by dedication and co-operation between God and human beings. This is not a mere "religion of sentimentality" but one that "demands action against social injustice and alienation from God."⁴⁵

In his book, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, Gershom Scholem examines the development of the Shekinah in Hasidism and Kabbalism. The concept of Shekinah was the Jewish mystics' answer to the question of revelation posed by "biblical anthropomorphisms and appearances of God in the vision of the prophets."⁴⁶ The Shekinah is the "great radiance"; it is the holy spirit and voice of the hidden God revealed to human beings.⁴⁷ The Kabbalist mystics' feminine understanding of the Shekinah has a communal component: The feminine Shekinah became "identified with the 'Community of

⁴⁵Prophets, 307, 309.

⁴⁶Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 111.

⁴⁷Scholem states the following: "'A created light, the first of all creations'. This Kovad is 'the great radiance called Shekinah' and it is identical with the ruah ha-kodesh, the 'holy spirit', out of whom there speaks the voice and word of God. This primeval light of divine glory is later revealed to the prophets and mystics in various forms and modifications." See Jewish, 111.

Israel', [which was] a sort of invisible church, representing the mystical idea of Israel in its bond with God and in its bliss but also in its suffering and in its exile."⁴⁸ Scholem believes that the Kabbalists experienced a blissful harmonious "original unity" between the Shekinah and God which was destroyed by sin. This separation between God and His Shekinah "is healed or mended by the religious acts of Israel: Torah, mitzwoth and prayer."⁴⁹

In the Crucified God Moltmann takes up these views of Jewish mysticism to help take Christianity beyond the "apathetic theology of Greek antiquity" in order to recover a "pathetic theology."⁵⁰ Moltmann describes Plato's God, which is rooted in the metaphysics of the "Good," as one that does not experience emotions, such as sorrow, nor

⁴⁸Scholem believes the idea has roots in the Gnostic myth, where 'lower Sophia' or "'daughter of light' . . . falls into the abyss of matter. In close parallel with this idea, the Shekinah . . . becomes the daughter who, although her home is the 'form of light', must wander into far lands." The female Shekinah "marks the sphere which is first to open itself to the mediation of the mystic, the entrance to that inwardness of God." Jewish, 229,230.

⁴⁹In some forms of Kabbalism "the quality of poverty is attributed to the Shekinah, in other words, to God Himself The alms from which the poor live symbolically reflect this mystical state of the Shekinah." Jewish, 230,231,233.

⁵⁰CG, 267,268.

interacts with human beings. In Moltmann's view, Plato thought the "envious, vengeful and punitive" gods of Greek poetry were less than God-like, because they experienced human passion. Plato's God is beyond such passions, is perfect, unchanging and unneedful of friendship. According to Moltmann, the "wise" person of Greek antiquity attempted to become like the apathetic God of Stoicism in order to live a life free from passion, sensation and need of others.⁵¹ For Moltmann, this attitude does not lead to a political theology, which demands that people become passionately involved in the suffering of others. The person who worships the apathetic God "becomes a *homo apatheticus*," one who can remain disinterested in the lives of others. Those who worship the pathetic God become "*homo sympatheticus*," and are more likely to become people who take responsibility for easing the suffering of others. According to Moltmann

the divine pathos is reflected in man's participation, his hopes and his prayers In the pathos of God, man is filled with the spirit of God. He becomes the friend of God, feels sympathy with God and for God. He

⁵¹The "wise man . . . must overcome needs and drives and lead a life free from trouble and fear, anger and love, in *apethia*. He will find rest in God in the thinking of thought. He will find the eternal presence of God or in the eternal will." CG, 268,269.

does not enter into a mystical union but a sympathetic union with God. He is angry with God's wrath. He suffers with God's suffering. He loves with God's love. He hopes with God's hope.⁵²

The God who suffers with the Jewish people is a God of "self-humiliation" who enters into the sufferings, longings and hopes of Israel. Because of this, one can say that there is, for the Jews, a dipolar nature in God. God is both beyond human beings and at the same time identifies with human beings: "God dwells in heaven and among those who are of a humble and contrite heart He is lofty and yet looks upon the lowly. So he is present in two opposite ways."⁵³ Moltmann asserts that the Jewish people enter into the di-polar nature of God through the covenant, but, since Christians are not part of this covenant, the same self-humiliating God is mediated to them in the revelation of the Cross, introducing the Trinity into the already dipolar

⁵²CG, 272. "The human being develops his/her humanity in proportion to his/her experience of God The experience of divine pathos opens human beings for full love." See also Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann, Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine trans. Leonard Swindler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 48.

⁵³"God already renounces his honor in the beginning of creation Like a servant he bears Israel and its sins on his back These [are] accommodations of God to the limits of human history." CG, 273. This "co-suffering of God" and "self distinction of God", Moltmann says, "is the most profound commonality that there can be between Jews and Christians." Jewish Monotheism, 50.

nature of God:

The revelation of God in his self-emptying in the crucified Christ . . . opens up God's sphere of life to the development of man in him. This situation is related to the situation of the Jews, for the pathos of God perceived and proclaimed by the prophets is the presupposition for the Christian understanding of the living God from the passion of Christ Where for Israel immediacy with God is grounded upon the presupposition of the covenant for Christians it is Christ himself who communicates the fatherhood of God and the power of the Spirit.⁵⁴

Since in self-emptying God enters into the situation of human beings, Moltmann believes that people need not come to God by "religious thoughts and feelings," "obedience to a law" or "through constant striving." Rather, since God died the death of the godforsaken and abandoned, people can readily identify with this God: "the incarnate God is present, and can be experienced, in the humanity of every man, and in full human corporeality."⁵⁵ Moltmann asserts that human beings are involved in a "realistic divination"

⁵⁴CG, 275. This idea of the relationship between the di-polar nature of the Jewish God of the Covenant and the Christian Trinity is also developed elsewhere by Moltmann. Moltmann states that Heschel's "Jewish experience of God cannot be a simple monotheism" because of the "self-communication of God God the Ruler calls the prophets. The prophet becomes an *ish-ha-ruac*, a human being driven by the Spirit." Moltmann says this is a communication of God with God which implies a "self-distinction of God." Jewish Monotheism, 49.

⁵⁵CG, 276.

when they live in Christ; they "live in God and from God."⁵⁶ This is not a theology that "would have to ignore the negative element in the world" but one that accepts the negative element in God. Since God is present, even in the suffering of the world, Moltmann can claim that "even Auschwitz is in God himself."⁵⁷

This Jewish and Christian "passion mysticism," in Moltmann's view, comes to its greatest expression today in the poor, sick and enslaved.⁵⁸ The God who is abandoned and suffers can be recognized, can be experienced, by those who suffer and are abandoned, such as Central American Indians, Mestizos, and Black North Americans, who see the suffering of Christ as "a symbol of their own sufferings."⁵⁹ As we saw in the last chapter, the identification with the suffering of Christ through this mysticism of the cross is not to be understood as resignation or justification for

⁵⁶CG, 277.

⁵⁷CG, 277, 278.

⁵⁸"This spiritual absorption into the sufferings of Christ led, as late medieval mysticism said, to a conformity of the soul with the crucified Christ One did not achieve fellowship with Christ by sacrifice and good works, but by mystical suffering and resignation The *via negativa* of mystical theology internalized or even replaced the *via analogia*." See CG, 45.

⁵⁹CG, 46.

suffering which does not change the conditions that cause suffering. Rather, this expression of misery is also a protest against misery. Those who follow Christ by accepting his suffering must also accept his political mission of working for social justice.⁶⁰ Thus, the suffering of Christ is aimed at overcoming the suffering of others. In Moltmann's words, "suffering is overcome by suffering and wounds are healed by wounds."⁶¹ Here is the mysticism of the cross Moltmann was searching for, one that is politically relevant, that moves people to change the conditions of alienation and suffering and avoids the modern propensity for self-concerned individualism. Thus, Moltmann can claim with Marx that "'Religion is the groaning of the oppressed creation, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of situations where there is no spirit'."⁶²

The point of this section is to explore a concept of experience that is central to Moltmann's theology. Now that

⁶⁰People "do not become imitators of his sufferings until they accept his mission and actively follow him The church of the crucified Christ must take sides in the social and political conflicts going on about it and in which it is involved, and must be prepared to join and form parties." CG, 51,53.

⁶¹CG, 45.

⁶²CG, 48.

we have an idea of how he understands experience, we can raise the question about the extent to which it coincides with the cultural-linguistic demand that Christian language, and not experience, should be the central focus of theology. One thing that needs to be pointed out is that Moltmann's idea of experience is not the same as the experiences criticized by Lindbeck. For Lindbeck, experiential expressivists are those who employ concepts of experience which come from modern philosophy. Moltmann's views on experience analyzed above are meant to replace modern views of experience. But does the idea of the passionate involvement of God in the suffering and work of Christ, a suffering in which Christians are called to participate qualify as an experience generated by biblical language? Moltmann would certainly say they are consistent with the story of the suffering of Christ in the Bible. However, does the fact that this concept of experience becomes a central interpretive device for Moltmann mean that he takes an approach to theology which is different from that suggested by the cultural-linguistic model of religion? Again, the answer is difficult to determine. However, it must be kept in mind that the concept of experience shown above does help Moltmann understand biblical language and so

acts as an interpretive framework. Further, it must be remembered that Moltmann explicitly states that the search for a concept of religious experience is important to the theological enterprise. This, in my view, is clearly against the basic approach suggested by the cultural-linguistic model.

4. The Trinity in the Modern World

This idea of the suffering of God with and for humanity is the basis for Moltmann's experience-based concept of the Trinity. It is formulated in response to several problems he sees in modern culture. In his 1980 work, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, Moltmann gives three reasons why, in his view, an experientially-based trinitarian theology is needed today. First, once again, he believes it can speak to the continuing problem of the "modern culture of narcissism." To participate in the life of Christ means to reach out of one's self to embrace the suffering of this world in order to address it. Subjectivism prevents this because it closes people within themselves.⁶³ But a Trinitarian theology shows God's

⁶³Moltmann states that "the modern concept of experience, which has discovered and stressed its subjective components, threatens to transform experience into

passionate interest in and participation in the suffering of people. Second, Moltmann thinks that a mystically based concept of the Trinity will inject some spiritual life into theology of practice. He describes the modern world as one of practical-utility, and believes that theology should also have practical applications. But he also thinks that modern practicality can lead to a repetitive drudgery, a reduction of human life to utility and a spiritless existence. Christian practice, in contrast, should flow out of a life of meditation and prayer so that Christians can rise above the one-dimensional practical nature of modern society. He states that

Christian faith is more than the point from which action takes its bearings. Being a Christian is also characterized by gratitude, joy, praise and adoration. Faith lives in meditation and prayer as well as in practice. Without the *via contemplative* the *via active* quickly becomes debased into activism, falling a victim to the pragmatism of the modern meritocratic society which judges by performance.⁶⁴

Third, Moltmann believes that a trinitarian theology offers Christians a way of thinking and dealing with the world that

experience of the self. . . . The modern culture of subjectivity has long since been in danger of turning into a 'culture of narcissism', which makes the self its own prisoner and supplies it merely with self-repetitions and self-confirmations. It is therefore time for Christian theology to break out of this prison of narcissism." TKG, 5.

⁶⁴TKG, 7.

goes beyond scientific reasoning. For him, scientific knowledge is controlling and dominating knowledge. In the contemporary world, there is a tendency for people to transfer this type of thinking to their relationships with others. He wants Christians to see that trinitarian thinking is not dominating and manipulative but focussed on participation and fellowship:

Where the theological perception of God and his history is concerned, there will be a modern discovery of trinitarian thinking when there is at the same time a fundamental change in modern reason- a change from lordship to fellowship, from conquest to participation, from productivity to receptivity.⁶⁵

Moltmann believes that only a radical change in the vision of the divine can take Christians beyond the subjectivist, utility-oriented and controlling nature of modern thinking. He believes that a monotheistic concept of God, which has informed Christian life in the Western world, has exacerbated and helped perpetuate these aspects of modernity. According to Moltmann, a monotheistic God dwells alone in heaven, removed from the concerns and sufferings of human beings and is a dominating deity, whose existence is unaffected by human action. This view of God, Moltmann asserts, has set the standard for human interaction in the

⁶⁵TKG, 9.

Western world, culminating in modernity. He believes that only a new trinitarian concept of God, one in which relationality and suffering are included, can provide the basis for human action that might address the problems of modernity.

Moltmann's critique of the monotheistic basis for Augustine's, Rahner's and Schleiermacher's theologies will give us an idea of what he sees as the dangers of unqualified monotheism. Moltmann thinks that mysticism and monotheism are dependent upon each other in Augustine's theology. There are, for him, two basic problems with Augustinian monotheism. First, in Moltmann's words, "monotheism in the concept of God and individualism in anthropology" seem to go hand in hand in Augustine's thought.⁶⁶ We have already seen that Moltmann is severely critical of individualistic views of human nature. In Moltmann's view, monotheism, which is heavily influenced by

⁶⁶See GC, 234. Moltmann also says that Augustine rejected the idea that the reflection of the Trinity on earth is the nuclear family (i.e., mother, father & children). The Trinity is one, it is God the Father in his theology: "So Augustine understands the divine plural at this point as singular, to which only a singular can correspond among human beings." Also, "Augustine does not interpret the soul as substance, like Aristotle. He sees it as subject. The spiritual subject exists through self-awareness, self knowledge and self love." CG, 235, 237.

Greek thought⁶⁷, has been the source of Western male, political dominance. The one, powerful and distant male God, according to Moltmann, has reflected and confirmed male dominance in everything from hierarchical political institutions to male-dominated family structures. Augustine's theology, asserts Moltmann, has contributed to Western attitudes of dominance:

Just as God dominates the world so the soul dominates the body . . . [woman is God's] image only under her 'head', the man It is only in domination of man over the woman that this likeness to God acquires social relevance.⁶⁸

Moltmann also sees a connection between human personhood and monotheism in Rahner's mystically-based

⁶⁷Augustine's neo-Platonic background for his mysticism is summarized nicely by William Ralph Inge: 1. the idea that "God is above all that can be said of him . . . [and] is absolutely immutable" helped Augustine formulate his concept of predestination; 2. in the Platonic "*Beauty of God*" Augustine saw the image of humans; 3. "the idea of a World-Soul" helped Augustine "to formulate his own teaching about the mystical union of Christians with Christ; 4. the Platonic concept of the contemplation of truth helped Augustine form his understanding of "the ascent of the soul." William Ralph Inge, Christian Mysticism (London: Methuen and Co., 1918), 128-131.

⁶⁸See GC, 236. Elaine Pagel also has written about the concept of dominance in Augustine's interpretation of Genesis as a true story about "The Fall," which posits the need for the body, women and people to be governed by rationally minded men and a strong government. See also Elaine Pagel, "Adam and Eve and the Serpent in Genesis 1-3," in Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

trinitarian theology. Rahner states that the Christian's "experience of Jesus and the Spirit," is the basis for an understanding of the Trinity.⁶⁹ From this interior "fathomless mystery" of human beings, Rahner believes that the "personhood of God" can be deduced. By understanding God in terms of personhood, people "allow God to be person in the way in which he in fact wants to encounter us and has encountered us in our individual histories, in the depths of our conscience."⁷⁰ According to Rahner, the fact that we can attribute personhood to God solves an important metaphysical problem for theologians. We need not be daunted, he asserts, by the metaphysical problems of the three persons of the Trinity if we understand God from the perspective of our mystical experiences of Jesus and the

⁶⁹"When entering upon the doctrine of the Trinity, we need not hesitate to appeal to our own experience of Jesus and his Spirit in us as given in the history of salvation and faith. For here the immanent Trinity itself is already present. The Trinity is not merely a reality to be expressed in purely doctrinal terms: it takes place in us Both mysteries, that of our grace and that of God in himself are the fathomless mystery." See TI vol. 6, 98.

⁷⁰"If anything at all can be predicated of God the concept of "person hood" must be predicated of him . . . and is true of God only if, in asserting and understanding this statement, we open it to the ineffable darkness of the holy mystery . . . [and] allow this formal assertion to receive its content from our historical experience." See Foundations, 74.

Spirit.⁷¹

Moltmann thinks that Rahner's monotheism and personalistic view of God obscure the trinitarian nature of God. He calls Rahner's mystical views of personhood "extreme individualism: everyone is a self-possessing, self disposing centre of action which sets itself apart from other persons."⁷² The real problem here, according to Moltmann, is that there can be no relationship between the Father and the Son and so "it is impossible to say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son."⁷³ Moltmann thinks that Rahner's mystical trinitarian view is not the biblical "history of the Father Son and Spirit." Rahner's view of God is still stuck, according to Moltmann, in Greek and existential individualism, hardly an adequate view of God for someone, like Moltmann, who is all concerned with responsible relationships. He just cannot see how Rahner's mystical personalistic and monotheistic view of God could provide salvation in concrete history:

The salvation that deifies us has arrived in the

⁷¹See Foundations, 99 and TI vol. 6, 101,102.

⁷²Moltmann states that "in this way Rahner introduces the individualistic idea into the nature of God himself." See TKG, 145,146.

⁷³TKG, 147.

innermost centre of the existence of an individual person Here the absolute subjectivity of God becomes the archetypal image of the mystic subjectivity of the person who withdraws into himself Rahner's reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity ends in the mystic solitariness of God.⁷⁴

According to Moltmann, one of the most important dimensions of God's being is trinitarian "relationality," a view of God which attempts to overcome the extreme individualism projected on divine being. He is firmly committed to the idea that one's view of God will determine one's personality. If Christians understand God as a being defined by relationships, then they will also see themselves in this way. Conversely, if Christians understand God as an isolated individual, then their own lives will be characterized by individualism. The solution then, for Moltmann, is to explicate the nature of God's relational experience among the members of the Trinity and with human beings so that Christians can rethink their experience of God. In saying this, he is rejecting the experiential theology of Schleiermacher as too one-sided. By asking

⁷⁴TKG, 148. John J. O'Connell, S.J., in his analysis of Moltmann's trinitarian theology, discusses Moltmann's criticism of Rahner's monotheism. But it is important to add that Moltmann criticizes Rahner's mysticism as a source of isolated, non-relational monotheism. See John J. O'Donnel, S.J., Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in Light of Process Theology and The Theology of Hope (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 124-128.

merely how one experiences God, something very important is left out of account that can only be understood when one asks *"how does God experience me?"*⁷⁵ For Moltmann, then, if God is passionately involved in human affairs, knows the suffering of the oppressed and desires to change the conditions of suffering, then so must those whose lives are molded by faith in this God. Moltmann makes this clear in the opening chapter of his 1980 work The Trinity and the Kingdom of God:

The other side of the relationship, the side we term 'God', remains unknown if we ascribe to it no more than the reason behind the definition of one's own self. . . . It will still be permissible to ask, not only: *how do I experience God?* What does God mean for me? How am I determined by him? We must also ask the reverse questions: *how does God experience me?* What do I mean for me?⁷⁶

We need to examine the way Moltmann answers some of these questions. What we will be attempting to find out is whether Moltmann's answer to these questions about experience places him in the experiential-expressivist model

⁷⁵See TKG, 3. "If [the person of faith] experiences God in this, then he also thereby experiences the way God has 'experienced' -and still experiences- him. If one were only to relate the experience of God to the experience of self [as Schleiermacher did] then the self would become the constant and God the variable." TKG, 4.

⁷⁶TKG, 3.

of theology, the cultural-linguistic model, or somewhere in between, that is, are his answers a blend of experience and language in which neither seem to dominate?

There are, in my view, three essential elements of Moltmann's trinitarian view of God: God's choice to suffer with and for creation; the idea that the three persons of the Trinity are distinct beings in an interdependent relationship; and the idea that human beings also participate in this relationship and do the work of God on earth. We have already seen how the suffering of Christ is central to Moltmann's theology. Here I want to show how this experience of suffering love is the basis for Moltmann's trinitarian theology. We will see below that it is the "openness" of the trinity, the participation of human beings in the Trinity through the Holy Spirit, which has implications for the modern world.⁷⁷

As I have shown above in Moltmann's critique of Rahner and Augustine, it is absolutely necessary to

⁷⁷Borrowing from Joachim of Fiore, Moltmann states, for example, that "the kingdom of the spirit. . . . is the rebirth of men and women through the energies of the Spirit. . . . In this Kingdom God rules through direct revelation and knowledge. Through the experience of the indwelling Spirit people turn from being God's children into his friends." TKG, 205. We saw above that Moltmann also focusses on this idea of friendship with God in his analysis of Teresa of Avila.

understand that Moltmann sees the persons of the Trinity as three distinct beings. He tries to show why the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity is of utmost importance for the world. According to Moltmann, the fact that God suffered in the passion of Christ shows that God is, by nature, a relational being.⁷⁸ The suffering which God endures in Christ in order to redeem humanity is an expression of God's love. He points out that to love something or someone means to go out of oneself for another, implying a relationship. In the case of God, this is a triune relationship:

Because [God] not only loves but is himself love, he has to be understood as the triune God. Love cannot be consummated by a solitary subject. An individuality (sic) cannot communicate itself: individuality is ineffable, unutterable. If God is love he is at once the lover, the beloved and love itself. Love is the goodness that communicates itself from all eternity.⁷⁹

Moltmann, in effect, shows the love of God by retelling the story of the love relationship that exists between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. If God's being is characterized by relational love, then this relationship of love existed among the members of the Trinity long before the creation of the world. But at a certain point in human

⁷⁸See for example, TKG, 33, 57.

⁷⁹TKG, 57.

history the relationship was made manifest in the suffering and death of Christ. He states that, on the cross, Jesus is given up by the Father, for the sake of the world. In so doing, the Father suffers the loss of the Son. In Moltmann's words, "the Father suffers the death of the Son. So the pain of the Father corresponds to the death of the Son. . . . the communicating love of the Father turns into infinite pain over the sacrifice of the Son."⁸⁰ This willingness to abandon the Son to suffering is supported by the Son's willingness to endure death. What is explicated here is a mutual will of the Father and Son to endure suffering for the sake of God's creation.⁸¹

In order to understand this as a trinitarian relationship, Moltmann has to show that the Spirit is also involved in this love relationship as a separate being. He states that it was God the Father who raised Jesus through the power of the Spirit, which means that the Spirit too is a being separate from the Son and the Father and has the special task of reuniting the Son with the Father:

The surrender through the Father and the offering of the Son take place 'through the Spirit'. The Holy spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining

⁸⁰TKG, 81.

⁸¹TKG, 82.

the bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation.⁸²

This triune relationship is based, then, on the experience of God's suffering on the cross. It is suffering undergone for the sake of human beings:

Jesus' forsakenness on the cross, the surrender of the Son by the Father and the love which does everything-gives everything- suffers everything -for lost men and women. God is love. That means that God is self-giving. It means he exists for us: on the cross. To put it in trinitarian terms- the Father lets his Son sacrifice himself through the Spirit. 'The Father is crucifying love, the Son crucified love, and the Holy spirit is the unvanquishable power of the cross'.⁸³

Moltmann further distinguishes the three persons of the Trinity from each other by distinguishing their tasks. The Father's task is to create, the Son's task is to redeem and the Spirit's task is to recreate the world. It is through the Spirit that Christians participate in the trinitarian nature of God:

The New Testament talks about God by proclaiming in narrative the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, which are relationships of fellowship and are open to the world.⁸⁴

According to Moltmann this reciprocal relationship is the beginning of the revelation of God's kingdom of

⁸²TKG. 82.

⁸³TKG, 83.

⁸⁴See TKG, 64.

justice. God sends the Son, who in the power of the creative Spirit, performs his healing ministry on the sick, poor and oppressed. Christians, in fellowship with Jesus, take part in the work of the Father through the Holy Spirit. This biblically based trinitarianism has obvious implications for Christians social role and political responsibilities. Any view of human nature and morality that is external to the Scriptures, such as monotheism, has, in Moltmann's view, distorted this "true" understanding of the Trinity and the Christian identity in the modern world.

This focus on the experience of suffering in mystical theologies plays a very large role in Moltmann's formulation of the Trinity. This concept of experience certainly seems consistent with the story of Christ's suffering, but is it warranted that the entire theology of the Trinity should be dependant upon this concept. Moltmann would probably say that his interpretive framework helps illuminate something which is already in the biblical texts, not that this is an extra-biblical idea of experience that eclipses the real nature of experience in the text. Does his approach to the Trinity then conform to the cultural-linguistic model? The answer is yes, if one applies to Moltmann the broad understanding of this model, namely, that

it allows for a generous appropriation of ideas into the biblical world. But the answer is no, if one thinks that the cultural-linguistic model rules out any use of an experiential framework for interpreting biblical language as the starting point for theology. In any case, the appellation 'experiential expressivist' does not seem to fit Moltmann, even though he is employing a concept of experience as an interpretive device for his understanding of the Trinity. He is not employing an individualistic concept of experience as do Lindbeck's experiential expressivists. Rather, Moltmann is searching for an experiential framework that replaces individualism. He believes he has found this in the experience of God's suffering and peoples participation in it.

5. Experience and the Holy Spirit

Moltmann's interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a relatively new development. Though he begins to deal with the Spirit somewhat in The Crucified God, he does not give it full attention until the late 1970's in the Church in the Power of the Spirit and, more importantly, in

1980 work The Trinity and the Kingdom of God.⁸⁵ Lyle Dabney believes that the lack of a developed concept of the Holy Spirit in Moltmann's early works can be traced to his Reformation theology background. He notes three key problems in this tradition that influenced Moltmann; the contradiction between God and human beings, the tendency to subordinate pneumatology to Christology, and the general failure to distinguish the human spirit and Holy Spirit.⁸⁶ Moltmann inherited the Reformation problems with the Spirit through Barth, but later came to reject the "extra-worldly" concept of God in his theology so that he could better explore God within creation. Moltmann always attempted to show that God was present in people's struggle to address the problems of modernity but could not explicate this in a doctrine of the Holy spirit because of the Reformation constraints. Moltmann finally overcame the problems of Reformation pneumatology. As Dabney further states,

⁸⁵Donald Claybrook asserts that the concept of the Holy Spirit is completely missing from the Theology of Hope. See Donald A. Claybrook, "The Emerging Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Jürgen Moltmann" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 185.

⁸⁶See D. Lyle Dabney, "The Advent of the Spirit: The Turn to Pneumatology in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann," Asbury Theological Journal 48 (1993): 81-107. The information used in this chapter is taken from an unpublished version of this article, 16ff.

when we see Moltmann . . . in *God and Creation* speak of the Spirit of God as being present in all creation, we are witnessing Moltmann's attempt to escape a theology which simply posits utter contradiction between God and world; which seeks to play off redemption against creation; which will understand God not simply as standing over and against the world but rather as embracing that which God has made in love and suffering.⁸⁷

In order for Moltmann to write a pneumatology in which the Spirit is thought to be present within human experience, he felt the need to further distance himself from dialectical theology's repudiation of experience. An examination of this rejection and the concept of experience that Moltmann formulates will help us determine the extent to which his method for creating a theology of the Holy Spirit conforms to the cultural-linguistic model of religion.

In his 1993 work *The Spirit of Life*, Moltmann is even more forceful about his rejection of Barth's polemic against religious experience and further confirms his desire to recover an experiential starting point for theology. Moltmann attempts to develop a theology that begins from "below," with the experience of God in life, not simply from God's revelation "from above":

By setting up this antithesis between revelation and

⁸⁷"Advent," 35.

experience, Barth merely replaced the immanentism which he complained about with a theological transcendentalism. But the real phenomenon . . . is to be found in God's immanence in human experience, and in the transcendence of human beings in God. Because God's Spirit is present in human beings, the human spirit is self-transcendently aligned towards God.⁸⁸

Moltmann makes several important moves in order to explicate a concept of the Holy Spirit "from below," some of which seem inconsistent with the cultural linguistic model. First, Moltmann uses the work of feminist theologians, what he calls "philosophy of life" philosophers (e.g., Nietzsche, Bergson, Dilthey,), Methodists, and charismatics in order to write a theology that arises from the experience of life.⁸⁹ He begins his experiential theology of the Holy Spirit with a phenomenology of human experience synthesized from these sources. There are, according to him, a number of dimensions to human experience. In language curiously close to that used by David Tracy, Moltmann points, for example,

⁸⁸Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1992) 7. Compare the following quotation by Moltmann about dialectical theology with his comments which I quoted in Chapter II on his agreement with dialectical theology: "The dialectical theology of Barth, Brunner, Bultmann and Gogarten led to an alternative which today is proving to be unfruitful. . . . In this case the qualitative difference between God and human beings makes every immediate relationship of human beings to God impossible." See SL, 5.

⁸⁹See SL, xiii.

to personal "limit situations" (experiences of danger, love and death) that permanently influence all people's lives.⁹⁰ Moltmann is referring here to experiences such as love and death which are seldom completely transitory because such experiences "overpower us . . . mould us, and become our companions. There are events in the past which never become 'past', but are continually present to us."⁹¹ And in language that seems to give a nod of approval to Schleiermacher, Moltmann locates the basic religious experience in "*the basic trust* with which people commit themselves to this life."⁹² Yet Moltmann, again, reasserts his caution against modern subjectivity, lest such concepts of human religious experience be understood in merely individualistic ways. He believes that subjectivity is constituted itself by many experiences, only one of which is "basic trust". We must discover transcendence, not only in inner subjectivity, but also in all possible experiences. In so doing, people will learn more about the possible

⁹⁰SL, 20. See Chapter I for Tracy's views on "limit experiences."

⁹¹SL, 20.

⁹²SL, 27.

experiences of God, since God's Spirit fills nature.⁹³ Pointing to the experiences of the Spirit in individual subjects, in the actions of history and in all of nature, Moltmann sees his experiential doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a "holistic doctrine."⁹⁴ Let us take a closer look at some key components of this "holistic doctrine" of the Holy Spirit, especially as it concerns our topic of mysticism.

Moltmann once again finds the Jewish view of the Spirit as *Rauch* and the *Shekinah* helpful in understanding the pervasiveness of the Holy Spirit in the world. It is the Jewish understanding that the indwelling God, represented in both these ways, is active in the creation of Jewish (and Christian) history. *Rauch* refers to God's creative divine presence. *Shekinah* refers to the God who lives, suffers, and travels with Israel. This two-fold dimension of the Spirit of God is active in creation, especially through the work of the messiah.⁹⁵ Here we come to the implications of this understanding of the Spirit for Christianity.

⁹³SL, 34.

⁹⁴SL, 37.

⁹⁵SL, 39-50.

Moltmann thinks that it is precisely through these basic views of *Rauch* and *Shekinah* that we must understand presence of the Spirit of God in Christ.⁹⁶ The creative, indwelling Spirit accompanies Jesus in his teachings and trials and allows him to initiate the creation of a new world, or the Kingdom of God. Moltmann asserts that, through the Spirit, Jesus is the

'Kingdom of God in person' This energizing power [of the Spirit] of God is given not for himself but for others: for the sick, the poor, sinners, the dying.⁹⁷

This Spirit of God, then, is that creative, empowering Spirit that led Christ in his life. It allowed Jesus to sacrifice his life and accompanied him through his temptations.⁹⁸

In all the experiences of Jesus in a God-forsaken world, the Spirit of God became present to the world.⁹⁹ What is important about this is that the Christian church, when it truly attempts to live the Spirit of Christ, also becomes the locus of the Spirit in the world. Moltmann believes that the creative, renewing, saving power of God

⁹⁶SL, 60.

⁹⁷SL, 61.

⁹⁸SL, 64, 65.

⁹⁹SL, 64, 65.

comes into nature through human beings in their faith response to the Spirit of Christ. The renewing, creative power of the Spirit in human beings makes possible the renewal of the whole cosmos. The experience of the Spirit by Christians really is, then, in his view, the foretaste of the coming kingdom of God.¹⁰⁰ Referring to the writings of Paul, Moltmann says that

the experience of the Spirit in the present is the beginning . . . and advanced pledge or foretaste . . . of the coming kingdom of glory. . . . In this the new creation of all things is already experienced-experienced now, for all, representatively and in anticipation. In the experience of the Spirit, the Spirit's charismatic energies will interpenetrate body and soul.¹⁰¹

What is especially interesting is that Moltmann

¹⁰⁰"Christian faith is a response to the word of the messianic gospel, and the resonance of that word in the hearts and lives of men and women. But in this very way, Christian faith is the experience of the quickening spirit experience of the beginning of the new creation of the world If this faith is experienced 'in the spirit', then here the spirit itself is indirectly experienced." See SL, 74.

¹⁰¹SL, 74. Douglas L. Schuurman gives a good extended criticism of Moltmann's formulation of the relation between the future kingdom and present creation, claiming that the two are discontinuous in his theology. Unfortunately, he does not include a treatment of the Spirit's presence and work in human experience in Moltmann's theology. See Douglas L. Schuurman, Creation, Eschaton and Ethics: The Ethical Significance of the Creation-Eschaton Relation in the Thought of Emil Brunner and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Peter Lang, 1991).

describes church members' experience of the Spirit in decidedly mystical language. For example, he states that the Christian hope for this world "springs from the overflowing rapture of the experience of the Spirit, and extravagant joy over the coming of God to this world."¹⁰² But Moltmann is adamant that certain misunderstandings about mysticism are detrimental to the work of the Spirit in the world. This is especially true of the type of mysticism that rejects the human body, and physical creation in general, as debased and inherently corrupt. The recovery of the experience of the Spirit in the body and in creation is central to The Spirit of Life. But in order to do this, Moltmann finds it necessary to criticize traditional mystical spirituality which has rejected creation and the human body.

Moltmann makes a distinction between two types of mystical spiritualities. On the one hand, there is the spirituality that select mystics enjoy apart from relationship with others and experience as something that is higher than physical existence and more profound than the body. He states that this type of spirituality, which is rooted in asceticism, "divides spirituality from everyday

¹⁰²SL, 75.

life."¹⁰³ On the other hand, there is a spirituality which can be understood as a "life-force of created beings, and the living space in which they can grow and develop their potentialities."¹⁰⁴ There is, in this spirituality, no separation between physical, bodily existence and spirituality.

Moltmann finds the word "vitality" to be a fitting description of this true Christian experience and spiritually. He clarifies the word 'vitality', which he takes to mean "*love of life*."¹⁰⁵ He gets this idea of 'vitality' from Nietzsche, Bonhoeffer, Tillich and others.¹⁰⁶ He believes that these people were constantly striving to find vitality in life in light of concepts of morality "which break the drive to live and spoil peoples's joy in living."¹⁰⁷ This spirituality of vitality also connects people with others and is nothing less "than true humanity" because it points to a mysticism that does not stop with the

¹⁰³SL, 84.

¹⁰⁴SL, 84.

¹⁰⁵SL, 85.

¹⁰⁶SL, 85.

¹⁰⁷SL, 85.

inward journey into the soul.¹⁰⁸ It is a mysticism that takes one to the centre in a way which then causes people to "go out toward others." This, according to Moltmann, is the biblical experience of the Spirit of new creation:

Anyone who experiences the Spirit of new creation in fellowship with the risen Christ already experiences here and now something of the 'life given' to his mortal sick and repressed body In the experience of the Spirit the spring of life begins to flow in us again."¹⁰⁹

The experience of the Spirit of new creation is the power Christians have available to them as they confront the modern world. As we have seen repeatedly, modern society, for Moltmann, is the biggest enemy of creation. It is modern society which brings death and destruction and causes people to degrade physical, bodily existence:

The constant disciplining and repression of the body which modern industrial society requires of its members, and the constant subjection and exploitation of the earth which that society pursues, make human beings numb and the earth infertile. Because the end will be the death of human beings and their replacement by machines, and because ecological death awaits at the end of nature, these trends in modern society can be described with total accuracy as death drives.¹¹⁰

In mysticism, then, Moltmann believes he is discovering "*life against death* . . . not life against the

¹⁰⁸SL, 86.

¹⁰⁹SL, 95.

¹¹⁰SL, 97.

body."¹¹¹ "Death" here is the death brought by modern society. The experience of the Spirit gives Christians the strength and power to fight against death and save the "body". It is Augustinian mysticism's rejection of the body, that Moltmann is critical of. He quotes Augustine's prayer which he sees as a degradation of creation:

What do I love when I love you? Not the beauty of any body or the rhythm of time in its movement; not the radiance of light, so dear to our eyes: not the sweet melodies in the world of manifold sounds; not the perfume of flowers and ointments and spices; not manna and not honey; not the limbs, so delightful to the body's embrace: it is none of these things that I love when I love my God.¹¹²

In answer to Augustine, Moltmann formulates a prayer which celebrates the experience of the Spirit in the body. In this prayer is the voice of a mystic:

When I love God I love the beauty of bodies, the rhythm of movements, the shining of eyes, the embrace, the feelings, the scents, the sounds of all this protean creation. . . . The experience of God deepens the experiences of life. It does not reduce them, for it awakens the unconditional Yes to life. The more I love God the more gladly I exist. The more intimately and wholly I exist, the more I sense the living God, the inexhaustible well of life, and life's eternity.¹¹³

The question we have been trying to answer in this

¹¹¹SL, 98.

¹¹²SL, 98.

¹¹³SL, 98.

section is, in Moltmann's attempt to replace Barth's "transcendentalism" with a theology of "God's imminence in human experience" does he do what the cultural-linguistic model of religion forbids? By focussing on experience, does he allow a preformulated concept of experience to determine Christian experience, rather than the language of the Bible? Does Moltmann's appeal to "limit experiences," "feeling of basic trust," "holistic experience," and vitality mean that Moltmann is an experiential expressivist"? On the one hand, I think that such an appellation is too strong. After all, Moltmann's reason for using these experiences in his theology is to create an alternative to modern subjective Christianity, an aim consistent with Lindbeck's proposal for theology. But it is clear, as I have shown in other parts of this dissertation, that Moltmann is employing a method that conforms more to the liberal tradition than to the dialectical tradition. Since he uses concepts of experience like this, his basic approach does not seem to be consistent with the cultural-linguistic paradigm.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to determine the extent to which Moltmann's explication and

employment of mystical experience is consistent with the cultural-linguistic model of religion. In order to do this, we examined Moltmann's continuing interest in religious experience. We saw that he is especially interested in mystical experience as an interpretive framework for his theologies of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit. I showed that, in order for him to deal effectively with mysticism, it was necessary for him to further distance himself from the dialectical tradition's criticism of mystical experience. But Moltmann is very careful about the type of mysticism he uses. He rejects subjectivistic and anti-body mysticisms and embraces a mysticism of suffering and vitality, which affirms physical and bodily creation and are, according to Moltmann, appropriate for theology in the context of modern subjectivistic culture.

The analysis of Moltmann's mysticism shows that, in one very important way, Moltmann fails to meet Lindbeck's criteria for the cultural-linguistic method. Moltmann definitely allows a concept of experience to play a major interpretive role in his concept of the Trinity and his views on the Holy Spirit. I think this has been established in this chapter. There is no getting around the fact that Moltmann is interpreting these aspects of the Christian

tradition through experiential interpretive frameworks, which is forbidden by the cultural-linguistic model of religion.

It is clear, however, that Moltmann uses his mystical concept of experience to reach an important goal of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model. That is, Moltmann, like Lindbeck, is striving to create postmodern theology. We saw in Chapter I that Lindbeck rejects the imposition of modern subjective experiences onto Christian language. The mysticism that Moltmann employs also attempts to replace subjectivistic interpretations of Christianity. Moltmann's criticism of Rahner's and Augustine's mysticism analyzed in this chapter made this clear. But is this enough to satisfy the cultural-linguistic demands not to allow concepts of experience to dominate Christian language? Lindbeck does not give any indication that another concept of experience, not even an anti-individualistic one, is an acceptable interpretive device. Hence, once again, it must be concluded that Moltmann's approach to theology is not uniformly consistent with the cultural-linguistic method.

CHAPTER V

ECUMENISM IN MOLTMANN'S THEOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine the ecumenical dimension of Moltmann's theology. We will be attempting to find out if Moltmann's recommendations for ecumenical dialogue conform to the cultural-linguistic method. A comparison of strikingly contrasting statements made by Lindbeck and Moltmann on their approaches to interreligious dialogue indicates that Moltmann's approach contrasts with Lindbeck's. In his 1988 work, Theology Today, Moltmann states that

the syncretistic claim to totality with which Christianity has often enough taken over the possessions and ideas of other religions in order to *absorb them into itself* is not a real offer of dialogue A true community of world religions is conceivable only if the religions take part in a fruitful exchange and openly influence each other.¹

Moltmann's demand that the world religions, including

¹See Jürgen Moltmann, Theology Today (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1988), 46,47. Emphasis mine.

Christianity, "openly influence each other" by shunning mere "absorption" contrasts sharply with Lindbeck's views in The Nature of Doctrine. There is no indication that Moltmann's use of the word "absorption" is a direct response to Lindbeck. It is, nonetheless, worth looking at one of Lindbeck's important quotations concerning absorption again in light of Moltmann's statement:

Only in some younger theologians does one see the beginnings of a desire to renew in a post-traditional and post-liberal mode the ancient practice of *absorbing the universe into the biblical world*. May their tribe increase.²

As I have shown in a number of places in this dissertation, the demand to "absorb the world" is Lindbeck's way of saying that the biblical worldview, while it can be informed by extra-biblical ideas, must not be determined by them. Lindbeck does not totally reject the possibility of mutual influence among the world religions. His primary concern, however, is that Christianity maintain its unique biblical identity by not being interpreted through extra-biblical frameworks. We shall see that Moltmann is willing to risk much more of the Christian identity in ecumenical conversation, both among the Christian confessions and with

²See George A. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 135. Emphasis mine.

various world religions, than allowed by the cultural-linguistic model of religion. We will also see, however, that there may be some area of agreement between Moltmann and Lindbeck concerning dialogue with Judaism.

1. Moltmann's Rejection of "Anonymous Christianity" and Christian Triumphalism

In the last chapter, I showed that Moltmann is critical of Rahner's mystical anthropology. He is also critical of Rahner's attempts at ecumenism, which is largely based on this mysticism. Lindbeck also rejects Rahner's idea of anonymous Christianity because it is based on an experiential understanding of Jesus and because it insinuates that non-Christian religions are poor subtypes of Christianity. Lindbeck states that

one can admit the unsubstitutable uniqueness of the God-willed missions of non-Christian religions when one thinks of these faiths, not as objectifying poorly what Christianity objectifies well, as Karl Rahner proposes, but as cultural-linguistic systems within which potentialities can be actualized and realities explored that are not within the direct purview of the peoples of Messianic witness.³

Lindbeck is attempting to show that by rejecting the approach to dialogue which assumes a common experiential

³See Doctrine, 54, 55.

core, one avoids implying that people from one tradition may or may not measure up to another tradition, depending on the degree to which they embody or express a particular common experience.⁴ I want to examine Rahner's idea of anonymous Christianity to show the similarities and differences between Moltmann's and Lindbeck's criticisms of his work, and so their contrasting approaches to dialogue.

Rahner wants to hold faith in Christ together with his rejection of the notion that non-Christians are "excluded from the fulfillment of their lives and condemned to eternal meaninglessness."⁵ In his view, all people are mystical beings of "unlimited openness for the limitless being of God" and share the Spirit- "the all-inclusive and the fathomless ground of all that can be grasped, of all that is real and all that is possible."⁶ The Spirit, in Rahner's view, is not "an additional adjunct to reality" but constitutes reality at its core and "stamps and determines man's nature and lends it a character which we may call a supernatural existential."⁷ This presence of the divine in

⁴Doctrine, 55.

⁵See TI, vol., 6, 391.

⁶TI, vol. 6, 392.

⁷TI, vol. 6, 393, 394.

non-Christians is evident in the same way as in Christians: in people's perseverance in everyday responsibilities and tasks.⁸ In this sense, non-Christians may be anonymous Christians, if they respond to the incognito presence of grace in their own tradition and everyday life. Thus, they are measured against the norm of Christianity, which is, for Rahner, the official thematization of God's transcendental revelation.

Moltmann criticizes Rahner's concept of "anonymous Christianity" for its universalistic attitude, the notion that all religions must be measured against the "Truths" of Christian belief. Such an attitude, asserts Moltmann, does not take "seriously the pluralism of religions." He asks, "do we not also have Jewish existence and human existence in other religions along side Christian existence, each [with] its own way of being 'expressly human'?"⁹ Moltmann further asserts that humanists or Jews, for example, would not like the label 'anonymous Christians' "any more than believing

⁸Rahner states that "this acceptance can be present in an implicit form whereby a person undertakes and lives the duty of each day in the quiet sincerity of patience, in devotion to his material duties and the demands made upon him by the persons under his care." *TI*, vol. 6, 394.

⁹Theology, 73

Christians want to be called 'anonymous Buddhists'.¹⁰ In his view, it is simply too much to expect Christianity to contain the universal truth for humanity and futile to continue the grief which has always accompanied Christianity's claim to absoluteness.¹¹ While insisting upon a politically relevant Christianity that is committed to the creation of a more just world, Moltmann is also calling for a more humble estimation of the function of Christianity.

Moltmann, then, wants to dispense with Christian superiority and triumphalism. To overcome Christian triumphalism, he believes that theology must make more of a distinction between the accomplishments of the church and the coming new age to which the church is called to bear witness and, thus, for which it must prepare the way:

The church is not yet the kingdom of God itself, but only the mediation, preparation and witness of the coming kingdom of God . . . one cannot say, either, that the incarnation of God in Christ is the goal of creation: rather the incarnation of Christ prepares for creation Being Christian is therefore to be seen as an anticipation of true humanity under the conditions of incomplete history and this unredeemed world.¹²

¹⁰Theology, 73-76.

¹¹Theology, 73.

¹²Theology, 77.

As a further criticism of Rahner's anonymous Christianity, Moltmann states that Christians should stop worrying about the spiritual status of non-Christians and try to see Christ "in the 'poor, the hungry, the sick, the thirsty and the prisoners' of Matt.25."¹³ He thinks that Rahner spent too much time considering the similarities and differences between Christianity and other institutions and not enough time considering the contributions Christians and others can make to alleviating the problems of modern culture. Moltmann states that "the urgent problem today is not the particularity of the church in modern pluralist society but the convincing support of the church for the poor and the oppressed in this modern society."¹⁴

Thus, Moltmann shares Lindbeck's concern that Rahner's idea of anonymous Christianity presumes Christian superiority and overlooks the unique potentialities offered by different religions. But Moltmann's criticism is not predicated upon a rejection of an experiential core to all religions, as is Lindbeck's. There is nothing in Moltmann's assertion that each religion has its own identity which precludes a search for shared experiences among religions.

¹³Theology, 77.

¹⁴Theology, 77.

Moltmann remains open to this possibility. He is more concerned about focussing on the way different religions can together address the problem of human suffering. In my view, if the discovery of a common experiential core among religions aids in this project, then Moltmann would be open to it. We will see below that this is the case.

But first, it needs to be noted that Moltmann is also critical of, what he sees as, Barth's triumphalistic view of the church, a subject about which Lindbeck is silent. Lindbeck is critical of Rahner's triumphalism because it does not accord with the cultural-linguistic emphasis on textuality. But Lindbeck does not address the problem of triumphalism inherent in Barth's emphasis on the biblical text. This is crucial because, as I showed in the Introduction, Lindbeck asserts that Barth's theology is the "chief source of the notion of intratextuality as an appropriate way of doing theology in a fashion consistent with a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion and a regulative view of doctrine."¹⁵ It is true that Lindbeck extends to all traditions the need to emphasize the particular textual (and oral) language of other religions and would probably not concur with Barth's triumphalism.

¹⁵See Doctrine, 135.

But Lindbeck may not have adequately addressed the fact that, like Barth, a focus on the uniqueness of one's own language, tradition, and worldview may promote a myopic, overly self-centered, and triumphalistic self understanding.

We have noted Moltmann's early enthusiasm for Barth, (still maintained by Lindbeck). But we have also been observing his increasingly frequent criticism and self-distancing from Barth. Moltmann also turns from Barth's ecclesiology. He takes exception to Barth's claim that the church is the one and only "locus of true religion."¹⁶ To be sure, Barth qualifies this claim. By "true religion", he does not mean to refer to a human achievement or experience that has intrinsic validity. "True religion" is properly qualified by the reception of grace. He does not believe that the Christian church is perfect. In fact, he believes the church has made the mistake of "grasping" God's revelation, an impossibility given the fact that revelation

¹⁶See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936-1932) vol. 1, 303,314. John Baille states that Barth, like Calvin, sees pagan religions and Christianity in the same light: both are religions by virtue of innate human religiosity, and since they are constructs of fallen humanity, they are suspect. John Baille The Sense of the Presence of God (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 186.

is a "contradiction" to human experience.¹⁷ Nonetheless, Barth believes "the church lives by grace . . . [and so] to that extent, it is the locus of true religion."¹⁸ Even with his qualification, the claim that the church is the one and only locus of true grace smacks of triumphalism and Moltmann takes exception to this.

Moltmann eschews Christian triumphalism in his approach to ecumenical dialogue. His effort at laying out conditions for ecumenical dialogue begins in his 1975 work The Church in the Power of the Spirit and continues in his latest contribution to Christian/Buddhist dialogue.¹⁹ His ecumenism addresses not only the problem of disunity among Christians, but extends as well to dialogue with Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other traditions. As a

¹⁷Dogmatics, 314.

¹⁸See Dogmatics, vol. 1, 298. John Baille believes that Barth's views of the church are based upon Protestant principles in "their most uncompromising form," namely, justification by faith and election. Thus, "True Religion" is really Reformed Christianity; World Religions are candidates for divine forgiveness only. Baille takes a different approach and maintains that whenever truth is found in another religion it is the work of the Holy Spirit and when there is error it is human doing. See Sense, 183, 186.

¹⁹Jürgen Moltmann, "God is Unselfish Love," in The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation eds. John B. Cobb, Jr., and Christopher Ives (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 116-124.

matter of fact, Moltmann has embraced ecumenism, in this extended sense, as the methodological basis of his later theological works.²⁰ The conviction and breadth with which Moltmann embraces his new methodology is striking. We can read, for example, in the Trinity and the Kingdom of God, that

'particularist' is the name we give to isolating sectional thinking, which is self-complacent and anxiously self-justifying. . . . This means a critical dissolution of naive, self-centred thinking [is necessary] Behind all this is the conviction that, humanly speaking, truth is to be found in unhindered dialogue.²¹

Moltmann is willing to go a long way toward abandoning "particularist" thinking. I have divided the analysis of Moltmann's attempt at "unhindered dialogue" into three parts: dialogue among Christian confessions; Jewish-Christian dialogue; and Christian dialogue with world religions. It will be evident that common to each of these pursuits is Moltmann's attempt to open up the Christian

²⁰Four of Moltmann's later contributions to theology are rooted in "ecumenical fellowship," or "ecumenical method." These are The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, God in Creation, The Way of Jesus Christ and The Spirit of Life.

²¹See TKG, xii-xv. Moltmann has reaffirmed this conviction more recently. See for example Jürgen Moltmann, "Theology in Transition- to What?," in Paradigm Change in Theology, eds. Hans Küng and David Tracy (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 220ff.

identity to change in the course of ecumenical dialogue. I believe that this approach to dialogue places an emphasis on the possibility for mutual transformation among dialogue partners which transcends the cultural-linguistic allowance for the absorption of other ideas. In other words, Lindbeck's approach to dialogue begins with the need to maintain the cultural-linguistic identity and worldview and from that position regulates the degree to which other ideas can influence dialogue partners. Moltmann's approach explicitly denies any need for anxiety about maintaining a specific identity and allows, at least in principle, for a more radical reunderstanding of each tradition in the course of dialogue.

2. Ecumenism Among the Christian Confessions

In previous chapters we saw that Moltmann finds great possibilities for the church when it is unburdened of its involvement in state politics. One further possibility seen by him is a sustained and mutually transforming ecumenical dialogue. Moltmann believes that the two world wars in Europe precluded the possibility of unhindered and fruitful ecumenical dialogue because the various churches were forced to divide their loyalties among different

nations. Dialogue began to take place only after the resolution of these political crises. According to Moltmann, after the war, even though "the different traditions as such remained," the political problems separating the churches were beginning to be resolved, eliminating any "reason for separation."²²

Now, claims Moltmann, the churches are going beyond negative consensus and are "transcending their own forms and traditions" in order to learn to live in "council." In his view, this means that questions "affecting one's own church" must now be worked out in consultation with other churches.²³ Especially through Christological formulations, churches are transcending their separate identities by coming together in the same mission of Christ in light of eschatological hope.²⁴ Moltmann makes his own contributions to this search for a common Christian identity by advocating a unified Christian identity *under the cross of Christ* and

²²See CPS, 12. See also Theology, 39-48.

²³"Ecumenical thinking means no longer staying outside but getting involved, and seeing the theological problems of the other church as our own." CPS, 14,15. See also "Theology in Transition," 220,221. Moltmann's term "negative consensus" should not be confused with "negative ecumenism," which we will examine below. He is critical of the former but advocates the latter.

²⁴CPS, 13.

by attempting to lay the ground work for the formulation of a *common Christian confession*.

We saw in Chapter II the importance Moltmann places on the cross in his political theology. He also believes that "identity under the cross of Christ" should play a prominent role in ecumenical dialogue. What he means is that ecumenical conversation must not be merely talk about the cross.²⁵ By stressing the word 'under', he is attempting to stress the personality-transforming power of belief in the cross for all Christians. Christians, in other words, can transcend their confessional differences and find a common identity in the suffering shared by each other and by Christ:

Ecumenism comes into being wherever . . . we find ourselves under the cross of Christ and there recognize each other as brothers and sisters who are hungry in the same poverty (Rom 3:23) and imprisoned in the self-same sin. Under the cross we all stand empty handed We do not stand under the cross as Protestants, as Catholics, or as adherents to Orthodoxy. Here rather is where the godless are justified, enemies are reconciled, prisoners are set free, the poor are enriched and the

²⁵Jürgen Moltmann, "The Ecumenical Church Under the Cross," Theology Digest 24 1976: 380-390. Christology, for Moltmann, must always lie at the heart of ecumenical conversation. For example, he insists that ecumenical dialogue concerning Mariology must "serve Christology." See Hans Küng, and Jürgen Moltmann eds., Mary in the Churches (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), xv.

sad are filled with hope."²⁶

Christ's death on the cross, his "vicarious suffering for the redemption of the world," is also the "birth pains of the church,"²⁷ which extend the reconciliation and redemption of the world to human beings. Under the cross the various confessional members are united through a newly shared transformation of personality that places the alleviation of human suffering in the foreground of Christian concerns. Moltmann cites Dietrich Bonhoeffer as one such personality who suffered for the sake of Christ.²⁸ According to Moltmann, Christians of all confessions can learn from people like Bonhoeffer that church unity begins in poverty and suffering, or what Moltmann calls "negative ecumenism:"

Fellowship in the negative always precedes fellowship in the positive True ecumenical unity begins precisely where we mutually share our poverty, our sickness The hunger in India is our hunger. The despair in Chile is our despair. The prayers in Korea

²⁶See "Ecumenical Church," 382. Moltmann also makes the point that Christian fellowship is to be experienced in the sharing of the Eucharist. It is Christ himself "who breaks the bread for us and hands us the cup." The refusal to share the Eucharist is the refusal of confessional organizations, not the refusal of the crucified Christ. See 384.

²⁷"Ecumenical Church," 383.

²⁸"Ecumenical Church," 386.

are our prayers."²⁹

The ecumenical identity under the cross should not be misconstrued as something dark and pessimistic.³⁰ The suffering of Jesus Christ, and so of Christians, must be a creative, redemptive suffering that leads to the joy of the resurrection.³¹ Good Friday cannot be discussed without the joy of Easter resurrection, which, for Moltmann, is the experience of the liberation of people within history. Liberation is realized by the political work of Christians in the world. Moltmann states that "the living experience of 'ecumenism at the basis'. . . was and is today found in a common resistance to political idolatry and social inhumanity, in a common suffering at the sight of oppression and persecution."³²

One of the most powerful and enduring ways that Christians formulate, understand and maintain their identity

²⁹"Ecumenical Church," 386.

³⁰"Ecumenical Church," 387.

³¹"Ecumenical Church," 388.

³²See "Ecumenical Church," 385. Moltmann recognizes another kind of suffering shared by the churches. One is the suffering of our own inhibitions and self-pity about a church which is diminishing in influence and is weakened by the apathy and falling away of its members. See "Ecumenical Church," 387.

is through the confession of faith.³³ The confession of faith gives stability of identity by explicating and governing "the church's preaching life and order" and it has an ecumenical function, since it attempts to give an exposition of Scriptures "on behalf of the one holy catholic and apostolic church."³⁴ Moltmann believes, however, that it has been difficult for Christians to formulate a common confession of faith. Immediately after WW II, claims Moltmann, ecumenical dialogue was characterized by "negative consensus," a mere tolerance among diverse identities.³⁵ "Negative consensus" meant that the different churches agreed to maintain their doctrinal distinctions and identities but that their distinctions could be formulated 'inclusively'. Nonetheless, the concerted effort by the

³³The confessions of faith and the creeds have served many purposes, from reestablishing Christian unity in the time of Charles V to determining political loyalty and identification. For example, "civil authorities simply referred to each religious body as a confession- whether Lutheran, Calvinist, Zwinglian or Catholic." New Catholic Encyclopedia, "Confession of Faith," s.v. by W.F. Dewan, 136.

³⁴Hans Weissgerber, trans., "Confessions," s.v. The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church.

³⁵Jürgen Moltmann, "The Confession of Jesus Christ: A Biblical Theological Consideration," in An Ecumenical Confession of Faith, ed. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 13.

churches to maintain their distinctiveness made it impossible to agree on a much needed common confession.

Moltmann believes that the confession of faith is a "constituent part" of the Christian faith, without which the identity of Christians could not have endured through Western history. But the shared confession can be viewed and interpreted differently in different cultural and historical circumstances. This is more than a platitude because the context in which the confession is made, and by whom it is made, has far-reaching social implications. According to Moltmann, the confession does not hold the same meaning for the "modern industrial workers" as it does for "medieval kings," slum dwellers in the third world, or rich Europeans.³⁶ Moltmann wants the confession to be understood politically and ecumenically. To do this, he believes that there must be an enduring constant in the Christian confession which cuts across historical and cultural boundaries. He thinks he has found this constant in the name 'Jesus', rather than in his title of 'Christ'. According to Moltmann, Christians confess, in the first place, to Jesus, whose life works and accomplishments do not change, regardless of historical circumstances. In

³⁶"Confession," 13,14.

contrast, Jesus's title 'Christ' has been variously understood as Logos, Representative, King, and Liberator, depending on the cultural or historical circumstance. The name Jesus is the enduring part of the designation "Jesus Christ" that should be the source of a common Christian identity, for it is precisely on the life and work of Jesus that the life and work of Christians everywhere and at every time must be modeled.³⁷ Moltmann states that

with regard to Jesus confessions of faith are unchangeable . . . the old titles and the new ones must be related to the person and his unique history What hope, lordship and liberation is in truth is therefore revealed through him, his life and his death, not through our dreams. The subject determines the predicates that we give him on the basis of our experience of faith and hope."³⁸

According to Moltmann the idea of 'witness' in the Old and New Testaments has important implications for Christian ecumenism. The Israelites witnessed to the God who showed loyalty to Israel by setting them free from other "gods and demons and led them to the truth of the one true God."³⁹ Against this background of the freeing and

³⁷Our confession must be oriented toward the confessing Christ who confesses to God that "'every one who confesses me before men, I will confess before my father, who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my father who is in heaven' (Mt. 10:32, 33; Lk.2:8;cf. Rev. 3:5)." See "Confession," 15.

³⁸"Confession," 15.

liberating work of God the confession of Jesus Christ must be understood.⁴⁰ The disciples witnessed to this liberating message of Jesus, according to Moltmann, when they preached the gospel to the poor, ate with sinners, and healed the sick.⁴¹ Christians today must also be identified by this witness and this work because "confessing and imitating Christ are inseparable."⁴²

Moltmann's focus on the common Christian experience of suffering and on the need for a common Christian confession seems to contrast with Lindbeck's recommendations for dialogue, which are based on his ideas about doctrine. Recall that in Chapter I we saw that Lindbeck formulates a

³⁹"Confession," 16.

⁴⁰Moltmann states that "Jesus was the divine witness to the truth that sets men free from godless laws and powers. By bearing witness to this liberating truth of God, Jesus in fact sets captives free." "Confession," 16.

⁴¹"Confession" 17.

⁴²Moltmann states that "this was the message of the World Council of Churches at Nairobi in 1975. See "Confession," 18. See also Jürgen Moltmann, "Bericht über die 5. Vollversammlung des ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Nairobi 1975," Evangelische Theologie 36 (1976): 177-184. Moltmann also states that there is a trinitarian aspect to the confession and witness of Christians since their work is carried out in the Spirit and in the community of the Son. "Christ is confessed in the Holy Spirit and by him . . . because the Holy spirit is the power of new creation in history . . . Christ is therefore confessed where the power of new creation is active." See "Confession," 18.

"rule theory of doctrine." This theory suggests that the doctrines of various confessions are much like rules for living out the worldview given by the Christian Scriptures. The language of doctrines provide the particular contextual world for each Christian sect. They give instruction for how to live, work, and worship. The emphasis here is on the *differences* in doctrinal language among Christian confessions in the course of conversation.⁴³ Moltmann takes a different approach. He searches for a common Christian confession, or, to use Lindbeck's terms, a common language. His views on dialogue among the Christian confessions seem to be a search for a new common Christian identity that, unlike Lindbeck's approach, attempts to transcend doctrinal distinction.

Hence, while Lindbeck may be committed to overcoming sectarian division, his rule-theory of doctrine advocates reconciliation based upon the appreciation of each Christian confession's differences. In contrast, Moltmann attempts to construct a common language for the Christian confessions and formulate a common experience (suffering) in order to unite the confessions. Both of these approaches contrast with the cultural-linguistic emphasis on doctrinal

⁴³See Chapter I, 19.

particularity and language rather than experience.

3. Dialogue with Judaism

Moltmann believes that dialogue with Judaism has great implications for Christian identity.⁴⁴ In his view, past attempts to protect Christianity's religious identity from Judaism through negative "images of the enemy" betray an unnecessary and destructive anxiety about weakening Christian identity:

Anxiety about one's own Christian identity, however, is as superfluous in dialogue with Jewish non-Christians as in dialogue with other partners. Whoever is overcome by an anxiety about identity in dialogue apparently has a rigid, unchangeable, schematic, and weak identity; an identity which lives from denial of others; an identity which reacts aggressively. In truth, one does not lose one's authentic identity in dialogue with others but rather gains a new profile over against the other.⁴⁵

In Moltmann's view, this anxiety and insecurity

⁴⁴See CPS, 136. According to Moltmann, only through the relationship the church has with Israel can it come to understand its true character and its unique contribution to the world: "Anti-Judaistic tendencies have paganized and corrupted [the church] of the power of its hope. The crisis to which these paganized and corrupted forms of Christianity have brought the world economically, politically, culturally, and ecologically today require the church to turn back to its Israelite origin: to turn back to the Old Testament, which at the same time means turning back to the messianic hope for the world."

⁴⁵See HD, 190.

about maintaining a specific non-Jewish Christian identity is evident in much of Christian theology. It has been at the root of Paul Althaus's and Rudolf Bultmann's theologies, which portrayed Judaism as merely the origin of the Christian church. But, according to them, the origin is now of no consequence to Christianity. In their theologies Israel "no longer has any special position or any special vocation to salvation for the church."⁴⁶ Moltmann further asserts that the Dutch Reformed Confession, formulated after WW II, talked about "dialogue, not about mission" when it discussed the Christian/Jewish relationship. At the basis of the Dutch Reformed Church's view is the belief that God rejects the continuing primacy of the law in Judaism.⁴⁷ This view, Moltmann believes, precludes the possibility of a common mission with Israel. The Second Vatican council, according to Moltmann, "still talks about Israel in the framework of the 'non-Christian religions'."⁴⁸ Because the

⁴⁶Bultmann further looked on the "Old Testament Jewish history as the shipwreck of the Law." See CPS, 140. Moltmann also states that "Rudolf Bultmann called the history of Israel attested to in the Old Testament the 'history of failure' . . . so as to put positive emphasis on justifying faith in Christ." See Theology, 32.

⁴⁷CPS, 146.

⁴⁸CPS, 146.

Council has taken "a linear view" of Israel, like Althaus and Bultmann, it sees Israel as merely a "preliminary step to the church."⁴⁹ Moltmann asserts that "uncertain identity" is at the heart of all these attempts to degrade Judaism:

Uncertain identity? The Christian definitions of Judaism we have sketched do not serve the understanding of Judaism but rather the demarcation of Christianity from Judaism. But do they thereby really serve the self-definition of the Christian? Can Christian self-understanding be strengthened only by fixing the boundaries over against others and through the rejection of Israel? Then the Christian faith would not be a certainty but a weak and uncertain thing.⁵⁰

Moltmann seems to share much with Lindbeck here. Recent statements by Lindbeck indicate that he also wants Christians to reunderstand themselves in light of their Jewish roots. In the 1991 publication of How My Mind Has Changed, he states that postmodern theologians would do well to take up an "Israel-like understanding of the church."⁵¹ Lindbeck asserts that ecumenism among the Christian confessions should be based upon a reemphasis on building a "community of morally imperative responsibility for one another like the members of the early church or contemporary

⁴⁹CPS, 147.

⁵⁰See HD, 200.

⁵¹See Mind, p. 40.

Jews."⁵² He states that

for classic hermeneutics, the Hebrew Bible is the basic ecclesiological textbook. Christians see themselves within those texts, when read in the light of Christ, as God's people, chosen for service not preferment, and bound together in a historically and sociologically continuous community that God refuses to disown whether it is faithful or unfaithful, united or disunited It was in some such way as this that the Christians of the first centuries, whom we call catholic, used Israel's story as a template for their own existence. . . . We are now better placed than perhaps ever before to retrieve, critically and repentantly, the heritage in the Hebrew Scriptures, apostolic writings and early tradition.⁵³

Lindbeck means that the Hebrew story has always been part of the Christian story, but that post-Constantinian Christians, especially liberal theologians, have distracted Christians from understanding themselves from within the context of the Hebrew biblical story. He believes it is time to reclaim the Hebrew story as part and parcel of Christianity's own story, and in so doing, allow it to be the "language" that creates Christian experience in the postmodern age.

Moltmann's dialogue with Judaism resonates with this approach. He goes beyond anxiety about Christian identity and attempts to recover the Jewish messianic roots of

⁵²See Mind, p. 41.

⁵³See Mind, p. 40, 42.

Christianity. As we saw in Chapter II his interest in messianism begins with "the Marxist and Jewish philosopher Ernst Bloch" whose messianism aims at the consummation or perfection of history, in the light of which all present situations are incomplete and provisional.⁵⁴ This "*ens perfectissimum*" interacts dialectically with the present to show human beings the ultimate and final goal of history so that they might begin to live and work in the present toward this goal. For christology this means that if Jesus's messianic career is seen as a glimpse of this "*ens perfectissimum*" then he can be understood as a model for present living. According to Moltmann, Bloch believed that when Jesus preached the messianic kingdom to the poor he was giving an actual, though partial, glimpse of the fulfilment of humanity. This glimpse at the perfection of humanity through Jesus's messianic claim of the kingdom of God could stimulate "ever new social and political utopias related to specific situations and is the driving force behind liberation movements and people's struggle for justice."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Moltmann believes that messianism is the "overarching perspective and inner impulse for Bloch's socialism." HD, 174.

⁵⁵HD, 178.

In this way, Jesus's messianism results in real and powerful political utopias, which, however, are always provisional in light of the actual and ultimate perfection of humanity's future.

As a further attempt to recover the Jewish story for Christian theology, Moltmann attempts to bring christology and eschatology back together again by recovering the Old Testament roots of the messiah.⁵⁶ He thinks that eschatology has been separated from christology in the history of theology, with the result that faith in Christ is no longer faith in the future.⁵⁷ From the messianic origins in Samuel and Isaiah through to Zechariah and Micah, Moltmann follows the development of the messiah. In the catastrophic periods of Jewish history, the messiah developed from the original king wanted by the Jewish people into the promised messiah of the future. This Old Testament concept of the messiah is a two dimensional development of the 'particular' messiah of Israel and the 'universal' son of man. The former belongs specifically to Israel and the latter to non-Jewish people:

This would mean that the Israel-centric messianic

⁵⁶WJC, 5.

⁵⁷See WJC, 5.

hope is the preliminary stage to humanity's hope for the son of man The messiah is a historical figure of hope belonging to nation, space and time. The son of man is a figure of expectation for all nations; he is above the world, because he overcomes the world.⁵⁸

Moltmann gleans "essential characteristics" of the messiah for both Judaism and Christianity from this two dimensional Old Testament history of the messiah. First, "messianic hope in Israel . . . and the general group of those involved in the expectation of the son of man (all human beings, humanity as a whole)" is political and historical.⁵⁹ We have seen throughout this dissertation how important political (as apposed to individualistic and otherworldly) considerations are for Moltmann. He is reconfirming here that the original Jewish understanding of the messiah was also a political, practical expectation. Second, messianic hope is revolutionary since it was born in political "catastrophe." The realization that the concept of the messiah is a revolt against oppression and slavery is

⁵⁸WJC, 16,17. Moltmann also points out that "a hope in the kingdom of God without messianic presence in history will lead to an expectation of world catastrophe, for this world will not bear the righteousness of the kingdom. Conversely, a messianic presence without hope in the kingdom of God as its consummation will become illusory and overlook the "'mystery of evil'." See HD, 62,63.

⁵⁹WJC, 21.

appealing to Moltmann. The idea of the messiah was born in defiance against the catastrophic conditions created by the Assyrian conquest of Israel. This defiance should persist "in the transition from every historical present to the messianic future."⁶⁰

Moltmann thinks that the recovery of these Jewish messianic roots for christology has obvious profound consequences for Christian identity. It is in this history that the mission of Jesus is grounded and it is in light of the title 'messiah' that Jesus's disciples and, therefore, Christians understand him.⁶¹ That Christians must understand Jesus through his Jewish roots does not mean that

⁶⁰WJC, 22. Moltmann is drawing on the works of Walter Benjamin who stated that "'to articulate historically what is past . . . means taking possession of a memory as it flashes up in the moment of danger'." See 23. Moltmann draws on this idea and states that "in present danger, what is past and therefore repressed, is made present as remembered identity. And the future redemption will liberate the whole past, and will make it present, freeing it from its suppression, and its repression The catastrophe permits hope only for the overthrow of conditions as they have come to exist. This may be called the revolutionary element in the messianic hope." See 23.

⁶¹Moltmann states that "there is no such thing as a christology without presuppositions; and its historical presupposition is the messianic promise of the Old Testament, and the Jewish hope which is founded on the Hebrew Bible. . . . We shall see ['Christ'] as the title for his function. . . . This means that we shall have to continually translate 'Christ' back into the title messiah, so that we can take what it originally meant." WJC, 1.

Christianity is the end of the Jewish hope for the messiah, nor that he is the fulfilment of Israel's hope which renders Judaism irrelevant. In fact, Moltmann believes that to deny or reject the messianic roots of Christ is a form of "anti-Judaism." Far from rejecting the Jewish roots of christology we must see that Christianity is in reality a particular form that Jewish messianism has taken.⁶²

The most glaring difference between Judaism and Christianity, in Moltmann's view, concerns the Jewish rejection of Jesus. Moltmann asserts that Jews reject Jesus for two main reasons, both of which radically call into question the political morality of Christians: Jews cannot accept the "enclaves of redemption in the midst of this unredeemed world"⁶³; and Jews reject Jesus because they view redemption in historical terms while Christianity traditionally thinks of "redemption as an event in the spiritual unseen realm." This is a quotation of Schalom Ben-Chorin. Moltmann uses this same quotation in The Way of Jesus Christ and further cites Martin Buber's assertion

that "'we [the Jewish people] know more deeply, more truly, that world history has not been turned upside down to its very foundations- that the world is not yet

⁶²WJC, 2.

⁶³WJC, 28.

redeemed. We sense its unredeemedness. . . . The redemption of the world is for us indivisibly one with the perfecting of creation."⁶⁴

In other words, Christian messianic redemption could too easily be construed as a-historical. But Moltmann asserts that the Jewish rejection of Christianity as a-historical may stem from an accurate observation of traditional Christian theologies spawned by Augustine, the 'consistent eschatology' of Albert Schweitzer, and the historical politicization of Christianity in which Christians "interiorize salvation and leave everything external to the Christian emperors."⁶⁵

Moltmann, then, far from disagreeing with the present Jewish 'no' to Christ, affirms it, or at least affirms the concerns of Jews that Christianity is a-historical. He responds to the accusations of Jewish theologians by stating that the "messianic question of the coming one" is answered concretely in Jesus reply to John the Baptist: "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."⁶⁶ This statement should remind Christians, and

⁶⁴See HD, 62. and WJC, 28.

⁶⁵See WJC, 31.

assure Jews, that messianic Christianity is meant to be, in its biblical origins, politically responsible.

Moltmann further asserts that for both Judaism and Christianity the messiah is a suffering messiah.⁶⁷ For the Jews, the messiah comes with the "Temple's destruction . . . lives among beggars and lepers . . . [and] suffers with the persecuted of Israel."⁶⁸ For Christians the messiah Jesus is understood "in his vulnerability and powerlessness, and finally in his death as an outcast."⁶⁹

Moltmann's dialogue with Judaism, then, is based on the hope of recovering the Jewish roots of Christianity, a position which accords with Lindbeck's desire for Christians to recover the story of the Hebrew Bible. Moltmann thinks this dialogue is a radical departure from the traditional Christian theological insistence upon keeping the Christian identity separate from the Jewish identity. But he believes that only a recovery of the Jewish messianic tradition can

⁶⁶See EH, 61.

⁶⁷Moltmann asserts that "Christian faith does not distinguish itself but rather finds common ground with Judaism in recognizing the messiahship of Jesus not only in his mission and the signs and wonders accompanying it but even more in his way of suffering." See HD, 63.

⁶⁸See HD, 63.

⁶⁹HD, 63.

provide the original and true picture of Jesus Christ for Christians. As we have shown throughout this dissertation, for Moltmann, it is in Jesus Christ that Christians must find their identity. There is no disagreement here between Lindbeck and Moltmann.

4. Dialogue with the World Religions

In this section we are going to examine Moltmann's basic approach to dialogue with non-Christian religions and his engagement with Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism and the possible implications this dialogue has for the Christian identity. To date, Moltmann's writings on dialogue with non-Judeo-Christian religions is limited. However, he has engaged other religions enough to give us a glimpse of what his future work on the subject might look like. After describing Moltmann's basic approach, I will attempt to determine the extent to which his method accords with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion.

Moltmann's approach to dialogue with non-Judeo Christian religions is much like his views on Christian-Jewish dialogue. He believes that Christians should enter the conversation with the world religions prepared to learn something new and come away with a new self-understanding:

Christians can only talk about their particular mission if they take note of and respect the different missions of other religions. They can only enter usefully into dialogue with them if they do not merely want to communicate something, but to receive something as well. Fruitful dialogue involves clear knowledge about the identity of one's own faith on the one hand; but on the other hand it requires a feeling of one's own incompleteness and a real sense of need for fellowship with the other. This is the only way in which real interest in another religion comes into being, a 'creative need for the other'.⁷⁰

In Moltmann's eyes this mutually transforming dialogue is necessitated by the new world situation in which all religious traditions find themselves. The economic, social, military and political realms have presented all religions with a common set of problems and an opportunity for a cooperative search for viable solutions. For this reason, religions, including Christianity, must no longer rely exclusively on their diverse pasts but must begin to concentrate on what they have in common.⁷¹ In the face of the problems of the modern world, Christianity's special promise and mission must be heard as one voice among many and not a voice spoken in isolation from others.

⁷⁰See CPS, 159. Emphasis mine.

⁷¹Moltmann asserts that "the only religions that will be able to present themselves and maintain their ground as 'world religions' in the future will be the ones that accept the single world that is coming into being This is the new situation for the religions, Christianity included." CPS, 150, 151.

Moltmann establishes some basic ground rules for dialogue with world religions which aim at a fundamental change of attitude on the part of the Christian church. First, the church must drop the attitude expressed at the Council of Florence which stated that 'outside of the church [there is] no salvation.'⁷² Second, he believes that the traditional "nature/supernature model" of theology must be abandoned. This model views Christianity as the supernatural truth of natural truths, which means that the truth of the church is absolute while others are only partial. The alternative view, for Moltmann, is that Christianity must only be understood as an 'absolute religion' on the basis of its openness and ability to learn from the truths of other religions.⁷³

Moltmann asserts that a "productive tolerance," not

⁷²CPS, 153. Moltmann's solution to this is quite vague: Christ died for the whole world and so the entire world is part of the church of Christ. John Hick has dealt with the traditional assertion of *extra ecclesiam nulla sallus* by showing that salvation can be understood broadly as the "transformation of human life from self-centredness to reality centredness [which] is not necessarily restricted within the boundaries of any one historical tradition." "Reality" here means the salvific, transformative and enlightening encounter with the divine that all religions experience. Hick borrowed this idea from Wilfrid Cantwell Smith. John Hick, A John Hick Reader, ed. Paul Badham (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 162.

⁷³CPS, 156, 158.

merely a benign relativism of truth, must be the result when the church repudiates its claim to absolute truth.⁷⁴ The Christian contribution to a "productive tolerance" with world religions is, he believes, to inject them "with the spirit of hope" in order to create the proper "climate essential to finding solutions" to serious human problems.⁷⁵ Toward this end, Christianity can act as a "critical catalyst" in dialogue, allowing the best elements of Christianity to combine with elements of other religions. What Moltmann means here is that when Christians live in a pervasively non-Christian environment, their values can indirectly influence others. For example, Christianity might show "unhistorical Hinduism the ethical import of the future tense," the sometimes fatalistic views of Islam "that the world can be changed." And Christianity can, perhaps, encourage any socially indifferent religions to "recognize social responsibility."⁷⁶ On the other hand, Moltmann

⁷⁴Moltmann states that "a life and a religion are relative in that they behave relationally and enter into living relationships to other life and other religions. In living relationship 'everything' is not of equal consequence and therefore of no consequence at all." CPS, 156,157.

⁷⁵CPS, 152.

⁷⁶Moltmann states that "if it is true that many religions have their faces so turned away from the world that they disseminate social indifference, then the presence

believes that Christians have much to learn from other religions and should attempt to gain a "catalogue of insights" from other religions: Islam's central principle 'let God be God' can remind Christians of the modern tendency toward idolatry; Buddhism can help Christians recall their repressed mystical tradition; and Primal religions can offer Christians ecological insights.

Willingness to dialogue in this manner, according to Moltmann, is showing the suffering love of God, a love that allows for self-change. He claims that this approach to dialogue contrasts with approaches that attempt to maintain the superiority of Christianity. Rahner's idea of "anonymous Christianity" and Hans Küng's tendency to see Christ as "normative" for all people seem to be attempts to maintain this superiority.⁷⁷ Moltmann believes that his approach to dialogue has stronger implications for Christian identity in confrontation with the world religions:

The dialogue of world religions is a process into which we can only enter *if we make ourselves vulnerable in*

of Christians makes them recognize social responsibility and activities appropriate to it." CPS, 158.

⁷⁷Paul Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions at a Crossroads," in Christianity Among World Religions, eds. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1986), 106. See also Paul Knitter, No Other Name? (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

*openness, and if we come away from the dialogue changed. We do not lose our identity, but we acquire a new profile in the confrontation with our partner. The world religions will emerge from the dialogues with a new profile. It may be said that Christians hope that these will be turned towards suffering men and women and their future, towards life and towards peace.*⁷⁸

I believe that this analysis of Moltmann's approach to dialogue with non-Christian religions reveals a contrast to the approach provided by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model. It is not that Lindbeck would disagree that Christians can be stimulated by the encounter with all sorts of people and can discover things hidden or latent in their own tradition in the course of dialogue. But Lindbeck approaches dialogue with an emphasis on maintaining one's religious distinction, which is given by the language of one's tradition. According to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model, every aspect of one's tradition can only be understood and experienced from within the textual world to which he or she belongs. In contrast, maintenance of the identity given by the Christian textual world is not Moltmann's chief anxiety. He focusses instead on the

⁷⁸See CPS, 152,153. Emphasis mine. See also "Paradigm Change," 224. For other comments on Moltmann's ecumenical dialogue with the world religions in The Church in the Power of the Spirit see Kyung Yun Chun's review in The Ecumenical Review 29, (January 1977): 91-92, and Donald Bloesch's review in Christianity Today 22 (April 1978): 36-37.

possible benefits which can come from an open, mutually transformative dialogue. Moltmann, of course, believes Christians have their own unique offering to make in the dialogue with other non-Christian people and does not believe Christians should abandon their religion. Nonetheless, while Lindbeck emphasizes religious language differences, Moltmann assumes these differences and focusses on how dialogue partners from the different world religions might benefit from the encounter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have been examining Moltmann's views on ecumenical dialogue in order to see if they conform to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion. I believe the analysis shows that Moltmann takes an approach to dialogue that is not consistent with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model. Moltmann attempts to describe the common experience of Christians as one of creative suffering. He also believes that a common Christian confession might unite the Christian sects. Both of these approaches violate the cultural-linguistic emphasis on the specific doctrinal language of each Christian confession and the prohibition against formulating a common religious experience for

religions.

We saw also that Moltmann goes to considerable lengths to explicate ground rules for Christian-Jewish dialogue. Much of his effort goes toward breaking down anxiety about the possibility of change in Christian identity in the course of this dialogue. Along with this, Moltmann criticizes key theologians' derisions and dismissals of Judaism. I showed that there seemed to be some correspondence between Lindbeck's views on dialogue with Judaism and Moltmann's belief that Christians must reunderstand Christ in light of Old Testament messianism. Lindbeck believes that Christians should give considerable attention to the recovery of the Hebrew Bible as an important part of their own tradition, a position with which Moltmann is in agreement.

Finally, I attempted to show Moltmann's developing interest in the nature of dialogue with non-Judeo-Christian religions. Moltmann is much more concerned with what Christians and non-Christians can learn from each other than about how they can maintain their own identity in the course of dialogue. Lindbeck is open to mutual influence among the world religions, but puts an emphasis on the distinctions between religions, which are rooted in their particular

language systems. Thus, once again, we have observed a difference between Moltmann's and Lindbeck's approach to dialogue. While Lindbeck's model of religion focusses on the unique language of traditions, Moltmann's focusses on dialogue and change. We will pursue this further in the Conclusion of this dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Moltmann's writings in this dissertation has shown that his theological method is not consistent with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic recommendations for theological method. There are some important agreements about method between Moltmann and Lindbeck. Both Lindbeck and Moltmann believe theology should be focussed on the biblical story, that theology should be self-consciously postmodern, and that it should strive for a non-subjectivist Christian self-understanding. On the other hand, while Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic basis for theological method rejects the use of interpretive frameworks as inherently distortive of Christian language, Moltmann embraces the use of experiential and philosophical interpretive frameworks for biblical theology as a methodological necessity. Further, while Lindbeck's postmodern approach to interreligious dialogue emphasizes the particularities and differences given in different religious language games, Moltmann's writings on dialogue puts more of an emphasis on the need to be open to change through ecumenical encounters than permitted by Lindbeck's

model of religion.

Hence, this dissertation has not yielded a final and unambiguous conclusion concerning Moltmann's method, at least as it has been examined through Lindbeck's categories. Nonetheless, the analysis has brought to light some important insights and developments in Moltmann's theological method. It has shown that Moltmann's basic approach to theology has shifted from a traditional dialectical method, which is suspicious of experiential interpretations of the Bible, to one that employs experiential and philosophical interpretive frameworks. Lindbeck calls such an approach experiential expressivism. However, the analysis has also shown that Moltmann's method does not neatly fit the experiential-expressivist model. The reason is that, in a number of important ways, Moltmann's approach to theology agrees with the methodological goals in the cultural-linguistic model of religion, in that it strive for a postmodern theology, is antisubjectivist and biblically-oriented.

The inconclusiveness of the examination of Moltmann's writings stems, in part, from difficulties that arose in the use of Lindbeck's model as a heuristic device. As I showed in Chapter I, Lindbeck believes that extra-

biblical ideas and experiences can be "absorbed" into the Christian worldview, so long as they do not eclipse the basic biblical-language frame of reference. But what exactly constitutes absorption of ideas and what constitute eclipsing of biblical language? This, as we saw, depends on one's reading of Lindbeck. For some it could mean a fundamental reunderstanding of the "plain sense" of Scriptures. For others, like James Gustafson, Lindbeck's model seems hopelessly sectarian and ill-suited as a basis for theology and ecumenical dialogue because it precludes the possibility of criticism from outside the biblical frame of reference. In my view, this wide range of interpretations makes it impossible to conclusively show whether or not Moltmann's theology is uniformly consistent with Lindbeck's model. However, it does seem that Moltmann's approach to theology is inconsistent with the narrow reading of Lindbeck, though somewhat in agreement with the broader interpretation of his cultural-linguistic model. The important point in this observation is not simply that Moltmann's theological method does or does not conform to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model. My intention was not to use Lindbeck as a normative authority for the way theological method should be understood. The

point was to determine the extent to which Moltmann's theological writings are influenced by factors outside of biblical language itself. It is this task that Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm suggests and to which it lends itself as a barometer.

The analysis of his theological method through Lindbeck's paradigm has shown Moltmann's interest in the need to employ a number of sources in the construction of theology. The fact that Moltmann does not eschew experiential or philosophical frameworks is an indication of the greatest difference between his theological method and Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic recommendations for method. Though Lindbeck's model allows for a controlled amount of extra-biblical influences in theology, it clearly rejects the use of experiential and philosophical interpretive frameworks for biblical theology. Moltmann's theological method does not. This is clear both from what Moltmann states explicitly about his own method and from the way he uses interpretive frameworks for forging his theology. We saw in Chapter I, for example, that Moltmann advocates a theological method which allows for the construction of a framework that provides a political interpretation of the Scriptures. The political framework is meant to replace the

modern frame of reference which, according to Moltmann, has obscured the nature of Christianity. As we have seen, he does believe that theology must be biblical and that the preoccupation with anthropological, philosophical, and experiential frameworks can subvert biblical theology. But the key word here is "preoccupation." Moltmann seems to be saying that some theologians remain fixated on method and do not pay enough attention to the political interpretation of the biblical story. This is a rejection of theology that fails to reexplicate the meaning of the Bible in political terms. It is not, however, a rejection of theology that employs experiential interpretive frameworks. This is an important observation because Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model clearly rejects any theological approach which interprets the Bible through concepts of experience. It is clear that Moltmann does not reject the experiential approach (to use Lindbeck's language) as long as it furthers his main theological objective: to construct a postmodern political theology.

But we have seen that Moltmann has not always been open to such a theological method. His early theology seemed to assume a method much more in line with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm. As I showed in the

Introduction and Chapter II, both Lindbeck and Moltmann have been influenced by Barthian dialectical theology, which categorically rejects religious experience and favours the Christian text as the starting point for theology.

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic emphasis on the language of the biblical text is inspired by Barth's focus on biblical revelation. During his early forays into theology, Moltmann was also clearly sympathetic to dialectical theology's focus on the biblical "Word" and opposed to liberal theology's seeming fascination with religious experience. But Moltmann's method is no longer entrenched in what he calls "the naked positivity of the Bible." While Lindbeck is clearly still operating primarily from within the basic outlines of Barth's approach (at least in Barth's emphasis on the text and rejection of experience), Moltmann, as I have shown in several places in this dissertation, has increasingly found it necessary to distance himself from dialectical theology. This, I believe, is an indication of the greatest difference between Moltmann's theological method and the recommendations for method given in Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion.

I believe Moltmann's departure from this tradition began with some methodological confusion and contradictions

in his early theological method. On the one hand, he seemed at home operating within the basic dialectical structure, which, as I demonstrated in Chapter II, offered itself as a natural place for young Germans like himself, critical of the post WW II German government and church. On the other hand, Moltmann was aware that his use of Bloch's ideas constituted an appropriation of biblically "alien ideas" into theology. As we saw, Bloch's philosophy informs Moltmann's views on biblical eschatology in the early publications, which for him is a wellspring of Christian experience. In Moltmann's theology, eschatologically-informed experiences are critically opposed to modern experiences. But did Moltmann go beyond the bounds of the cultural-linguistic limits in his use of Bloch's philosophy? Barth, himself, seemed to think that Moltmann had reduced the biblical notion of eschatology to a set of non-biblical ideas. After reading The Theology of Hope during a stay in the hospital, Barth replied to Moltmann that


my own concern relates to the unilateral way in which you subsume all theology in eschatology To put it more pointedly, does your theology of hope really differ at all from the baptized principle of hope of Mr. Bloch?¹

¹See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., Karl Barth Letters: 1961-1968 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns Publ., 1981), 175.

This quotation seems to indicate that Barth thought that Moltmann merely conflated biblical eschatology and Bloch's philosophy. Moltmann may disagree that he allowed extra-biblical experiences to eclipse the language of the Scriptures by employing Bloch's ideas. It sometimes seems as if Moltmann assumes he is recovering the *authentic* meaning of scriptural language when he recovers eschatology as the pervasive theme of Christianity. But what I think Moltmann came to realize is that he is rescuing the eschatological theme of the Bible from particular *interpretations* that do violence to the eschatological dimension of the Scriptures, the interpretations that construe Christianity as a modern, subjectivistic religion. He is replacing this interpretation with the Blochian interpretation. However, unlike Lindbeck, Moltmann is not rejecting the process of biblical interpretation itself. The cultural-linguistic model attempts to replace biblical interpretation and call attention to the ability of biblical language to create its own particular worldview and experiences. It is clear that through his use of Bloch and in his subsequent reflections on method, Moltmann came to view such approaches to theology as overly optimistic and unworkable.

One might be tempted to argue that Moltmann was still operating from within the biblical frame of reference when he used Bloch's ideas, since Bloch too was expounding the meaning of Jewish and Christian eschatology. However, there is reason to be skeptical about the extent to which Bloch's views represent the real meaning of biblical eschatology. Anyone who reads Bloch's The Principle of Hope will find that his interpretation of the Old and New Testament represents only a fraction of this book. Bloch also finds the theme of hope in many other religions, forms of literature, music, and philosophies. In his early theology, it seems as if Moltmann thought that Bloch discovered the truth about the Judeo-Christian tradition alone. However, Bloch interprets many expressions of Western and non-Western culture through his Marxist framework of hope. Bloch, then, would also be considered an experiential-expressivist according to Lindbeck's model of religion because he uses the experience of hope as the singular interpretation of the Bible and, indeed, all religions. The attempt to claim that every religion is an expression of one particular philosophy or experience- in this case, the experience of hope- violates the cultural-linguistic prohibition against reducing diverse religious

language games and experiences to one preformulated idea of experience. Moltmann, in his pervasive use of Bloch in his early theology, does exactly this. But does this really mean he too is an experiential expressivist?



In my opinion, Moltmann's embrace of a basically liberal theological method does not mean that he fits the full description of an experiential expressivist. For he agrees with Lindbeck that the experiences formulated and employed by the liberal theologians are subjectivist and individualistic. Moltmann's entire theology is driven by the desire to explicate a theology that guides Christians toward political involvement and toward the work which will change the oppressive, unjust conditions of modern culture. The way to create such a theology, according to Moltmann, is to change the interpretive frame, not the basic method. The greatest indication of the different theological starting points between Lindbeck and Moltmann is that Moltmann finds it necessary to abandon dialectical theology in order to create a post modern theology, while Lindbeck clearly maintains continuity with this tradition by playing down the role of experience and emphasizing the textual worldview.

Moltmann does not think that he allows non-biblical language or experience to determine the meaning of the

Bible. He believes that the frameworks he uses help illuminate something already inherent in the biblical narrative, namely, the political justice dimension of the Christian and Hebrew Scriptures. In my view, Moltmann's interpretive frameworks do not seem to eclipse, overshadow, or radically predetermine the meaning of the Scriptures, as Lindbeck fears might be the case with anyone who applies interpretive frameworks to the text. In fact, the way Moltmann uses interpretive devices is somewhat in accordance with the cultural-linguistic recommendation to absorb elements into the biblical world in order to learn from them. The important point is that Moltmann still operates mainly from within the 'language' (to use Lindbeck's term) of the Christian textual world. But in his mind, this does not preclude the necessity of explicating and employing interpretive frameworks. Lindbeck's model assumes that biblical language is necessarily distorted by such interpretations. Moltmann does not believe this is the case. It seems that for Moltmann, the biblical texts are clarified, discovered anew, and illuminated by experiential and philosophical interpretive frameworks.

In my view, Moltmann's use of the interpretive sources examined in this dissertation are, for the most

part, consistent with what I have been calling the broad reading of the cultural-linguistic model of religion. That is, Moltmann allows the work of Bloch, Marx, mystics, and non-Judeo-Christian religious traditions to influence his reading of the biblical text, but it is not clear that his use of these sources eclipses or subverts the language of the Bible, as Lindbeck cautions. His use of these sources seems more consistent with the "absorption" approach suggested by Lindbeck, at least in terms of the pervasiveness of their impact on Moltmann's reading of the Bible. However, Moltmann's basic approach to theology is inconsistent with the narrow interpretation of the cultural-linguistic model, the one which assumes that Lindbeck's model is sectarian and closed to criticism and influence from outside of the biblical language game.

I have shown in other places in this dissertation that Moltmann has spent considerable time thinking about religious experiences and ideas that might be conducive to the production of political theology. Besides Bloch's philosophy of hope, Moltmann has used Karl Marx's critique of religion, views on alienation in modern industrial society, and emphasis on praxis. We examined this in Chapter III and attempted to determine the extent to which these Marxist

ideas inform Moltmann's theology of the cross. I tried to show the inconclusiveness here between Moltmann's approach and Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion. We saw in this chapter that there are some areas of agreement Moltmann and Lindbeck. There is, for example, a cultural-linguistic feel to the way Moltmann addresses the identity-relevance dilemma. We saw that he wants Christians to maintain their own identity as they work with various political and social justice organizations to change the conditions of suffering and alienation in the modern world. Lindbeck would also find the historical tendency of Christianity to become absorbed by politics undesirable, since this violates the cultural-linguistic demand that Christian language, not other language games, should determine the Christian worldview. There is also an affinity between the way Moltmann appropriates Marxism and Lindbeck's assertion that theologians can absorb Marxist elements into the biblical world. Moltmann, as we have seen, is at least cautious about which elements of Marxism he uses and which he finds contrary to the Christian world. He very carefully distinguishes between destructive elements of Marxism, like scientism, the rejection of transcendence, and uncritical claims to political power and the elements he

finds useful, such as the critique of religion, revolutionary freedom, and the call to political praxis. Even though, in my judgement, Marxism is a much larger determining factor in his theology than the cultural-linguistic method would allow, Moltmann, at least, shares some of Lindbeck's caution about uncritically appropriating non-biblical concepts into the Christian world. Further, I believe the analysis of Moltmann's critique of Tillich's theology in this same chapter demonstrates Moltmann's agreement with some aspects of the cultural-linguistic critique of Tillich's views on religious experience. As we saw in the first chapter, one of the major reasons Lindbeck formulated his cultural-linguistic method was to counter individualism. The analysis of Tillich's theology shows that Moltmann shares this same concern.

However, even though both Moltmann and Lindbeck are critical of the experiential dimension of Tillich's theology, the methodological underpinnings that guide their critiques differ. Whereas Lindbeck's criticisms about Tillich's subjectivism centre on Tillich's focus on experience, Moltmann is critical of Tillich's individualistic existentialism. The point is that Moltmann would replace one extra-biblical interpretive framework

(existentialism), with another (Marxism). From the point of view of Lindbeck's method, this is as much of a violation of the cultural-linguistic program as Tillich's theology.

In Chapter IV, I examined Moltmann's continuing attempt to formulate an effective and useful experiential framework for interpreting key aspects of the Christian biblical and doctrinal tradition, in this case, the Trinity and the Holy Spirit. We saw that Moltmann turns to mysticism, embracing the passion mysticism of Unamuno, Teresa of Avila, Heschel, and Scholem. Once again, I demonstrated that the use of such an experiential framework seems to contrast with the cultural-linguistic idea that the use of frameworks obscures the language of the Bible. The difference between Moltmann's method and the cultural-linguistic model is clearly underscored by his further repudiation of the dialectical tradition's condemnation of mysticism and religious experience in general. I showed that Moltmann came to see this tradition as lifeless and colorless, precisely because it rejected theological discourse about experience. Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm, being very much in line with the dialectical tradition on matters of experience, would not condone such an approach to theology.

But Moltmann creates a mystical framework in order to counteract the self-involved individualism of modernity. According to Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic paradigm, this certainly is a worthy goal. Further, Lindbeck would agree with Moltmann that Rahner's mystical interpretation of the biblical tradition is one more form of modern experiential expressivism (though I am not certain he would see it as a continuation of Augustinian mysticism, as Moltmann does). But even though Moltmann agrees with the cultural-linguistic critique of subjectivism, his methodological alternative to subjectivism is different from Lindbeck's. Moltmann's approach is to formulate a framework and interpret the Bible according to it. Lindbeck would see this approach as a limitation to the possible experiences contained in the Biblical narrative.

In Chapter V, we saw that Moltmann is keenly interested in exploring dialogue among the Christian confessions and with non-Christian religions. Most importantly, we saw that he is interested in shaping the Christian identity through this dialogue. Though there is more work for him to do in this area, his writings on Jewish-Christian conversation, examination of non-Judeo-Christian religions, and dialogue among the Christian

confessions openly demand that Christians must not be afraid to risk a new identity in the course of conversation.

The issue at stake, as I stated in the beginning of this chapter, is the extent to which Moltmann is willing to allow ecumenical dialogue to influence Christianity. I have been trying to show that, at least in theory, Moltmann is willing to allow for more change in Christian identity through dialogue than is permitted by the more restrictive reading of the cultural-linguistic method. This does not negate the fact that there may be areas of agreement between Lindbeck and Moltmann in their approaches to ecumenical dialogue. As I demonstrated, Lindbeck, like Moltmann, rejects Rahner's notion of anonymous Christianity. They both believe that the attempt to understand the many religions in the light of Christian experience dismisses the unique truths and identities of other religions. I have shown that Moltmann affirms the experiences of Jews, Moslems, and Buddhists in the face of Rahner's ideas. Lindbeck also rejects Rahner's idea of anonymous Christianity, because such a concept violates the notion that all religions are products of their own language system.

But there are also important differences between

Moltmann's and Lindbeck's approach to ecumenical dialogue. The analysis of Moltmann's views on dialogue seem to indicate that his method allows for more change in Christian identity than Lindbeck's. As shown at the beginning of Chapter V, Moltmann affirms a mutually transformative dialogue between religions without qualifying the extent to which one can "absorb" ideas from others. In contrast, for Lindbeck the term 'absorb' indicates a controlled acceptance of extra-Christian views into the Christian worldview. In other words, one can only absorb non-Christian ideas to the extent that they do not eclipse the identity, experiences, and worldview generated by Christian Scriptures and doctrines. From the information given in this chapter, it is clear that Moltmann not only does not demarcate the limits of non-Christian influences, as the cultural-linguistic method does, but affirms the need of open and mutually influential dialogue. The accent for him is on change in identity not maintenance of identity.

It also seems that by advocating an ecumenical identity "under the cross" and a common Christian confession that Moltmann is much more willing than Lindbeck to find a way to bridge the differences between the Christian confessions. This seems to contrast with Lindbeck's

recommendations for dialogue, which privileges language differences- doctrinal differences- among the Christian confessions and wants ecumenical dialogue to proceed from this starting point. He states that "operative doctrines, even if not official ones, are necessary to communal identity." He also believes that rejection of doctrinal difference is a product of modern individualism: modern people tend to see communally authoritative doctrines as an affront to individual freedom.² Moltmann, in contrast, wants Christians to transcend doctrinal differences in order to find a common task and vision in life in one main mission: to change the conditions of suffering in the world. Hence, as we have seen, he recommends that Christians unify "under the cross of Christ" by acknowledging the common experience of suffering humanity and by working against the causes of suffering. Thus, Moltmann is advocating the formulation of doctrinal and experiential common ground for Christian sects, a move which, as far as I can determine, violates Lindbeck's recommendations given in the cultural-linguistic model of religion.

Moltmann's desire to have Christians reunderstand their identity and mission in light of Jewish messianism

²See Doctrine, p. 74, 77.

seems, at first glance, to go against Lindbeck's recommendations for ecumenical dialogue. According to the cultural-linguistic method, dialogue partners should retain their own identity in the course of dialogue. But, as we have seen, Lindbeck understands the Jewish faith to be a crucial part of the Christian story and he advocates a concerted effort on the part of Christians to embrace the worldview given in the Hebrew Bible. Moltmann also seems to be doing something similar in his dialogue with Judaism. It is clear that his return to the messianic roots of Jesus is meant as an attempt to open up a renewed Christian self-understanding. We saw in Chapter V that he is critical of theologians who have dismissed, underestimated, or refused to see the importance of Judaism for Christian identity. Moltmann sees in the messiahship of Jesus the possibility for a new foundation for a political theology for the modern era. It is a political theology in which Christian responsibility for the suffering of people is emphasized. Thus, recovery of the Old Testament story of the messiah provides a radical new awareness of the Christian mission. Moltmann and Lindbeck seem to be in agreement about this.

Hence, the analysis of Moltmann's theology reveal some real differences between Lindbeck and Moltmann

concerning theological method. Most importantly, is the fact that Moltmann embraces the same method for doing theology that the liberal theologians did, but without falling into the trap of subjective individualism. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, Moltmann is explicit about the need to formulate and coopt ideas of experience and extra-biblical philosophies in order to formulate a postmodern theology. This means that Moltmann and Lindbeck take different points of departure, though, oddly, seems to end up in the same basic territory. That is, Lindbeck begins with the rejection of preformulated frameworks for interpreting the Bible, but allows for a controlled absorption of extra-biblical experiences and ideas, so long as the language of the tradition dominates. Moltmann begins with interpretive frameworks, but puts them in the background allowing them to guide his reading of the Scriptures. The result for both is still a biblically-based postmodern theology, in which (according to my reading of Moltmann) the language of the tradition plays the dominant role.

I believe this dissertation shows that Moltmann's theological approach may be more open to a radical rereading of the Christian tradition than Lindbeck's. After all,

Lindbeck's method emphasizes the particular and unique worldview given by textual language. Moltmann has always been a maverick theologian, exposing the biblical world to radical reinterpretations in light of many different ideas. His ideas about conversation with world religions and among Christian confessions shows that he would be open to even newer understandings of the Christian world from sources that might include the Buddhist, Native, and many other language systems. In my opinion, this sort of radical reunderstanding has not happened in his theology just yet, but his method leaves open the possibility. In any case, if he does pursue this conversation, he will use it to further his central, life-long project: to create a postmodern theology using whatever ideas or experiences that illuminate the biblical political, ecological corrective to modern culture. Moltmann offers an approach that addresses many of the same concerns as the cultural-linguistic model of religion, but opens the biblical world to surprising new postmodern interpretations not permitted by the cultural-linguistic approach.

APPENDIX

MOLTMANN'S WRITINGS ON WORLD RELIGIONS

In Chapter V, I examined Moltmann's basic approach to dialogue with non-Christian religions and demonstrated the differences between his approach to dialogue and those suggested by Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion. In this Appendix, I want to go beyond an examination of Moltmann's approach to dialogue with non-Christian religions and examine the writings in which he engages their ideas. Much of Moltmann's thought on non-Christian religions is centered around his interest in ecological theology. Moltmann's book, God in Creation, is his first major endeavour in writing an "ecological doctrine of creation." As part of this endeavour, Moltmann analyses "symbols of the world" in several different religious traditions and compares and contrasts them with Judeo-Christian symbols of the world. I want to look examine God in Creation to set the stage for our analysis.

In this book, Moltmann addresses the relationship

that God has with the world. God, according to Moltmann, is both imminent in, and transcendent of, creation. The origins of this seemingly paradoxical presence can be found in the first act of creation. Out of a pure act of love in the beginning of creation, asserts Moltmann, God made a space for creation by withdrawing, allowing for the possibility of finite existence. This act explains how God "created out of nothing" and how finitude can be part of God:

In order to create a world 'outside' himself, the infinite God must have made room beforehand for a finitude in himself. . . . The *nihil* for his *creatio ex nihilo* only comes into being because- and in so far as - the omnipotent and omnipresent God withdraws his presence and restricts his power.¹

This choice to create finitude diminishes God's

¹See GC, 86,87. This retreat on the part of God, in addition to allowing for creation, also brought in the possibility for destruction, immorality, hatred, in other words, the fact of evil. Human evil occurs when people close themselves off from God's creative possibilities. Ronald Cole-Turner criticizes Moltmann for not dealing adequately with the problem of evil here. He states that "for Moltmann, sin is the perversion of our relatedness to God, a selfishness which closes itself off from divine potentialities. . . . One simply cannot grasp the perniciousness of human evil in terms of closing ourselves off to divine potentialities." I believe this statement does not adequately take into account Moltmann's extended treatment of humankind's destruction of the environment in this and other works. See Ronald Cole-Turner's review of God in Creation, Zygon 22 (March 1987): 122. See also Gustave-Pierre Leonard, "Moltmann on Creation," Cross Currents 7 (1986): 473.

transcendence. But it also means that all things exist in God, since even God's removal is still a place opened by God for creation.

But the fact of the constant renewing and regeneration of creation points to the fact that God's ability to create is still an integral part of nature. In other words, creative transcendence lies within nature. Just as God created out of nothing in the beginning, nature shows the same tendency toward renewal, even when it seems to be heading for destruction.² It is evident, then, asserts Moltmann, that the world, because of the presence of God's transcendence, is an "open system." This open system is one in which all aspects of creation are related into "a participatory whole," in which constant change, renewal and the ability to find ever fresh possibilities are evident in nature. This process and world are no less than God, imminently and transcendentally present:

If the evolution of open systems leads to complex open systems, and if we can see no end to this evolution, it would seem obvious to think of the universe itself as a 'self transcending system'. . . . If we call the transcendence of this world God, we can then tentatively say: The world in its different parts and its whole is a system open to God. God is its extra-worldly

²Moltmann uses the terms "nothingness" and the "nihil" in a special sense. It is the absence of God in which destruction, sin and death can take place. GC, 87,88.

encompassing milieu, from which, and in which it lives."³

Moltmann is aware that his view of God's creation departs from traditional views. He states that

ever since Augustine, Christian theology has called God's work of creation an act of God outwards but no one has even asked the critical question: Can the omnipotent God have an 'outward' aspect at all? . . . If there were a realm outside God, God would not be omnipresent. . . However, there is in fact one possible way of conceiving an extra-Deum. But it is only the assumption of a self-limitation by God himself preceding his creation which can be reconciled with God's divinity without contradiction.⁴

Moltmann assumes the idea of "God's self limitation" from Jewish kabbalism. What Moltmann is doing, then, is replacing traditional Christian theological assumptions about creation with particular Jewish assumptions.⁵

Moltmann also emphasizes the sabbath rest of God's creation, an aspect of the creation story in Genesis which, he believes, has been left out of account by theologians. It has been more natural for theologians, including Moltmann, to accent the active, creative role of people in history and in nature. But the call of Genesis for people to "subdue the earth" has become the "intellectual

³GC, 205.

⁴GC, 86.

⁵GC, 86.

foundation for today's ecological crisis: unlimited reproduction, over-population of the earth, and the subjugation of nature."⁶ Moltmann believes that people should emulate God's decision to rest after creation and let nature run its course. They could then "synchronize" their lives to be more in tune with the natural world. What Moltmann is referring to here is a total rethinking of how people relate to and interact with nature. It is a call to a whole new orientation to creation, the result of which will be beneficial to both people and nature:

In order to arrive at a more viable symbiosis between human society and natural environments, it is essential to 'cool off' human history, and to slow down its one-sided varieties of progress. Its concept of time must be brought into harmony with the laws of life and the rhythms of nature Without the sabbath quiet, history becomes the self destruction of humanity.⁷

Given this analysis of his understanding of God's relationship to nature, we are now in a better position to

⁶GC, 29.

⁷GC, 138,139. William C. French notes that this accent on the sabbath rest seems to collide with the notion of the "open system" of nature, which is the theatre for God's prolific creativity. He does not believe these two aspects of God's activities, which have great implications for human activity, are "well integrated in God in Creation." I think this is a valid observation, especially given Moltmann's insistence on the centrality of Christian work within history in all of his other writings. See William C. French, "Returning to Creation: Moltmann's Eschatology Naturalized," Journal of Religion 68 (January, 1988): 84.

appreciate Moltmann's desire to engage non-Christian religions. He focuses on the aspects of other religions that deal especially with nature. That this engagement will help Christians better understand their relationship to nature is shown in the following statement by Moltmann:

a mutual complementation of the ideas inherent in the different symbols of the world, so that we can evolve an understanding of the human being in his world which is richer than any single world symbol is capable of achieving We shall ask what a Christian integration of these symbols of the world could take.⁸

Moltmann analyses "symbols of the world" in non-Christian religions and shows the ways in which they resonate with Christian symbols and how Christianity assimilated or altered them.⁹ Moltmann sees Christian remnants of the "The Great World Mother" symbol found, for example, in "Indo-Germanic tribes in Greece Persia and North

⁸See GC, 316,317. Moltmann states that particular human experiences are only possible because the whole of human experience gives the particular experiences a context in which they can be understood. Symbols convey this whole of human experience, their "surplus of meaning," in particular situations and "release experience." In so doing, symbols "invite new discoveries," they are "the initiatives for the process of perception and interpretation," and symbols release archetypal experience that "produces and orders concepts, absorbs experiences and gives them expression." See 297,298.

⁹Moltmann wants to show how the "Christian world of symbols has absorbed these other symbols of the world, and to show how they have been transformed in the process." GC, 298.

India." This "cosmic archetypal human being" was the mother-earth- in whose womb people feel at home, are born and protected. This symbol was "taken up by Christianity and transformed" in the Christian ideas of redemption.¹⁰ Christ was viewed by the Ephesians and Colossians as the head of the universe, and the husband of the church which is the "mother of the faithful" and mother of the universe. Moltmann believes that, even though Christianity had patriarchalized the Great World Mother symbol, the figure of "Christ, the cosmic human being who will redeem the world," goes beyond male-female distinctions and "resolves" them.¹¹

In the "Mother Earth" cults found throughout the world, Mother Earth is set over Father Heaven, as for example in North American native cults, symbolizing the begetting of human life and birth. Moltmann states that such symbols are also present in the biblical tradition, for

¹⁰Drawing on the work of various experts in matriarchal religions, Moltmann states that "the earliest testimonies of human religion and culture are evidently matrifocal in their definition." GC, 298.

¹¹Moltmann states that "scientifically, this ancient symbol; of the world led to the Gaia hypothesis . . . [in which] all higher forms of life on earth develop in multi-layered system environments. Like all other living things on earth, human beings belong to the ecosystems that surround and embrace them- the biosphere, the atmosphere and the multi-layered ecosystem of this planet earth." GC, 300.

example, in the story of Adam in Genesis who was "taken from the earth."¹² However, the earth in Genesis is no longer seen as mother but as the "raw material for the creator's work."¹³ This mother earth symbol is also found in the New Testament stories about the "grain of wheat" which falls to the ground and in concepts of the church as "Mother Church."¹⁴

In response to Nietzsche's assertion that paganism, in contrast to Christianity, is the festive religion 'par excellence', Moltmann asserts that "the biblical traditions take up 'the pagan feast' and give it a messianic form which

¹²Moltmann shows that this traditional understanding is still alive in Christian burial rites, for example, when the words "'Earth to Earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life'" are spoken. Moltmann also asserts that the Canaanite fertility cults were not forms of prostitution but celebrations of the mother-earth/father-heaven fertilization of life. GC, 302.

¹³GC, 302. Daniel Dombrowski states that one can learn from Moltmann that "the present ecological crisis of domination is due in part to an unreflective acceptance of theological and philosophical theories which unwittingly act as ruses for Father Heaven, who is not only sexist but is also unnecessarily destructive of the natural environment." See Daniel A. Dombrowski's review of God in Creation, International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion, 25 (1989): 127-128.

¹⁴Moltmann states that "out of the motherly womb of the church, outside of which there is no salvation, believers are born again to new life, in a parthenogenesis - 'in a virgin way'." GC, 302.

points toward the eschatological future' but does not destroy it."¹⁵ He supports this idea by showing that Christian messianism has absorbed pagan elements of the "feast of heaven and earth." Drawing on the work of Eliade, Moltmann shows that the festive return to the original time in the feast of heaven and earth "presents the original birth of life" which is imitated by people in fertility cults.¹⁶ Far from rejecting these rituals, Christianity has absorbed elements of the "pagan feast of heaven and earth" but now sees them in light of the Christian hope:

This [Christian] eschatological feast of the new creation of the world absorbs the various elements of the pagan feast of heaven and earth as well as elements of Israel's sabbath feast . . . the coming Christ will be received as bridegroom; the church goes to meet him as a bride adorned for her husband.¹⁷

Moltmann analyses the dance of Shiva in the Hindu faith as an example of the symbol of "The World as Dance" and finds Christian parallels to this symbol. In the dance of Shiva five divine activities are represented, "creation, preservation, destruction, the giving of rest and release

¹⁵GC, 304.

¹⁶Moltmann here rejects the Jewish and Christian condemnation of the "rituals of the Canaanite festival religions or the fruitful mother earth." GC, 303,304.

¹⁷GC, 304.

and salvation." The significance of this dance lies in its attempt to show that Shiva is the source of all movement, the one who releases the soul from illusion, and that the dance takes place "in the heart of every human being," which is the centre of the universe.¹⁸ In this dance, Moltmann believes we are shown that all antitheses (heaven/earth, eternity/time, life/death) become one and we are reminded that "the mystery of structures of matter, like the mystery of life systems, is rhythm, the ordered pulse of time."¹⁹ Christianity also took over similar symbols from the ancient Greek world:

The sacral dance is the bodily imitation of the vibrations which the divine communicates to the cosmos, and living participation in these vibrations Gregory of Nyssa was drawing on images like this when he described the primal condition and the state of redemption in dance metaphors Hippolytus' Easter hymn belongs to the same world of images.²⁰

In a more recent work, Moltmann reflects on the problem of the modern ecological crisis and searches for a solution in the ancient Taoist tradition. The setting for his reflection is contemporary China and its attempt to do away with its traditional way of life in favour of modern

¹⁸GC, 305.

¹⁹GC, 306.

²⁰GC, 306, 307.

industrialization and "progress".²¹ He examines the implications of this situation through the paradigms of equilibrium and progress and gives an admirable analyses of the Taoist and Confucian philosophies of harmony.²² The purpose of his analysis is to contrast the view of the human/nature relationship with the historical world view and its emphasis on progress in nature. According to Moltmann, the traditional religions of China were religions of harmony:

Chinese Taoism is the religion of natural harmony; Confucianism is the religion of social harmony; and Buddhism . . . is the religion of inner spiritual harmony [These represent] a flowing harmony which embraces pulsating life, the rhythms of nature and the cycles of history, and through which human beings attempt to attune themselves to life, nature and history and influence them.²³

The rice field, which is cultivated in accord with the rhythms of nature and the ways of the ancestors, is the economic manifestation of this harmony. But this world view is being supplanted by Western ideas of industrial progress

²¹Moltmann states that "today the Chinese people are organizing themselves to set out from the culture of harmony with nature to the culture of progress in world history." See Jürgen Moltmann, Creating a Just Future, (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 87.

²²Creating, 88.

²³Creating, 88, 89.

in history brought in by Marx, Lenin and Mao. In this scheme *self-reliant* rather than *nature-reliant* human beings are becoming detached from nature. As a result, the economy of the rice field is being replaced by industrialism and ancestor veneration is being replaced by the Western notion of "free association of individuals."²⁴ This Western view, Moltmann believes, arose in the "Abrahamic religions" of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are religions of "historical hope" and not religions of nature:

They are religions of human alienation from the past and present for the sake of God's greater future . . . they are not nature religions but religions of human history But they have become the religious basis for the development of modern industrial ideologies.²⁵

Moltmann believes that a mediation between progress and harmony can be worked out. The equilibrium with nature that Westerns need in order to survive can be found in Taoist wisdom. We must balance the prevailing Western male, dominating and exploiting *yang* tendencies with the *yin* attitude of China, "which has the more female

²⁴Creating, 94. Hans Küng remarks that the importance of rice in Chinese culture extends to the symbol of God in much the same way that bread for Christians becomes a symbol for Christ. Hans Küng and Julia Ching, Christianity and Chinese Religions (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 263.

²⁵Creating, 96.

characteristics of conservation, empathy and synthesis."²⁶

Recently, Masao Abe, a creative Japanese Buddhist philosopher and theologian, has used Moltmann's theology in an attempt to find common religious ground between the Buddhist concept of *sunyata* and the Christian concept of *kenosis*. An analysis of the ensuing conversation allows us a glimpse of how Moltmann responds to the work of someone who engages his thought from outside of the Christian tradition. Moltmann enthusiastically welcomes Abe's intellectual engagement as a step toward "mutual transformation" of the two traditions. And even though he doesn't think Abe's present work has brought about this transformation, he does think that "Christianity and Buddhism in their immiscible differences are led into a common reality."²⁷ We find Moltmann in this engagement with Zen Buddhism, once again, ready to take up new ideas from another religion for the "transformation" of Christianity.

²⁶Moltmann also states that "the Taoist harmony with nature through the integration of humankind into nature and activity through non-intervention in nature which we find in ancient Chinese culture comes very close to the modern quest for a culture which is capable of survival." Moltmann sees here a similarity between the Taoist concept of *wuwei* (economy of action) and the biblical sabbath. Creating, 99,100.

²⁷See Emptying, 116.

Abe's aim in engaging non-Buddhist thinkers in The Emptying God is to answer the challenge of two dominant forms of atheism, scientism and Nietzschean nihilism, which threaten to negate human religiosity. Abe confronts this threat by attempting to elucidate "the authentic meaning of religion" in its socio-historical context.²⁸ He believes that only the formulation of a revolutionary understanding of the Buddhist, Jewish and Christian religions can adequately meet the challenge posed by scientism and nihilism. The Christian concept of the emptying of God in Christ, or kenosis, and Mahayana Buddhist concept of emptiness, or sunyata, lend themselves to this new task of radical reformulation.

Abe points to New Testament writings that give the clearest picture of Christ's kenosis. He quotes Paul's letter to the Philippians as "one of the most impressive and touching passages in the Bible." In this passage Paul states that "Christ Jesus . . . counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." This passage is significant for Abe for two reasons: First, it indicates for him that Jesus "abdicated his divine rank" in order to

²⁸Emptying, 3.

assume the role of a servant; and, second, that the emptying of God on the cross shows the depth of God's love for humanity.²⁹

Abe believes it is crucial to see the idea of kenosis, not just as one defining characteristic of God, but rather as "essentially" and "fundamentally" self-emptying or self negating in God's nature.³⁰ Kenosis is existentially and religiously relevant to the human ego because by taking Christ as an example people can realize that only through totally dying to the ego- the source of sin -can a person's life be transformed and one can become a servant of Christ.³¹

Abe believes with Moltmann that it is essential to see kenosis as a revelation of the Nature of God, not just

²⁹Emptying 9,10.

³⁰Abe states that "consequently, we may reformulate the doctrine of Christ's kenosis as follows: "the son of God is not the son of God (for he is essentially and fundamentally self-emptying): precisely because he is *not* the Son of God he *is* truly the Son of God (for he originally and always works as Christ, the Messiah, in his salvation function of self-emptying)." Emptying, 10.

³¹Thus, Abe formulates kenosis in relation to the self in the following way: "Self is not the self (for the old self must be crucified with Christ); precisely because it is not, self is truly self (for the new self resurrects with Christ)." Emptying, p. 12.

of Christ. This nature is made evident, for Moltmann, in the fact that we must see the crucified Christ as the "crucified God."³² If God is really unconditional love then the self-emptying of God must be total.³³ The nature of God as total self-abnegation, in Abe's view, is important for three reasons. First, it overcomes Nietzschean nihilism, which insists upon the "sacrifice of God," by showing that God's own sacrifice of God's self points to the nature of being itself- that being is essentially self-emptying for the good of the other. Second, essential self-abnegation makes God more present and relevant to the modern scientific world through the elimination of the notion of God as "infinitely unrelated" to autonomous scientific reason. Finally, the notion of the kenotic God resonates well with the Buddhist concept "of absolute nothingness as the essential basis for the ultimate."³⁴

Moltmann agrees with Abe that modern scientism and

³²Emptying, 14.

³³Abe formulates the fundamental nature of God as follows: "God is not God for God is love (and completely self-emptying); precisely because God is not a self-affirmative God, God is truly a God of love (for through complete self-abnegation God is totally identical with everything, including sinful human beings)." Emptying, 16.

³⁴Emptying, 17.

Nietzschean nihilism are threats to religion. But he sees their danger, not in scientism and Nietzschean existentialism as such, but rather in terms of the contradictions inherent in modern notions of science and atheism.³⁵ Moltmann asserts that the real interest for Christians in Buddhism, Taoism, and other "wisdoms of the East arises out of their critique of the contradictions of 'modern' civilization and the quest for a 'postmodern' world of peace and reconciliation of contradictions."³⁶

Moltmann also confirms with Abe that the notion of the kenosis of God must be seen as the fundamental character of God's being. But Moltmann has several criticisms of Abe's views. First, he states that Abe misunderstood his notion of the Trinity, which is essential to a full understanding of kenosis. Abe made the mistake of thinking that Moltmann's concept of the Trinity was rooted in monotheism, something that Moltmann rejects entirely. Moltmann's rejection of monotheism does not mean he embraces

³⁵Moltmann states that "Christians today see the contradictions of this modern world more than its advances. Not science itself is a problem of the world, but rather science in its 'scientific-technological civilization'. . . . The metaphysical nihilism of the thinking of Nietzsche is not the problem of humanity today but rather the political and economic extremism which is practised." Emptying, 117.

³⁶Emptying, 117.

polytheism. Rather, he insists upon three separate divine identities in trinitarian thinking. If the distinction between the Father, Son and Spirit is not maintained, asserts Moltmann, it is impossible to understand the nature of God as fundamentally relational. This, as we saw in Chapter IV, is Moltmann answer to the Augustinian tradition, continued in Rahner's theology, in which the Trinity is merely a three part manifestation of a single, sovereign, self-existing God. We also saw in Chapter IV that this view of God is a projection of Augustinian and modern individualism.

To support the distinction between the members of the Trinity and their fundamental relationality, Moltmann points to the Gospel of John (17:20) as a paradigmatic statement of the Trinity. The passage "Father, thou art in me, and I in thee . . . we are one" means that the very existence of the Father, Son and Spirit is dependant upon their reciprocal love and self surrender to each other.³⁷

³⁷Moltmann states that "it is the divine being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to surrender entirely to the other person and in this way to achieve self-realization only in the other persons." It is important to remember that, for Moltmann, this divine community (perichoresis) is an important and powerful alternative to the destructive monotheistic views of divinity. Emptying, 119.

Moltmann's second objection concerns Abe's use of Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme to interpret divinity as "nothingness or groundlessness." He believes that this reduces metaphysics concerning God to Buddhist categories.³⁸ Such a move divides concepts of nature from concepts of person, something that Moltmann assiduously avoids.³⁹ Third, since God is community Christians pray in the Spirit "through the Son to the Father [making] Christian existence is existence in God." Here, Moltmann rejects Abe's view of the God-human relationship as an "I-Thou-relationship" of human beings with the "one personal God as ultimate reality." He rejects it because of the trinitarian nature of God and because the biblical view of redemption goes beyond mere personalistic, spiritual redemption to include redemption of the body, all other creatures, in short, the whole cosmos.⁴⁰ This communal nature of God's being contrasts with Abe's view of God as subject, albeit an "emptying" subject.

³⁸Emptying, 121.

³⁹Moltmann states that "according to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, "person is a *hypostatic nature* or, said differently, "nature is captured in person. . . . In person, nature comes to itself. In nature, a person realizes him/herself." Emptying, 120.

⁴⁰Emptying, 120.

Moltmann believes that his Trinitarian view of God brings with it a new understanding of creation that can provide a basis for further Christian-Buddhist dialogue. When Christians see the persons of the Trinity and creation together as "*God's creation in God*" then they might be able to see that all things live in mutual interdependence. There are several consequences of this view of creation:

(a) Creation means that everything that exists is contingent. (b) Nothing that exists has its cause in itself (c) Whatever is contingent and cannot exist out of itself has its existential basis in something else. All creatures exist in mutual dependence . . . [because] creation is a single creation community. It is a perichoretic network of reciprocal sympathy.⁴¹

Moltmann believes that "sunyata appears to come close to this [view] of creation" and so Christians can learn from Buddhists how to exist in a non-self-centered and non-greedy way within the creation community.⁴² This, for him, is the real pay-off that comes with acceptance of the kenotic and sunyatic approach to existence.

In summary, Moltmann has begun an open, mutually transformative dialogue with non-Christian religions. He

⁴¹Emptying, 121.

⁴²"If all existing things exist reciprocally in each other and in God, then this world has no centre in itself. It is 'extrinsic'. In sunyata the perichoretic structure of all things is realized." Emptying, 121.

firmly believes that Christians should not walk away from the dialogue unchanged. There is little indication in the above analysis that any of the world religions, except for Judaism, has radically influenced Moltmann's theology to date. Nonetheless, what we have seen about his method for ecumenical dialogue seems to indicate that he is open to such influences in further discussions with non-Christians.

•

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Augustine. The City of God. Translated by Gerald G. Walsh, S.J., and edited by Vernon J. Bourke. New York: Doubleday, 1958.
- Baille, John. The Sense of the Prescence of God. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Barth, Karl. Church Dogmatics. Edited by Bramiley Rev. G. 772W., and Torrence, Rev. T. F. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1956.
- . The Epistle to the Romans. Translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
- . The Humanity of God. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1960.
- . Karl Barth Letters: 1961-1968. Edited by Geoffrey Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns Publ., 1981.
- Bender, Frederic L. Karl Marx: The Essential Writings. London: Westview Press, 1986.
- Bloch, Ernst. Man on His Own. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- . The Principle of Hope. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. 3 Vol. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Bloesch, Donald G. "Tensions in the Church." Christianity Today 22 (April 1978): 36-40.
- Bodensieck, Julius, ed. The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church. S.v. "Mystical Union," August Kimme. Tr.
- . The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church. S.v. "Confessions." Hans Weissgerber. Tr.

- Bultmann, Rudolph. Faith and Understanding. Edited by Robert W. Funk, translated by Louise Pettibone Smith. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.
- Bush, Randall B. Recent Ideas of Divine Conflict: The Influences of Psychological and Sociological Theories of Divine Conflict Upon the Trinitarian Theology of Paul Tillich and Jürgen Moltmann. Distinguished Dissertation Series. San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991.
- Catholic University editorial staff. New Catholic Encyclopedia. S.v. "Confession of Faith." by W. F. Dewan.
- Capps, Walter. Hope Against Hope: Moltmann to Merton in One Theological Decade. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
- Carr, Anne. Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit. The Journal of Religion 58 (April 1978): 213-214.
- Chun, Kyung Yun. Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit. The Ecumenical Review 29 (January, 1977): 91-92.
- Claybrook, Donald A. "The Emerging Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Jürgen Moltmann." Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983.
- Cobb, John Jr. Process Theology as Political Theology. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982.
- . Review of The Analogical Imagination. Religious Studies Review 7 no.4 (October, 1981).
- Cole-Turner, Ronald. Review of God in Creation. Zygon 22 (March, 1987): 120-122.
- Conyers, A. J. God Hope and History. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988.
- Corner, Mark. "Review of The Nature of Doctrine." Modern Theology 3 (April 1986): 277-282.

- Dabney D. Lyle. "The Advent of the Spirit: The Turn to Pneumatology in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann." Asbury Theological Journal. 48 (1993): 81-107.
- Dombrowski, Daniel A. Review of God in Creation. International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion. 25 (1989): 127-128.
- Dulles, Avery S.J. Models of the Church. New York: Doubleday, 1974.
- Fay, Brian. Critical Social Science: Liberation and Its Limits. Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. The Essence of Christianity. Translated by George Eliot. New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, 1957.
- Frei, Hans. The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- . Review of the Theology of Hope. Union Seminary Quarterly Review 23 (Spring 1968): 267-272.
- . "Niebuhr's Theological Background." In Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr, ed. Paul Ramsey. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.
- French, William C. "Returning to Creation: Moltmann's Eschatology Naturalized." Journal of Religion 68 (1988): 78-86.
- Freud, Sigmund. The Future of an Illusion. W. W. Norton and Co. Inc, 1961.
- Frick, Eugene G. Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit. Horizons 4 (Fall 1977): pp. 258-259.
- Fromm, Erich. Marx's Concept of Man. New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1964.
- Galloway, A. D. Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit. Scottish Journal of Theology 32 (1979): 173-175.

Gadamer, Hans-George. Philosophical Hermeneutics. Translated and Edited by David E. Linge. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977.

———. Truth and Method. Translated and Revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad, 1990.

Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973.

Gerrish, Brian A. "Review of Lindbeck's Nature of Doctrine." Journal of Religion 68 (January 1988): 87-92.

Gilkey, Langdon. "The Universal and Immediate Presence of God." In The Future of Hope. Jürgen Moltmann. Edited by Frederick Herzog, 81-109. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Gustafson, James. "The Conditions for Hope: Reflections on Human Experience." Continuum 7 (Winter 1970).

———. "The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University." CTSA Proceedings 40 (1985): 83-94.

———. "Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical and Policy." Calvin College: The Stob Lectures, 1988.

Hauerwas, Stanly, and Jones L. Gregory. Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1989.

Heidegger, Martin. Basic Writings. Edited by David Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Heschel, Abraham. The Prophets. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1955.

Hick, John. A John Hick Reader. Edited by Paul Badham. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990.

Hunsinger, George. Review of The Church in the Power of the Spirit. Theology Today 35 (April 1978): pp. 99-100.

- Inge, William, Ralph. Christian Mysticism. London: Methuen and Co. 1918.
- Ising, Dieter, et. al. Bibliography Jürgen Moltmann. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987.
- Kant, Immanuel. Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. Translated by P. Carus. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950.
- . Critique of Practical Reason. Translated by Lewis White. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Pub., 1956.
- . "Critique of Pure Reason." In Philosophical Classics. Vol 2, ed. Walter Kaufmann. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. Two Ages. Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Knitter, Paul. "Catholic Theology of Religions at a Crossroads." In Christianity Among World Religions. Edited by Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann. Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1986.
- Knitter, Paul. No Other Name? Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985.
- Kraemer, Hendrik. Religion and the Christian Faith. London: Lutterworth Press, 1956.
- Kroeker, Peter T. "Karl Rahner's concept of Revelation: A Convergence of Traditional, Biblical and Contemporary Theology." M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1983.
- Kucheman, Clark A. "Professor Tillich: Justice and the Economic Order." The Journal of Religion 46 (January 1966):
- Küng, Hans, and Ching, Julia. Christianity and Chinese Religions. New York: Doubleday, 1988.
- . and Moltmann, Jürgen, eds. Mary in the Churches. New York: The Seabury Press, 1983.

———. and Moltmann, Jürgen eds., Who Has the Say in the Church. New York: the Seabury Press, 1981.

Lapide, Pinchas, and Moltmann, Jürgen. Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine. Translated by Leonard Swindler. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Lauritzen, Paul. "Is 'Narrative' Really a Panacea?: The Use of 'Narrative' in the Work of Metz and Hauerwas." The Journal of Religion, 67 (July, 1987): 322-339.

Leonard, Gustave-Pierre. "Moltmann on Creation." Cross Currents 36 (1987): 470-474.

Lindbeck, George A. "Barth and Textuality." Theology Today 43 (October 1986): 361-382.

———. "The Bible as Realistic Narrative." Journal of Ecumenical Studies 17 (Fall, 1980): 81-85.

———. "Confession and Community: An Israel-Like View of the Church." In How My Mind Has Changed, eds. James M. Wall and David Heim, 32-42. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. 1991.

———. The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984.

———. "Reform and Infallibility." Cross Currents 11 (1961):

———. Review of Jeffery Stout's "Ethics after Babel." Theology Today 46 (April 89): 59-61.

Livingston, James C. Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971.

Lorenz, Rudolph. "Zum Ursprung der Religionstheorie Ludwig Feuerbachs." Evangelische Theologie 17 (1957): 171ff.

Lyons, James R. ed. The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969.

- Marshall, Bruce D., ed. Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts." Translated by T.B. Bottomore. In Marx's Concept of Man. Erich Fromm. New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1964.
- . and Engels, Friedrich. On Religion. New York: Schocken Books, 1967.
- McIntyre, John. Review of God in Creation. Scottish Journal of Theology 41 (1988): 267-273.
- Meeks, Douglas M. "Moltmann's Contribution to Practical Theology." In Hope for the Church. Edited by Jürgen Moltmann et. al. Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.
- . Origins of the Theology of Hope. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.
- Michalson, Gordon E. "The Response to Lindbeck." In Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 107-119.
- Mink, Louis O. "Introduction." In Of True Religion. Augustine. Translated by J.H.S. Burleigh (South Bend Indiana: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1959.
- Modras, Ronald. Paul Tillich's Theology of the Church: A Catholic Appraisal. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963.
- . "Begegnung mit dem Atheismus." In Umkehr zur Zukunft. München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1970.
- . "Bericht über die 5. Vollversammlung des ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Nairobi 1975." Evangelische Theologie 36 (1976): 177-184.
- . "The Challenge of Religion in the 80's." Christian Century 97 (1980): 465-468.

- . "Christian Theology and Political Religion." In Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Leroy S. Rouser. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.
- . "Christian Rehumanization of Technological Society." The Critic 16 (May/June 1970): 10-17.
- . The Church in the Power of the Spirit. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- . Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship. Luce Program on Religion and the Social Crisis. Edited by Carlton T. Mitchell. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986. pp. 15-31.
- . "The Confession of Jesus Christ: A Biblical Theological Consideration." In An Ecumenical Confession of Faith. Edited by Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.
- . Creating a Just Future. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989.
- . et. al. "The Cross and Civil Religion." In Religion and Political Society. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
- . The Crucified God: the Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974.
- . Diakonie im Horizont des Reiches Gottes: Schritte zum Diakonentum aller Gläubigen. Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984.
- . "The Ecumenical Church Under the Cross." Theology Digest 24 1976: 380-390.
- . Einführung in das Studium der evangelischen Theologie. Edited by Rudolf Bohren. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964.
- . Experiences of God. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

- . The Experiment Hope. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- . "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit-Trinitarian Pneumatology." Scottish Journal of Theology 37 (1984): 287-300.
- . The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- . The Future of Creation. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- . God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press, 1985.
- . "God is Unselfish Love." In The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation. Edited by John B. Cobb, Jr., and Christopher Ives. Mayknoll: Orbis Books, 1990.
- . "Der Gott der Hoffnung." In Gott Heute. Edited by Norbert Kutschki Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1967.
- . "Grundzüge mystischer Theology bei Gerhard Tersteegen." Evangelische Theologie 16 (1956): 205-224.
- . "Hans Küng, Rome and the Gospel." Christian Century 20 (1980): 188-189.
- . Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology. Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.
- . Im Gespräch mit Ernst Bloch: Eine theological Wegbegleitung. Munich: Kaiser Traktate, 18, 1976.
- . "The Interlaced Times in History." In Paradigm Change in Theology. Edited by Hans Küng, David Tracy.
- . "Introduction." In Man on His Own. Ernst Bloch. Translated by E.B. Ashton. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

- . "Justice Creates Peace." International Spirituality. Pamphlet 13. Edited by Glen Stassen: 1-16.
- . "Küng and die Unfehlbarkeit." Evangelische Kommentare 13 (1980): 65ff.
- . Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.
- . "Marxisten und Christen in Marienbad." Evangelische Theologie 27 (January 1967): 308-310.
- . On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics. Translated and with an Introduction by M. Douglas Meeks. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- . Hope and Planning. New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1971.
- . "Politics and the Practice of Hope." The Christian Century (March 11, 1970): 288-291.
- . Das Reich Gottes und die Treue zur Erde. Wuppertal-Barmen: Jugenddienst-Verlag, 1963.
- . "The Revolution of Freedom: The Christian and Marxist Struggle." In Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue, ed. Thomas W. Ogletree. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969.
- . Religion, Revolution and the Future. Translated by M. Douglas Meeks. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.
- . The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press, 1992.
- . "Teresa of Avila and Martin Luther: The Turn to the Mysticism of the Cross." Studies in Religion 13/3 (Summer 1984): 265-278.
- . Theology Today. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1988.

- . "Theology in Transition- to What?" In Paradigm Change in Theology. Edited by Hans Küng, David Tracy. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
- . Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology. Translated by James W. Leitch. London: SCM Press, 1967.
- . The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press, 1981.
- . Umkehr zur Zukunft. München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1970.
- . The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions. Translated by Margaret Kohl. San Francisco: Harper Collins Pub., 1990.
- . "Zwingt der Glaube zum politischen Handeln." In Dialog mit dem Zweifel. Edited by Gerhard Rein. Berlin: Kreuzer Verlag, 1969.
- Morse, Christopher. The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Munitz, Milton K. Contemporary Analytic Philosophy. New York: MacMillan Pub., 1981.
- Novak, Michael. The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- O'Donnel, John J. S.J. Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in Light of Process Theology and The Theology of Hope. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Pagel, Elaine. "Adam and Eve and the Serpent in Genesis 1-3." In Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism. Edited by Karen L. King. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Pauck, Wilhelm and Marion. Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought. 2 Vols. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- Phillips, D.Z. "Lindbeck's Audience." Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 133-154.

Placher, William C. Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation. Louisville Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

Proudfoot, Wayne. Religious Experience. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Rahner, Karl. ed. Sacramentum Mundi. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965. "Church and World," S.v. Karl Rahner.

———. Sacramentum Mundi. S.v. "Dogma," by Karl Rahner

———. Sacramentum Mundi. S.v. "Mysticism," by Heribert Fischer.

———. Foundations of Christian Faith. New York: Crossroad, 1986.

———. The Spirit in the Church. London: Burns and Oates, 1979.

———. Theological Investigations. Translated by Fischer, Heribert. "Mysticism." Sacramentum Mundi.

Rader, Melvin. Marx's Interpretation of History. London: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Scholem, Gershom G. Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.

Schuurman, Douglas L. Creation, Eschaton and Ethics: The Ethical Significance of the Creation-Eschaton Relation in the Thought of Emil Brunner and Jürgen Moltmann. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.

Slater, Peter. "Lindbeck, Hick and the Nature of Religious Truth." Studies in Religion 24:1 (1995): 59-75.

Stone, Ronald H. Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980.

Sykes, Stephen W. "The Dialectic of Community and Structure." In Love: The Foundation of Hope. Edited by Frederick B. Burnham et. al. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Tillich, Paul. The Courage to Be. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.

———. Dynamics of Faith. Vol 2, Existence and the Christ. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1957.

———. Systematic Theology. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957.

———. Theology of Culture. Edited by Robert C. Kimball. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

———. "What is Wrong with the 'Dialectical' Theology." In The Journal of Religion 15 (April 1935): 127-145.

Tracy, David. The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981.

———. Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology. New York: The Seabury Press, 1975.

———. "Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm." In Paradigm Change in Theology. Edited by Hans Küng and David Tracy. New York: Crossroad, 1989.

———. "Introduction." In Cosmology and Theology, eds. Tracy, David and Nash, Nicholas Nash. New York: Seabury Press, 1983.

———. "Lindbeck's New program for Theology: A Reflection." The Thomist (1985): 460-472.

———. "Origins of Philosophy of Religion." In Myth and Philosophy, eds. Reynolds Frank, and Tracy David. New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Unamuno, Miguel. The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations. Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno. Translated by Anthony Kerrigan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Van A. Harvey, "Secularism, Responsible Belief, and the 'Theology of Hope'." In The Future of Hope. Jürgen Moltmann. Edited by Frederick Herzog, 126-153. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. "Ecumenical Dimensions of Lindbeck's 'Nature of Doctrine'." Modern Theology 4:2 (January 1988): 121-131.

Werpehowski, William. "Ad Hoc Apologetics." Journal of Religion 66:3 (July 1986): 282-301.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. The Blue and Brown Books. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.