

Foundations of 'Ecological Reformation':  
A Critical Study of Jürgen Moltmann's  
Contributions towards a 'New Theological  
Architecture' for Environment Care

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## **Abstract**

Jürgen Moltmann's desire to see the relationship between humans and our natural environment improve is long-standing. In later years he called for a 'new theological architecture' to help facilitate an 'ecological reformation' of Christianity and society. While Moltmann did not claim to have created this new architecture, one of his work's aims has clearly been to contribute towards it. To what extent has Moltmann been successful in this aim? Firstly, his doctrine of the Trinity provides the themes of love and relatedness which pervade and colour his whole project. These themes then interact with other key areas of Moltmann's thought that inform this architecture: creation, God's ongoing care and openness towards creation (largely pneumatology and christology), and eschatology. Each of these areas contribute to a theological architecture in which non-human creation, past, present, and future, is a full recipient of God's uniting love and openness. Naturally this leads towards a consideration of the ecological reformation. Less positively, Moltmann's discussion of God's creating through self-restriction presents some problems for this architecture's coherence, although Moltmann's developing views on this do help provide a solution. Furthermore, analysis of the criticisms made by various commentators suggests that several debated areas are actually particularly productive for Moltmann's contributions to the architecture. Other criticisms do highlight areas of concern and possible development, but do not present terminal problems. The potential for this architecture to address practice, not simply theory, increases through elements of Moltmann's theological anthropology that challenge humanity's behaviour. Those elements thus form a lens through which Moltmann's wider contributions to the architecture more powerfully speak of the need for creation care. Therefore, while Moltmann's contribution towards a new architecture for ecological reformation would be helped by certain modifications, nevertheless it is highly significant. Its wide scope makes it fertile for further contributions and development.



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# List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations of Moltmann's major works listed below will be used in the footnotes. The pattern below, that Moltmann's name is omitted from references to his works, will be followed throughout the text and notes of this thesis. All other authors will be named consistently.

- BP* *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2007)
- CJF* *Creating a Just Future: The Politics of Peace and the Ethics of Creation in a Threatened World*, trans. by John Bowden (London: SCM, 1989)
- CoG* *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1996)
- CPS* *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, 2nd edn (London: SCM, 1992)
- CrG* *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden, 2001 edn (London: SCM, 2001)
- EthH* *Ethics of Hope*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 2012)
- ExH* *The Experiment Hope*, trans. by M. Douglas Meeks (London: SCM, 1975)
- EiT* *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2000)
- EoG* *Experiences of God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1980)
- FC* *The Future of Creation: Collected Essays*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1979)
- GiC* *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985)
- GSS* *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1999)
- HP* *Hope and Planning*, trans. by Margaret Clarkson (London: SCM, 1971)
- HTG* *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. by John Bowden (London: SCM, 1991)
- IEB* *In the End – the Beginning: The Life of Hope*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2004)
- JCTW* *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1994)
- OC* *The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Life-Style*, trans. by M. Douglas Meeks (London: SCM, 1978)

- OHD*     *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. by M. Douglas Meeks (London: SCM, 1984)
- PP*        *The Power of the Powerless: The Word of Liberation for Today*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1983)
- RRF*     *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, trans. by M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969)
- SpL*     *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1992)
- SRA*     *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!: God's Future for Humanity and the Earth*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2010)
- SW*        *Science and Wisdom*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2003)
- TJ*        *Theology and Joy*, trans. by Reinhard Ulrich (London: SCM, 1973)
- TKG*     *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1981)
- ToH*     *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. by James W. Leitch (London: SCM, 1967)
- WJC*     *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1990)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In recent years not only has awareness grown of the importance of humanity's relationship with the natural world, but also the volume of attempts to offer some measure of a solution to urgent problems or further understanding of the issues. The field of Christian theology is not an exception. Jürgen Moltmann joined this wider movement relatively early in its history and has continued to connect with it as a priority in his work. He has addressed these concerns from a variety of directions within his larger theological system. For this reason he has long been known for his outspoken desire to see the relationship between the human race and the rest of creation improve.

Moltmann's background has been explored in depth elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> However, a brief summary will be useful. Jürgen Moltmann was born in 1926 near Hamburg, Germany. He became involved in the Second World War towards its conclusion and was captured and taken as a prisoner of war to Belgium, and then Scotland, for nearly three years. During this time he decided to become a pastor. He returned to Germany in 1948 where for the next decade he trained and then served as a pastor until he took up a teaching post at a seminary in Wuppertal in 1958. From there he moved to teach in Bonn in 1963 and soon after to Tübingen in 1967. He taught there until his retirement in 1994 and ever since has remained Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at that university.

In latter years, Moltmann has observed the rise of humanity's acknowledgement of the world's ecological predicament and the global desire to take action. He has termed this needed change a movement towards an 'ecological reformation' (or 'revolution'); a new way of life where earth and ecology, not economy and progress, are the primary guides of humanity. Alongside that insight Moltmann asserts that a contribution Christian theology can make to such a process is to find the 'new theological architecture' that is needed to

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<sup>1</sup> See especially his autobiography (*BP*), although many studies of his work contain biographical information.



help facilitate the ecological reformation/revolution within both Christian culture and society.<sup>2</sup>

Where Moltmann uses the phrases concerned he makes the following A, B, C argument:

**A:** Society needs an ‘ecological reformation [*ökologischen Reformation*]<sup>3</sup> or ‘ecological revolution [*ökologischen Revolution*]<sup>4</sup>. The relationship between human beings and their world has broken down, already with disastrous results for both nature and humanity. A reformation is needed for survival.

**B:** Likewise an ‘ecological reformation of Christianity’ is needed.<sup>5</sup> His use of the broad term ‘Christianity’ in this instance is best understood to mean Christian thought and behaviour. Such a reformation is needed for the Christian community’s own relationship with the earth as well as to aid reformation in society in general. The latter is important to Moltmann because he believes that there are deep religious and cultural roots in society that guide its actions and attitudes. He sees Judaeo-Christian thought, particularly in the West, as part of the contribution to an attitude of domination towards nature. His claims appear to be less that Christian ideas will be the definitive shaping force of society and more that Christianity partly helped create this crisis and so Christianity needs to do its part to help relieve it.

As seen here, Moltmann uses the term ‘ecological *reformation*’ to refer to the change needed in both Christian thought and society. It is, therefore, an ideal term to use throughout the current project to describe the transformation of *all* humanity, Christian or otherwise, for which Moltmann hopes.

**C:** Moltmann argues that a ‘new theological architecture [*neue theologische Architektur*]<sup>6</sup> will be beneficial to both A and B.

Although Moltmann’s description of the nature of the theological architecture was minimal, he did give certain detail. This was: a God-centred, rather than anthropocentric, view of the world which recognises God’s presence in, and future for, the whole of creation of which humanity is only a part.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> *GSS*, pp. 21-22, 224. These are two different articles reprinted, among others, in one volume. They are also essentially the only place Moltmann uses these terms. The earlier article also appears in a similar form as ‘Theology in the Project of the Modern World’, in *A Passion for God’s Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, and the Christian Self*, ed. by Miroslav Volf (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), pp. 1-22. The phrase ‘ecological reformation’ also appears in *CJF*, p. 15, but it is not an explicit subject of the discussion, nor is it followed by any mention of the ‘theological architecture’.

<sup>3</sup> *GSS*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22, 224-25.

following pages, however, will draw out further substance from Moltmann himself, summarised as follows: *the new theological architecture reassesses God's relationship with creation and humanity's position within this relationship. It helps to facilitate the ecological reformation of Christian thought and action, and society, as it creates the thinking-space in which humanity can re-imagine its relationship with, and responsibilities for, the natural world.* That is the basic understanding of the phrase which the study shall employ, though others may yet discover additional insights.

This project deals mainly with C; the possibilities for the make-up of this new theological architecture as it looks to the ecological reformation of Christianity and society. Illustrative examples of *practical* possibilities for the reformation will appear occasionally, but the task tackled in the following pages is not that of exploring the precise shape of these consequent reforms.

While the phrase 'theological architecture' only appears a few times in Moltmann's writings the description above usefully encapsulates the various themes in which he engages with environmental concerns. Therefore, it is a suitable umbrella term for the current enquiry's focus. The term does not refer to Moltmann's whole system of thought. Rather, this research gathers specific elements of his work together to form a new construction.

While he did not claim to have created this new theological architecture, nor explicitly state it as a goal of his work, even so it is clear that Moltmann has joined in the project. His wider systematic work reminds us that he sees his goal generally to provide 'contributions to theology' that encourage conversation and critical thinking, not a 'system' or 'dogmatics' which he fears 'enforce their own ideas'.<sup>7</sup> The same goal encompasses Moltmann's emerging quest for a theological architecture. Accordingly, the research undertaken here has expectation from Moltmann only for *contributions* to a theological architecture, not a completed enterprise.

The question which arises, and the question which the thesis explores, is: *in what way and to what extent has Moltmann achieved his aim and contributed to a theological architecture that calls for the ecological reformation of Christianity and society?*

The relationships between the theological architecture and Christian thought and behaviour on the one hand, and society's on the other, are not simple, nor are they guaranteed to be fruitful. Not every Christian will agree with the theological assumptions or conclusions which Moltmann makes. The criteria by which a Christian judges the architecture will be

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<sup>7</sup> TKG, pp. xi-xiii.

varied but some are reasonably likely, for example: the inner coherence of Moltmann's work, its compatibility with tradition, the biblical evidence for his arguments. Those three criteria have an element of subjectivity in that they are open to interpretation (as later discussion demonstrates). Therefore this study can only assess the strength of Moltmann's argument in these areas and not declare that everyone must agree, for example, with his biblical interpretation. If his assertions are convincing then he can expect to help facilitate the ecological reformation of Christianity, namely in the lives of persuaded persons and communities. In addition, he could hope to bring some measure of reformation to wider society through the influence of Christians on that society (whether through activity, lobbying or protest).

The link between the theological architecture and society is difficult to quantify but almost certainly not all of those outside of Christian faith will necessarily dismiss instantly all of Moltmann's ideas. Of course there will always be those for whom his work is fallacious or totally unconvincing. Even so, there may be insights that are of general interest to the non-theological, or even anti-theological, reader on such subjects as the value of nature, the stress on respectful relationality and love within creation, and the importance of action. For Moltmann himself, the desired theological architecture is of use to society because he believes there is an 'implicit theology of modern times – a theology always already existent, but not critically thought through'. For him then, a 'public theology' is needed; that is, one which challenges and converses with society's implicit views on environment care. In this way he seeks the 'public relevance' which he believes Christian theology needs on this issue, and indeed society in general needs.<sup>8</sup> As in the case of Moltmann's work, what follows is not a dogmatic assertion of the way the world must respond to this issue. Rather it is intended as an exploration in line with Moltmann's purpose of engendering conversation.

To summarise, the purpose of the following research is not to argue that Moltmann's theology is logically compelling for *all* Christians, nor is it to argue the way in which Christian beliefs and values will have an impact on wider society (the latter in particular has potential for further research). Also, to claim that Moltmann could create a theological architecture that could completely transform Christian culture or society would be to expect too much. It is beyond the ability of any one person. Rather the thesis, within the terms of mainstream Christian thought, will *explore and analyse the potency and coherence of Moltmann's contributions towards the theological*

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<sup>8</sup> GSS, p. 1.

*architecture, which he hopes will speak to both Christianity and society.* With this quest comes the acknowledgement that the precise implications for any given person will differ according to their own situation.

The study will thus operate acknowledging Moltmann's dual approach:

**A:** Moltmann's contributions to a new theological architecture present a call to Christians to reform their views towards the environment.

**B:** His contributions also give, admittedly largely in theological terms, a call to society at large to hear any wisdom that might be found within his work and likewise reassess its relationship with the natural world.

This approach means that the work ahead will rarely speak exclusively of an ecological reformation in terms of '*Christianity*' alone but will rather speak simply, and inclusively, of *humanity*.

## 1.1 STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS

This project stands within a rich and ongoing study of Moltmann's work on both theology and ecological issues among many scholars. This fact alone necessitates a brief literature review. To the particular subject of Moltmann's theology and environment care, many have brought an analytical eye to discrete topics, more than can be listed here. A few have sought to explore his work with a systematic approach to the full range of his ideas. Timothy Harvie mentioned the two most prominent of these when he recently stated that environmental concern 'has become a prominent feature in Moltmann's later writings and has received much attention. Because of this, [...] this work will not deal explicitly with ecology except where it specifically intersects the political and economic spheres of discourse'.<sup>9</sup> He actually cited three works: the dissertations of Celia Deane-Drummond,<sup>10</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger,<sup>11</sup> and Douglas J. Schuurman.<sup>12</sup> Harvie's statement above questions the need for further studies like these. Yet this project develops the work which he

<sup>9</sup> Timothy Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope: Eschatological Possibilities for Moral Action* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond, *Ecology in Jürgen Moltmann's Theology* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler and Jürgen Moltmann* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Douglas J. 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).

mentions, with its own particular interests and the incorporation of a further two decades of Moltmann's work.

Deane-Drummond's stated aim is to analyse Moltmann's development of a 'green theology', that is, 'one that is thoroughly aware of ecological issues, but within the framework of theological concerns'.<sup>13</sup> She describes Moltmann's work, up to and including *The Way of Jesus Christ*, as a move 'towards a green theology' but claims 'it is only a first step'.<sup>14</sup> However, this study goes some way to give evidence of a 'further step', through an exploration of Moltmann's subsequent work, and his earlier work in the context of the whole. Deane-Drummond's approach has similarities to the present work, yet the present study reaches different conclusions, a result of a mixture of interpretations of specific topics and divergent directions of exploration. Furthermore, she has a more scientific, specifically biological, perspective with associated lines of enquiry, and her own foci and emphases draw her in particular directions.

Bouma-Prediger's overall aim is to show how Christian tradition in its entirety contains 'considerable resources to develop an ecologically informed and affirming theology'.<sup>15</sup> He thus chooses three authors as dialogue partners and Moltmann receives only a third of his attention. Crucially, Bouma-Prediger's scope restricts the amount he can engage with Moltmann's work. In addition, the research which follows disagrees with certain elements of that engagement. Bouma-Prediger makes important contributions, yet they are different to this thesis in that the latter concentrates more wholly on Moltmann's work and thus explores to greater depth and gives wider results.

Harvie's inclusion of Schuurman's study is generous. While it has 'creation' and 'ethics' in its title, 'creation' refers mainly to the original act of creation and 'ethics' to social ethics.<sup>16</sup> It is thus largely a study of continuity and discontinuity between past, present and future, and its implications for more general human activity, not specifically environmental issues. This does have some ramifications for certain elements of this thesis, but its value for the overall task is limited.

As well as these specific reasons, there is also the question of date. All three of the above studies are theses from the 1980s and very early 1990s. Moltmann has done extensive and significant work since this date which adds to, interprets and complements much of his earlier material. Moltmann's

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<sup>13</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 296.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>15</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Schuurman, *Creation*, p. 2.

contribution to the new theological architecture has not been static. In addition, the amount of secondary literature on many areas of his thought has also grown. This has generated new critiques and defences of Moltmann's work to take into account.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

What follows is primarily a study of certain aspects of Moltmann's theology that can helpfully contribute to the new theological architecture. Successive chapters will extract different threads of his thought, and by doing so will build up the substance of this architecture. The greater part of the research is thus an exploration and analysis of Moltmann's work. Each discussion contains a close focus on the primary texts, followed by analysis and purposeful engagement with secondary authors. However, as the investigation of Moltmann's own explicit claims continues, so too does attention to the potential to make new connections and conclusions from his work which he himself does not make explicitly.

In order to give due attention to the most profitable themes, the scope of engagement focuses on selected doctrines relevant to the task, and often only certain areas within those doctrines. This is not a study of every facet of Moltmann's entire system. Rather it explores how certain aspects of Moltmann's work can be drawn together to offer coherent contributions to a specific architecture, a structure of thought pertinent to the reformation of ecological views. It is important to remember that the thesis evaluates the potential of Moltmann's *contributions* to this theological architecture. The thesis cannot claim to discover the completed architecture in Moltmann's work. The 'new' theological architecture will in fact be an 'emerging' one.

Furthermore, this research cannot claim to answer all the questions that pertain to each topic that is dealt with. Its interest lies in the coherence of the new architecture and its potential as it seeks to facilitate an ecological reformation. The thesis, therefore, has not settled once and for all controversial topics such as God's suffering, or the exact make-up of the inner triune life. These areas are addressed in so far as they touch the subject of a theological architecture which looks to facilitate an ecological reformation. In addition, while the thesis is thoroughly interested in the ecological reformation, it is not possible to give equal attention and detail to both this and the theo-

gical architecture. It is the latter that mainly occupies this work's energies in order to illustrate the foundation for practical earth-care activity that can be gathered from Moltmann's theology. Some possibilities for the ecological reformation will emerge, but only in limited way.

To facilitate this the study will take an essentially systematic approach to Moltmann's work from the 1960s to the present day. Almost all published monographs are included, with only minor exceptions, so there is no need to list them all. For clarity, a reference to his early work generally alludes to that of the 1960s and 70s, while his 'systematic contributions' are the six books which are at the centre, chronologically and often theologically, of his thought: *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (1981), *God in Creation* (1985), *The Way of Jesus Christ* (1990), *The Spirit of Life* (1992), *The Coming of God* (1996), and *Experiences in Theology* (2000). There are many other monographs scattered throughout his career. Journal articles and chapters from edited volumes are also incorporated when they help to illuminate a given theme or demonstrate the evolution of his theology.

In addition, an English language researcher is very grateful for the extent and quality of the translation of Moltmann's works. There is little which Moltmann has written that has not found its way into English in a clear and understandable format, provoking few complaints about accuracy. For that reason this project has proceeded with the work in its English translation with confidence. When there is cause to pause over the meaning of a translation, or give depth to a particular word or phrase, the German original is consulted.

As far as is practicable the project gives separate chapters to different areas of theology. However, the decision roughly to follow a timeline based on a theology of cosmic history (original creation, continuous creation, new creation), has meant that doctrines such as pneumatology and christology are not given distinct chapters but are spread through different topics. The present work also specifically tracks the development of some of Moltmann's ideas throughout his career when this is helpful to the interpretation of their more mature state. Therefore, in order to appreciate best the overall contribution of Moltmann's work, each theme is addressed coherently as a whole but occasionally with discussion of how it fits into the chronology where pertinent.

As to the range of themes, the study focuses largely on God's relationship with all creation, and humanity's response to this. However, a significant area of the general thought around environmental themes is concerned with the effect of climate change on humanity, especially the poor. The study

that follows places humanity's predicament in the context of the larger, more comprehensive, picture.

## Use of Terms

It will be helpful to include a brief discussion on the use of certain terms, particularly those which concern the 'world':

### *Environment*

Moltmann recognises that the 'term "environment" which is in general use is anthropocentric' and speaks of it 'belonging to us'.<sup>17</sup> The use of the word 'environment' can lend weight to attitudes towards the world which emphasise humanity's possession of it. This is to give it only a value for humanity, not for its own right. It becomes 'our environment'. However, in this work it refers simply to the world in relation to humanity. This is not an expression of ownership or superiority, but a recognition that the world gives humanity its surroundings.

### *Nature*

For Moltmann, neither is the word 'nature' the preferred word for the world; it does not carry the same respect and recognition of God's ownership as does the word 'creation'.<sup>18</sup> He also indicates that he feels the term separates humanity from the rest of creation.<sup>19</sup> The term is useful to this study, however, precisely because of this separation.

### *Creation*

The word 'creation' frequently carries with it certain assumptions. In Christian writings it often refers exclusively to non-human creation and is a synonym for nature. This is not the intention in this thesis. 'Creation' is just that, all that is 'created'.

Given these considerations, this study refers to the non-human part of creation sometimes as 'nature', 'environment', 'world' or 'earth'. It responds to Moltmann's warning about the importance of definitions: 'In ecological ethics too we don't know whether we ought to talk about the environment, the world we share, or nature. If an ethics allows its concepts to be predetermined by the

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<sup>17</sup> 'The Scope of Renewal in the Spirit', *The Ecumenical Review*, 42:2 (1990), 98–106 (p. 104); *EthH*, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> *GSS*, p. 112.

<sup>19</sup> *EthH*, p. 107.



dominant worldview, it cannot be innovative.’<sup>20</sup> Given his misgivings about these terms, Moltmann seems to fear that the use of terms with associated negative meanings can bind those meanings restrictively into the discussion. However, this need not be so. A wider context of affirmation of the world’s value can rehabilitate these terms.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE

The thesis journey starts with a brief exploration of Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity in Chapter 2. Then the subsequent four chapters develop a more detailed study of his understanding of God’s relationship with creation from its beginning to new beginning. Next, in Chapter 7, is an analysis of the connections between theology and humanity’s response, which leads finally to Chapter 8 and an appreciation of the multiple implications for ecological reformation of a theology which places great importance both on creation in its entirety and wholeness, and on humanity’s responses to this importance.

Having briefly outlined the main pillars of this structure a little more detail follows, beginning as described above with Moltmann’s trinitarian doctrine of God in Chapter 2. Moltmann’s work on the doctrine of the Trinity provides the themes of love and relatedness which are a guide to the theological architecture. While the topic of the Trinity can be an abstract one, Moltmann’s formulation of it derives from his observations of the concreteness of God’s relationship with creation.

Chapter 3 discusses Moltmann’s theology of the original act of creation. God creates something other than God’s own self to relate to, consistent with the themes of love and relationship introduced previously. Alongside this it considers divergent expressions of God’s ‘making space’ for creation in Moltmann’s work and settles on the preferred notion of ‘living space’. Moltmann also affirms, with nuances, God’s freedom in the creative process.

Chapters 4 and 5 follow the pattern of cosmic history and examine Moltmann’s understanding of God’s continuous love for creation as it lives and grows. Chapter 4 pays particular attention to God’s outgoing love. Through the Spirit and Son, Moltmann contributes to a theological architecture in which there is a universal presence and involvement of God within creation. The Spirit is a gift, poured out on the world while the Son comes to earth as

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. xiii.

a human. Both work for the whole cosmos, to bring life and fellowship. As the topic of pneumatology and creation has been a particularly important one for Moltmann, this will comprise the bulk of the chapter. Also the enthusiasm with which Moltmann has tackled the subject of the 'Spirit of Life' means that this chapter is of greater length than the others.

Chapter 5 turns to God's open and vulnerable love that allows creation to affect the divine life. It explores God's relationship of openness with creation in terms of God as Trinity and the specific relationships of the Spirit and Son. From there the study moves to Moltmann's theory of divine passibility, which enables a discussion around how God suffers with and for creation.

Chapter 6 concerns itself with the future of creation and God. Creation's future includes every part, human or otherwise. Furthermore, this future is eternal interrelated life with God. In addition, the chapter considers the dynamic of continuity and discontinuity between the present and the future in Moltmann's work. The balance found here brings both confidence and responsibility for humanity's consideration of action.

In Chapter 7 the focus shifts from the scheme of the previous five chapters (namely God and God's relationship with creation) to consider Moltmann's work on anthropology, particularly those aspects that challenge humanity's response to theology. The potency of Moltmann's contributions to the theological architecture greatly increase through attention to this particular area. There is a multifaceted approach by which theology can help determine attitudes and actions.

In Chapter 8 the study brings Moltmann's systematic scheme of theology into dialogue with his emphasis on humanity's response, the ecological reformation. The importance of the whole of creation in Moltmann's theology corresponds to an importance of the care for the whole of creation.

Finally, Chapter 9 concludes that through the various contributions that Moltmann has made, he has given the Christian community a formidable resource towards the new theological architecture. His contribution to the new architecture is ambitious in its sweep and has a high level of coherence within itself, and faithfulness to traditional views. Most importantly, it relentlessly and persuasively seeks to re-envision humanity's attitude towards its relationship with nature: the *ecological reformation*.



# Chapter 2

## The Trinitarian Foundation

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This exploration of Moltmann's search for an ecological reformation begins with the doctrine of the Trinity. This is an important starting point for him as he believes that the doctrine of the Trinity should have a greater effect on the Christian life and its practical outworkings. His aim is to 'develop and practise' trinitarian thought.<sup>1</sup> He considers liberation theology to show this to be possible because of the 'theological depth and practical aims for church and society' given by the social doctrine of the Trinity so that 'people are becoming capable of surviving with one another and with nature'.<sup>2</sup> All this serves to oppose the famous statement by Immanuel Kant: 'Virtually no practical consequence can be drawn from the doctrine of the Trinity taken literally [...] Thus such a belief, because it neither makes a better man nor proves one to be such, is no part of religion.'<sup>3</sup> Moltmann's trinitarian work, with the richness it contributes to his theology of creation, presents an alternative to Kant's claim.

This chapter sets the scene for Moltmann's contributions to the theological architecture. It first follows the growth of his doctrine of the Trinity as his published works grow more numerous. Then comes an outline of the doctrine's more mature state in Moltmann and a selection of the criticisms brought to bear by others. Certain criticisms of his trinitarian work are omitted. One notable example is the wide-ranging reaction to Moltmann's aversion to hierarchy and subordination within the Trinity, and his rejection of the term 'monotheism'.<sup>4</sup> This is an interesting debate but the thesis focuses

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<sup>1</sup> *TKG*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *HTG*, p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in *CrG*, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), pp. 13, 15, 175,

more on his work on the love in the trinitarian relations rather than the theme of hierarchy.

The chapter is shorter than most for two reasons. Firstly, much of Moltmann's discussion of the Trinity is tied into wider discussions of God's relationship with creation which come later in this project. Secondly, it heeds Werner Jeanrond's caution to be careful not to take too many conclusions from 'God's inner dialogue', which is less knowable than God's relationship with creation.<sup>5</sup> Instead Moltmann's trinitarian work here serves as a preliminary discussion before later chapters survey in depth many of its implications for God's relationship with creation.

## 2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOLTSMANN'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is a relatively weak theme in Moltmann's earlier theology of the 1960s, particularly in regards to a lack of discussion of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that the Trinity was of no interest to him, only that it did not play an overt part in his discussions of that time. In addition, there is a greater attention to the topic of the Holy Spirit in his early work than many people notice.<sup>7</sup>

The beginnings of Moltmann's more developed doctrine and in-depth discussion of the Trinity became visible to a large degree first in an article from the early seventies.<sup>8</sup> This article above all seeks to answer the question:

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185, 193-94; Randall E. Otto, 'Moltmann and the Anti-Monothism Movement', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 3:3 (2001), 293-308; Ryan A. Neal, *Theology As Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of Hope* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), p. 98, n. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Werner G. Jeanrond, 'The Question of God Today', in *The Christian Understanding of God Today: Theological Colloquium on the Occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the Foundation of Trinity College, Dublin*, ed. by James M. Byrne (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 1993), pp. 9-23 (p. 16).

<sup>6</sup> Trinity is a brief secondary topic in one conversation (*ToH*, pp. 50-58). It also appears in a piece from 1969 which appears in an English translation as: 'Political Theology', *Theology Today*, 28:1 (1971), 6-23 (pp. 12-13)). It has a brief mention in some other early work (*HP*, pp. 14-15, chapter originally from 1966). See also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 152; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 73, n. 24 (who identifies some further sources of criticism).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Chapter 4 of this work, 'The Spirit and Creation in Early Material', p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> 'The "Crucified God": A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross', *Interpretation*, 26:3 (1972), 278-99.

‘Has God himself suffered?’<sup>9</sup> This means that he locates the discussion firmly in the event of the crucifixion and abandonment of Christ and it is here that the consideration of the Trinity occurs. For Moltmann, ‘the concept “God” is constituted’ from this event that involved Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Here Moltmann intrinsically connects the doctrine to both the suffering and the love of God, love that is both for the world and between the trinitarian persons.

Moltmann also speaks of the *relational character* of God as seen in the cross, ‘in which these persons are constituted in their relationship to each other and so constitute themselves’.<sup>11</sup> In the cry of abandonment on the cross, Jesus ‘lays claim to his own being in this special relationship with the Father, in which he is the Son’.<sup>12</sup> But in this moment of abandonment there is also profound unity as both the Father and the Son surrender their relationship with each other because of their love for the world.<sup>13</sup> Here Moltmann’s trinitarian work already has significant implications for a theological architecture which includes the whole world.

Moltmann takes up this theme and develops it further in *The Crucified God*.<sup>14</sup> However, the criticism remains that he speaks of the Trinity but in effect gives little attention to the Spirit.<sup>15</sup> This criticism takes credence from such statements as: ‘And we have not interpreted the death of Jesus as a divine-human event, but as a trinitarian event between the Son and the Father.’<sup>16</sup> The Spirit is conspicuously absent from this statement. In Moltmann’s defence, in his work there are other discussions of the Spirit prior to this point.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that while this discussion, and others like it, may neglect to mention the Spirit, his theology as a whole does not entirely neglect the subject.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 278, 282. This particular question returns in Chapter 5 of this work, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 296 (cf. ‘the Trinitarian concept of God was developed out of the understanding of the crucified Christ’, Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann (eds), *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine: A Dialogue*, trans. by Leonard Swindler (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1981), p. 47).

<sup>11</sup> “The “Crucified God””, p. 295.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>14</sup> *CrG*, esp. Chapter 6, pp. 206-303.

<sup>15</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics*, p. 109, n. 43; T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007), p. 243. See also Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 178 (n. 25), 182-83 (n. 57), where again Neal gives lists of secondary sources. Beck even suggests that *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is more about the Church and not strongly pneumatological (Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 95).

<sup>16</sup> *CrG*, p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> And indeed there may be more discussion of the Holy Spirit in Moltmann’s work than English readers are led to believe. Neal points to the unpredictability of the translation of ‘der Geist’ into ‘Spirit’ or ‘spirit’ (Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 183, n. 60).

<sup>18</sup> In other words, the accusation that his theology is ‘binitarian’ is exaggerated (see Beck,

From the beginning of the 1980s explicitly trinitarian discussion becomes the standard for Moltmann's theology. One of the hallmarks of his trinitarian work is the way he grapples with the significance of the three persons of the Godhead. He makes it clear that he does not wish to overemphasise either the three-ness (tritheism) or the one-ness of God (modalism), but nevertheless he feels he must start the discussion from one end or another. He decides to begin with three persons and ask how they might be one because he considers the history of Christ to present us with three divine actors.<sup>19</sup> Neal questions whether Moltmann overstates the necessity of his particular approach and argues that starting from three-ness or one-ness is acceptable.<sup>20</sup> Paul Molnar, on the other hand, claims that it is a false choice, that we must begin with 'the triune God who is simultaneously one and three'.<sup>21</sup> However, this actually matches Moltmann's own method. He may start the discussion from the three-ness of the Trinity yet the origin of that discussion was his desire precisely to respect the simultaneity of three and one in the Trinity. He later explains that he began with God's three-ness as a counter to what he perceived to be modalistic tendencies in Western theology.<sup>22</sup> His enthusiasm to start with, and retain, the three-ness of God has led him to claim that the one-ness of the Trinity is not 'numerical unity'. For Moltmann this does not mean that God is multiple, but neither is the Divine simply mathematically 'one'.<sup>23</sup>

His question is, therefore: how is the God who is 'three' also understood to be 'one'? In Moltmann's answer to this, God's love is the key concept for his doctrine of the Trinity. If God is love then 'he has to be understood as the triune God. Love cannot be consummated by a solitary object'.<sup>24</sup> The Trinity's unity is such that '[b]y virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one'.<sup>25</sup> It is here in this work that Moltmann employs the concept of *perichoresis* to describe the inner relations of the Trinity.<sup>26</sup>

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*The Holy Spirit*, p. 243).

<sup>19</sup> *TKG*, p. 149 (cf. *EiT*, p. 322).

<sup>20</sup> Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 104, n. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), p. 232.

<sup>22</sup> 'Foreword to McDougall, J. A., *Pilgrimage of Love*', in *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. xi–xiv (p. xii).

<sup>23</sup> Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 64 (cf. *TKG*, p. 95). Because of this approach, Moltmann's corrective emphasis of God's three-ness has appeared to some to be the overemphasis towards tritheism which he wished to avoid. This problem is addressed in the next section.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57. Here he sets trinitarianism against monotheism.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150. It does seem that the word and concept was already in Moltmann's mind in 1972 from his own reflections on his theology (*BP*, p. 171). However, he might possibly

## 2.3 UNITY THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann continues to describe more clearly his view of the relations of the Trinity which he started with his earlier discussions on a trinitarian theology of the cross. He does not wish to locate the unity of God solely in one substance, or one subject. He puts more importance on a union of love and fellowship.<sup>27</sup> For while the classical foundations for this unity start with a unity of one substance or one subject, he is keen to look beyond both these ideas as they do not fit with the ‘concept of unity corresponding to the biblical testimony of the triune God, the one who unites others with himself’.<sup>28</sup> In other words, for Moltmann, concepts of divine unity based solely on a single substance or subject do not allow God to be open to unification with creation, which is neither the same substance or subject.<sup>29</sup> This desire to include all creation demonstrates that Moltmann’s trinitarian theology already has possibilities for an ecological reformation.

At times his rhetoric seems to reject completely the idea of any unity of substance or subject within the Trinity. However, the context explains that this is not so: his concern is the primary definition of God’s unity, not what else the Trinity might share. To demonstrate this, elsewhere he states clearly that his intention is not to claim there is no unity of substance or subject:

[T]he unity of the triune God is not to be found solely in the single divine *substance*, or merely in the identical divine *subject*; it consists above all in the unique *community* of the three Persons. The trinitarian Persons possess in common the divine essence, and exercise in common the divine sovereignty. This means that their trinitarian community precedes their substantial and their subjective unity *ad extra*.<sup>30</sup>

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have used a word from his later vocabulary retrospectively to name this concept.

<sup>27</sup> *TKG*, pp. 95, 150, 157.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>30</sup> ‘The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit – Trinitarian Pneumatology’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 37:3 (1984), 287–300 (p. 289). See similar sentiments in *TKG*, p. 58; *GiC*, pp. 85–86; *HTG*, p. 59. Some of those who engage with Moltmann’s work also note this: Linwood Urban, *A Short History of Christian Thought: Revised & Expanded Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 69; Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 106, n. 6; Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics*, pp. 114, 117.

There are others who seem to miss, or at least not mention, the subtlety of his argument: Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 242; Randall E. Otto, ‘The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 54:3 (2001), 366–84; Tim Chester, *Mission and the Coming of God: Eschatology, the Trinity and Mission in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 36–37; J. Matthew Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other: The Trinitarian Ethics of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), pp. 24–33, 37, 77.



There may well be foundations for divine unity other than the Trinity's inner relationships, but Moltmann's primary understanding of this unity, the unity which he believes God wants to share with creation, is fellowship. By 'their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one'.<sup>31</sup> For Moltmann, this is '*perichoresis*'.<sup>32</sup> A significant part of its relevance for ecological reformation is the relationship between God and creation it describes in Moltmann's handling of that subject.<sup>33</sup>

## Accusations of Tritheism

Moltmann's formulation of *perichoresis* raises an issue for Paul Molnar, given the way in which Moltmann develops his theology of the cross: 'On the cross the Father and the Son are so deeply separated that their relationship breaks off.'<sup>34</sup> With this claim, Molnar feels that Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity shows clear dangers of tritheism.<sup>35</sup>

It is a pertinent question to ask what happens to the Trinity, which finds its unity in relationship, when those relationships are broken, when one person is 'forsaken' by another. If the relationships can 'break' perhaps the divine unity can do likewise. If the different subjects survive outside of the union then, as noted above, the charge of tritheism will not be far behind. Yet, as noted above, he speaks of the mixture of abandonment *and unity* in the cross event. On the cross the Son and the Father are separated but 'are at the same time most inwardly united through the Spirit of sacrifice'.<sup>36</sup> This is a unity that survives abandonment.<sup>37</sup>

The claims above are not the only basis for the charge of tritheism against Moltmann. He also attracted attention with such statements as that the Trinity's unity is 'not in their numerical unity'.<sup>38</sup> For Alan Torrance, 'the slightly individualistic nuances in [Moltmann's] interpretation of trinitarian person-

<sup>31</sup> *TKG*, p. 175 (cf. pp. 95, 150; *GSS*, p. 101).

<sup>32</sup> *TKG*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> This issue is considered throughout this thesis, but see especially Chapter 5, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Paul D. Molnar, 'The Function of the Trinity in Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation', *Theological Studies*, 51:4 (1990), 673–97 (p. 694). Douglas Farrow may also refer to this problem although he does not follow up the question (Douglas B. Farrow, 'In the End is the Beginning: A Review of Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions', *Modern Theology*, 14:3 (1998), 425–47 (p. 431)).

<sup>36</sup> *ExH*, pp. 80–81 (cf. "The Crucified God", p. 293; *TKG*, p. 82).

<sup>37</sup> For further explorations of the crucifixion see Chapter 5 of this work, pp. 107, 128.

<sup>38</sup> *TKG*, p. 95 (cf. Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 64).

hood and [...] “community”, mean that he is arguing from a standpoint which may be argued to be sailing too close to tritheism’.<sup>39</sup> Others share this discomfort with Moltmann’s language of three-ness and community.<sup>40</sup> Tim Chester even claims that he makes the general unity of the Trinity ‘volitional’.<sup>41</sup> This is a strong claim, yet Chester gives no evidence to support it.

It is helpful to realise the standards to which one is required to adhere when discussion of the Trinity is attempted: ‘I am not happy with some of Moltmann’s terminology here! The notions of union and communion are clearly preferable to those of unitedness and at-oneness, which are too individualistic and hence err in the direction of tritheism.’<sup>42</sup> It seems it is very difficult to find language with which everyone will agree. In addition, it is important to remember that Moltmann has also chosen to use provocative language in order to re-balance a perceived overemphasis on God’s oneness.<sup>43</sup> For this reason his language will undoubtedly appear to lean in one direction.<sup>44</sup>

Moltmann is aware of these dangers and sees *perichoresis* as an answer to them ‘because it combines threeness and oneness in such a way that they cannot be reduced to each other, so that both the danger of modalism and the danger of “tritheism” are excluded’.<sup>45</sup> This mutual indwelling is not a trivial one which can be discarded (that would suggest three gods), but neither does it result in a loss of all differentiation between the members of the Trinity.

## Problems with Perichoresis?

Moltmann is by no means the first person to employ the word *perichoresis* to describe the relations of the Trinity. He himself traces its use back to Gregory of Nazianzus and John of Damascus.<sup>46</sup> However, Moltmann develops the

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<sup>39</sup> Alan J. Torrance, *Persons In Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 248.

<sup>40</sup> James P. Mackey, ‘Social Models of the Trinity’, in *Readings in Modern Theology: Britain and America*, ed. by Robin Gill (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 123–30 (p. 126); Urban, *A Short History*, p. 69; Joy Ann McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 158. See also Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 189, n. 26, who is not exactly uncomfortable, but does question the adequacy of the divine unity in Moltmann’s theology.

<sup>41</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Torrance, *Persons In Communion*, p. 257, n. 115.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Foreward to McDougall’, p. xii.

<sup>44</sup> A consideration which Chester also notes (Chester, *Mission*, p. 45).

<sup>45</sup> *EiT*, p. 322.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

word's use in that he speaks of it as the primary basis for God's unity.<sup>47</sup> As such there are those who disagree with his particular approach.

One criticism of his development of *perichoresis* is made by David Crump who finds fault with the scriptural basis of Moltmann's thought in this area. Crump's accusation is that Moltmann takes the references in John's Gospel which concern the three members of the Trinity and 'fuses' them with the same Gospel's accounts of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son.<sup>48</sup> Crump points out that these later references do not mention the Spirit and observes that Moltmann seems to assume that the Spirit is included anyway. He gives a warning: 'Scholars such as Moltmann would do well to acknowledge that, in using John as they do, they are constructing a sizeable theological conclusion on an argument from silence.'<sup>49</sup> Joy McDougall asserts, however, that Moltmann uses a wider biblical basis than just two sections of John's gospel. As his theology has developed she can identify more and more connections to different themes of the Christian Scriptures.<sup>50</sup> McDougall's observations strengthen her claim that Moltmann is deeply committed to a biblical basis for his trinitarian work.<sup>51</sup> Also, the scriptural witness as a whole shows that his combination of two themes from John's gospel (Trinity and indwelling) is defensible. Cyril Sorc goes so far as to say: 'Only in light of the perichoretic love can we understand John 14-17.'<sup>52</sup>

A further criticism of Moltmann's use of *perichoresis* is made by Randall Otto. He outlines how he considers Moltmann to have altered the meaning of *perichoresis* when he made it the Trinity's primary source of unity instead of the divine substance. He also gives Moltmann a dubious privilege: '[He] stands as the vanguard of theologians who have engaged in such misuse, invoking *perichoresis* while denying its basis in the one divine nature'.<sup>53</sup> Otto cites a dictionary definition of *perichoresis* which contains the phrases 'necessary being-in-one-another or circumincession of the three divine Persons of the Trinity because of the single divine essence' and 'the three Persons are

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<sup>47</sup> TKG, p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> David Crump, 'Re-examining the Johannine Trinity: perichoresis or deification?', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 59:4 (2006), 395–412 (p. 396).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 400-01.

<sup>50</sup> McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, p. 157.

<sup>51</sup> Joy Ann McDougall, 'The Return of Trinitarian Praxis? Moltmann on the Trinity and the Christian Life', *The Journal of Religion*, 83:2 (2003), 177–203 (pp. 7, 182).

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 117. Passages that speak of the 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor. 13.14) and of how Jesus offered himself to the Father through the Spirit (Heb. 9.14) are examples that add to the argument that the Spirit should be understood to have the same closeness of relationship as between the Father and the Son.

<sup>53</sup> Otto, 'The Use and Abuse', p. 372.

distinguished solely by the relations of opposition between them'.<sup>54</sup> From this Otto questions what good can occur for the concept of *perichoresis* if it is 'divorced from its basis in one divine essence'.<sup>55</sup> For Otto this basis is necessary for a 'real and not merely conceptual relationship' between the subjects of the Trinity, hence Moltmann's use of the word is 'vacuous'.<sup>56</sup>

In response to Otto's criticism, as far as the trinitarian relationships are concerned in Moltmann's work *perichoresis* sits alongside a unity of substance. For Moltmann, 'perichoresis means the mutual indwelling of the homogeneous divine Persons, Father, Son and Spirit'.<sup>57</sup> As noted above, it is a mistake to claim that he removes the unity of substance from the Trinity's identity. Rather he has suggested that it is not the *only* source of unity.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, under Otto's own understanding of *perichoresis*, Moltmann has not as drastically separated trinitarian substance from their relationships as Otto suggests.<sup>59</sup>

## Fears of a Prior Social Agenda

Torrance claims that Moltmann, along with other social trinitarian thinkers, projects anthropological concepts, such as 'person', 'social' and 'community', onto God.<sup>60</sup> In particular the fear is that Moltmann lets his particular view of the ideal society shape his trinitarian theology.<sup>61</sup> Karen Kilby makes a particular study of the differences between him and another exponent of the social Trinity, Patricia Wilson-Kastner. Kilby believes the contrast that is found reflects the differences in their attitudes to society. For Kilby this demonstrates the influence of each writer's social experience and values on their theology. She comes to the conclusion that Moltmann's focus 'on the

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366, citing *Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, 2nd edn (New York: Crossroads, 1987), p. 377.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 377.

<sup>57</sup> *EiT*, p. 316.

<sup>58</sup> See above, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Otto, 'The Use and Abuse', pp. 372-77. Harvie also claims that Otto's misreads Moltmann (Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 117).

<sup>60</sup> Torrance, *Persons In Communion*, p. 248.

<sup>61</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Holy Spirit as a Distinct Person in the Godhead', in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honour of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. by Mark W. Wilson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 34-41 (p. 40); Torrance, *Persons In Communion*, p. 249; Farrow, 'In The End', p. 427; Ed. L. Miller and Stanley J. Grenz, *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), p. 122; David H. McIlroy, *A Trinitarian Theology of Law: In Conversation with Jürgen Moltmann, Oliver O'Donovan and Thomas Aquinas* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), pp. 23, 71-72 (McIlroy comes to this conclusion through several other authors, including Karen Kilby, Randall Otto, and Paul Molnar). Matthew Bonzo points to this danger but does not accuse Moltmann of it (Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 5, n. 10).

excessive individualism of the modern West' forms much of his thought on social trinitarianism.<sup>62</sup> The danger in these accusations is that, if they are true, they undermine one of the important themes which Moltmann's trinitarianism contributes to the new theological architecture: the use of the Trinity as a pattern for human life.

One could argue that Moltmann's approach is inevitable for a human. Even Kilby admits that 'any language that is used about God is drawn from human experience in some way or other'.<sup>63</sup> McDougall defends Moltmann's position and claims that the use of anthropological language for God appears in both Testaments of the Christian Scriptures, 'in the Psalms, in the Pauline literature as well as the Gospel accounts'.<sup>64</sup> It seems that to use anthropological language is difficult to avoid, and there is already a good precedent for its use.

However, Kilby's critique is not just that Moltmann constructs a doctrine of the Trinity through his view of human experience and a preference for relationality. More than that, she is concerned with what results from Moltmann's trinitarian views. To explain, she believes the following to take place: there is an unknown about God (triune unity); a concept is used to name that unknown (*perichoresis*); that concept is then expanded on with human experience (relationships and relatedness) as opposed to the biblical witness; the result is that *perichoresis* is then reflected back on to the human community as an important attribute of God. After this process, Kilby argues, a theologian may contend that their findings on the divine relatedness should serve as a significant guide for humanity's action and social aims. If all this is the case, as Kilby and others suggest it is for Moltmann, then what really occurs is that the theologian projects their experience and opinion on to God and it is 'reflected back onto the world' with newly received divine significance.<sup>65</sup> So 'what is at its heart a suggestion [i.e. *perichoresis*] to overcome a difficulty [i.e. divine unity] is presented as a key source of inspiration and insight'.<sup>66</sup>

This, however, is not the case in Moltmann's work. His work gives two reasons why it is not prior held social values that drive his doctrine of the Trinity.

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<sup>62</sup> Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity', *New Blackfriars*, 81:957 (2000), 432–45 (p. 440).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.

<sup>64</sup> McDougall, 'Return of Trinitarian Praxis', p. 189.

<sup>65</sup> Kilby, 'Perichoresis and Projection', pp. 441–42 (cf. Torrance, *Persons In Communion*, p. 249, n. 94; Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, p. 163).

<sup>66</sup> Kilby, 'Perichoresis and Projection', p. 441.

The first is that he demonstrates his social doctrine of the Trinity to have a broader base than social concerns and humanity's experience. He has shown his work to be consciously led by the biblical witness, as seen above. Ryan Neal supports him in this instance and points out that it is not the human condition that most speaks to Moltmann of the divine nature, it is the cross and resurrection.<sup>67</sup> McDougall also defends his biblical basis for trinitarian relationships.<sup>68</sup> From this starting point Moltmann would argue that the mystery of the triune unity is not a complete unknown, that the entire canon of Christian Scriptures evidence relationships that characterise this unity. Therefore the relationality inherent in his social Trinity is not primarily the result of anthropological projection (even though it may naturally play a small part).

Secondly, it is equally possible that Moltmann's priorities for society are not where his thought starts. It is more plausible to understand these so-called 'prior commitments' as a response to the God revealed through Jesus Christ, his incarnation, mission, message, cross and resurrection. In other words, both Moltmann's social vision, and his social trinitarianism have the same fundamental commitment to a biblical basis.

Finally, Moltmann does not base human activity purely on his construction of the inner-trinitarian unity. He approaches the task of finding a guide for humanity's actions from a number of directions. Therefore, any possible weaknesses he has in this area would still have a balancing force from the rest of his thought.<sup>69</sup>

## 2.4 CONCLUSIONS

Much of what has been said in this chapter serves to highlight the coherence and orthodoxy of Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity because it forms a key contribution to the new theological architecture. His trinitarian work appears to come more from the witness of the Christian Scriptures than purely from his experience of society. His approach has also been consciously trinitarian and not tritheistic.

<sup>67</sup> Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 125.

<sup>68</sup> McDougall, 'Return of Trinitarian Praxis', p. 189. However McDougall she does also admit his hermeneutics are questionable for some. McIlroy also considers Moltmann's biblical work to be selective in this case (McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 72).

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 7 of this work, p. 173, for the exploration of this wider basis for humanity's actions.

Overall he presents a doctrine of the Trinity where loving relationships are the key to its understanding. Moltmann's work repeats this claim many more times in other areas of theology in order to infuse them with the central theme of God's love. There is significance in relationality itself for environmental concerns. The theme of love is of course present in theologies that disagree with Moltmann's specific conclusions but his particular approach creates a fruitful path to a new architecture for understanding God's relationship with creation that leads to a human ecological response. The thesis can now turn to look at Moltmann's perspective on the original act of creation.

# Chapter 3

## Original Creation

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The original act of creation is an essential piece of the puzzle to explore in order to build a picture of Moltmann's contributions to the new theological architecture for creation care. Overall there is relatively little written by him about the *initial* act of creation. This results from his enthusiasm to discuss God's creative activity throughout *all* of history, a large proportion of which falls under the topics of continuous and future creation. Nevertheless, there are some important aspects to his theology of the original creative act which shape and direct the emerging architecture towards its desired goal. Moltmann's doctrine of creation is the place where he speaks of God's motivations and decisions to create without any preconditions: 'The beginning has no presuppositions at all', except only the reality of God's self.<sup>1</sup>

Here then is the appropriate place to ask the question: What is the origin of God's creative act? Moltmann answers this question and provides his foundation for understanding the divine relationship with creation, and creation's own relational existence. If the subject of this discussion is the Trinity's nature and will, without creation's existence, then the foundation can only be God. However, what exactly is it about God which leads to a creative act? Even with the work above on the nature of the Trinity in Moltmann's theology, there are still more questions concerning precisely how that picture of God relates to the creation of the world.

It is also important to ask: what is creation? This is not a scientific question about the structure of the universe and the processes of nature, but a theological one. What changes at the act of creation, and what is this creation in relation to God's self? This chapter does not explore all of what

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<sup>1</sup> *GiC*, p. 74.



the Trinity may have done in the act of creation; it does not, for example, discuss the time period for creation (views on which range from six days to billions of years), or method (namely whether creation produced fully grown animals or initiated a process of evolution). The aim is to explore those aspects of original creation which are important for Moltmann's contributions to a theological architecture which will build foundations for an ecological reformation.

To this end this project will explore God's love and freedom in relation to original creation, and then the result of the creative act itself. For Moltmann *God, out of love, freely creates something other than God*. This chapter explicates that statement through these topics: the pervasive principle of love, the Trinity's free creativity, and the creation of an 'Other'.

### 3.2 THE PERVASIVE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

In Moltmann's work, a constant is that God is love. For Moltmann, if a theology moves down a path that would alter this central description of God, then he will avoid it and warn against it.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when he approaches the doctrine of creation, love plays the primary role, and he sees two ways in which this role works out: in the inner relationships of the Trinity and the outward love of God which seeks new relationships.<sup>3</sup>

There are certainly fewer statements about God's love specifically related to the *initial act* of creation in Moltmann's work than those about an *ongoing* relationship with creation. Those that do exist, however, are clear: God's love is the principle that drives this creativity; the Trinity creates 'out of love'.<sup>4</sup> Earlier in his work, Moltmann expressed agreement with Barth that creation flows from the divine love, and soon after he tells us that the overall scheme of creation 'is in accordance with the love which is God'.<sup>5</sup>

Moltmann also often uses the word 'pleasure' to describe the basis for the world. It is 'the creation of the divine good pleasure', 'for joy', because of God's

<sup>2</sup> As seen in his formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

<sup>3</sup> There are other principles important for Moltmann's doctrine of creation, such as 'wisdom' (*TJ*, p. 41), although it is not as prevalent as 'love' in his work.

<sup>4</sup> *GiC*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>5</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', in *Creation, Christ & Culture: Studies in Honour of T. F. Torrance*, ed. by Richard W. A. McKinney (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), pp. 119-34 (p. 124); *TKG*, p. 58. This quote refers as well to continual creation and the detail of creation, but definitely encompasses initial creation.

desire.<sup>6</sup> God ‘delights in his creation’ in a way that ‘makes it unequivocally plain’ to Moltmann that creation flows out of the divine love.<sup>7</sup>

## Inner Love

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann says that creation does not just flow out of the divine love in general, but specifically out of the loving relationships found within the Trinity, or perhaps more accurately out of one particular relationship: ‘Creation is part of the of the eternal love affair between the Father and the Son. It springs from the Father’s love for the Son and is redeemed by the answering love of the Son for the Father.’<sup>8</sup>

In what way does creation flow out of this relationship? Is creation a gift from Father to Son that the Son then gives back? Moltmann indeed says that creation simply overflows from this loving relationship, but what exactly does that mean? He speaks of the Trinity’s glorification through creation: ‘free creations of God for the purpose of the self-communication of his goodness, with his glorification as their end goal’.<sup>9</sup> From this it appears that creation flows out of the love of the Father and Son for one another in a mutual gift of glorification. For them to create and enter into relationship together with creation would bring further joy to their eternal relationship. Therefore they begin the project of creation because of their love for each other and the results which creation will bring.

## Outer Love

However, to consider the act of creation to be only the result of the trinitarian persons’ love for each other would not be the whole picture. This love of God’s also focuses outwards to create a new relationship of love outside the existent divine relations.<sup>10</sup> This means creation does not simply benefit the inner trinitarian relationships. Moltmann makes it clear that creation itself is an object of divine love: ‘The love with which God creatively and sufferingly

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<sup>6</sup> *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present*, trans. by John Sturdy (London: SPCK, 1974), p. 108; *FC*, p. 98; *GiC*, p. 72. See also *TJ*, pp. 40-41; ‘Creation and Redemption’, p. 124; *TKG*, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> *GiC*, pp. 76, 276 (cf. *TKG*, pp. 111-14).

<sup>8</sup> *TKG*, p. 59 (cf. p. 112). Moltmann’s discussion here omits the Holy Spirit, a more regular feature of his earlier work (see above, p. 14).

<sup>9</sup> *GiC*, p. 207. This means that, for Moltmann, God also creates to self-communicate.

<sup>10</sup> In Moltmann’s work, the lengths to which God goes to redeem creation suggests that this is not merely a secondary focus.

loves the world is no different from the love he himself is in eternity.<sup>11</sup> And elsewhere: ‘In God’s eyes nothing created is a matter of indifference.’<sup>12</sup>

The way in which Moltmann presents God’s trinitarian love to be relational makes it unsurprising that he considers the divine love for creation also to be relational. The act of creation is not the creation of a tool (as it might be if no love for creation existed), or the creation of a piece of art which God observes (as it might be if it were simply a case of ‘looking on with love’). It is rather the creation of an ‘Other’ to which God can ‘self-communicate’, and that can respond.<sup>13</sup> What the Trinity self-communicates is goodness and love. For Moltmann, this does not include the glorification of power.<sup>14</sup> What is desired is a ‘response in freedom’ to God’s search for a new relationship of freedom and love.<sup>15</sup> Such a conclusion has implications for the ecological reformation, in that humanity’s loving response must embrace all of God’s creation, not God alone.

## The Same Love

It is important to emphasise that, for Moltmann, this inner and outer love are expressions of the same love, not two different loves. Matthew Bonzo discusses at length how Moltmann describes two dynamics of God’s love: love for like (*philia*, inner trinitarian love) and love for a different ‘Other’ (*agape*, love for what is not divine). Bonzo discusses this differentiation as found in various areas of Moltmann’s thought.<sup>16</sup> His reading is helpful and detailed, yet also overemphasises the differences between the two concepts, and so views them to have different characteristics.<sup>17</sup> He also notes another whom Moltmann’s language troubles, citing Henry Jansen: ‘[He] wonders if “Moltmann’s distinction between necessary and free love (*philia* and *agape*) is at all helpful in understanding the nature of love. . . it is difficult to understand how such terms would clarify the human experience of love”’.<sup>18</sup> While Bonzo’s conclusions may seem inaccurate, the fact that he and others have perceived

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<sup>11</sup> *TKG*, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> *GSS*, p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> *TKG*, pp. 59, 108 (cf. *SW*, p. 61).

<sup>14</sup> *GiC*, pp. 75-76, 207. Moltmann points us here to *TKG*, pp. 52-60. It seems that he rejects the self-communication of power because he thinks God will not show the divine glory in that way.

<sup>15</sup> *TKG*, p. 59 (cf. p. 106).

<sup>16</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, especially Chapter 3, pp. 36-51.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-41.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48, n. 27, citing Henry Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), p. 137.

common problems indicates a need for clarity in Moltmann's work here. However, despite a certain propensity to be misunderstood, his work on the love of God only describes one love: divine love.<sup>19</sup> They are not two different loves, but in different contexts this love can be love for like or love for 'Other'. If one accepts the idea that humanity can reflect the love of God, then Moltmann's work gives encouragement to love both that which is like and unlike.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of a focus on an ecological reformation, this love includes non-human creation.

### 3.3 GOD'S FREE CREATIVITY

The place of love in Moltmann's doctrine of creation shows that God creates for creation's own sake because of the love which already exists in the Trinity's inner self. In addition, that selfless love seeks the other's fulfilment in a loving and reciprocal relationship. This is a consistent dynamic of Moltmann's general project and hence a useful contribution to the new theological architecture. The discussion that follows on from this flows from Moltmann's view that God *freely creates*. To think about the divine love leads to a consideration of how exactly this love leads God to create.

The question is necessary because Moltmann presents seemingly definite comments about both God's free decision to create *and* the absence of choice. This leads some to conclude that he has discounted divine freedom in relationship to creation, which in turn asks serious questions of what this love can look like and its place in the sought for architecture. The discussion that follows concerns how, for Moltmann, God's creative act is not an unavoidable consequence of divine love, nor an idea that just happened to come about which God could have freely dismissed. Rather it involves a balance of the two. The first issue to explore is the way in which Moltmann describes the act of creation as a free decision by God.

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<sup>19</sup> *TKG*, p. 59. A fact which Bonzo recognises, but which he seems to interpret to mean that the two loves only *eventually* become the same thing when creation is made like God (Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 65).

<sup>20</sup> This idea that humanity reflects God's love is one of the arguments put forward in Chapter 7 of this work, p. 176.

## Resolve and Decision

Even before Moltmann begins his detailed discussion of creation in the 1980s he seems to have the basic assumption that '[t]he original creation was created out of the will of God'.<sup>21</sup> For him, 'God is free' and so creation is not 'a necessary unfolding of God nor an emanation of his being' but has 'its ground [. . .] in God's *good will*'.<sup>22</sup> Moltmann then returns to this theme in *God in Creation* and states it just as strongly: 'the world is not [. . .] an emanation from God's eternal being. It is the specific outcome of his decision of will'.<sup>23</sup> The divine freedom is still paramount. For him, that God creates 'through what he says' supports this idea.<sup>24</sup>

The passage below gives a clear indication of Moltmann's parameters as he speaks of the act of creation. Here he affirms his conformity, in this respect, to traditional views of God's creativity:

The later theological interpretation of creation as *creatio ex nihilo* is therefore unquestionably an apt paraphrase of what the Bible means by 'creation'. Wherever and whatever God creates is without any preconditions. There is not external necessity which occasions his creativity, and no inner compulsion which could determine it. Nor is there any primordial matter whose potentiality is pre-given to his creative activity, and which would set him material limits.<sup>25</sup>

Creation truly comes from nothing. There is nothing that *forces* God, from within or without. There is nothing that constrains the divine ability to create. For Moltmann 'creation must be based on a divine resolve of the will to create' and is a 'personal decision'.<sup>26</sup> However, at this point the complication concerning the nature of God's freedom appears in his thought: 'when we say that God created the world "out of freedom", we must [*müssen*] immediately add "out of love"'.<sup>27</sup> In other words, freedom and love coincide. Freedom 'must' include love and does not appear without it.

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<sup>21</sup> *RRF*, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> *TJ*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> *GiC*, p. 72 (cf. pp. 79-86, where Moltmann also speaks of God's resolve to be a Creator and to create).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 80 (cf. *TKG*, p. 58).

<sup>27</sup> *GiC*, p. 75 (cf. *EthH*, p. 122).

## Freedom before Choice

This ‘must’ could present a problem. Does it impose a limit on the divine freedom? The answer is ‘no’. Rather, Moltmann simply highlights the intrinsic connection between love and freedom. He states that ‘[f]or God it is axiomatic to love, for he cannot deny himself’.<sup>28</sup> Many would agree with this statement, and the co-existence of love and freedom, but it is the way Moltmann applies this argument to his theology in this particular context that troubles commentators.<sup>29</sup> If God is free, yet also is love, then freedom cannot include the complete freedom to choose anything outside of love. At times Moltmann writes in manner that would generally be acceptable, as though this were only a limit on God not to choose anything evil: ‘In his love God can choose; but he chooses only that which corresponds to his essential goodness, in order to communicate that goodness as his creation and in his creation.’<sup>30</sup> Moltmann’s words elsewhere explain this view: ‘God’s freedom can never contradict the truth which he is in himself. “He remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim. 2.13)’.<sup>31</sup>

At other times, however, Moltmann has a much narrower concept of God’s freedom: ‘Love is a self-evident, unquestionable “overflowing of goodness” which is therefore never open to choice at any time. True freedom is the self-communication of the good.’<sup>32</sup> This may not seem far from the statement that God is always God and will always act in a way appropriate to the divine love and nature, but takes that somewhat comforting notion and makes it into a statement that creates the impression of cutting all freedom out of the Trinity.

The alternative is that ‘freedom’ is different to ‘choice’ and this is exactly the distinction Moltmann attempts to draw. He argues that this rejection of choice does not equate to the removal of God’s freedom. In his estimation ‘freedom of choice is by no means freedom’s highest stage’.<sup>33</sup> If freedom is in choice (and thus in the power to make that choice) then, for Moltmann, this is ‘the language of domination’ where ‘only the lord is free’.<sup>34</sup> It is an interesting assertion that challenges what a popular understanding of freedom

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<sup>28</sup> *TKG*, p. 107.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 132-37.

<sup>30</sup> *GiC*, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> *TKG*, p. 53 (cf. pp. 54-55).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55, paraphrasing von Hügel but explicitly in agreement.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56. It seems that Moltmann is concerned to have a definition of freedom for God that can also protect the freedom of humanity.

might be: to be under no constraint.<sup>35</sup> But given that Moltmann has already acknowledged decision and will in God, what are we to make of this? One available understanding is that he thinks freedom is not only to do whatever you want (choice) but freedom is to live out a selfless life (love).<sup>36</sup>

Another answer to Moltmann's rejection of choice comes from the precise way in which he uses the word 'choice' in this context. The statement here gives us an indication of the particular usage: "True freedom is not "the torment of choice", with its doubts and threats; it is simple, undivided joy in the good."<sup>37</sup> Such a statement could simply be a human fear of freedom, a projection of the human experience of weakness onto the discussion about God. That conclusion, however, is not necessary. Moltmann's claim highlights his view that God does not face choices like humans do. For him, humanity has the torment of unresolved dilemmas when the options and outcomes are not fully understood (the constriction of lack of knowledge), or when right and wrong is clear but selfishness or fear might make a decision hard to come to (the constriction of lack of selfless love).

For Moltmann then, God's freedom is not tainted by such things. A human concept of choice is inadequate to describe divine choice. God, unlike humans, has perfect knowledge and love which mean that there is no dilemma. This concept could be illustrated by parents, who see their child wandering into acute mortal danger when they know they can do something about it and spring into action. 'I had no option!' Technically the choice was there but the decision was made automatically. Likewise, perhaps in God there is 'no' choice, for the choice is already made. The path of love is clear, so all that remains is the 'simple, undivided joy in the good'.<sup>38</sup> Divine freedom would thus be to know what to do and to be completely free to follow it. So when Moltmann asserts that freedom of choice is not the highest freedom he may not mean that there is literally not the smallest amount of choice. Rather, it would be better to read him as saying that the greatest freedom is not in a choice but the freedom to know the right choice and to be able to not waver from it.

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<sup>35</sup> For example: 'the state of not being subject [to something]' (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edn (CD-ROM, 2004)). There are clearly many nuances and varieties of the meaning of freedom, but its most popular understanding is surely the ability to do and choose a desired course of action, within reason.

<sup>36</sup> *GiC*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>37</sup> *TKG*, p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

## Inescapable Love

The above approach makes sense of the difference between divine and human approaches to a (potentially) problematic choice, but this is less appropriate if a choice exists between equally positive paths. It could suggest that the Trinity's love will determine only one of these to be the right one, and so leave no 'choice' in the matter. This leaves no room for God to have the 'joy' of the choice between two different paths that will both bring good. In Moltmann's defence, such a scenario is unlikely to be what he had in mind. His inclusion of love in freedom is aimed more at the removal of the choice not to love. That is his main argument here, not the suggestion that love only gives God one path to follow.

However, the latter of those two ideas is still considered by Molnar to be present in Moltmann's work. He is of the opinion that Moltmann's thought makes God 'the prisoner of love, which by its very nature *must* freely create another in order to be true to its own nature'.<sup>39</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond believes the phrase 'prisoner of love' to be an 'exaggerated' criticism, but separately lends her agreement that in Moltmann there is the idea that 'it is necessary for God to act beyond his inner-self, since he finds bliss only in selfless love'.<sup>40</sup> If Deane-Drummond is right here then again it seems as if God's creativity does not flow out of freedom, but rather an inevitable expression of need. Yet Deane-Drummond makes here the same mistake which Bonzo made. She appears to take a phrase that Moltmann does not entirely agree with and assign it to his views. She refers to a certain passage in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* where he outlines Christian panentheism in contrast to Christian theism, but she assumes that he describes a position with which he is in wholesale agreement.<sup>41</sup> However, while Moltmann is undoubtedly a proponent of panentheism, it does not follow that he agrees with every aspect of the particular Christian panentheism he outlines. He goes on to say that both theism and panentheism have truth to them but need alterations, particularly to show that God's liberty is not arbitrary (here love counterbalances freedom) and that God's nature is not law (here freedom counterbalances love).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Molnar, 'Function of The Trinity', p. 681 (cf. Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?: Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), p. 209).

<sup>40</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102; *TKG*, pp. 106-07.

<sup>42</sup> *TKG*, p. 107. A similar mistake to Deane-Drummond's is made by Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 135.



Moltmann attempts to steer a course between positions that root themselves exclusively in either freedom *or* love. He expresses his belief that those positions are poorer if they do not recognise that one root does not stand alone in God's history as Creator, and as such also in the emerging theological architecture. In Moltmann's work, there is therefore no 'selfless love' which needs to act beyond God's 'inner-self', which forces the creation of the world. 'For Moltmann the necessary other for God is within the being of God.'<sup>43</sup> There is simply the one love, 'that operates in different ways in the divine life and the divine creativity', which finds each new expression of that love to be 'bliss'.<sup>44</sup>

It is true that in his discussions about God's love Moltmann makes claims about whether the Divine could *not* have created. For instance, he speaks of the danger of a 'contradiction between [God's] nature before and after this decision' to create if the Trinity was self-sufficient before creation but is now not self-sufficient because of the bond of love and faithfulness towards creation.<sup>45</sup> In fact, Moltmann wishes to avoid the idea of self-sufficiency all together: 'Can God really be content to be sufficient for himself if he is love?'<sup>46</sup> The point is understandable, but his trinitarian theology suggests that God really could be self-sufficient *and* be love because each person of the Trinity can look beyond the 'self' to the others in the perichoretic relationship.

These statements of the logical necessity of creation notwithstanding, and given Moltmann's efforts to integrate two different views, overall his work in this area is a characteristic attempt to counter a view (arbitrary freedom) which he believes is too prevalent. In this way the themes of love and freedom are related concepts in his doctrine of creation, and constructive for the new theological architecture.

## Original Creation: A Unity of Will and Nature

It is clear that Moltmann wishes to hold together the free choice of the Creator and the flow of God's nature in the act of creation. Behind this is a desire to avoid the extreme views that creation is either an arbitrary choice or a purposeless natural event.<sup>47</sup> He believes that the view of the Trinity as both

<sup>43</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 252.

<sup>44</sup> *GiC*, p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> *TKG*, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53 (cf. p. 108: 'From eternity God has desired not only himself but the world too, for he did not merely want to communicate himself to himself; he wanted to communicate himself to the one who is other than himself as well.').

<sup>47</sup> *TJ*, pp. 40-41 (cf. *TKG*, p. 54, referring to Barth).

supreme subject (which he links to God's decision) and supreme substance (which he links to the outpouring of the divine eternal being) helps create a path between arbitrariness and purposelessness. For him, to say that creation was a decision which was both free and flowed out of God's loving essence is the best approach.<sup>48</sup>

If we lift the concept of necessity out of the context of compulsive necessity and determination by something external, then in God *necessity* and *freedom* coincide; they are what is for him axiomatic, self-evident. For God it is axiomatic to love, for he cannot deny himself. For God it is axiomatic to love freely, for he is God. There is consequently no reason why we should not understand God as being from eternity self-communicating love. This does not make him 'his own prisoner'. It means that he remains true to himself.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore Moltmann can maintain the language of choice alongside the sense of 'how could a loving God do anything else?', a 'unity of will and nature' that makes creation 'meaningful'.<sup>50</sup>

His aim is not to debate whether God decided to create or not, he is clear on the matter: God resolved to create.<sup>51</sup> His overall point is that if we accept that God is love then that has to affect the way we see the act of creation. Firstly, it was not an accident or an indifferent experiment, it happened with the same thought and care, anthropomorphically speaking, that exists in the inner relations of the Trinity. Secondly, creation was not forced, nor was it a reluctant choice or a departure from normal character. Rather the act flowed out of the divine character and being. So while Moltmann does say that God was not self-sufficient without creation, this is not because of an assumption of divine needs. Instead, God has revealed the trinitarian self to be a Creator who has made creation as a partner. Therefore, for Moltmann, it cannot be said that the Trinity was sufficient without creation, because such a claim would contradict Christian claims for the identity of the Trinity. As a Creator, God is 'true to himself'.<sup>52</sup> Along with the discussion about God here, creation's identity has emerged as that of a partner with God. This gives it a high status and lays another foundation for the ecological reformation.

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<sup>48</sup> *GiC*, pp. 82-86.

<sup>49</sup> *TKG*, pp. 107-08.

<sup>50</sup> *GiC*, p. 85; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 124 (cf. *TKG*, p. 112).

<sup>51</sup> *EthH*, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> *TKG*, p. 108 (cf. p. 55).

### 3.4 THE CREATION OF AN ‘OTHER’

The final part of this chapter’s statement about the act of creation is this: God creates something other than God. It is important to emphasise this is a constant in Moltmann’s theology, and as such in his contributions towards the new theological architecture, because some critics claim that he loses the distinction between the Divine and creation.<sup>53</sup>

He states clearly that the Trinity creates something which is ‘not God’.<sup>54</sup> He writes that creation is ‘[i]n between God and nothing’, ‘not “begotten” by God’, ‘not in itself divine’ and ‘different from [God]’.<sup>55</sup> This difference exists, for Moltmann, because God created *ex nihilo*. Creation is not eternal and is created out of nothing, that is, it is something unlike and distinct from the Divine.<sup>56</sup> He also asserts that God’s love, expressed ‘in different ways in the divine life and in the divine creativity’, reinforces that distinction.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Zimsum*

This commitment that creation is something other than God leads Moltmann to ask the question of how, with an omnipresent, omniscient, eternal deity, there is space for anything else. His answer is that ‘the Creator has to concede to his creation the space in which it can exist [...] allow it time [...] allow it freedom’. This is ‘an act of God inwardly’, ‘self-limitation’ and ‘self-humiliation’.<sup>58</sup> It is a restriction of the divine omnipresence, omniscience and eternity.<sup>59</sup> Here Moltmann purposefully takes up the idea of divine self-limitation from kabbalistic Judaism, namely *zimsum*, which he claims has always played a part in Christian theology.<sup>60</sup> He understands this term to mean ‘God’s self-limitation’ or ‘a withdrawal into the self’ during original creation by which God made the space for creation to exist.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For this criticism in regards to creation, see Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians: Selected Essays 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 149-50, n. 49; Molnar, ‘Function of The Trinity’, pp. 673-74, n. 4. This complaint also appears elsewhere, concerning God’s immanence in creation, both in the present and at the eschaton (see Chapter 4 of this work, ‘Pantheism?’, p. 71, and Chapter 6, ‘Creation in God’, p. 151).

<sup>54</sup> *TJ*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>55</sup> *Man*, p. 108; *TKG*, p. 113; *GiC*, pp. 72, 76 (cf. *SW*, p. 169; Bonzo, *Indwelling*, pp. 39-40).

<sup>56</sup> *GiC*, pp. 78-79 (cf. p. 74).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>58</sup> *TKG*, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> *CoG*, pp. 281-82.

<sup>60</sup> *GiC*, p. xiii.

<sup>61</sup> *TKG*, p. 109; *GiC*, pp. xiii, 86-89.

He also comes to the conclusion that divine self-limitation is necessary because of his adherence to *creatio ex nihilo*. He agrees with this concept because it ensures there are no preconditions, whether primordial material, inner compulsion, or external necessity, to creation.<sup>62</sup> For him it also speaks of creation's rootedness in the divine 'good pleasure'.<sup>63</sup> *Creatio ex nihilo* leads him to ask: how can God create out of 'nothing' when there is no nothing, there is only God?<sup>64</sup> His answer is that there is first the creation of nothing through the withdrawal of God's self. Therefore, there is now space for creation. In this problems begin to emerge as Moltmann effectively says that 'nothing' is actually 'something' that God needs to create.<sup>65</sup> Yet there will be more serious questions to ask as we continue.

Moltmann receives some criticism from Deane-Drummond for his appropriation of the concept of *zimsum*. She asserts that it is uncritical, that in the Jewish mystical tradition ideas surround *zimsum* which he has chosen not to take up. These include notions of judgement and links with 'gnostic speculation'. She also questions whether he can really link his Christian theology to this Jewish tradition given their divergent roots. Is it possible, she asks, to use such selective parts of *zimsum* without the use of the same foundations?<sup>66</sup> This should not, however, mean that Moltmann cannot use this concept selectively. It seems both acceptable and helpful that he should use the ideas of other traditions to inspire his own approach. Deane-Drummond's question, however, should serve as a warning to be careful of the implications which arise from the integration of this or any other idea from a different worldview.

It is fair to note that Moltmann's use of *zimsum*, despite its problems, does make a contribution to a positive view of God's creative acts. It speaks of the lengths to which the Trinity is prepared to go to create and give creation its space. This demonstrates God's humble love for creation and willingness to undergo costly change. Moltmann sees this as 'the beginning of that self-emptying of God which Philippians 2 sees as the divine mystery of the Messiah'.<sup>67</sup> For him, this is more profound than if the Divine simply created something else. More than this, God made space at a cost.

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<sup>62</sup> *GiC*, p. 74.

<sup>63</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> *TKG*, pp. 108-11; *GiC*, p. 86; *CoG*, p. 297; *SW*, p. 62.

<sup>65</sup> *GiC*, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, pp. 202-03. Molnar, for example, asserts that kabbalistic *zimsum* is 'pantheistic and emanationist' (Molnar, 'Function of The Trinity', p. 673, n. 4).

<sup>67</sup> *GiC*, p. 88.

These more positive implications of *zimsun* might remain with a more restricted use of the term that simply recognises the cost and concessions which God takes and makes in the act of creation. However, the consequences which a more whole-hearted and literal adoption of the doctrine brings are not all desirable. The statement that gives particular cause for concern is: ‘God makes room for his creation by withdrawing his presence. What comes into being is a *nihil*’.<sup>68</sup>

## Making Space for Creation

The language of the self-restriction of God’s presence is present throughout Moltmann’s work: ‘By withdrawing himself and giving his creation space, God makes himself the living space of those he has created.’<sup>69</sup> The immediate problem with this statement is that it implies that the Trinity and creation occupy the same sort of space and have to make room for each other. Various commentators have taken up this problem which negates the need for extensive exploration here.<sup>70</sup> However, there are qualifications to this debate which this research can bring.

The logic that leads to God’s ‘need’ to make space is easily open to question. The argument goes that this need occurs because there can be nothing, ‘space’ included, already in existence ‘outside’ the Divine: ‘If we assume an *extra Deum*, does not this set God a limit?’<sup>71</sup> However, if Moltmann claims that the Trinity has to look ‘inward’ for ‘space’ then that implies that God is unable to look ‘outwards’. The Divine is therefore trapped and limited. This seems to describe space as a box which God fills. This is obviously dangerous philosophical territory, and need not be what omnipresence means. It is preferable to view God’s pre-creation presence as simply *being* all that there is, not *filling* all that there is. This implies nothing about space, whether ‘inward’ or outward’. There was simply God and nothing else. One could argue that Moltmann only speaks metaphorically here. Yet even if this is so the problem remains that the resultant threat of the *nihil*, explored below, presents a still serious threat to creation.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> *CoG*, p. 299.

<sup>70</sup> See Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, pp. 102, 300; Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), pp. 58-59 (cf. Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 140).

<sup>71</sup> *GiC*, p. 86.

This assertion can lead to the argument that creation is simply brought into being as a new thing which is not God. The Trinity is no longer all that there is but now exists with creation. There is no need to speculate who occupies what space, and no need for God to ‘self-withdraw’. Deity and creation do not need to inhabit mutually exclusive space. The making of literal ‘space’ is not necessary for the discussion.

This does not mean that the positive connotations of God’s self-limitation, namely that Moltmann follows others and calls this self-restriction ‘self-humiliation’, must disappear along with a spatial theory. That ‘self-humiliation’ demonstrates God’s love for creation.<sup>72</sup> The Divine still decides to allow something else to exist, and still decides no longer to be the totality of all existence. Paul Fiddes concurs when he argues that *zimsum* need not imply physical movement, rather ‘God withdraws from God’s own exclusiveness of being’.<sup>73</sup> Moltmann recognises that this dynamic is at play, even though he does not equate it with God’s self-humiliation: ‘He determines himself to be the Creator who lets a creation co-exist with himself.’<sup>74</sup>

### **The Threat of the *Nihil***

A further problem related to the idea that God makes space for creation is the precise nature of the result of the restriction of the divine presence, namely the *nihil*. Moltmann’s idea of this original nothingness is a surprisingly threatening concept: ‘The *nihil* in which God creates his creation is God-forsakenness, hell, absolute death, and it is against the threat of this that he maintains his creation in life’.<sup>75</sup> This construction of the *nihil* brings two possible dangers: (1) creation is unavoidably caught in chaos and death from the beginning, and (2) God is directly responsible for death and sin.

(1) Bonzo succinctly outlines the problems which Moltmann’s theology raises for him in this instance:

The problem for creation is that as God’s different Other, it finds itself in a place of abandonment and forsakenness by God. [...] If essential to the difference that characterizes creation is godforsakenness and the suffering it entails, does not Moltmann come close (too close in my view) to constructing—his intentions notwithstanding—a theodicy which to a

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<sup>72</sup> *GiC*, p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 251.

<sup>74</sup> *SW*, p. 61, citing Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, §42, pp. 330ff.

<sup>75</sup> *GiC*, pp. 87-88 (cf. ‘Creation and Redemption’, p. 125; ‘Towards the Next Step in the Dialogue’, in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. by Frederick Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 154-64 (p. 164)).

large degree ontologizes, and in that way, justifies suffering and evil as necessary and inevitable?<sup>76</sup>

Bonzo's understanding is that if creation is forsaken then 'human inadequacies [and] sin' are necessary, and not based on disobedience.<sup>77</sup> It is hard to refute this claim as humanity does find itself at a distance from God before it has any input into the relationship. This is one of the aspects of Moltmann's creation *ex nihilo* which looks problematic. Wolfhart Pannenberg lends his support to this critique. He points out that originally 'creation out of nothing' simply referred to the fact 'that the world did not exist before', and so Moltmann's extrapolation of God's withdrawal is 'materially unfounded mystification'.<sup>78</sup> Speculation can be good and helpful, as Moltmann shows on many occasions, but in this instance the end result has little to justify its acceptance.

There is also the question of the biblical foundation Moltmann uses for the threat of the *nihil*. For instance, he refers to Psalm 104.29, translated as: 'When thou takest away their breath, they die and return to dust.' For him, this speaks of the Spirit at work to preserve creation 'against annihilating Nothingness'.<sup>79</sup> However there seems to be no need to read an 'annihilating nothingness' into this psalm. The context implies that this sentence talks more about the need for God's sustenance in the ongoing cycle of life and death. It is more an affirmation of a creature's non-immortality than the presence of a threatening *nihil*.

(2) In a universe created out of the love of God from where did the power of death or sin come? Down through the ages people have wrestled with this question, couched in various ways. The danger of Moltmann's development of the *nihil* is that it may give the answer 'directly from God'. Deane-Drummond notes the creation of the *nihil* as a 'negative element' in original creation.<sup>80</sup> If this is so then the Trinity is responsible for the first negativity. Then love created the threat of a nothingness of such pure godlessness. Randall Bush observes that the creation of something which is 'basically hostile and destructive', and which 'can only be overcome by God's creative power [. . . ] suggests that God is the cause, as well as the solution, to his own suffering'.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, pp. 103, 108.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110 (cf. p. 48, n. 25).

<sup>78</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 14-15.

<sup>79</sup> *GiC*, p. 96 (cf. *WJC*, p. 288).

<sup>80</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 212, referencing to *GiC*, pp. 74-79, 86-88.

<sup>81</sup> Randall B. Bush, 'Recent Ideas of Divine Conflict: The Influences of Psychological and Sociological Theories of Conflict upon the Trinitarian Theology of Paul Tillich and Jürgen Moltmann' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1990), p. 357.

Moltmann could point to the following sentence for his defence: ‘Admittedly the *nihil* only acquires this menacing character through the self-isolation of created beings to which we give the name of sin and godlessness.’<sup>82</sup> Here he is keen to separate God from responsibility for this threat. This would not convince Bonzo: ‘it is difficult to see how humans can avoid sinning and thereby realizing the *nihil*, as they must act in a godforsaken space’.<sup>83</sup> Bonzo’s logic is set out thus: Sin is made inevitable by God’s creation of the *nihil*; the *nihil* is made a threat by sin; therefore God creates an inevitable threat. Moltmann’s answer to this accusation must surely come from his theology of the presence of the Trinity, particularly by the Holy Spirit, in creation. Self-isolation is not inescapable because God makes the divine self present to creation and actively both looks and works for community with creation.<sup>84</sup> As constructive as this may be, it does not completely defend Moltmann from Bonzo’s charge that if it is the godforsakenness of the *nihil* which draws people to self-isolation, then responsibility creeps towards God.

Bush makes the sensible point that the creation of the *nihil* in Moltmann’s theology does not fit with the picture of God as love, which is a central pillar of his work. It is ‘inconsistent with his emphasis upon God’s *pathos*’ that the Trinity ‘seems to abandon his entire creation’ from the start.<sup>85</sup> Such a conclusion would damage a theological architecture with aspirations to lead an ecological reformation as it raises doubts about the quality of the divine love for creation. It also raises the question of why the creation of the *nihil* is necessary.

It is possible that the removal of the concept of God’s self-restriction of presence and creation of the annihilating *nihil* from Moltmann’s doctrine of creation would not necessarily remove the threat of nothingness from creation. For regardless of whether ‘nothing’ is ‘created’ or not prior to the act of creation, if creation is created from nothing, where there was nothing before, then one could still argue that the threat still remains of the possibility that creation slips back into the absolute nothingness it once was. This interpretation could easily come from the times when Moltmann describes creation as threatened simply by the fact that there was nothing before it. The the concept of nothingness could be separated from the idea that God

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<sup>82</sup> *GiC*, p. 88.

<sup>83</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 48, n. 25 (cf. p. 81).

<sup>84</sup> This is a major subject for discussion in Chapter 4 of this work (see, for example, pp. 67, 82).

<sup>85</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, pp. 333-34.



*specifically created* that nothingness.<sup>86</sup>

Interestingly, Moltmann seems to drop his emphasis on the creation of the *nihil* after *God in Creation*, at least in his major works.<sup>87</sup> The word, '*nihil*', does not appear in the context of creation's origins in any of the rest of his subsequent systematic contributions. He is able to speak of a threat to creation from chaos and nothingness and does not attach to it comment on the origin of that nothingness.<sup>88</sup> 'Annihilating nothingness' seems to become the language for the threatened *destination* of creation, instead of its *origin*.<sup>89</sup> In *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!*, to the question of why creation is 'threatened by chaos and [...] annihilation', his answer similarly does not include the *nihil*. Again, in a departure from his prior handling of the subject, his answer is that God 'has conferred on creation its own scope for freedom and generation. [...] But in these free spaces, the earth and human beings are creations that stand on the edge of chaos and are threatened by the forces of annihilation'.<sup>90</sup>

It is helpful that Moltmann has chosen to change the way he presents the predicament of creation. Creation is still under threat, but the whole discussion is able to take place without reference to the *nihil*, which was formerly at the centre of the discussion. This is by no means proof that he has changed his thought. It may be that he believes he has made the point well enough for it not to need any repetition. But the change in language allows an alternative emphasis to emerge.

The crucial point of this change in emphasis is a reversal of the notion of the godforsakenness of creation. Instead of God *withdrawing* from creation's space, from the very beginning of creation the Divine continually *draws closer* to that which is created. This leads towards the consummation of creation and the full presence of God. This way the lack of the Trinity's presence in creation does not result from active abandonment of creation's space. Instead, it originates from the fact that creation is something which is 'Other' than God. As such the relationship must grow and slowly develop and deepen over time as it moves towards its consummation and the perichoretic indwelling of creation.

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<sup>86</sup> *FC*, p. 120 (reprinted with edits in *SW*, p. 39).

<sup>87</sup> There is a brief mention in *SW*, pp. 119-20, where he speaks of the *nihil*. This instance, however, is a reminder of topics covered in *God in Creation* and is spoken of in a much gentler manner: the language of 'living space'.

<sup>88</sup> *WJC*, p. 290; *SpL*, p. 213.

<sup>89</sup> *EiT*, p. 338.

<sup>90</sup> *SRA*, pp. 204-05. There are similar expressions in *EthH*, where he again does not mention the *nihil*. These may not count as major works, but both are recently published monologues and as such useful in tracking the trajectory of Moltmann's thought.

Despite his movement away from the concept of the *nihil*, Moltmann evidently does not wish to shy away from the concept of God's withdrawal to make space for creation, and he consciously recovers it in *The Coming of God*.<sup>91</sup> Fortunately, however, the way he speaks of the divine self-restriction here, enabled perhaps by his prior shift away from the unhelpful consequences of the *nihil*, gives the result that the 'primordial space' is a far more hospitable place and a much less forsaken place. These are the very gains intended above in the rejection of God's literal self-withdrawal. Moltmann achieves this through his focus on God as the 'living space' for creation.

### God as 'Living Space'

Another problem with Moltmann's theory of divine self-restriction, particularly as it features in *God in Creation*, is that it appears to achieve the opposite of another one of his key themes around the Trinity's relationship with creation: God is the 'living space' of creation. 'The Trinitarian relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is so wide that the whole creation can find space, time and freedom in it.'<sup>92</sup> The difficulty is that a few years after that statement, Moltmann apparently wanted to maintain that: 'The *nihil* in which God creates his creation is God-forsakenness, hell, absolute death', and this was the necessary space for creation. At the same time he says the goal is that: 'God is the dwelling place of the world created by him'.<sup>93</sup> These are not two easily compatible ideas, and in *God in Creation* the impression is given that the Trinity as 'dwelling place' is something that cannot have started at the beginning of creation.<sup>94</sup> One could argue that they are compatible through the eschatological journey from forsakenness to God and creation's mutual indwelling, but equally a journey from partial indwelling to consummated indwelling appears to be more attractive, and more coherent.

Moltmann defines a 'living space' as: 'the environment to which a particular life is related, because it accords that life with the conditions in which it can live'.<sup>95</sup> His recognition that God creates living spaces for life to thrive in (earth, sea and air) further demonstrates the potential inappropriateness of the *nihil*. Those particular living spaces are fit for abundant life whereas the original space made for creation to live in is hostile, a place of 'absolute

<sup>91</sup> *CoG*, pp. 281-82, 296-99.

<sup>92</sup> *TKG*, p. 109.

<sup>93</sup> *GiC*, pp. 87, 149.

<sup>94</sup> Moltmann does try to claim that only sin and godlessness in creation realise the 'menacing character' of the *nihil* (*Ibid.*, p. 88). But as discussed above (this work, p. 40), this is difficult to accept in the light of its description as a whole.

<sup>95</sup> *GiC*, p. 148.

death'. It would seem that the provision of creation's primordial environment should be a wholly more hospitable affair.

If he wishes to claim that God is creation's 'living space' from the beginning then a reconsideration of the godforsakenness of creation's original space needs to occur. This is precisely what he does when he re-approaches the subject a decade later in *The Coming of God*. Here Moltmann returns to language of the self-withdrawal of God's presence and its importance, yet he also departs from the earlier extremity of his depiction of the space created, characterised so vividly by the threat of the *nihil*. The Trinity still withdraws, but the result is different:

[God] does not leave behind a vacuum, as the kabbalistic doctrine of *zimsum* suggests. He throws open a space for those he has created, a space which corresponds to his inner indwellings: he allows a world different from himself to exist before him, with him and *in him*. [...] So the space of creation is at once outside God and within him. Through his self-restriction, the triune God made his presence the dwelling for his creation. [...] It is God's very self-withdrawal that makes it possible for those created to say 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17.28). [...] The Creator becomes the *God who can be inhabited*.<sup>96</sup>

This heartfelt portrayal of the effect of God's withdrawal demonstrates an intimate view of the Trinity's relationship with creation from the beginning. The liberation of the discussion from the language of godforsakenness helps this view. In *God in Creation* he spoke of God both *withdrawing* to make space and *being* the 'living space' at the same time.<sup>97</sup> These two ideas were difficult to hold together. The contrast between his earlier writings and this later passage is stark. It is still, as is expected, philosophically problematic to hold together words such as 'outside God and within him', but the overwhelming sense is that the withdrawn-from-space is near to God, cared for, and a place of life. The divine creation of 'a space which corresponds to his inner indwellings' is much more at home with the language of the openness of the trinitarian relationships towards creation found in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* than the language of the *nihil*.<sup>98</sup> It is the alteration of the concept of the *nihil* which is key to this change.

This modification in his consideration of the subject should alleviate the concerns of some of his critics, as it does those of this research. Nevertheless, Bonzo has remained very critical of this element of Moltmann's work. For him,

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<sup>96</sup> *CoG*, pp. 298-99.

<sup>97</sup> *GiC*, pp. 87-89.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *EiT*, p. 323; *SW*, p. 120.

the original description of the *nihil* misshapes Moltmann's entire foundation for creation: 'Instead of creation as a with-space, a space for moving with God, from the outset, creation is an opposed-space, a space of "detachment from God" and for "freedom of movement over against God"'.<sup>99</sup> So Bonzo concludes that creation is effectively a 'curse' and a 'demerit'. However, Bonzo does not give any allowance for a shift to occur over the course of Moltmann's career. Admittedly, there is language of separation and distance between God and creation in the primordial moment in *The Coming of God*. Nevertheless, Bonzo does not incorporate Moltmann's parallel theme of God's closeness to creation into his own discussion.<sup>100</sup>

If the passage which Bonzo cites above is read with the 'space conceded by God' defined as 'living space', as opposed to forsaken space, then it changes the meaning:

Through the space conceded by God, creation is given detachment from God and freedom of movement over against him. [. . .] Remoteness from God and spatial distance from God result from the withdrawal of God's omnipresence [. . .] they are part of the grace of creation, because they are the conditions for the liberty of created beings.<sup>101</sup>

In Moltmann's newly balanced language, words such as 'detachment', 'freedom of movement over against', 'remoteness', and 'distance' are each an expression of *relative* separation, as opposed to *absolute* separation. Detachment does not describe a move from intimacy to estrangement but rather a move from the overwhelming presence of God to breathing space. Remoteness does not speak of a severe distance but a generous gift of independence for existence. The key aim here for Moltmann is to emphasise the freedom of creation *in the context of God's love for creation*. The Trinity does not withdraw to make a forsaken space where something different can exist. Rather, the Divine withdraws to make God's own self a 'broad place' where there is the space for free life and growth.<sup>102</sup> Moltmann also defines 'living space' as space for 'reciprocal self-development': 'side by side [. . .] they need wide spaces in which they can move freely'.<sup>103</sup> There is space, yet existence is still together with others, 'side by side'. This applies equally to creation's relationship with God, as Moltmann had earlier stated: "To experience the *ruach* is to experience [. . .] the space of freedom in which the living being can unfold. That is the

<sup>99</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 114, citing *CoG*, p. 306.

<sup>100</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, pp. 114-15.

<sup>101</sup> *CoG*, p. 306.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

experience of the Spirit'.<sup>104</sup> So to live in the space of God, instead of space from God, brings freedom. Moltmann balances here 'liberty' and 'dwelling place', freedom and love.

This also makes more coherent the idea that God's withdrawal is only perceived as godforsakenness through sin. People can misuse the gracious space of liberty and self-isolate. When that isolation occurs the distance between God and the isolated creation appears as a forsaken space. Chester's critique is that Moltmann makes creation, instead of sin, the root of godforsakenness. However, the development of Moltmann's ideas over time begins to answer this fear.<sup>105</sup>

### 3.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explored a definition of Moltmann's doctrine of original creation: *God, out of love, freely creates something other than God*. This captures three useful parts Moltmann's work in this area that further contribute to the theological architecture for which this project searches.

For him original creation flows out of the love of God which expresses itself between the persons of the Trinity for all eternity. That love for creation is not a new love, or a different love, but an extension of the eternal divine love. It is true that Moltmann does walk a narrow line between choice and compulsion in his efforts to include love and freedom equally in God's actions, but he appears to hold the two together successfully. His wish to see the original act of creation as an act of free love and loving freedom is helpful.

The implications of God's self-restriction to make space and freedom for creation change as Moltmann's theology develops. The earlier, and less satisfactory, idea of the annihilating *nihil* is emphasised less (perhaps even replaced) in the later understanding of self-withdrawal as creation of hospitable space. The concept of God as creation's 'living space' was present in Moltmann's earlier work, but the nature of the *nihil* into which creation negated its effectiveness. In the development of Moltmann's work, God's self-withdrawal does not necessarily lead to a spatial concept of the Divine. Originally, in *God in Creation*, it seemed that creation needed a space that was absolute nothingness to exist in, and so the Trinity had to self-restrict in order

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<sup>104</sup> *SpL*, p. 43.

<sup>105</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 101.

that there might be an empty space. This was problematic for the reasons given above, and left the questions: why did not God just create something *outside* God's self? Is the Divine confined by limits of space? After Moltmann's more recent work, it appears that God needed to self-withdraw in order to make a space, not because creation needed an empty space and there was no space anywhere else, but because creation needed God to be its 'living space'.

The notion of the Trinity as 'living space' is the most helpful thread in Moltmann's discussion around the space made for creation. This idea, for obvious reasons, is much more attractive than the suspension of creation over an annihilating nothingness which God has vacated. A divine 'living space' is also more coherent with Moltmann's stress on the love of God.<sup>106</sup> This change in his work facilitates a smoother acceptance of the part which *zimsum* plays. Without the negative connotations of spatial concepts of God, and the threat of the *nihil*, God's withdrawal is an imaginative and positive contribution to the doctrine of original creation.

The healthy concept of 'living space' is also a better foundation for the freedom of creation than the absence of God. Now it is creation's space *in* God which gives it that freedom. This space is still created by withdrawal, but a change in the outcome of withdrawal is accompanied by a change in the environment that gives freedom. There was a dichotomy between the gift of freedom through the need of an empty space of nothingness and that same gift through God's presence in creation by the Spirit. Now, however, Moltmann describes the presence of the Trinity in creation as a coherent part of that process that gives freedom.

The three parts of the statement for this chapter (*God, out of love, freely creates something other than God*) each framed the discussions and outlined an important part of this architecture's potential to inform humanity's view of creation itself: creation is loved, creation is freely created, creation is not God. Perhaps most significant of these for this project is that creation is loved, as shown from its origins. This will be a theme of Moltmann's theology which constantly recurs, but each time it will appear from a different perspective. He emphasises the fact that divine love makes creation 'meaningful'.<sup>107</sup> God made creation as worthy of love and this 'meaning' in turn gives substance to Moltmann's call for ecological reformation. The development of God as 'living space' for creation sets the scene for the Trinity and creation's relationship to be an intimate one of mutual indwelling.

<sup>106</sup> See also Bush, *Recent Ideas*, pp. 333-34.

<sup>107</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 124.

Creation is made to have life and freedom. Life is God's intention for creation from the beginning (this theme also recurs in Moltmann's work). The freedom which the Trinity gives to creation makes God's creativity a risky venture, although this is not the same risk as an annihilating *nihil*. It is rather a risk that comes from *within* creation through its freedom. All of the troubles for creation and for the Trinity will stem from this freedom. This all witnesses to the fragility of creation, and the potential for creation to develop faults. At this point one may wish to speak of God as the cause of both creation's and God's own suffering, but this is only acceptable in the very limited sense that the Divine allowed the conditions for suffering to exist. There was a risk in the creation of a free 'Other', which God embraced in order to have an authentic relationship, but that is very different from the claim that the suffering of creation is God's fault.

The next stage in identifying Moltmann's contributions to this theological architecture is to unpack the divine response to these themes. To this task the next two chapters turn: the exploration of continuous creation from the twin perspectives of the care and openness of God's love.

# Chapter 4

## God's Care for Creation

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will observe how Moltmann's view of God's ongoing care for creation further contributes to the substance of this new theological architecture and its potential to enable ecological reform. Again, as the aim is now to explore those aspects of continuous creation which are important in the wider conversation between theology and environment care the chapter will not engage every aspect of this topic. This approach is selective of those elements of Moltmann's theology which are particularly helpful for the project's aims.

The topic of God's continual activity in creation is perhaps one of the more varied areas of thought in Christian theology, in which the presentation of the Trinity's relationship with creation ranges from the absent maker of deism to the intrinsically-connected God of process theology. This question of divine treatment of creation in the present is important for many people; it is the basis for their adjudication of the authenticity of God's reported love for creation. If Moltmann were asked, 'Does God's ongoing creativity reflect the same foundational love of the initial creative activity?', his immediate answer would be yes. For him, *God's love defines the ongoing action and involvement in creation*, and it is always an overflow of the love of which the Trinity consists through eternity.<sup>1</sup> This consistent approach to God's love both shapes Moltmann's view of God's relationship with creation and is constructive for the new theological architecture.

In order to give appropriate background to these discussions of the 'Spirit of Life', as Moltmann calls it, this chapter will first track their development from the earliest stages, as well as the specific use of the phrase 'all flesh'. This will provide the position from which to investigate the presence and

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<sup>1</sup> *TKG*, p. 59; *GiC*, pp. 76, 84.



activity of the Spirit *in creation* in particular, aided by an understanding of the journey Moltmann's theology has made.

Subsequent to this is a turn to the Son's care for creation. The bulk of Moltmann's discussion of the Son's activity in creation is with regards to the cross event, which the next chapter discusses. This chapter will look at the way in which the Son's work in creation reflects that of the Spirit. Yet Moltmann also separates and distinguishes the roles of Spirit and Son in continuous creation. The Son has his own unique role.

All this adds to the understanding of the theological architecture which can be drawn from Moltmann's work. God's continual, active involvement in continuous creation is marked by love, life and universal involvement. This gives additional fuel to the drive towards ecological reformation.

## 4.2 THE SPIRIT AND CREATION: SETTING THE SCENE

### The Spirit and Creation in Early Material

Some regard Moltmann to be weak in his presentation of a theology of the Holy Spirit in his early work. It will thus be helpful to outline the themes pertinent to this discussion from his work of the 1960s and 1970s. This period is important as it pre-dates his more systematic works on theology. He is not renowned for his pneumatological developments during this time and even *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* has received criticism for a lack of pneumatology.<sup>2</sup> However, while his early writing does not often take the Spirit as a primary theme, he does bring elements of it into his work on a number of occasions. The effect of this is that he slowly builds up an established picture. He achieves this significantly in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, but also in the works prior to it.

This survey of early work begins with Moltmann's comments on the Spirit in connection to people and the Church, and then continues to look at the Spirit's link to creation.

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<sup>2</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 95. Beck states that even Moltmann admits it is more a doctrine of the Church than the Spirit.

## The Spirit of the Church

Moltmann speaks of the Spirit in the lives of people from his first major work of *Theology of Hope*; there he claims that, for Paul, the Spirit is ‘the ‘life-giving Spirit’, the Spirit who ‘*raised up* Christ from the dead’, who ‘*dwells in*’ those who recognise Christ and his future, and ‘*shall quicken their mortal bodies*’ (Rom. 8.11).<sup>3</sup> By this Moltmann also affirms that the Spirit is at work in the lives of people in the present, especially in believers’ lives.<sup>4</sup> This work then is the ‘quickenings’ of a person to live a different life to the others around them.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout his early writing Moltmann mentions this work of the Spirit drawing people towards the eschatological future.<sup>6</sup> This work engages with various aspects of the believer’s life: it is the Spirit who ‘unites, orders and preserves’ the ‘people of God’, and frees them for fellowship with Father, Son and Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Through this freedom, or liberation, the Spirit brings forth joy and thankfulness in the community, and an anticipation of the future new creation.<sup>8</sup> But this experience also brings an awareness of ‘life’s godlessness’; now ‘inhuman relationships and inhuman behaviour become painfully obvious’.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the Spirit is the power to suffer in participation in the mission and the love of Jesus Christ, and is in this suffering the passion for what is possible, for what is coming and promised in the future of life, of freedom and of resurrection.<sup>10</sup>

Again this key concept of participation is an important part of Moltmann’s theology that heightens responsibility for the believer. For the community of God is never, as far as Moltmann is concerned, a community united merely by its vision or knowledge of God; it is the community united *with* and even *in* God, and *with* God’s mission. The Spirit ‘moulds life in faith to the living hope’ and ‘gives the community the authority for its mission’.<sup>11</sup> The work of the Spirit in the believer’s life ‘is both gift and charge. [. . . It is] for some purpose. [. . . It is] for the kingdom of God, for the liberation of the world’.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *ToH*, p. 211 (cf. p. 68).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. “The ‘Crucified God’”, p. 299: ‘This Spirit gives to those who believe and love an *arrabōn*, a foretaste.’

<sup>5</sup> *ToH*, p. 216.

<sup>6</sup> *HP*, pp. 46 (1968), 108 (1960), 146-47 (1961); ‘The ‘Crucified God’”, pp. 294-95; *CrG*, p. 352.

<sup>7</sup> *CPS*, pp. 59, 279, 294.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 65, 279.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> *ToH*, p. 212 (cf. *CPS*, p. 262).

<sup>11</sup> *CPS*, pp. 279, 294.

<sup>12</sup> *FC*, p. 108 (1972).

Fortunately for the believer, the Spirit also ‘makes the impossible possible’.<sup>13</sup>

Later in Moltmann’s theology ‘life’ becomes synonymous with the relationships and fellowships found throughout creation, but in this earlier work ‘fellowship’ is only a nascent theme mainly concerned with the Church (particularly as *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* addresses it). The work of the Spirit to liberate creates fellowship as the Church both participates in this process and celebrates its own liberation.<sup>14</sup> The ‘power of the Holy Spirit’ also upholds and maintains fellowship as it gives strength to faith and hope and ‘gives it life’.<sup>15</sup>

This fellowship of the Holy Spirit leads the Church out of itself to greater and more inclusive fellowship because the direction of this process is ‘in tendency universal, all-embracing and exclusive of no-one’.<sup>16</sup> However, this is still a movement *from* the Church *outwards*, as opposed to the later idea that the Spirit sometimes creates fellowship throughout creation *despite* the Church.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, Moltmann’s approach is still universal in its aim. The Spirit works to build fellowship within *all* creation, human and non-human, in the present day. The Spirit is ‘the bond of fellowship and the power of unification’ and, while the completion of this is set firmly in the future, the ‘history of the Spirit is the history of these unifications’.<sup>18</sup> This process is also one of which the Church can feel part. This should lead to an awareness of this cosmic community and a subsequent intentional search for more involvement.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, to a limited degree Moltmann seems after all to describe at this early stage a growing sense of fellowship throughout creation brought about by the Spirit. This idea develops more fully as his theology progresses.

Moltmann also has a particular emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit in people in particular: ‘Faith in Christ and hope for the kingdom are due to the presence of God in the Spirit.’<sup>20</sup> The Spirit fills people ‘in their freedom with joy and thanksgiving’ as they live ‘in the presence of the Spirit’, the one who begins in them the work of the ‘new creation’.<sup>21</sup> The Spirit affects every part of a person and ‘makes the whole biological, cultural and religious

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 108 (1972).

<sup>14</sup> *CPS*, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 197, 343. This is not a claim that humanity cannot use its own strength, rather that these things are only *made certain* by the Spirit.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 198, 252.

<sup>17</sup> *SpL*, pp. 8-10, 230-31.

<sup>18</sup> *FC*, p. 91 (1975).

<sup>19</sup> *CPS*, p. 197.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 197 (cf. pp. 220, 279).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 59, 191, 279.

life history of a person charismatically alive'.<sup>22</sup> Yet even this statement about humanity connects a person to their surroundings.

There are brief discussions from Moltmann on the matter of the sanctification of the Church. It occurs 'through the Spirit, [and leads to] obedience to sanctify all things for the new creation', 'through Christ's activity in and on it', and the wider process of 'God [. . .] calling the godless through Christ, by justifying sinners, and by accepting the lost'.<sup>23</sup> Yet it also may result from its own activity: 'The church is therefore sanctified wherever it participates in the lowliness, helplessness, poverty and suffering of Christ.'<sup>24</sup> This specific comment about the Church is a starting point for the more inclusive position which Moltmann seems to hold later in his career: 'whatever God has made and loves is holy'.<sup>25</sup> He does, however, make one comment which seems a little more expansive at this point: 'Everything that love reaches and destines for love is sanctified for the kingdom of God'.<sup>26</sup> This gives a good indication of the future trajectory for Moltmann's theology of sanctification which embraces all things.

### The Spirit of Creation

Early in his work, Moltmann speaks of the indwelling of the Spirit in people.<sup>27</sup> However, even at this stage, God's indwelling of creation is not *only* for humanity. Moltmann speaks of a 'comprehensive [. . .] horizon of hope' for God's presence to be 'all in all'.<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere he uses the phrase: 'the complete and universal indwelling of God'.<sup>29</sup>

This future indwelling is more than simply the presence of the Divine. It brings with it freedom for 'the whole of suffering creation', the 'liberation of enslaved nature'.<sup>30</sup> 'All things' will be 'united' with, and 'transfigured' by, God's presence, and 'take part in God's fullness of meaning and potentiality'.<sup>31</sup> Even in the 1960s and 1970s Moltmann included the whole of creation in the consummated future, brought about by the Holy Spirit. At this stage in his theology he already encourages a greater community between nature and

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339, 353.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>25</sup> *SpL*, p. 176.

<sup>26</sup> *CPS*, p. 354.

<sup>27</sup> *ToH*, p. 211 (cf. 'The Crucified God', *Theology Today*, 31:1 (1974), 6–18 (p. 13); *CrG*, pp. 282–84).

<sup>28</sup> *HP*, pp. 49–50 (1968).

<sup>29</sup> *CrG*, p. 349 (cf. p. 282; *RRF*, p. 36 (1968); Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 50).

<sup>30</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966); *CrG*, p. 349.

<sup>31</sup> *FC*, p. 94 (1975, cf. p. 85); *RRF*, p. 36 (1968); *CrG*, p. 349.

humanity: 'The sighing of the Spirit for the revelation of God's glory and the freedom of creation creates a solidarity between the longing of all creation and the longing of the troubled peoples of God.'<sup>32</sup>

Towards the end of this earliest period of Moltmann's career his theology showed a desire not to limit the Holy Spirit's presence in creation to the future. Significantly, while his attention to the Spirit's work in people is neither lost, nor loses its passion and importance, in his later he does broaden his exploration of the Spirit's universal nature. The distinction between the Spirit's work in believers and non-believers, humanity and creation, becomes blurred. Now the 'life-giving Spirit' becomes a more holistic idea.

There were hints of the development of this more holistic approach through the 1960s and into the 1970s. During this time Moltmann indicates that he is unhappy if the Spirit's work is solely connected to the Church: 'While one can say that a charismatic community takes shape in the body of Christ, one cannot say that it is still spatially limited to the sphere of innerness or the church.'<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere he speaks of the Spirit as the 'motivating force' of matter, and of a need to understand 'matter spiritually'.<sup>34</sup> While it is unclear as to whether this specifically concerns the Holy Spirit's presence or a more generic use of the word 'spirit', it is clear that his thoughts are increasingly holistic.<sup>35</sup>

It is when, in the mid-1970s, Moltmann comes to *Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit* that he presents his thoughts more coherently to show the great breadth of the involvement of the Spirit in creation. Now he describes the Spirit as 'the perfecting power of God [who] makes enslaved creation live and fills everything with the powers of the new creation'.<sup>36</sup> He already described these powers which fill all things as 'the powers of life' which determine the present, look to the future, and embrace 'human history and natural history'.<sup>37</sup> It is the development of the work of the Spirit in the present with which this chapter is most concerned.

Moltmann starts to use different phrases which all speak of a universal life-giving work that is not just focused on the future. He speaks of 'the Spirit's

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<sup>32</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. The original German suggests that the 'it' refers to the charismatic community (see *Perspektiven der Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1968), p. 31).

<sup>34</sup> 'Hope and History', *Theology Today*, 25:3 (1968), 369–86 (p. 383). See also *RRF*, p. 217.

<sup>35</sup> The confusion arises over the capitalisation of word 'Spirit' in the earlier article but not in the reprint of the article in the later book.

<sup>36</sup> *CPS*, p. 191.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

world-sustaining operations' which are linked to God's redemptive activity, but most certainly active in the present.<sup>38</sup> The Spirit reaches out to 'the whole breadth of creation' and 'the energies of new life in the Spirit are as manifold and motley as creation itself'.<sup>39</sup> Now the new life of the future is also *in* the present, not just to draw the present onwards: the 'Spirit is the reviving presence of the future of eternal life in the midst of the history of death', the "life-giving" Spirit, giving life to everything that is mortal'.<sup>40</sup>

So towards the end of the 1970s Moltmann's work firmly identifies the Spirit as being at work throughout all creation. The Spirit feels the pain, and keeps up the hope, of all creation.<sup>41</sup> However, Moltmann does not remove all differentiation between the work of the Spirit in nature and humanity. He still maintains that the Spirit relates to people 'in a way that is different from creation [. . .]. We are "born again" from the Spirit (John 3.3), not created by it' as the rest of creation is.<sup>42</sup> Subsequent chapters will return to the subject of the Spirit in relation to the pain and hope of creation. Here however, the discussion focuses on the presence and active care of the Spirit in creation in the present.

In preparation for this discussion there follows a section tracing one other theme through Moltmann's early work and into his latest writings. This is his interpretation of the phrase 'all flesh' in connection with the 'pouring out' of the Holy Spirit. It is of particular interest because he often frames his discussion of the presence and work of the Spirit with this phrase. It is by no means the sole foundation of Moltmann's thought on the Spirit and creation, as shown by the other themes in this chapter, but it is nevertheless an important thread that warrants attention.

## Moltmann's Interpretation of 'All Flesh'

The use of the phrase 'all flesh' is another example of an element of Moltmann's work which gradually changes its meaning and emphasis over time. David Beck has noticed this variation on Moltmann's usage and rightly comments that 'the vast majority of the time it signifies all living creatures'.<sup>43</sup> This, however, is truer of his later work than his earlier work. 'All flesh' is a pervasive phrase

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 295-96.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 36; *FC*, p. 98 (1974).

<sup>42</sup> *EoG*, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 152.

in Moltmann's work; perhaps the only major work without it is the first book, *Theology of Hope*, and the phrase occurs in a variety of different contexts, as it does in the Christian Scriptures.<sup>44</sup>

Of primary concern is Moltmann's use of the phrase in relation to the prophecy of Joel 2.28-32, and to that prophecy's quotation in Acts 2.17-21.<sup>45</sup> This is because of its phrase: 'I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'.<sup>46</sup> This has heavily influenced Moltmann's pneumatology. He also forges a link between that phrase and the covenant of God and Noah in Genesis 9. In this passage, God speaks and promises that 'never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood'. The context leaves little doubt that this use of 'all flesh' is at least inclusive of all animals.<sup>47</sup> Moltmann however comes to understand the term to refer to 'all the living' in a way that seems to include all life, universally.<sup>48</sup> The context of this verse seems to indicate it is concerned with only a greater vision of God's Spirit active in all humanity. However, with his own definition of 'all flesh' from Genesis 9, Moltmann concludes that the fulfilment of this prophecy from Joel means that: 'The outpouring of God's Spirit therefore leads to the rebirth of all life, and to the rebirth too of the community of all the living on earth.'<sup>49</sup> What follows is an outline of Moltmann's use of the phrase, in order to understand the way in which this aspect of his thought has developed and contributed to the theological architecture and its contribution to this chapter's focus on God's care for creation.

### Early Theology

The first clear instance of this phrase in Moltmann's work is in a chapter of *Hope and Planning* that dates from 1966. Here he follows the words in Acts 2.17 (with acknowledgement of Luke's use of Joel) of 'upon all flesh' with his own statement: 'The eschatological determination of time is bound up here with a universal determination of place.'<sup>50</sup> This passage's context is that Moltmann wishes to recognise that there is a common future for humanity and creation. His discussion here does not focus on his understanding of 'all

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<sup>44</sup> For instance: *kol' basar* in Gen. 6-9, Isa. 40, Joel 2; *pasan sarka* in Acts 2. These will appear in this discussion but there are many others, depending on the translation used (the NRSV, for example, does not translate even all of these instances as 'all flesh').

<sup>45</sup> The Hebrew text of the Joel reading is numbered: 3.1-5.

<sup>46</sup> Joel 2.28.

<sup>47</sup> Gen. 9.11.

<sup>48</sup> *SpL*, p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>50</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966).

flesh', nor does he go on to speak specifically of the outpouring of the Spirit on non-human living flesh. However, the section is so obviously concerned with non-human creation that it is hard to conclude that his words, whether intended or not, do not lead to the inclusion of all creation within 'all flesh'.

There is also a use of 'all flesh' in *The Crucified God* that seems to refer to more than just humanity.<sup>51</sup> The context in this instance is the liberation of humanity within its various relationships, but included is the sense that God fills all creation, both human and non-human, with meaning. This meaning 'is termed the presence and indwelling of God in a new creation' where 'man and nature then take part in God's fullness of meaning'.<sup>52</sup> Moltmann now refers to the Spirit's coming on 'all flesh' in his explicit discussions of the presence of God in *all things*.

The next major work to note is *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, which uses 'all flesh' several times. The Church 'prays for the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit [that it] may descend on "all flesh"'.<sup>53</sup> This speaks of a future sense to the descent on 'all flesh', but which at the same time already takes place to some degree in the present.<sup>54</sup> However, alone these give little indication to the understanding of what that flesh might be, although the chapter concerned ends with, among other things, thoughts about the 'coming rebirth of the whole creation'.<sup>55</sup> The next chapter of the book reinforces this idea in which Moltmann sees the fulfilment of the promise of Joel 2.28 at Pentecost as 'the beginning of the outpouring of the Spirit of God "on all flesh"' when 'God himself takes up his dwelling in his creation'. This is the 'initial fulfilment of the new creation of all things'.<sup>56</sup> This description reflects traditional human-focused understandings of Pentecost, but suggests a wider than traditional inclusivity.

Moltmann enhances this suggestion through a statement at a similar time that: 'The powers of the new creation are meant to enter into the Christian community and, through this, to come upon all "flesh", preparing it for eternal life.'<sup>57</sup> The meaning of this quote may be disputed if contrasted with a different translation into English of the same German article which seems to restrict 'flesh' to the Christian community: 'The powers of the new creation are to descend *on "flesh"* in the community of Christ and *through it*, in order

<sup>51</sup> *CrG*, p. 352.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>53</sup> *CPS*, p. 247.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 257, 279.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>57</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 128.



to quicken *that flesh* for eternal life.<sup>58</sup> However, the German text behind this second translation more likely refers to flesh in general than the community's flesh.<sup>59</sup> A similar phrase from a later work supports this claim, although its publication date is relatively close: '[Jesus is] sending the Spirit upon the disciples, and the energies of the Spirit upon the church, and through the church "on all flesh".'<sup>60</sup> Therefore it appears that Moltmann sees 'all flesh' as wider than humanity, although in this early stage of his career humanity retains a central role in the Spirit's outpouring to the rest of creation.

This central role of humanity means that Moltmann sometimes writes as if the time when the Spirit's presence moves out from humanity into the rest of the world has yet to begin:

Believers [...] are already prompted here and now by 'the earnest of the Spirit' which, according to the prophetic promise, is to be 'poured out on all flesh'. That is why they are not separated from the world, but as the first fruits of the new creation, stand as representatives for the whole longing and waiting creation.<sup>61</sup>

This quote, and others like it, give a sense of a great *future* event of 'pouring out' into all creation, an event which has not yet happened.<sup>62</sup> The extent to which Moltmann says the Spirit *has been* poured out into the whole of creation is minimal at this early stage in his writing.

## 1980-89

In *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* Moltmann speaks of the present and future outpourings on 'all flesh' in a way that can appear contradictory. First, he speaks of the outpouring 'on all flesh' as a Pentecost occurrence that leads to a greater fulfilment to be 'completed when God is "all in all"'.<sup>63</sup> He follows this with some interesting nuances. Firstly, he mentions the presence of the Spirit in creation before Pentecost, in fact from the beginning of creation:

<sup>58</sup> *FC*, p. 124, emphasis added.

<sup>59</sup> 'Die Kräfte der Neuschöpfung sollen in der Gemeinde Christi und durch sie auf das »Fleisch« kommen, um es für das ewige Leben lebendig zu machen.' (*Zukunft der Schöpfung: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1977), p. 131.) The earlier article was actually first published in English and was not translated from a previously published German text. The earlier German is therefore unavailable and there is no guarantee that it is the same as that which underlies the later article in *FC*.

<sup>60</sup> *TKG*, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> *FC*, p. 54 (cf. *OC*, p. 40; 'Theology of Mystical Experience', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 32:6 (1979), 501–20 (p. 518); *EoG*, pp. 77–80; *SpL*, p. 212 (this much later instance is just an inclusion of earlier material with little editing)).

<sup>62</sup> For example: *OC*, p. 86; *TKG*, pp. 89, 104; *OHD*, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> *TKG*, p. 110. Moltmann does not explicitly mention Pentecost here but he refers to the prophecies of Joel and Acts and the outpouring which they speak of.

‘Creation only exists in the power of the divine Spirit’.<sup>64</sup> This ever-presence of the Spirit is then somewhat different at Pentecost:

With Jesus’ resurrection, transformation and glorification, the general *outpouring of the Holy Spirit* “on all flesh” begins. [...] *The messianic era* commences where the forces and energies of the divine Spirit descend on all flesh, making it alive forever more.<sup>65</sup>

This demonstrates the various purposes of the Spirit’s indwelling in Moltmann’s theology. The first quotation says that from the beginning the Spirit has sustained creation and driven the processes of nature forward, and the second quotation states that it is only since the Christ event, in the ‘messianic era’, that the Spirit brings the power of the cross and resurrection to creation. These do appear to be different works.

Moltmann continues during the time of his systematic contributions to assert that his discussion of ‘all flesh’ connects to the physical nature of all creation.<sup>66</sup> He perhaps also offers us another clue to the difference between the Spirit as seen at Pentecost and the Spirit as seen in creation from the beginning: ‘The messianic era [...] *awakens* the Spirit itself in the whole enslaved creation.’<sup>67</sup> The Spirit was always present but the the Spirit is awakened to new activity.

In *The Way of Jesus Christ* there is perhaps the most obviously inclusive use of ‘all flesh’ in Moltmann’s work up to that point. In the context of a discussion about how Christ died for all of creation, nature and humanity, he states: ‘the conquest of death’s power through Christ’s rebirth and the outpouring of the divine Spirit “on all flesh” have to be seen as the great sign of “the springtime of creation”’.<sup>68</sup> ‘All flesh’ is clearly part of a discussion that includes all creation. However, this is still not yet a clear assertion that this new outpouring of the Spirit reaches all of creation *in the present*. In other words, at this point it is not certain that, for Moltmann, the outpouring of the Spirit on ‘all flesh’ referred to in Acts 2 is immediately inclusive of all creation.<sup>69</sup> This changes in the subsequent decade.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>66</sup> *GiC*, p. 67.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>68</sup> *WJC*, p. 253. To track the development of Moltmann’s use of this particular phrase, attention is paid to the German publishing dates, which is why this work is counted in discussion of the 1980s.

<sup>69</sup> This idea that all creation waits for a future outpouring is also seen at this stage of Moltmann’s thought in *HTG*, p. 67, an article which dates back to 1984 (also seen in a different translation in ‘The Fellowship’, p. 297).

## 1990 Onwards

In *The Spirit of Life* Moltmann finally unambiguously states an inclusive position in regards to the scope of ‘all flesh’: ‘According to the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9.8-11), the expression ‘all flesh’ extends beyond the human race to cover all the living.’<sup>70</sup> Here he discusses the prophecy of Joel 2.28, and while he had already stated that the ‘all flesh’ seen in the flood narrative (Genesis 6-9) included all the living, the Genesis account was not explicitly connected in his work to the Joel/Acts occurrence of the phrase until now.<sup>71</sup> He still maintains an expectation that this will happen in the future, but the context is the perspective of Jewish expectations derived from their Hebrew Scriptures. For this reason the futurist language is inevitable. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost will allow Moltmann to develop that future expectation into a present fulfilment, as he does with the outpouring of the Spirit on humanity.<sup>72</sup>

This development does not happen immediately because Moltmann still occasionally uses the language of the future to refer to the outpouring of the Spirit onto non-human creation.<sup>73</sup> Yet he demonstrates that his intention is still to describe an outpouring of the Spirit that has begun but has further to go. *The Spirit of Life* contains a section which begins with reference to the ‘eschatological hope’ for the outpouring of the Spirit but clearly continues to say that the outpouring of the Spirit has been seen in movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: an ‘eschatological experience’ as opposed to simply a hope.<sup>74</sup> Moltmann thus describes this present human experience of out-poured Spirit, which originates at Pentecost, as ‘a foretaste of the coming glory, which will fill the whole world’.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, his current understanding appears to be that ‘all flesh’ refers to all of creation, but that the outpouring which occurred at Pentecost did not necessarily come to every part of creation at that time.

In *The Coming of God* Moltmann makes it apparent that he has not only linked the ‘all flesh’ of Genesis with that of Joel and Acts, but also believes it to

<sup>70</sup> *SpL*, p. 57 (cf. p. 87: “All flesh” can mean “everyone” and also “everything living”).

<sup>71</sup> See *WJC*, p. 128.

<sup>72</sup> Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann, *God - His and Hers*, trans. by John Bowden (London: SCM, 1991), p. 15; ‘A Pentecostal Theology of Life’, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 4:9 (1996), 3–15 (p. 3).

<sup>73</sup> Moltmann-Wendel et al., *God - His and Hers*, p. 39; *SpL*, pp. 212, 233-34 (cf. *EoG*, p. 77; ‘Theology of Mystical’, p. 518).

<sup>74</sup> *SpL*, pp. 239-41.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God’, *Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion*, 17 (1996), 170–84 (p. 179).

have the same meaning across the Old Testament: ‘the Old Testament formula “all flesh” or “no flesh” (Gen. 9.11; Ps. 65.3; 145.21; Joel 2.28 and frequently elsewhere) does not just mean human beings in their physical constitution; it means animals too – that is, “all the living”’.<sup>76</sup> And in *The Source of Life* he soon expands his definition of the phrase in Joel/Acts, based on Genesis 9.10-17, from just animals to encompass ‘plants, trees and animals’.<sup>77</sup> There are also signs that an inclusive ‘all flesh’ is now a more influential part of Moltmann’s theology in Chapter 7 of that work, which is an adaptation of the fourth chapter of *The Spirit of Life*. In the original version of the chapter, there is a paragraph concerned with the Spirit’s presence in the world, in which the Spirit is ‘poured out on all flesh’, but despite the presence of some inclusive language there is little to take the discussion beyond humanity.<sup>78</sup> In the later work, however, he inserts the sentences which follow, in an otherwise little changed passage, after the reference to ‘all flesh’: ‘This doesn’t just mean people’s souls. It means their bodies too. It doesn’t mean just the ‘flesh’ of human beings: it means the ‘flesh’ of everything living.’<sup>79</sup> There is obviously some kind of concern to emphasise the inclusivity of ‘all flesh’ that exists in a way that it did not only six years earlier.<sup>80</sup>

Now, in the mid-1990s, the evidence grows, even if still not fully clear, that for Moltmann the outpouring of Pentecost was inclusive of all living things *from the beginning*. This is in contrast to his earlier emphasis on merely a partial outpouring at first which only included humanity. For him, there is no doubt that Pentecost was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel and that people have been ‘endowed’ with the Spirit. Now he immediately continues to note the Spirit’s prior and continual presence in all creation, with a link to ‘all flesh’.<sup>81</sup> There is still scope to understand these two presences as

<sup>76</sup> *CoG*, p. 70 (cf. p. 131: ‘the life of all the living – of “all flesh”, as our Bible puts it’). See also: ‘this living power of God will be poured out ‘on all flesh’, which in the language of the Old Testament means everything living’ (*GSS*, p. 240 (1996)). It is possible to read this as an expression of the view that there is a solely human use of the phrase once in Genesis 6 (*CoG*, p. 228), but nowhere else does Moltmann refer to this difference in meaning and he discusses the same passage elsewhere without that stipulation (For example: *WJC*, p. 128; *IEB*, p. 36).

<sup>77</sup> *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1997), p. 12 (he also says it ‘is of course human life first and foremost’. Cf. ‘A Pentecostal’, p. 5; ‘The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life: Seven Theses’, in *Religion in a Secular City: Essays in Honor of Harvey Cox*, ed. by Arvind Sharma (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. 116–20 (p. 120)).

<sup>78</sup> *SpL*, p. 84.

<sup>79</sup> *The Source*, p. 71. This definition does not seem to change from this point on (cf. *SW*, p. 183; *IEB*, p. 159).

<sup>80</sup> Based on the German publication dates.

<sup>81</sup> *The Source*, pp. 23-24. Interestingly, here the cosmic flavour to ‘all flesh’ is not based

different, as discussed above, yet they always draw closer together. Now Moltmann describes how, beginning with Easter, the Spirit comes to ‘all flesh’, which includes all the living and ‘the final springtime of the whole creation begins’.<sup>82</sup> Or expressed otherwise: ‘God’s sending is biocentrically orientated, not anthropocentrically’.<sup>83</sup>

Moltmann seems to confirm the growth of this emphasis on an equal outpouring on human and non-human creation as the twentieth century draws to a close:

Fifty days after Easter we arrive [. . .] at *Pentecost* [. . .]. What previously ‘rested’ only on Christ and acted in him – God’s life-giving, healing Spirit – now comes upon all living things; for ‘all flesh’ (the Hebrew is *kol’ basar*) does not mean human life alone. The divine well of life opens, and the energies begin to flow on to all mortal life.<sup>84</sup>

This is what is meant by the ‘springtime’ of creation. Of course Moltmann still retains a sizeable distinction between the present outpouring of the Spirit on ‘all flesh’ and the complete eschatological indwelling of God in ‘all flesh’. He does see Pentecost as the fulfilment of the promise in Joel 2 but it is not the complete fulfilment of the Spirit’s presence, which will happen when God comes to dwell in creation at the eschaton.<sup>85</sup> However, the degree to which Moltmann views the Spirit of the new creation as already present has definitely changed; what was an emphasis on a future immanence with

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on Joel/Acts but Psalm 104, and also after this quotation on Job 34.14, Wisdom 1.7, and Isaiah 34.16 (although Macchia, in his own translation of Moltmann’s work, replaces this with Jeremiah 34.16 (‘A Pentecostal’, p. 14)).

<sup>82</sup> *The Source*, p. 71.

<sup>83</sup> *GSS*, p. 240 (1996).

<sup>84</sup> ‘Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Future World’, *Anvil: An Anglican Evangelical Journal for Theology and Mission*, 16:4 (1999), 247–53 (pp. 248–49). See also *EiT*, pp. 147, 288, 326; ‘The Liberation of the Future and its Anticipations in History’, in *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 265–89 (p. 284); ‘The Holy Spirit’, p. 120.

This view seems now to remain constant: ‘At Pentecost the life-giving Spirit of God “is poured out on all flesh”’ (‘The Presence of God’s Future: The Risen Christ’, *Anglican Theological Review*, 89:4 (2007), 577–88 (p. 584)). Here Moltmann has just explicitly linked ‘all flesh’ with all the living (cf. ‘The Holy Spirit’, p. 120; ‘The Resurrection of Christ and the New Earth’, *Communio viatorum*, 49:2 (2007), 141–49 (p. 143); *SRA*, pp. 60, 160, 167; *EthH*, p. 114).

<sup>85</sup> ‘The World in God or God in the World?: Response to Richard Bauckham’, in *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 35–41 (p. 40); ‘Hope and Reality: Contradiction and Correspondence: Response to Trevor Hart’, in *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 77–85 (p. 82); *SW*, p. 53 (this reference is from the re-translated Chapter 8 of *FC*, pp. 115–30, but this final section is an addition in reply to certain questions by Deane-Drummond. The same sense is perhaps reinforced by Moltmann’s use of ‘all flesh’ in *SW*, p. 151).

only ambiguous reference to the present is now a clear affirmation of the immanence of the Spirit in the present as well as the future.

### Interpretation Problems?

There is one particular criticism to explore: Moltmann's interpretation of the biblical texts, and in particular the way he interpreted 'all flesh' in Joel (*kol' basar*), and that passage's translation in Acts (*pasan sarka*), to mean 'all the living'. For example, theological dictionaries give *kol' basar* a variety of meanings, with 'all living flesh' as one possible meaning. This particular meaning is popular, for instance, for Genesis 6 and 9.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, these and other reference works assign a human-only meaning to Joel 2.28 or Acts 2.31.<sup>87</sup> Likewise all biblical commentaries surveyed do not mention the more inclusive meaning either for *kol' basar* in the Joel passage, or for its equivalent in Acts 2.17. Even Duncan Reid, a theologian who is sympathetic to environmental concerns, does not go as far as to consider the Joel/Acts occurrence of the phrase 'all flesh' to include all the living. He appears content to follow the theological dictionary's advice.<sup>88</sup> Colin Gunton concludes that this particular use definitely refers exclusively to humanity, but for him this is an indication what 'God has in store for his whole creation'. So for Gunton, Joel/Acts does not give us warrant to go beyond an outpouring of the Spirit on humanity, and his basis for a future outpouring for creation is not from these passages either.<sup>89</sup>

The question this raises is 'Why?'. Why is it inappropriate to read the instances in Joel and Acts as inclusive of all the living? This is not a question of linguistics but of theological interpretation. It is possible that most article writers simply have not thought, or had need, to go beyond the immediate

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<sup>86</sup> Eduard Schweizer, 'Sarx', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume VII*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), pp. 98–151 (p. 106); Anthony C. Thiselton, 'Flesh', in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (revised edn): Volume 1: A-F*, ed. by Colin Brown (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1986), pp. 671–81 (p. 672); William R. Dromeris, 'Finish, Complete', in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Volume 2*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), pp. 657–58 (p. 657).

<sup>87</sup> Schweizer, 'Sarx', p. 125; Thiselton, 'Flesh', p. 677; Alexander Sand, 'Sarx', in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 3*, ed. by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), pp. 230–33 (p. 232); Gary V. Smith, 'Dream', in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Volume 2*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), pp. 153–55 (p. 154).

<sup>88</sup> Duncan Reid, 'Enfleshing the Human: An Earth-Revealing, Earth-Healing Christology', in *Earth Revealing, Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology*, ed. by Denis Edwards (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), pp. 70–83 (p. 70, n. 5).

<sup>89</sup> Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit Moved Over the Face of the Waters: The Holy Spirit and the Created Order', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 4:2 (2002), 190–204 (p. 204).

context of Israel and humanity in these passages and so had no intention of setting an explicit boundary for its exposition. Yet still for some, as above, the more inclusive interpretation is definitely incorrect.

Beck attempts to give one reason for this action. He argues that Moltmann's broader interpretation of Joel/Acts is flawed, particularly the way he links Genesis 9 and Joel 2 to develop his understanding of all flesh. The main thrust of Beck's argument is that we cannot import the meaning of 'all flesh' from Genesis into the promise of Joel because they are concerned with different spheres of the activity of God. He describes a differentiation between eschatological and non-eschatological works of the Divine: 'The promise in Genesis 9:10 is not an eschatological one, for it does not reference a future time of salvation. In contrast, Joel's prophecy is eschatological, for it explicitly looks to the [eschatological] future'. Therefore, Beck claims, we are not permitted to transfer the scope of God's work in Genesis to the scope of the Spirit's presence in Joel, for as he does so Moltmann 'is mixing two categories of divine promise'.<sup>90</sup> Subsequently Beck also suggests that the context of the Joel passage shows it to be concerned not with all humanity, but even more exclusively than that: it is only addressed to the 'children of Zion'.<sup>91</sup>

For this reason Beck disagrees that Joel and Acts refer to the outpouring of the Spirit on all creation. He understands these to mean that 'the Spirit has been poured out on the church' alone. This does not mean that Beck wishes to undermine a theology of the Spirit in creation: 'Moltmann is right that the Spirit gives life to all creatures'. It is simply that, for Beck, the presence of the Spirit in creation is not this particular outpouring of the eschatological promise. Therefore, this presence is not eschatological.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, Beck presents three different instances of the 'level' of the Spirit's presence: the act of creation, the salvation of the human, and the consummation of creation. For him, the Spirit is in all things from the beginning of creation, but this is not an eschatological presence. In salvation we see the 'first installment' of the eschatological work of the Spirit which is 'universal to all believers, but is not universal to all human beings' (and by implication not to creation either). The final act of consummation is when the full indwelling of the Spirit is in all things, the culmination of the eschatological work of the Spirit.<sup>93</sup> For

<sup>90</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 152.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153 (cf. Robert B. Chisholm, 'Bāsār', in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Volume 1*, ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), pp. 777–79 (p. 778)).

<sup>92</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 153.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

Beck the outpouring of the Spirit speaks of the ‘first fruits of eschatological resurrection-life’, which he is happy to recognise in the Church. And so in the present day he judges only the Spirit’s work in the Church to be eschatological. In his opinion, to speak of the fruit of the Spirit’s eschatological work in wider humanity or all creation is an assumption which has ‘no evidence’.<sup>94</sup>

The position which Beck asserts is that the Spirit is present in creation in ways both eschatological and not. However, that eschatological presence lies only in the Church. It is for this reason that Beck can conclude that: ‘the Pauline idea of the indwelling of the Spirit is an eschatological idea, whereas Moltmann’s reasoning from the omnipresence of the Spirit in all of creation is not’.<sup>95</sup> Beck sees the historical omnipresence of the Spirit as non-eschatological, therefore Moltmann’s approach, for Beck, is non-eschatological.

However, elsewhere Beck sets out a view of the Spirit’s work which seems eschatological in its entirety:

An eschatological pneumatology is one in which every work of the Spirit is considered within its proper context. [. . .] [E]very work of the Spirit takes its place within the overall flow of pneumatic activity, which, in turn, is set within the grand narrative of eschatology.<sup>96</sup>

This statement is one which appears reasonable, and one with which Moltmann would concur. It also corresponds to Beck’s own support for inaugurated eschatology, that the eschatological future is present and active in history, not separated from the present as in a futurist eschatology.<sup>97</sup>

At this point there are further questions for Beck’s approach. Given the above view of a wider context to the Spirit’s work, and Beck’s preference for inaugurated eschatology, it does not seem coherent to claim that the Spirit’s present work in creation and those outside the Church is not eschatological. As there is only one Spirit, the Spirit which creation experiences as life-giving must surely be that same eschatological Spirit. Whatever work the Spirit is involved in, it is part of the sweep of salvation history which points to the eschatological redemption of creation. Beck might counter that the work of Spirit in the Church has a level of continuity with the eschaton which the Spirit’s work in the rest of creation does not, but such a claim, if it was made, would be difficult to substantiate.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 153, 241.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-22.



Beck, in effect, follows the pattern of inaugurated eschatology only in regards to the Spirit *and the Church*: in the present there already continuity with the future goal. In contrast, with regards to the Spirit *and creation* the pattern he follows is a futurist eschatology, which he earlier described and rejected as faulty because it means that ‘the kingdom is strictly a future and apocalyptic reality’.<sup>98</sup> From Beck’s descriptions it would seem that for him too the kingdom of the Spirit in relation to creation and humanity outside the Church is not yet a reality. It must wait for the future. This does not seem a particularly unified approach to the work of the Spirit. He does lean towards the integration of these views when, despite holding the view that salvation is the first instalment, he admits that: ‘It could be said that the Spirit’s presence that permeates all of creation is the first installment of the Spirit’s presence that will completely saturate all of creation.’<sup>99</sup> Even with that acknowledgement Beck still declines to see it as a first-fruit of the Spirit’s eschatological indwelling as he is content to do with the Spirit’s presence in believers.

Returning to consider the outpouring of the Spirit on ‘all flesh’ of Joel and Acts, there is a question whether Beck’s argument gives a firm basis for the passages to refer exclusively to the people of God. For him, as for Moltmann, all of creation is reliant on the work of the Spirit, and that work is all in the context of the Spirit’s eschatological work. To claim then that the Spirit’s work in one area or another is not eschatological is to contradict these other statements. If eschatology is best understood as inaugurated, present and not yet, it seems counterproductive to undermine this and deny the ‘present’ aspect in wider creation. In other words, it doesn’t make sense to deny the presence of the eschaton in creation, and affirm creation’s eschatological orientation. Equally, for Beck to say that there is no evidence for the eschatological work of the Spirit in creation or the community of humanity outside the Church is an overly sweeping claim that is extremely difficult to defend.<sup>100</sup>

It seems that Beck’s assertion that the instances of ‘all flesh’ in Genesis 9 and Joel 2 should not be linked because of their different eschatological character is not coherent with his claim that all the Spirit’s work ‘is set within the grand narrative of eschatology’.<sup>101</sup> If the promise of Joel 2, and its fulfilment in Acts 2, is particularly eschatological then there is little problem in its inclusion of the Spirit’s work in all creation. There is support here

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

from Peter Althouse, who states that ‘a canonical approach would suggest Moltmann’s reading is a valid interpretation of the work of the Spirit in creation’.<sup>102</sup> Althouse does not go any further to explain, but perhaps the work here offers a framework to support his defence.

In addition to this evaluation of Moltmann’s use of ‘all flesh’, this thesis moves now to look at the other theological reasons that he has to locate the Spirit’s presence throughout creation. The work below, and the above work on his early pneumatology, will demonstrate that his claim is not dependent on one discussion of biblical interpretation.

### 4.3 CONTINUOUS LOVE: THE SPIRIT

The focus now turns to Moltmann’s overall view of the Spirit’s ongoing involvement in creation. The Spirit is at work in a variety of ways, and Moltmann is not overly restrictive when it comes to the Spirit’s activity in creation. His approach here lends its own strength to the architecture which grows in his theology. The Spirit’s work begins with the Spirit’s presence in creation. Moltmann has a ‘holistic’ pneumatology which is partly in response to his fear that Christians have mostly restricted the work of the Spirit to the work of the Church. ‘The Holy Spirit is not tied to the church’, he states, and so he seeks to find the Spirit’s connections to all parts of life, a ‘*Universal Affirmation*’.<sup>103</sup>

#### The Spirit’s Presence

From this point this discussion shifts to Moltmann’s pneumatology as a whole and pays less attention to the development of different themes over time. This is largely because as Moltmann moves into the 1980s his pneumatology and theology of creation take a high profile position that they never lose, although they have continued to develop up to the present day. Much of this growth is seen in *God in Creation*, but by no means exclusively so. As one might expect, *The Spirit of Life* is an equally important text for this topic. Also, the material discussed above from his earlier work to link the Spirit and creation, which will not be repeated, underpins this work.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Althouse, ‘Review: Beck, T. D., The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things’, *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 30:2 (2008), 318–19 (p. 318).

<sup>103</sup> *SpL*, p. 230, the latter quote is from the subtitle of the book.

### The Spirit in *All* Creation

The first point of interest is Moltmann's statement that God's relationship with nature is intimate, not distant. He recognises that the Holy Spirit is widely understood in Christian tradition to be present in the beings and lives of people, but 'in considering the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we must not confine our attention to human persons and communities. We must also keep in mind the communities found in nature'.<sup>104</sup> In that same vein Moltmann includes the idea that a 'holistic' pneumatology also includes human *bodies*; it encompasses 'their total being'.<sup>105</sup> The Spirit is 'more than simply the finding of faith in the heart through the proclaimed word' and 'goes deeper than the conscious level in us'.<sup>106</sup> This is part of the 'rediscovery of the body' that comes with a renewed understanding of creation.<sup>107</sup>

Moltmann thinks it is important to recognise that the act of creation was more than 'a work and God's self-differentiation from that work. [...] God the Creator also puts his whole soul into each of those he has created', and by 'whole soul' (a comparison with an artist who puts their whole soul into a painting) he means the Holy Spirit.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, for Moltmann, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is universal: 'God's Spirit fills the world'.<sup>109</sup> That which he had previously spoken about in less direct ways he now brings to the fore of his discussion.

In the second of his systematic contributions he speaks boldly of the 'indwelling divine Spirit of creation'.<sup>110</sup> He speaks of 'perceiving God in all things'.<sup>111</sup> He considers the Spirit's presence and states that there is a need to embrace 'the wholeness of the community of creation, [...] human beings, the earth, and all other created beings and things'.<sup>112</sup> All of this results from Moltmann's search for recognition of 'the cosmic breadth of God's Spirit'. For him this is the starting point for many of the approaches that can be seen to connect the theological architecture to an ecological reformation. It is the sign of God's present love and activity in creation.<sup>113</sup>

Importantly, for Moltmann, there is still a fuller presence of God in

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>108</sup> *SW*, p. 169 (cf. *GiC*, p. 14).

<sup>109</sup> *GSS*, p. 22, citing *Wisdom* 1.7.

<sup>110</sup> *GiC*, p. xii (cf. pp. 99, 206).

<sup>111</sup> *SpL*, p. 35 (cf. 'Shekinah', p. 174; *GSS*, p. 102; *SW*, p. 169).

<sup>112</sup> *SpL*, p. 37 (cf. *GSS*, p. 22; *EiT*, pp. 146-47, 288, 326 (where Moltmann himself refers to: *The Source*, pp. 22-25)).

<sup>113</sup> *SpL*, p. 10.

creation to come at the eschaton. The current indwelling of the Spirit is universal but not complete in the way that it will be in the new creation.<sup>114</sup>

### A Developing Emphasis

Moltmann's more mature theology of the Holy Spirit's presence has evoked many responses. One of these is not so much a criticism as a claim that there is a significant contradiction between his later and earlier work. Chester contrasts a later quotation, 'experiences of the Holy Spirit . . . are of unfathomable depth, because in them God himself is present *in us*, [. . .] *a transcendent depth*', with an earlier quotation, 'God is not "beyond us" or "in us"'.<sup>115</sup> Ryan Neal makes a similar observation with different material:

Earlier he asserted: God is not 'in us or over us but always only before us, who encounters us in his promises for the future'. [. . .] As pneumatology became more important, however, Moltmann changed his mind: 'God acts *in* and *through* the activity of his creatures; God acts *with* and *out of* the activity of his creatures'.<sup>116</sup>

In Chester's earlier quotation, Moltmann's aim in that piece is to contrast eschatological theology with what he terms the failed projects of transcendence theology and immanence theology, which have claimed opposing conceptions of God's presence.<sup>117</sup> Moltmann's point is not to categorise the Divine primarily in spatial ways, either as an absolute-out-there or fully-in-humanity. Rather he speaks of the coming God who, while 'already present' as the divine future affects the present, is at the same time not fully present 'in the way of his unmediated and immediate eternal presence'.<sup>118</sup> Strict categories are not suitable for God's relationship with creation in the present. Rather, it has begun but is still yet to come. The wider context of the early quote made by Chester implies that Moltmann does not say that God is either spatially not in us or beyond us. Instead he asserts firstly that 'in us' and 'beyond us' are each an overly exclusive definition of the divine presence, and secondly that the question should primarily concern temporality, not space.

In the light of this, the passage which Neal quoted from *Theology of Hope* appears to describe the same issues. Therefore, to place these old quotes next to Moltmann's later discussion of the Spirit's immanence in creation is

<sup>114</sup> Chapter 6 of this work, p. 137, investigates Moltmann's eschatology.

<sup>115</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 25. Citing *SpL*, p. 155 (emphasis added by Chester) and 'Theology as Eschatology', in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. by Frederick Herzog (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 1–50 (p. 10), respectively.

<sup>116</sup> Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 180, citing *ToH*, p. 16 and *GiC*, p. 211, respectively.

<sup>117</sup> 'Theology as Eschatology', pp. 1–9.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–11.

possibly to confuse and mislead. Similar words are used, but the context and points made are very different. The contrast is not between two different understandings of God's immanence by Moltmann. Rather the contrast is between his earlier work where he acknowledges that God is present but gives less thought to the 'now' while concentrating more on the future, and his later work where he discusses at length the present presence of God. So while it may be disconcerting to read in Moltmann's early work that 'God is not the ground of this world', it is important to hold in mind that he seeks to combat exclusive positions during his attempts to cultivate a distinctly eschatological approach.<sup>119</sup> And as much as his words mean he might be misunderstood, there is not so much a contradiction with later work as a development of emphasis.

### **Further Criticisms of the Spirit's Universal Presence**

Further reactions are critical of this newly developed description of the Spirit's immanence.

#### *A Spatial God?*

Moltmann's earlier emphasis on the eschatological nature of God over spatial language for God weakened his language of the divine presence in creation. This makes the reaction to Moltmann's move to speak more of the immediate presence of God, albeit still not to the extent of its eschatological fullness, particularly interesting. Deane-Drummond wonders whether his emphasis on creation as God's home, and the divine indwelling of creation, leads him to 'think of God in *spatial* categories'.<sup>120</sup> Colin Gunton states that 'Moltmann's attribution of space and time to God is in danger of turning them [rather than God] into absolutes'.<sup>121</sup> So Roland Sokolowski observes that: 'Moltmann emphasises God's immanence only to stand accused of imprisoning God in time, space and history.'<sup>122</sup>

Douglas Farrow echoes this concern and responds to Moltmann's thoughts on the immanence of the Spirit in all creation with a request for balance: 'the Spirit is present to and for this world, whether creatively or redemptively,

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 123.

<sup>121</sup> Cited in Roland Sokolowski, 'A Theological Response to Ecological Crisis: Assessing the Ecotheology of Jürgen Moltmann' (unpublished master's thesis, Spurgeon's College, 2010), p. 36, square brackets added by Sokolowski.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 36, referring to Gunton's and Alan Torrance's comments in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*, ed. by Colin E. Gunton, 2nd edn (London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 10, 90, 92, 98-99.

as an absolutely *free* presence, a presence which is neither spatio-temporally obligated, [...] nor [...] alien to or inexpressible in space and time'.<sup>123</sup> The accusation was that Moltmann *denies* God's presence in the space of creation. It is now that he *imprisons* God in that space. A related reminder comes from John McIntyre, although not in any direct comment on Moltmann's work: 'As Jesus could be regarded in purely human terms, and his presence among humankind misunderstood, so could the presence of the Spirit be interpreted purely naturalistically.'<sup>124</sup>

Moltmann's retention of God's transcendence in panentheism, as discussed below, also contributes significantly to leading him away from a theology that spatially restricts the Trinity, or restricts the Spirit's presence, exclusively to the natural world.

### *Pantheism?*

The critiques above express a concern that Moltmann not tie God to creation's governing boundaries. Similarly, his work leads some to wonder whether he has brought God and creation so closely together as to lean towards pantheism. David McIlroy states that when Moltmann speaks of the Spirit's indwelling he 'draws such a close connection between creation and the new creation that he confuses the gift and the giver', although there is nothing in his reference that warrants such a conclusion.<sup>125</sup> Deane-Drummond notes that William Barr has 'accused Moltmann of inconsistency in his thinking' in that he holds a distinction between God and creation while he also says that this 'is embraced and comprehended by the greater truth. . . the truth that God is all in all'.<sup>126</sup>

While Moltmann has been accused of pantheism, he has defined his own view as panentheism. Deane-Drummond is aware of this and upholds his chosen position: 'lest we fall into the trap of pantheism we need to insist that "God does not manifest himself to an equal degree in everything."<sup>127</sup> She also highlights that '[a]s long as we find a distinction between the endlessness of space and the infinity of God there is no danger of pantheism'.<sup>128</sup> Moltmann achieves this in at least two ways. One is that God made creation apart from the divine self, and entered into it in order to dwell in it. Thus it was not

<sup>123</sup> Farrow, 'In The End', p. 439.

<sup>124</sup> John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), p. 203.

<sup>125</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 31, referring to *SpL*, p. 47.

<sup>126</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 103, citing *GiC*, p. 89.

<sup>127</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 120, citing *GiC*, p. 103.

<sup>128</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 105.

‘begotten’ and ‘therefore is not divine’.<sup>129</sup> The other is that Moltmann still retains a sense of transcendence that balances with God’s immanence.<sup>130</sup> So he qualifies his views: the Holy Spirit is present in the world ‘without being absorbed into it’.<sup>131</sup>

Richard Bauckham reveals an interesting development in Moltmann’s work which may be another potential reason behind the accusation of pantheism came about. It concerns uses of the word ‘pantheism’ by Moltmann in *Experiences of God*, pp. 77-79, which in a later publication is changed to, or supplemented by, the word ‘panentheism’.<sup>132</sup> It may be that the earlier book might indicate a more favourable attitude to pantheism than Moltmann would wish to convey. Whether the alterations are due to a change in his thought or a realisation of the most appropriate term is unclear. What seems probable is that in the earlier work he merely engaged in dialogue with ideas from pantheism, for he later says that there are ‘elements of truth’ in pantheism.<sup>133</sup> Subsequently, as time progressed, panentheism became a stronger theme in his work, and he also wished to distance himself from charges of pantheism. He therefore edited his material to reflect this development. This does not change the fact that from his earliest writings Moltmann has said that pantheism does not match what he thinks Christian theology should be.<sup>134</sup> As the next chapter looks at the reciprocal nature of God’s relationship with creation problems will arise around his use of panentheism as well, but that is best delayed until after a consideration of his thought relating to both the outward and inward directions of God’s relationship with creation.

## The Spirit’s Activity

An additional topic in Moltmann’s work alongside the Spirit’s *presence* in all creation is what exactly the Spirit *does* in creation. As his theology of the Spirit’s presence has developed it has become much more dynamic than it was in his earlier work, now showing many strands of activity. This explosion of ideas fits with his statement that ‘all divine activity is pneumatic in its effec-

<sup>129</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 133, citing *TKG*, p. 113.

<sup>130</sup> *GiC*, pp. 14-15, 98.

<sup>131</sup> *SW*, p. 53.

<sup>132</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, pp. 244-45, referring to *EoG*, pp. 77-79, and *SpL*, pp. 211-13. This occurs in both English and German editions (see *Freiheit und Gelassenheit: Meister Eckhart heute* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1980), pp. 143-45; *Der Geist des Lebens: eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1991), pp. 225-27).

<sup>133</sup> *GiC*, p. 98.

<sup>134</sup> *ToH*, pp. 137, 178; *CrG*, pp. 215, 243, 274, 287; *CPS*, p. 305.

acy'.<sup>135</sup> Since the constant theme of these activities is that God loves creation, and the divine indwelling is loving, the overarching concept contributed to the theological architecture here is the Spirit as 'the Source of Life'; the one who is at work in each living thing to give it the life necessary for existence.<sup>136</sup>

### The Spirit of Life

The Spirit as the 'Spirit of Life' fits well with Moltmann's ideas that emerge in the 1960s and 1970s, except now the Spirit is more expressly open to 'everything that exists' and is at work 'in nature, in plants, in animals, and in the ecosystems of the earth'.<sup>137</sup> It is the Spirit who 'makes [creation] live and renews it', it is the 'fountain of life' that 'animates' and 'holds [creatures] in life'.<sup>138</sup> The Spirit is the '*spiritus vivificans*'.<sup>139</sup> Again, this is not merely a gift of God from afar, rather creation 'lives from the continual inflow of [God's] creative Spirit'.<sup>140</sup> For human beings, life with the Trinity is more than a conscious experience of faith: the Spirit is at work in the 'unconscious' and the body as well.<sup>141</sup>

From Moltmann's work the impression emerges that the Spirit's life-giving work refers to activity at different layers of existence. Sometimes he says that the Spirit is that which allows the biological processes to happen: 'In that Spirit [all creatures] become alive and without that Spirit they return to dust', for the Spirit 'is the motive power [...] in everything', 'imparts to them their existence' and 'sustains the whole creation'.<sup>142</sup> At other times he speaks of a new kind of life given to creation beyond the basic biological existence: The Spirit 'quickens the body, giving it new life' and a 'new energy for living'.<sup>143</sup> This particular description of the Spirit's work refers to humanity, yet this is not meant to be exclusive, for Moltmann has stated that '[e]verything that is, exists and lives in the unceasing inflow of the energies and potentialities of the cosmic Spirit'.<sup>144</sup> These statements shows the continuity and equality

<sup>135</sup> *GiC*, p. 9 (cf. p. 96: 'In the life-giving operations of the Spirit and in his indwelling influence, the whole trinitarian efficacy of God finds full expression.').

<sup>136</sup> 'A Pentecostal', p. 4 (cf. *The Source*, p. 10, which has a slight translation difference).

<sup>137</sup> *GiC*, p. 10; *SpL*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>138</sup> *GiC*, pp. 10, 11, 14 (cf. pp. 96-98, 270; *WJC*, p. 41).

<sup>139</sup> *SpL*, p. 178.

<sup>140</sup> *GiC*, p. 163 (cf. 'The Scope', pp. 100, 102). Other places in *God in Creation* that speak of the creative Spirit in the present include pp. 55, 65-67, 85, 96-99, 100, 207, 212, 258. Each speaks of creativity and the Spirit in creation apart from consummation, albeit with a focus on them leading to the eschatological future.

<sup>141</sup> *SpL*, p. 3.

<sup>142</sup> 'The Scope', pp. 100-06 (cf. *SpL*, p. 274; *The Source*, p. 117).

<sup>143</sup> *SpL*, p. 3, referring to 1 Cor. 6.19-20. (cf. *GiC*, p. 262; *The Source*, p. 117).

<sup>144</sup> *GiC*, p. 9 (cf. p. xii).



which he wishes to portray between the activity of the Spirit in nature and humanity, although he does not homogenise it.

Moltmann also maintains, in the light of the negative elements of existence, that life is not only a gift but something that needs protection and so he describes God as ‘preserving’ the life of creation from that which causes destruction.<sup>145</sup> This might be the activity of destructive elements within creation, so Moltmann comments that the Spirit is at work in everything which ‘ministers to life and resists its destruction’.<sup>146</sup> For a time in his writing, ‘preserving’, or preservation, was explicitly ‘against the annihilating Nothingness’.<sup>147</sup> But even as that aspect of his theology has changed, he has maintained that creation ‘can exist and live only through the presence of the divine Spirit’.<sup>148</sup>

Moltmann’s view of God’s love for creation leads him to assume that the Spirit is in ‘*everything*’ which is about life and not destruction.<sup>149</sup> This has had the effect that Moltmann both determines where the Spirit is at work according to whether it corresponds to his theology of God’s cosmic love, and then also declares these works to be ‘the revelation of God’s indestructible affirmation of life and his marvellous zest for life’.<sup>150</sup> The diligent reader could accuse Moltmann of creating a circular argument: ‘I know life-giving is the Spirit’s work because it shows God’s love, and I know what God’s love is because I see it here in the Spirit’s life-giving work.’ Where exactly does Moltmann start from in order to discern the loving nature of the Trinity’s actions? Do we know what God’s love is because we first see God’s actions, or do we declare certain happenings to be God’s actions because they apparently match a love we believe is there? The answer to this seems to lie earlier in this thesis: the fact that creation exists is evidence of the divine love and shows that this love brings things to life. Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that Moltmann’s proposal is this: ‘I know life-giving is the Spirit’s work because it shows God’s creative love, and the Spirit’s life-giving work *continues to affirm what God’s love is as I observe its effects.*’

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<sup>145</sup> *CoG*, p. 200; *GiC*, p. 262. Moltmann’s use of the word ‘preservation’ could be mistakenly interpreted to indicate a static view of creation, eschatologically speaking. Rather it means means that the ever eschatologically orientated process of creation is preserved from stagnation. There is still change to come: ‘God’s preservation of creation is in itself already a preparation for their perfecting.’ (‘The Scope’, p. 103.)

<sup>146</sup> *SpL*, p. xi.

<sup>147</sup> *GiC*, p. 96 (cf. pp. 10, 209; ‘The Fellowship’, p. 298).

<sup>148</sup> ‘The Scope’, p. 102. For this change in Moltmann’s theology around *zimsum*, see Chapter 3 of this work, p. 42.

<sup>149</sup> *SpL*, p. xi.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Pentecost and the Theology of Life’, *Concilium*, 3 (1996), 123–34 (p. 129). See also ‘A Pentecostal’, p. 10; *The Source*, p. 19.

The exploration of this overall title, 'Spirit of Life', will consider three elements in Moltmann's work of the Spirit's work to give life in the past and present: the Spirit as mover of evolution, as Creator of fellowship, and as enabler of co-creativity.<sup>151</sup> For him, these are all aspects of the love of God and are hence all connected to life-giving and life-supporting. For this reason the Spirit is, for him, the Spirit of life. In his work, all of the Spirit's work is eschatological in nature and is open to the future, but discussion of that aspect to the Spirit's work will follow in Chapter 6.

Before this discussion continues, Beck raises an interesting point. On the one hand, the Spirit as the force of life in the world has brought many positive contributions to a theology that seeks to address the concerns of creation. On the other hand, Beck wonders whether Moltmann has allowed the notion of 'life' to dominate his discussion of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of other metaphors for the Spirit which he surveys.<sup>152</sup> Moltmann himself is critical of any approach that would let one theme dominate over others.<sup>153</sup> He has, however, in all likelihood not gone so far as to let the theme of 'life' become unaffected by other characteristics or metaphors of the Spirit. Rather, for him, it best captures the overall picture of the Spirit's work. However, Beck's point is important because there must be a continual awareness of the way in which a narrow frame of reference might stifle further thought, and that a variety of starting points for the discussion of the Spirit's activity might bear different fruit.

### **The Mover of Evolution**

The Spirit's activity in the life of any particular living creature is not separate from the history of life as a whole, or the development of life from the origins of the universe.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, intrinsically related to the Spirit as giver of existence is the Spirit as the organiser, or shepherd, of life. For Moltmann this takes shape thus:

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<sup>151</sup> At one point, Moltmann himself divides the work of the Spirit in creation into four parts (*GiC*, p. 100). Slightly different categories are used here to take into account the wider scope of his treatment of this topic outside of *God in Creation*.

<sup>152</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 196 (cf. p. 99).

<sup>153</sup> *SpL*, pp. 272-73.

<sup>154</sup> Cho Hyun-Chul makes some helpful observations: 'The interconnectedness of all creatures is not static but dynamic. [...] Assuming that the Spirit empowers, vivifies, and renews all creation, one may have a good reason to construe the changes that evolution effects in the world as the consequence of the activities or movements of the Spirit in creation.' (Cho Hyun-Chul SJ, *An Ecological Vision of the World: Toward a Christian Ecological Theology for Our Age* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 2004), pp. 79-80.)

The Spirit is the principle of creativity on all levels of matter and life. He creates new possibilities, and in these anticipates the new designs and 'blueprints' for material and living organisms. In this sense the Spirit is the principle of evolution.<sup>155</sup>

Moltmann's view of God's relation to evolution, and the latter's role in creation, is varied throughout his work, as the explorations of this project show. Here the focus remains on the Spirit's role in evolution while below it moves to look at Christ's role.

When Moltmann describes the Spirit's involvement in evolution he refers to the process in a positive manner, or, perhaps more precisely, to the positive parts of the process. For him evolution is the Spirit's movement of creation towards 'self-transcendence'.<sup>156</sup> It was God who gave creation this movement and 'accompanies' and 'entices' through the Spirit.<sup>157</sup> It is the Spirit who 'creates interactions', 'harmony' and 'co-operation', and the Spirit who creates openness and gives the potential into which creation can evolve.<sup>158</sup> The Spirit leads creation towards its future.<sup>159</sup>

Evolution has essentially good aspects here as it states that each individual part of creation strives for life and explores the openness and freedom given to it by God as it searches out the best way to be. This is not, however, to place the individual's importance above that of the community. For Moltmann, evolution seeks to create 'differentiated community' that brings liberation to each involved.<sup>160</sup> His view is that, in this task, the Spirit's accompaniment of creation is so close that: 'We have to see the concept of evolution as a basic concept of the self-movement of the divine Spirit of creation'.<sup>161</sup>

In addition, evolution is not without its limitations.<sup>162</sup> Moltmann demonstrates this when he addresses its lack of redemptive qualities. Also in the present and past it is plain to see that evolution is concurrent with the death of countless creatures. Thus he also speaks of the Spirit's need to work against part of evolution, the part that cannot give the fullness of life: "Then the "life-giving" Spirit will wake the dead to eternal life and drive the violence of death out of the whole creation".<sup>163</sup> Christopher Southgate calls this 'the real

<sup>155</sup> *GiC*, p. 100.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206 (cf. pp. 16, 100).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 205-06.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>160</sup> *SpL*, p. 228.

<sup>161</sup> *GiC*, p. 19.

<sup>162</sup> Moltmann 'does allow for negative possibilities in evolution' (Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 216).

<sup>163</sup> *SpL*, p. 74.

ambiguity of an evolutionary creation'.<sup>164</sup>

Despite its ambiguities, the link between God and evolution constructively informs a theology of the Trinity's involvement in creation. If this process is one in which God is involved then this shows part of the divine character. It reinforces the view that God values freedom and has gifted creation with freedom. As Arthur Peacocke says in his poetic description of creation, God said: 'Let Other be. And let it have the capacity to become what it might be, making it make itself. And let it explore its potentialities.'<sup>165</sup> Unless we claim that God has controlled all of history precisely, we must say that the various events and happenings in creation have influenced the processes of nature. For this reason, it would seem that not everything in the journey of evolution is guaranteed. This suggests that God is willing to take risks with creation. John Taylor considers this to be inspirational: 'I am amazed afresh at the unbelievable daring of the Creator Spirit who seems to gamble all the past gains on a new initiative, inciting his creatures to such crazy adventure and risk.'<sup>166</sup> The idea of gambling past gains is not one which Moltmann would necessarily consider to be applicable, but the presence of risk, with its adventure and mystery, seems quite evident in a notion of evolutionary creation. Alongside these two dynamics of freedom and risk there is a third, that God's love is driving force of evolution. As the Spirit draws creatures to find greater intelligence, adaptivity, community and liberty, so we can see that the love of God brings richness to the whole network of creation's life.

Each of the three proposals above are accompanied by problems. Firstly, how can all of creation have freedom, or how does creation utilise this freedom?<sup>167</sup> The description of creation's freedom as freedom from God's absolute control is a good starting point, but does this entail freedom to develop by pure chance (as the balloon set free to the wind) or are we to assume that creation has the freedom to control its own future? Both these extremes seem to fall short of a more nuanced view of creation's freedom that includes God's persuasive and enabling work, the presence of choice in nature, and the ability of biological entities to react to events. As Peacocke says, there can 'be overall direction and implementation of divine purpose

<sup>164</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning*, p. 60.

<sup>165</sup> Arthur Peacocke, 'Biology and Theology of Evolution', *Zygon*, 34:4 (1999), 695–712 (p. 696).

<sup>166</sup> John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), p. 33.

<sup>167</sup> For example: 'can nature reject evolution sinfully?' (Kjetil Hafstad quoted in Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 215.) or: 'The problem becomes more acute when Moltmann extends the idea of closedness to non-human creation.' (Ibid., p. 215.)

through the interplay of chance and law without a deterministic plan fixing all the details'.<sup>168</sup> It is plain that creatures have the ability to balance various considerations in their activity, each according to their own ability. If it is argued that God relates to creatures by the Holy Spirit, in a way appropriate to each one, it could be argued also that there is at least a *possibility* that God's input could be one of the considerations of the creature. John Polkinghorne affirms Moltmann's thought around the Spirit and evolution, coupled with the mystery of the biological processes:

Nothing reliably known to science forbids a belief that the hidden work of the Spirit, acting within the cloudy unpredictabilities of the world, has been part of the unfolding fruitfulness of evolutionary contingency. [. . .] If the Creator works through an evolutionary process whose character is the fruitful interplay of contingency and lawful regularity, then one must surely expect God to be active within the processes of history and not solely confined to the role of the sustainer of cosmic order.<sup>169</sup>

Secondly, if there is risk then what security is there that the whole project of creation will ultimately have a good end? And if the present state of affairs is not guaranteed, does that suggest that the life of creation (particularly humanity) is an accident of history? In reply, the security, as always in Moltmann's work, is located in eschatology and the redemptive plans of God.<sup>170</sup> That is the guarantee of history's ultimate good end. Admittedly, his view of creation's freedom does suggest that creation at any particular point may not be exactly as God would have envisaged. This, however, does not mean that creation cannot bear the marks of the Creator's goodness and purposes. These marks remain alongside creation's freedom. This means that Moltmann would reject a view that gives creation's history over to pure chance. He does not consider history to be accidental. God's involvement is guaranteed to bring redemption to problems and mistakes.

Thirdly, if love is central then it is problematic to associate God's activity in the Spirit with evolution's dubious record. The results of evolution do not always exhibit a high presence of love as their guiding principle: human intelligence and adaptation has brought great harm; community within creation is fragmentary at best; liberty is fully present nowhere. Therefore, how does love fit in with the tragedies and pain of an evolutionary creation? While

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<sup>168</sup> Peacocke, 'Biology', p. 705.

<sup>169</sup> John Polkinghorne, 'Jürgen Moltmann's Engagement with the Natural Sciences', in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. by Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), pp. 61–70 (p. 68).

<sup>170</sup> See Chapter 6 of this work, 'Hope for *All* Creation', p. 139.

Graham Buxton sympathises with what we might call a positive theology of evolution, he still thinks it important to answer the question: ‘[I]f God is involved in shaping the direction of evolutionary processes, how do we account for the “ubiquity of pain, suffering and death” in creation?’<sup>171</sup> In a similar vein Cho Hyun-Chul points out that if, as Moltmann has said, we consider evolution to have produced countless victims, that is those who have died along the way (effectively every living thing), God appears to drive a process that produces these victims.<sup>172</sup> Beck takes these concerns and concludes that development of killing skills which evolutionary adaptation brings is not ‘a foreshadowing of the new creation’, and as such the overall process is best separated from God’s activity in creation.<sup>173</sup>

It seems that Beck’s reticence to join God and natural evolution together comes from certain outcomes of evolution that taint the overall picture. However, Moltmann’s emphasis on creation’s freedom allows for abilities and behaviour in creation that do not mirror divine love to sit alongside God’s loving involvement. Therefore, instead of a view of ‘evolution’ as a process inaugurated by God, and which involves good and bad effects, in Moltmann’s thought it is better understood as the word which describes the changes over time that occur as God’s loving activity and creation’s risky freedom interact. In other words, evolution is not a process which we must either accept as wholly God’s work, or reject as separate from that activity. It is rather the product of God’s relationship with creation through time as that relationship contains the dynamics of freedom, risk and love.

Pain and suffering in a process in which God is involved can be accounted for because creation, in its freedom, does not follow the perfect path. So when Moltmann refers to the victims of evolution these are not victims of a relentless and inefficient drive to perfection by God. They are rather victims because problems that stem from creation’s freedom thwarted God’s loving purposes in their lives, for the moment at least.<sup>174</sup> So while the results of evolution may not always seem to bear God’s mark, for Moltmann: ‘If the world were completely and wholly godless and forsaken by the Spirit, it would

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<sup>171</sup> Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, Creation and Pastoral Ministry: Imaging the Perichoretic God* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. 229, quotation from Arthur Peacocke.

<sup>172</sup> Hyun-Chul SJ, *An Ecological Vision*, pp. 149-50, referring to *WJC*, p. 287. Hyun-Chul’s primary concern here is Christ’s place in evolution and redemption, but the principle applies equally well to the Spirit’s activity in creation. See also *JCTW*, pp. 101-06.

<sup>173</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 112.

<sup>174</sup> This approach to evolution may have similarities to that of T. F. Torrance, in that evolution is not free from evil. See Southgate, *The Groaning*, p. 32.

have become nothing (Ps. 104.29); it would have ceased to exist.’<sup>175</sup> This suggests that evolution could not happen at all without the Spirit.

### **The Spirit of Death?**

The subject of the Spirit’s activity in the process of evolution highlights a topic that runs parallel to ‘life’: death. It seems that many of the objections to evolution are not concerned with the fact that a particular creature that lived a hundred thousand years ago was not the same as its descendant that lives today. In that sense, evolution is not the problem. It just describes the relative difference between living creatures over the span of world history. Rather the problem is that, in the struggle of all things to live and grow, the first creature died, and in all likelihood the second creature will share the same fate. Death is a problem to those who care about life, and appears to be the opposite to the aim of the ‘Spirit of Life’.

The problem develops in looking at the world and discovering that, as far as human understanding allows us to go, there is no way to conceive of life without the accompaniment of death. All life in creation is reliant on death: ‘It survives because some other part of creation has relinquished its life.’<sup>176</sup> The life that a fungus gains comes from the decomposition of matter. The life that a carnivore gains is through the death of another animal. Southgate describes death as a ‘thermodynamic necessity’, and ‘the prerequisite of “regeneration” [and] “biological creativity”’.<sup>177</sup> Arthur Peacocke states that: ‘New patterns can come into existence [. . .] only if old patterns dissolve to make a place for them.’<sup>178</sup> Therefore ‘death is the price paid to have trees and clams and birds and grasshoppers, and death is the price paid to have [the biological emergence of] human consciousness’.<sup>179</sup>

The ramifications of this conclusion for a theology of life are decidedly complicated. Beck outlines Moltmann’s predicament well:

As giver and sustainer of life, the Holy Spirit supports life and is opposed to death in all its forms. [. . .] If the Holy Spirit is immanent in creation as Moltmann says and is the principle of life for all creatures, does this not also commit the Spirit to acting as the Spirit of death, at least in this present age? [. . .] [C]learly all life cannot simply go on multiplying, for the planet would not support it. Because death is necessary for ecological

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<sup>175</sup> *GiC*, p. 102.

<sup>176</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, *A Worldly Spirituality*, cited in Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 238.

<sup>177</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning*, p. 8.

<sup>178</sup> Peacocke, ‘Biology’, p. 705.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature*, cited in Edwards, *Breath*, p. 138.

balance and the survival of all living things, we must embrace the Spirit's role in killing and in death, inasmuch as it is necessary for creatures to kill in order to live.<sup>180</sup>

One pertinent example would be the popular understanding that humans are meant to eat animals. Within this widely held view, it would be difficult to claim that the Spirit does not support the moment of slaughter when the general consumption of meat is acceptable. Beck does not see an answer to this problem in Moltmann's writings, but speculates that 'his answer would probably be that the Spirit works to perpetuate life, but he is forced to do so in the present age in ways that he finds most wretched'.<sup>181</sup> This solution upholds Moltmann's insistence on the freedom of creation. Yet the idea that something forces the Spirit to 'act most wretchedly' does not fit with his theology.

There is not an immediate answer to this difficulty. There are those, such as Southgate, who question whether death is the absolute enemy or whether in fact it might be a good and proper part of creation: 'It seems to me that death need not be considered a problem, if it follows a fulfilled life.'<sup>182</sup> And there are those who question whether Moltmann is right to give all death the same significance: humans, animals, plants and vegetables. Are their deaths of the same consequence?<sup>183</sup> For Steven Bouma-Prediger, sin, and not death, is the problem in creation to be solved.<sup>184</sup> Yet death is clearly an unwelcome element in creation for Christian theology.

Death remains both the problem and the answer for life. The question this leaves for the theological architecture is: can the Spirit bring any life without death? This would seem to be an important question, because it shapes how this architecture interacts with the ethical response which those of the Christian faith may have to death. For Denis Edwards, there is 'no theoretical answer' to the presence of unwelcome death in creation. We can only accept it as part of the world. For him, the focus must be on the response to it.<sup>185</sup> The stance that is taken on the role the Spirit plays in the cycle of life and death will contribute to how a person decides that response.

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<sup>180</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 215.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>182</sup> Southgate, *The Groaning*, p. 8 (cf. Hyun-Chul SJ, *An Ecological Vision*, pp. 149-50).

<sup>183</sup> Richard Bauckham, 'Moltmann's Messianic Christology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 44:4 (1991), 519-31, pp. 529-30 (cf. Chester, *Mission*, p. 17).

<sup>184</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, pp. 237-40.

<sup>185</sup> For him, this response leads 'to the idea of the Spirit as the faithful companion who accompanies each creature in love' (Edwards, *Breath*, pp. 106-07). That idea in turn leads to the suffering of the Spirit with creation, which will be part of the discussion of the next chapter.



What the above arguments suggest is that the Spirit actively brings life to creation. As things are, death is also necessary for this life to occur. This at least indicates that God is willing to let death be part of the processes of life. While this is not to give death any kind of positive designation, it is a tentative acceptance of death's presence. This acceptance may be useful in ethical considerations as it suggests to humanity that death might be part of the processes by which people look after the planet.

### **The Creator of Fellowship**

Another major part of the Spirit's activity throughout the world is the creation of fellowship. What earlier in Moltmann's theology was a focus on the Church now is spread throughout the whole of creation. To reach such an expanded definition of fellowship could involve the loss of the importance of the specific inter-human relationships seen in the Church and society. However, he does not lose his focus on the fellowship within humanity.<sup>186</sup>

This progression to an inclusion of the whole of creation in the fellowship of the Spirit is very much connected to life-giving, for life is fellowship in Moltmann's thought: absence of relationships equals death.<sup>187</sup> 'For nothing exists, lives and moves *of itself*. Everything exists, lives and moves *in others*, in one another, with one another, for one another'.<sup>188</sup> Hence the Spirit brings 'life-enhancing fellowship' and the 'experience of life' as it brings fellowship.<sup>189</sup> So for Moltmann 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' is synonymous with 'the life-giving Spirit', and the 'wholeness of creation' is the 'community of creation'.<sup>190</sup>

Given the above, the expectation is that the operations of the Spirit to create fellowship involve the whole breadth of creation, just as in Moltmann's work on the Spirit's life-giving activity. This is indeed the view which he holds. A universal fellowship includes all that is alive, as is clear from the language he uses to describe it: the Spirit 'forms the community of creation' and sustains it.<sup>191</sup>

Moltmann's use of the word 'community' in reference to the interactions between plants and people may be open to critique: 'it would seem incredible to affirm, for example, that all relationships between humans and plants should exhibit "reciprocity" and "mutual indwelling"'.<sup>192</sup> However, McIntyre's

<sup>186</sup> *CPS*, pp. 226, 306, 316; *PP*, pp. 128-30; *SpL*, p. 4; 'Pentecost', p. 132; *The Source*, p. 24.

<sup>187</sup> *SpL*, p. 219.

<sup>188</sup> *GiC*, p. 11 (cf. p. 263; *CPS*, p. 133; *SpL*, p. 219).

<sup>189</sup> *SpL*, p. 219; *GSS*, p. 22.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219; 'The Scope', p. 101.

<sup>191</sup> 'The Scope', pp. 100-01 (cf. *SpL*, pp. 10, 57; 'Pentecost', p. 132; *The Source*, p. 24).

<sup>192</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 261 (cf. *TKG*, pp. 94-95; *GiC*, pp. 188, 203-06).

thoughts about a similar discussion in John Taylor's *The Go-Between God* about the language of community between organisms and particles are helpful for defending this approach: 'This language would all sound unacceptably anthropomorphic, were it not independently used by a whole series of scientists, such as C. H. Waddington, Charles Birch, Sewell Wright, Alister Hardy and Heisenberg, among several others.'<sup>193</sup> Moltmann also makes his own claim for its justification:

Creation itself lives in the complexity of ever-richer communal relationships. That is why it is appropriate to talk about *the community of creation*, and to recognise the operation of the life-giving Spirit of God in the trend to relationship in created things.<sup>194</sup>

Moltmann argues that this growth towards community is evident even in elementary particles that join to make molecules. In this sense, life-giving is not a separate task from fellowship-making, but is a result of it. He also argues that the whole person 'can only exist in exchange with other living beings in nature and in human society'.<sup>195</sup> Edwards expresses the work of the Spirit in this area particularly well:

The Spirit is not simply an impersonal *power* but a *personal presence* interior to each creature, creating communion with all in ways that are appropriate for each of them. It is the presence of the Spirit that enables creatures to interact in their own creaturely patterns of relationship, at the level of particles, cells, organisms, evolutionary symbiosis, populations, ecological interactions, the planetary community, the solar system, the Milky Way galaxy and the universe.<sup>196</sup>

Similar to this view, Moltmann explicitly states that this Spirit-created 'community' is one into which the Spirit also draws humanity.<sup>197</sup> In *The Spirit of Life* he often writes that Christians' connectedness to the Spirit draws them into this wider fellowship: 'To experience the fellowship of the Spirit inevitably carries Christianity beyond itself into the greater fellowship of all

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<sup>193</sup> McIntyre, *The Shape*, p. 201, concerning: 'the Spirit is present as the Go-Between who confronts each isolated spontaneous particle with the beckoning reality of the larger whole and so compels it to relate to others in a particular way; and that it is he who at every stage lures the inert organisms forward by giving an inner awareness and recognition of the unattained' (Taylor, *The Go-Between*, p. 31).

<sup>194</sup> *SpL*, p. 225, in this his scope is universal, from the relationship of atoms to molecules all the way through cells, organisms, communities.

<sup>195</sup> *GiC*, p. 263.

<sup>196</sup> Edwards, *Breath*, p. 119.

<sup>197</sup> *SpL*, p. 229. Moltmann does not explicitly call this 'Spirit' the Holy Spirit in this section. However, he does refer to this Spirit moulding 'all material structures and all systems of life'. This matches his view of the Holy Spirit (cf. *GiC*, p. 263).

God's creatures.'<sup>198</sup> However, this is rather an increased *awareness* of the fellowship of the Spirit, as opposed to a claim that Christians have access to a community which others do not. This is because Moltmann speaks of the Spirit that 'has gathered everything living into a great community of life, and sustains it there'.<sup>199</sup> The community is already there, even if it is open for partial rejection.<sup>200</sup> This interpretation, of the community between nature and non-believers, fits with his universal language elsewhere and his view that all humanity is connected to the whole of creation.<sup>201</sup>

This relatedness between all things is not simply a functional interaction however. Moltmann also labours the point that this fellowship leads to solidarity between nature and humanity.<sup>202</sup> This seems to be a logical progression from his view of the presence of the Spirit as 'unconditioned and unconditional love' who brings 'full and unreserved love for the living'.<sup>203</sup> As the Spirit binds things together it leads them 'beyond themselves' and sends humanity to engage with 'the needs and distress of the world'.<sup>204</sup> The love and fellowship of the Spirit connects humans to nature to the extent that 'ecological crises in the world are crises in their own life too'.<sup>205</sup> The community which God creates is a community which reflects the character of the Trinity itself.

Finally, Moltmann does not just see this community as comprising nature and humanity alone, with God excluded. Such a view could be pictured as a mixture that is stirred from above by God, with a so-called 'Spoon of the Spirit'. Rather it is as much a community *with* God as a community created *by* God: 'The trinitarian fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the full community of the Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer with all created being[s], in the network of all their relationships.'<sup>206</sup> The Spirit 'creates the community of all created things with God and with each other', and as to the exact appearance of this community between the Divine and creation, Moltmann writes that 'all created things communicate with one another and with God,

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<sup>198</sup> *SpL*, p. 10 (cf. pp. 221, 259).

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>200</sup> 'The whole misery of men and women comes from a love for God that has miscarried.' (*Ibid.*, p. 50.)

<sup>201</sup> *GiC*, p. 18, and see above.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 270; *SpL*, p. 97.

<sup>204</sup> *GiC*, p. 103 (cf. pp. 263-64); *SpL*, p. 235, which mentions ecological annihilation amongst other threats.

<sup>205</sup> *SpL*, p. 248.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221 (cf. *CoG*, p. 278).

each in its own way'.<sup>207</sup> In response to this, Bouma-Prediger asks a searching question: 'Does the analogy between the relationships *ad intra* and the relationships *ad extra* imply that it is inappropriate to speak of *any* hierarchy or subordination between God and the world or with respect to different creatures in the world?'<sup>208</sup> This, at least in regards to God and the world, is probably already answered by Moltmann's insistence that God's freedom in creation is not the freedom of power but the freedom of love. There is therefore no subordination in God's relationship with creation.<sup>209</sup> With regards to the appropriateness of such language in the relationships within creation Deane-Drummond also brings her concerns: '[Moltmann] seems to ignore the fact that the structure of such relationships [in creation] is more akin to hierarchies through pyramidal structures than the egalitarian position which he is anxious to promote.'<sup>210</sup> She questions whether Moltmann has overly romanticised the interrelationships of creation and not paid due heed to the domination present in creation. He may be guilty of this, but it remains that he is also correct to highlight the interdependency of humans and the rest of creation. There is a fellowship that should not be ignored.

### **The Enabler of Co-Creativity**

The third intrinsic part of the Spirit's life-giving work is the mission to enable creation to take up the responsibility of co-creativity with the Trinity. For Moltmann, God is closely present and active in creation, but that is not to say that God wishes to do all the work alone: 'God acts *in* and *through* the activity of his creatures; God acts *with* and *out of* the activity of his creatures; created beings act *out of* the divine potencies'.<sup>211</sup> Therefore part of the Spirit's work is to enable and empower humanity and all creation to be co-creators. While this leads to creation's participation in God's work, this discussion for our present exploration stays within the remit of *the work of the Spirit* in creation that enables the reciprocal relationship. The precise nature of *creation's actions* of participation in the relationship is a subject for later chapters.<sup>212</sup> 'Co-creativity' refers to continuous creation and does not include original creation for obvious reasons: by definition creation's activity is part of the

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<sup>207</sup> *GiC*, p. 11.

<sup>208</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 261.

<sup>209</sup> See Chapter 3 of this work, 'God's Free Creativity', p. 29.

<sup>210</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 219.

<sup>211</sup> *GiC*, p. 211.

<sup>212</sup> Chapters 7 and 8 of this work, pp. 185 and 215 respectively, will address that material.

creation's continual life and, therefore, continuous creation.<sup>213</sup> This theme is of course by no means Moltmann's invention and many others explore it, but he does as ever bring his own engaging contribution to the discussion.

As discussed above, for Moltmann, the Spirit works in creation to bring and sustain life, and life exists and flourishes in the context of relationships and fellowship. This paints a picture in which God does not simply construct a functional, rigid and completed life-system, that cannot change. To do that would be only to create life that existed but did not flourish, for 'life' in its fullest sense is about relationships. Therefore the gift of life is the ability to seek, discern, build and reject these relationships, not merely to exist in a complex structure of connectivity. This is not a denial that God provides the underlying mechanisms for life to exist. Rather it is an affirmation that creation is not a steel-framed construction site that is welded and fixed in place but is more like a nurtured garden that is encouraged to grow. To continue the metaphor, this garden becomes more beautiful because the plants themselves grow, not only because the gardener put them in place. The life of each creature contributes to the life of the whole. This does not necessarily have to be a conscious effort to join in God's work, as might be the case in the believer, but nevertheless if God wishes there to be forests then the forest itself must grow, as well as every part of the eco-system that contributes to its life.

This participative relationship is explicitly given to nature as well as humanity in Moltmann's thought. As God is at work in all creation '[t]he church participates in the glorifying of God in creation's liberation'.<sup>214</sup> The Church cannot acknowledge the Spirit and ignore nature, he says, because the Spirit expresses the tension of a not-yet finished creation and brings an awareness of the whole of creation's predicament.<sup>215</sup> So the Spirit leads 'the church beyond itself, out into the suffering of the world [. . .] through newly awakened faith and fresh hope'.<sup>216</sup> Hope, for Moltmann, is an important part of the Spirit's work to enable. Timothy Harvie describes it as 'living within the pneumatologically empowered *Zwischenraum*', the 'in-between space' of what is to come set against the realities of the present.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Given the eschatological orientation of God's work in creation this must have implications for creation's part in the new creation. The discussion returns to this in Chapter 6 of this work, p. 137.

<sup>214</sup> *CPS*, p. 65.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 273.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>217</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 142. This is discussed further in Chapter 7 of this work, p. 193.

While this co-creativity extends to all of creation, the particular work of the Spirit to enable humanity to join in God's overall activity is still pertinent, as it contributes to the picture of human care of the environment. Moltmann looks to the Spirit to give humanity the power to live in accordance with this growth that God has planned.<sup>218</sup> As in other cases, this idea is often located within his discussion of the Church's activity. Yet, as above, this is not to say that he deems people who do not acknowledge the Holy Spirit of Christianity to have no part in God's creativity. Moltmann clearly feels that the Spirit is at work in all people, but ideally the Church *should* be more greatly aware of the Spirit's work and so be at the forefront of the activity which the Spirit enables. For '[t]he Spirit calls them into life; [. . .] gives the community the authority for its mission; [. . .] unites, orders and preserves it'.<sup>219</sup>

Some, such as Randall Bush, have claimed that while Moltmann speaks of co-creativity his work actually describes a relationship in which God is the 'sole actor'.<sup>220</sup> Paul Fiddes believes that Moltmann makes all of creation's successful contributions to God's eschatologically orientated work exclusively a result of the Spirit's transformational work. This means that creation makes no real contribution of itself and God is only satisfied or 'pleased by his own work of transfiguration'.<sup>221</sup> Harvie does not express the same criticism, but he does at one point describe the relationship between the works of the Spirit and humanity in a way that lends credence to Bush's and Fiddes's charge: he says that 'the overcoming of violence and conflicts must be seen, within the framework of Moltmann's thought, as a work of the Spirit first and foremost, and therefore only derivatively enacted through human praxis'.<sup>222</sup> However, Moltmann's discussion of creation's freedom describes a God who is satisfied by a mutually cooperative relationship where the Spirit's transformative work meets the free participation of creation. In fact, his emphasis on God's desire to create an 'Other' who can respond to God's love, and the participation offered to creation, presents a stronger case: God would be particularly *dissatisfied* if

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<sup>218</sup> *The Source*, p. 145.

<sup>219</sup> *CPS*, p. 294 (cf. pp. 279, 343).

<sup>220</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 295, referring to Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 84-85, 137; Rubem Alves, *Theology of Human Hope*, p. 66; Hill, *Three-Personed God*, p. 173; O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality*, pp. 152-53; Brian J. Walsh, 'Theology of Hope and the Doctrine of Creation: An Appraisal of Jürgen Moltmann', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 59:1 (1987), 53-76; Dillstone, *Modern Churchman*, 18:5 (1974/5), p. 150.

<sup>221</sup> Fiddes, *The Creative*, p. 85, referring to *TKG*, pp. 103-05, 116-18. Fiddes also points towards the problematic nature of Moltmann's particular theory of *creatio ex nihilo* for creation's true cooperation with God's work (p. 137). This is perhaps a less important criticism to consider given this thesis's work on that theme in Moltmann's writings.

<sup>222</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 142.

creation were to be excluded from the divine creative work. So while Harvie may be able to categorise humanity's activity as a secondary contribution, the weight of Moltmann's thought suggests that, for him, humanity nevertheless plays an instrumental and yet free part of a communal project.

### Further Criticisms of the Spirit's Universal Activity

#### *The Spirit's Work in all People and Places*

Moltmann's vision for the work of the Spirit in creation is one that embraces all things in creation. However, for some critics, events and situations that are 'bad' challenge this inclusivity. In her book, *The Holy Spirit in the World*, Kirsteen Kim draws together various criticisms, especially from the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1991. She reports the 'alarm' from the orthodox representatives about certain presentations at the conference that were prone 'to affirm with very great ease the presence of the Holy Spirit in many movements and developments without discernment'.<sup>223</sup> Moltmann's own contribution is not specifically named at this point, but the context points to Kim's belief that his is included. Kim herself states that Moltmann's pneumatology is 'about affirmation rather than discernment' and asks him to be more shrewd and specific as to the movements and actions he puts the Spirit's name to.<sup>224</sup>

Farrow is also strong in his critique of Moltmann's wish to connect the Spirit to life-giving movements in the world. He goes so far as to call this topic in *The Spirit of Life* 'naïve':

How are we to recognize or decipher what "ministers to life and resists its destruction"? Surely an immanentist pneumatology tells us nothing at all, a universal affirmation far too much. Which movements in human culture are "shot through by the Spirit" (democracy? the German Christian movement? gay liberation?) and what exactly is their spiritual or life-affirming ingredient?<sup>225</sup>

There is evidently a worry about any connection between the Spirit's work and movements that cause damage. Even where the case is not so clear cut, and the consequences of a group's actions are not fully apparent, there is a wish to not be overly generous with a declaration of the Holy Spirit's influence.

Kim requests the consideration of another dynamic operative here. She highlights that the theologians of the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions

<sup>223</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: a global conversation* (London: SPCK, 2007), p. 57.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>225</sup> Farrow, 'In The End', p. 432.

saw in Moltmann's work 'a lack of awareness that there are many spirits'. For them it is quite possible, not just that the Holy Spirit is absent from a particular movement in the world, but that there may be harmful spirits at work. Kim also claims that there is biblical precedence for having 'areas of the created world from which the Spirit is absent, or at least not present in fullness'.<sup>226</sup> While the particular verses Kim uses to support this claim do not convince, the main point is reasonable: surely not everything in this world of human history and activity clearly displays the fruit of the Spirit's work.

Harvie focuses this concern in bringing it down to an individual level. He points out, quoting Moltmann, that 'Christ has not promised to be present among the "man of violence" who is tight-fisted with the resources available to him'. With this 'violent' person, 'the praxis engaged in is counter-intuitive to the praxis of the Kingdom'. For Harvie this equates to a need to 'distinguish the Spirit's presence among them'.<sup>227</sup> Harvie's phrase 'distinguish the Spirit's presence' is admittedly not the same as a declaration of the Spirit's absence. In addition, the wider context of Harvie's comments here includes discussion about merely a *different* work of the Holy Spirit in those outside of a confessional faith, which points to his own inclusive approach. However, for Harvie, it seems that Christ is not present in some, and he links that presence to the Spirit's own presence.<sup>228</sup> Therefore, Harvie appears to say that there may be situations where the Spirit is not present, just as he believes there are situations where Christ is not present.

The context of Moltmann's phrase helps to interpret his own words. 'Man of violence' comes from a section of his work which specifically speaks of the common ground of all people, 'rich and poor', 'powerful and helpless', in their common poverty. In his thought, poverty 'extends from economic, social and physical poverty to psychological, moral and religious poverty'. Because of this he speaks of all people 'without distinction' as the focus of Jesus' 'messianic mission'.<sup>229</sup> This dispels any fears that he suggests an equality of culpability for the respective situations of rich and poor, of those who abuse power, and those who are abused. That has never been his claim. Rather, he speaks here of a common need which the oppressed and the oppressor

<sup>226</sup> Kim, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 64. Kim refers to 1 Sam. 16.14, which is a difficult passage to interpret (it speaks of an 'evil spirit from the Lord'), and Ps. 51.11, which only speaks of the fear of the Spirit's departure.

<sup>227</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 83, referring to Moltmann's phrase in *CPS*, p. 79 and Deut. 15.7.

<sup>228</sup> 'The Spirit is at work where Christ has promised to be present' (Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 69).

<sup>229</sup> *CPS*, pp. 78-80. 'Messianic mission' being Moltmann's title for that section of his work.



share, and Jesus' work to address this need. This is where Moltmann differs from Harvie's claim that Christ, and by implication also the Spirit, has not promised to be present in the particularly 'violent' (in violence's many guises) individual. If God's Kingdom aims to bring 'freedom to all' then the Spirit should be at work in all.<sup>230</sup> It seems coherent with Moltmann's work to extend this premise from the individual to wider movements and situations in this world: the Spirit must be active in every person, situation, and movement in creation if there is to be any hope for its redemption. Also, it suggests that if there is any life in a person, situation, or movement, then it comes from the Spirit of life, who draws creation into participation with God.

In such a case, the observer of a situation can differentiate between the Spirit's work and *the fruit of* that work. That is, a harmful situation does not equate to an absence of the Spirit's attempts to bring life to that situation. Moltmann's theology suggests that the Spirit is at work both to facilitate *life-affirming* situations and to bring new life in *life-threatening* situations. Therefore, the question moves away from: 'where is the Spirit at work?', and becomes: 'in what type of work might the Spirit be involved in this situation?'. Taylor explores this dynamic of the Spirit's differing activity in good and bad situations:

The Spirit of Life is ever at work in nature, in history and in human living, and wherever there is a flagging or corruption or self-destruction in God's handiwork, he is present to renew and energize and create again. Whenever faith in the Holy Spirit is strong, creation and redemption are seen as one continuous process.<sup>231</sup>

Beck also points to this theme in Moltmann's work: 'The Spirit's role regarding the oppressors is as "the Spirit of righteousness and justice who speaks in *the guilty conscience* of the people who commit violence".<sup>232</sup> This points to the Spirit's work in the 'man of violence' to reach the goal of non-violence.

Through these nuances, his work does not claim the Spirit's universal activity is a universal affirmation of everything. Rather it is a universal affirmation of the Spirit's work to bring life, sometimes despite the accidents and sins within creation. Moltmann's theology thus argues coherently that the Spirit is present in even the most evil situation in the world, for this is where life-giving work is required. This bears a similarity to Jesus' words: 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.'<sup>233</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>231</sup> Taylor, *The Go-Between*, p. 27.

<sup>232</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 173, quoting *SpL*, p. 142.

<sup>233</sup> Matt. 9.12 (cf. Mark 2.17; Luke 5.31).

*The Newness of Pentecost*

For many, as outlined above, Pentecost stands out as a new work of the Spirit *in humanity alone*, whereas for Moltmann this event does not distinguish itself in that way. In the light of his theology of the universal work of the Spirit since the beginning of creation, and his insistence that the Spirit comes to all creation at Pentecost, some raise the question of whether he has compromised Pentecost's uniqueness. This complaint must be considered because the theological architecture should contain a coherent account of the history of the Spirit that affirms the full importance of this particular event in the Christian calendar. One critic is David McIlroy, who perceives a reduction of the importance of Pentecost because of this great emphasis on the Spirit's universal work: 'Moltmann loads so much of the Holy Spirit's work onto creation that nothing new happens at Pentecost other than the manifestation of that which was already present.'<sup>234</sup> The comment refers to *God in Creation*, pp. 68-69, and McIlroy follows it with this note:

The one place in Moltmann's writings where he appears to hold to the classical understanding that "A different divine presence is revealed in the history of the Holy Spirit from the presence revealed in creation from the beginning" is in the minor work *Experiences of God*[.]<sup>235</sup>

When Van Nam Kim considers Moltmann's interpretation of 'all flesh' from the Joel and Acts passages already highlighted, he is able to link it back to the work of the Spirit in creation from the beginning. Kim makes no criticism of this, and is able to speak of the uniqueness of Pentecost in Moltmann's thought at other points. However, the ease with which the language of the Pentecost prophecy is linked to the Spirit's work that has continued since original creation may lend weight to McIlroy's criticism that Moltmann does not assign enough difference to the experience of Pentecost.<sup>236</sup>

McIlroy is incorrect, however, to assert that this theme is only in *Experiences of God*. Significantly, the given quote, with the overall discussion, is also taken up and included in *The Spirit of Life*, a considerably more major work.<sup>237</sup> Here Moltmann demonstrates that he recognises that the history of

<sup>234</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 31.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31, n. 79, referring to *EoG*, p. 77.

<sup>236</sup> Van Nam Kim, 'A Church of Hope: in the Light of the Eschatological Ecclesiology of Jürgen Moltmann' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université catholique de Louvain, 2004), p. 277 (cf. pp. 284, 299, 374-77). Kim points to *CPS*, p. 294, for the newness of Pentecost.

<sup>237</sup> *SpL*, pp. 211-13, although this is not enough to alleviate Douglas Farrow's concerns that this work lacks a 'substantial discussion' of Pentecost (Farrow, 'In The End', p. 431). The chapter McIlroy quotes from is also published as 'Theology of Mystical Experience', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 32:6 (1979), 501-20.

the Spirit's presence in creation is not static but changeable. Yet we can also see elsewhere that he considers Pentecost to be a pivotal moment. Notably, however comprehensive the Spirit's presence was in the beginning of creation and in subsequent history, the event of the cross and resurrection brings something wholly new to the world and the Spirit is the way by which this 'power' comes to creation, beginning at Pentecost.<sup>238</sup> This explains how he is able to claim a difference in a work of the Spirit in the people of God after this event, in his affirmation that the charismatic community has its gifts 'through Pentecost'.<sup>239</sup> He also speaks of a change of roles between the Son and the Spirit at Pentecost. Whereas before the resurrection the Son was sent by the Spirit, now the Spirit is sent by the Son.<sup>240</sup> Moltmann similarly refers to a 'passing of the divine lordship' from Son to Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>241</sup> All these mean that he is able to say that Pentecost is a new thing.<sup>242</sup>

Moltmann is obviously not unorthodox in describing the Spirit's extensive work before Pentecost. The Christian Scriptures witness to the Spirit's activity before that event in the Old Testament references to the presence and work of the Spirit.<sup>243</sup> Kirsteen Kim also points out that even in the New Testament, Pentecost is not the 'first appearance' of the Spirit in people, as it is earlier mentioned in reference to John the Baptist.<sup>244</sup> In that context McIlroy is partially correct. For Moltmann, the work of the Spirit seen at Pentecost is another manifestation of the Spirit who is already at work throughout creation. But McIlroy is wrong to imply that for Moltmann this is simply a manifestation of the *same* work. It is rather a 'new movement'.<sup>245</sup> For him, this work is new because the Spirit creates a changed relationship between God and humanity: a relationship that recognises the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, because it is 'through the trinitarian history of the Christ-event that the Spirit has *become* the Spirit of the risen Christ'.<sup>246</sup> So the Spirit does a new work and brings to creation something which was not previously present, namely a new experience of God's saving actions in Christ.<sup>247</sup>

<sup>238</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966); *GiC*, pp. 66-67; *WJC*, p. 263; *CoG*, p. 335; 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 250; *EiT*, pp. 108, 111-12, 147-48, 326, 331; 'The Holy Spirit', p. 117.

<sup>239</sup> *IEB*, p. 163 (cf. *SpL*, p. 278).

<sup>240</sup> *TKG*, p. 89 (cf. Badcock, *Light of Truth*, p. 201).

<sup>241</sup> *FC*, p. 76.

<sup>242</sup> *CPS*, p. 294; *SpL*, p. 271; 'Shekinah', p. 179; 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 250; Miroslav Volf, 'Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship: An Interview with Jürgen Moltmann', *The Christian Century*, 100:8 (1983), 246-49 (p. 247).

<sup>243</sup> For example: Gen. 1.2; Job 33, 34; Ps. 104; Isa. 34.16.

<sup>244</sup> Kim, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 10.

<sup>245</sup> *SpL*, p. 278.

<sup>246</sup> Badcock, *Light of Truth*, p. 201, referring to *TKG*, pp. 122-28.

<sup>247</sup> See *PP*, p. 128-29; *JCTW*, pp. 74-75; *The Source*, p. 16; *BP*, p. 203.

## 4.4 CONTINUOUS LOVE: THE SON

This section proceeds to a discussion of Moltmann's view of Christ's involvement in continuous creation. To be involved in the whole of creation, Christ must be more than simply Lord of the Church. Therefore Moltmann considers there to be a 'broad horizon' to the 'rule of Christ', where 'Christ's sphere of sovereignty is the whole creation, visible and invisible'.<sup>248</sup> This is different to the complete rule of Christ which comes at the eschaton, but nevertheless Christ 'already shares in God's rule over the world', in a limited yet very real sense.<sup>249</sup> This view of the 'cosmic Christ' is important to Moltmann as he sees it as one of the ways to encourage reconciliation with nature, and it is usefully taken in the research here as pointing to the ecological reformation.<sup>250</sup> He also considers it necessary explicitly to make the case for the involvement of the cosmic Christ in the whole history of creation, not just the original act of creation. In this task he seeks to release Christ's role from a restriction he perceived traditional theology to have placed on it.<sup>251</sup> He wishes to do this to retain the cohesion of the creation/redemption process. This means that the Son is involved in the same processes which were previously connected to the Spirit's activity.

As already noted, this subject is discussed more briefly here than the involvement of the Spirit because the major part of Moltmann's writing concerning Christ's activity in creation is concerned with the event of the cross and resurrection, which subsequent chapters will explore. For him, cosmic christology takes its basis from the cross and resurrection, which has 'universal significance' and 'touches the innermost constitution of creation itself'.<sup>252</sup> Yet his account of the relationship of Christ with creation does make significant points that ensure it is a noteworthy element of his christology, and as such gives his contributions to the new theological architecture a rounded approach.

### The Son of Life

'Life' is not simply the centre point of the Spirit's work in creation for Moltmann. It is the intention and goal for all of God's work, as Father, Son, and

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<sup>248</sup> *CJF*, p. 66; *WJC*, p. 280.

<sup>249</sup> 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 250.

<sup>250</sup> *CJF*, p. 66.

<sup>251</sup> *WJC*, p. 286.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281-82.

Holy Spirit. For this reason it is not a surprise to see him comment that ‘the presence of Christ is experienced in the Spirit who is the giver of life’.<sup>253</sup> He also mentions a title for Christ, ‘the life of the world’, which he links explicitly to nature as well as humanity.<sup>254</sup> Again like the Spirit’s work, the life-giving work of Christ in creation appears in various roles.

#### *The Power of Evolution*

Moltmann refers to Christ’s part in continuous creation ‘as the moving power in the evolution of creation’.<sup>255</sup> This reflects an aspect of the Spirit’s work too. However, he is only happy to speak of Christ’s involvement in evolution alongside Christ’s suffering, death, and redemptive work.<sup>256</sup> This is because evolution is not redemptive in itself. For Moltmann, the processes of evolution requires redemption in order to deal with the ambiguities, faults, and victims present in the process.<sup>257</sup> In this sense, for him, Christ is the power of evolution in that he is the power that raises living things from the death inherent in them and redeems them to eternal life. This connects back to the Spirit’s work to bring the power of Christ’s resurrection to creation.

#### *The Creator of Fellowship*

Another significant similarity between Christ’s and the Spirit’s work is the creation of fellowship in the world. Early in his career Moltmann stated that the Spirit is present throughout *all* creation, and while he also described Christ’s presence in *all* creation, the bulk of his work concerns Christ’s fellowship with humanity in particular. Jesus ‘gathers’ and ‘calls’ people to fellowship with one another, a fellowship which ‘abolishes mankind’s aggressive divisions and fatal separations’, and points ‘to the banquet of the nations’.<sup>258</sup> Interestingly Moltmann speaks of Christ ‘gathering’ the community and the Spirit ‘giving it life’.<sup>259</sup> This differentiation in the language to describe their roles indicates his own understanding of the subtle differences between those roles. But nevertheless, many similarities remain: the community that Christ creates, like that made by the Spirit’s work, is not simply community *within* creation. For humanity, it is ‘fellowship with Christ’ that is ‘a foretaste on earth’ of full fellowship with God.<sup>260</sup> Communion with Christ helps to bring people into

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 292-301.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., pp. 287, 297; *JCTW*, p. 101.

<sup>258</sup> *CPS*, pp. 84, 115, 252, 343.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>260</sup> *TJ*, p. 62.

‘the trinitarian situation of God’.<sup>261</sup> For Moltmann, the trinitarian relationship of God with creation includes all things. Therefore, as the Son draws nature and humanity into that relationship he also draws them to each other. He says: ‘the body of Christ is the church – the body of Christ is the whole cosmos’. As Christianity centres on Christ it includes the whole cosmos in its thought.<sup>262</sup> As such, Christ takes people from ‘ruthless exploitation’ of the world to ‘caring reconciliation’, a ‘community [...] in the cosmos as well as among God’s people’.<sup>263</sup>

#### *The Enabler of Co-Creativity*

Finally, for Moltmann, Christ also shares in the enabling work of God in creation. Moltmann states that to recover community with nature is to manifest the ‘righteousness of God’ in humanity’s situation.<sup>264</sup> In this way Christ brings humanity, in this instance, to be co-carers of creation, co-creators of the life of the world. For Moltmann, the Son shapes humanity to have a greater fellowship and life, and draws people into that same work.

## **Separating Christ’s and the Spirit’s Role**

There is an obvious similarity between the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ. Part of this link is that the creation of life, the encouragement of fellowship and enablement of co-creativity are at the centre of God’s overall work in creation. Moltmann has said that ‘through Spirit and Word the Creator enters into his creation and drives it forward’.<sup>265</sup> Also the Spirit is the ‘Spirit of Christ [...] present wherever Christ is present’.<sup>266</sup> For these reasons both Spirit and Christ should, in Moltmann’s thought, be active in their own ways, and in partnership, towards these goals (it is, of course, difficult to envisage the possibility of any person of the Trinity ever acting independently of that relationship). The Spirit’s work is not the Spirit’s work alone, nor is Christ’s work Christ’s work alone. Moltmann describes Christ as being present by the Spirit: ‘The Holy Spirit is the divine subject of the history of Jesus. For that reason the Son of God is also present in and through the Spirit in his church, and beyond it is at work in creation.’<sup>267</sup> Thus, Christ is at work through the

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<sup>261</sup> *CrG*, p. 286.

<sup>262</sup> *WJC*, pp. 275-76.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 306-07.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>266</sup> *SpL*, p. 9.

<sup>267</sup> *CPS*, p. 36.

presence of the Spirit in creation. Moltmann also reminds us that the Spirit was at work in Christ when he was bodily on the earth. It is not easy to separate their roles.<sup>268</sup>

*Balancing Christ's Work with that of the Cosmic Spirit*

Given the similarity between Christ's life-giving work and that of the Spirit, Moltmann has come under attack from those who claim that he does not outline sufficiently the distinction between the roles of Christ and the Spirit. In particular, the concern is that he neglects Christ's role. Bauckham believes that in his earlier theology, particularly in *The Crucified God*, it was Christ who was the centre of God's involvement in history. He suggests that as Moltmann's theology developed further it became increasingly focused on the Spirit's involvement and as this has reached into the whole cosmos it is the Spirit 'who takes the centre stage'.<sup>269</sup> This could be a simple change in the emphasis of his work, but Sjoerd Bonting takes this observation further: 'Moltmann gives the Spirit a near monopoly in creation, neglecting the role of the Logos.'<sup>270</sup> For Bonting the role that Moltmann gives to the Spirit is so universal that it leaves little room for the Son to act. One problem with this criticism is that it does not seem to allow for the Spirit and the Logos to work together complementarily. An emphasis on the Spirit's part of God's work need not be a 'monopoly'. Another response to this complaint is that Moltmann also retains the image of the cosmic Christ throughout his theology and it does not become an absent theme once his pneumatology gains its full momentum.<sup>271</sup> For example, he states that: 'If Christ is confessed as the reconciler and head of the whole cosmos, as he is in the Epistle to the Colossians, then the Spirit is present wherever Christ is present'.<sup>272</sup> This would indicate that the very reason that the Spirit has become such a universal presence is because of the Cosmic Christ's relationship with the Spirit.

Bauckham is of course aware of Moltmann's theology of the cosmic Christ. He recognises affirmation of the work of Christ in the past, present and future of creation: 'Later Moltmann interprets Christ's mediation of creation as having three aspects: he is (1) the ground of the creation of all things; (2) the moving power in the evolution of creation; (3) the redeemer of the whole creation process'.<sup>273</sup> This reinforces the fact that, in Moltmann's theology,

<sup>268</sup> 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 250.

<sup>269</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 186.

<sup>270</sup> Sjoerd L. Bonting, 'Spirit and Creation', *Zygon*, 41:3 (2006), 713-26 (p. 720).

<sup>271</sup> See *GiC*, pp. 94-95; *WJC*, pp. 152-57, 179-83, 194, 274-312; *CoG*, pp. 250, 279.

<sup>272</sup> *SpL*, p. 9.

<sup>273</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 186, n. 1, citing *WJC*, p. 286. See also H. Paul Santmire, 'So

Christ is still at work in the creation process.

However, while Moltmann's work does not force the Spirit into a central role to the detriment of christology, the overlap between the roles of both remains. H. Paul Santmire is dissatisfied with Moltmann's approach and feels that he has failed to 'differentiate' adequately between the 'cosmic vocations' of the Spirit and Christ. For Santmire, this differentiation is necessary to stop what he sees as a tendency in Moltmann's work for the two 'ministries' to 'collapse into each other, almost modalistically', and undermine the 'mediation by the Son and the Spirit'.<sup>274</sup> Mediation here means God's work in creation through Son and Spirit, so Santmire expresses his concern that Moltmann loses the distinction between their forms of presence in the world and thus loses the uniqueness of their respective work. Santmire believes that Moltmann's treatment of the Son and the Spirit is vivid, but does not always create an account that 'functionally differentiates them'.<sup>275</sup>

However, Santmire is unfair in his assessment of Moltmann's theology of Christ and the Spirit when he claims that 'Moltmann believes that the two are not fundamentally differentiated in the New Testament itself'.<sup>276</sup> Santmire quotes from *The Way of Jesus Christ* where Moltmann states that the 'New Testament writings do not make any systematic distinction. . . between Word and Spirit in creation'.<sup>277</sup> However, two sentences earlier in that work Moltmann described the separate yet complementary roles of both the Spirit and the Son in a way that almost perfectly matches the distinction which Santmire seeks.<sup>278</sup> Thus while the Spirit and Christ are both said to be at work, for example, in evolution and the redemption of creation, this does not mean that there is no distinction between their complementary and intertwined activities. Moltmann has also shown this to be his pattern of thought on other occasions:

The history of the Logos and the history of God's Spirit were often seen parallel to one another in theology, and were even viewed as interwoven with one another. But a clear distinction was made between

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That He Might Fill All Things: Comprehending the Cosmic Love of Christ', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 42:3 (2003), 257–78 (p. 266).

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276, n. 63, citing *WJC*, p. 289.

<sup>278</sup> Although interestingly they reach the opposite conclusions: Santmire shows a preference for Christ to unite and the Spirit to maintain particularity, whereas for Moltmann the Word differentiates and the Spirit binds together (Santmire, 'So That He Might', p. 265; *WJC*, p. 289).



the incarnation of the Logos and the inhabitation of the Spirit.<sup>279</sup>

### *The Self-Offering of Christ*

There is at least one important topic which demonstrates a difference between the Spirit's and Christ's roles, namely the incarnation. Moltmann states: 'the Son actually becomes man, while the Spirit's presence is merely an indwelling'. The Spirit is not incarnate like Christ is and, according to Moltmann, the Spirit does not serve like Christ does.<sup>280</sup> The Spirit does not live amongst the people 'in person'.<sup>281</sup> In the incarnation Christ offers himself into creation. The discussion of the sufferings of this event follow in the next chapter, but the outwards movement of Christ into creation and the self-emptying of this act requires a brief comment here. This is especially because of the love that this demonstrates, for Moltmann claims that 'the incarnation of the Son is the perfected self-communication of the triune God to his world'.<sup>282</sup> This part of Christ's work shows that God is willing to act as more than an outside force for good, and will get involved more intimately with creation. In the Christ event Moltmann also sees variation in the roles of Son and Spirit.

### *Christ's Unique Role*

While the roles of the Spirit and the Son have much in common in Moltmann's work, they are also clearly distinguishable. They cannot be completely separated, nor can one be said to be active without the other. Nevertheless, each is engaged in particular activities as the primary actor. The Son has uniquely come to earth 'in person' while he also works alongside the Spirit to bring life, in all its facets, to creation.

## 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has seen contributions to the new theological architecture that significantly grow its connectedness with ecological reformation. Moltmann

<sup>279</sup> *GiC*, p. 102 (cf. p. 98; *BP*, p. 290; *SRA*, pp. 60, 62).

<sup>280</sup> *TKG*, p. 212.

<sup>281</sup> 'Shekinah', p. 179. This is more than simply a difference in physical presence for Moltmann, who goes so far as to write that the 'kingdom of the Spirit cannot well be identified with the kingdom of the Son' (*TKG*, p. 212). While this is a vague statement it does highlight the fact that Moltmann seeks to retain difference between their work.

<sup>282</sup> *TKG*, p. 116. This obviously includes the death and resurrection but also speaks about more than that.

overwhelmingly characterises the relationship which God has with creation as an intimate and life-giving presence and activity *in all creation*.

With regards to the Spirit, Moltmann's theology has developed over time to express that the Spirit is, and always has been, present throughout creation. This presence is accompanied by activity of various sorts in every living thing, which connects to the theme of God's relational and loving character. For Moltmann, God loves the whole creation and so is present throughout it. Thus it is not a love from afar but an involved love. This universalistic approach still discerns many places, events, and people that are involved in activities which are at odds with God's purposes. Yet he still affirms that the Spirit can be present and at work to bring life and oppose the negative elements that are present.

Alongside this, Moltmann's christology in the area of continuous creation mirrors his pneumatology in so far as both are involved in the life of creation. At the same time, both the Son and the Spirit have their own unique roles, though issues remain on how fully these are made clear. This universalistic approach to the Son's work has an additional foundation in the cross and resurrection. For Moltmann, this shows the scope of Christ's mission and involvement in the world which encompasses, and has significance for, all.

This study, and the remarks of various scholars, also generates a question concerning the simplicity of a 'life-giving' theological architecture. It is apparent that life in this world is inseparable from death. The question of how much this was God's intention and how much it might have been the way in which creation, in its freedom, has developed is not one which this thesis has sought to answer. For humanity's present situation, the fact of life and death is a given, and so the way in which God, through the Spirit and the Son, is at work in these processes today contributes to the exploration of human ecological actions.

This work has shown that Moltmann considers God to relate to creation in such a way that it has freedom, that there is an element of risk in its ongoing life, and that God loves it with a love which reflects that which was demonstrated at the original act of creation. The scope of the Trinity's activity leaves no part of creation outside of the divine care, while all of creation is included in God's eschatological purposes. For Moltmann, this gives all of creation a high status: 'This dignity is conferred on them by God's love *towards* them, Christ's giving of himself *for* them, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit *in* them.'<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> WJC, p. 307.

The work of God to enable co-creativity gives humanity a responsibility to make choices that share the Trinity's creative aims. In this way the desired ecological reform is given both motivation and assistance by the divine works. This is considered in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8. Even though there may be a lack of choice in the actions of nature (such as for trees) this does not remove the significance of their participation in God's creative activity. Conscious or not, the growth of the tree is process by which the tree is co-creative with the Creator and helps accomplish the continual life of the planet. This helps humanity to move away from the idea that plants and animals are incapable of important action and only *exist* for God or humanity's pleasure, and instead move towards the idea that all creation has significance to its daily activities for the overall life. This is a theological significance to place alongside the ecological significance of each part of creation about which science has already taught. This strengthens overall progress towards ecological reformation.

As God sends the Spirit and the Son into creation, for Moltmann, 'God is in himself open to his creation, and allows himself to be determined by its continuing history'.<sup>284</sup> The account contained within Moltmann's theology, and thus offered to the theological architecture, of God's openness to be affected by creation as well as affect it is the next focus of this study.

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<sup>284</sup> Badcock, *Light of Truth*, p. 197.

# Chapter 5

## God's Openness to Creation

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on Moltmann's view of the way in which God's love brings creation *into* the open trinitarian relationships and is a counterpart to the previous chapter's discussion of the flow of that love *out* to creation. This openness is a strength for a theological architecture that takes the natural world seriously, and thus comprises a weighty component of the plea for ecological reformation.

The first part of this investigation considers the roots of Moltmann's view of the Trinity's openness and includes the particular openness of both the Spirit and the Son. Following this is an exploration of one specific aspect of the divine openness to creation: suffering. This will begin with a consideration of Moltmann's general approach to divine passibility before a discussion of God's suffering *with creation*. His views on this topic attract considerable critique from the wider theological community which this chapter will relate to his work with further reflection.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that Moltmann sets out a coherent theology of God's openness towards, and suffering with, creation. This in turn brings with it notable implications for the status of creation, and for the importance of relationships within it. Through the inclusion of notions of divine openness and suffering, the theological architecture grows in the voice it brings to ecological concerns.

## 5.2 THE OPENNESS OF GOD TO CREATION

The foundation of God's openness towards creation is, for Moltmann, the witness of the Christian Scriptures; they are 'the testimony to the history of the Trinity's relations of fellowship, which are open'.<sup>1</sup> This aspect of Moltmann's theology stems from the openness of the Trinity to the world. He also gives special attention to the particular openness of the Spirit and the Son in their distinct relationships with creation.

### The Openness of the Trinity

#### Openness of Relationships

For Moltmann, the Trinity's openness is intrinsically connected to its inner relationships. Firstly, he considers the relationship with creation to demonstrate similar principles to those present in God's trinitarian relationships. Secondly, for him, God can be open to creation because the Trinity's unity is through relationships.

With regards to the way in which God's outer relationships mirror the inner relationships, Moltmann writes: 'The history of God's trinitarian relationships of fellowship corresponds to the eternal perichoresis of the Trinity.'<sup>2</sup> He had previously moved in this direction: 'we must be careful not to picture the Trinity as a closed circle of perfect existence in heaven', rather the Trinity's relationships with creation are perichoretic and therefore open.<sup>3</sup> Moltmann describes a 'living quality of God's relationship to the world'.<sup>4</sup> This living quality is thus one that Moltmann's work can lend to the new theological architecture.

On the subject of God's openness to creation on account of the Trinity's relational unity, Moltmann believes that if divine unity was found solely in substance or subject then that would prevent openness to others who are not of the same substance or subject.<sup>5</sup> So he sets out his premise: 'the unity of the

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<sup>1</sup> *TKG*, p. 19 (cf. p. 64).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> 'The "Crucified God"', p. 298 (cf. *CPS*, pp. 55-56).

<sup>4</sup> *CPS*, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *TKG*, pp. 149-50, also William P. Alston, 'Substance and the Trinity', in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ and Gerald O'Collins SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 179-201 (p. 197). In this way Moltmann also shows disagreement with John McIntyre's suggestion that God's inner relationships are based on a unity of substance and that creation's relationship with God cannot, therefore, reflect the divine unity (cited in Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 111).

triune God is not to be found solely in the single divine *substance*, or merely in the identical divine *subject*; it consists above all in the unique *community* of the three Persons'.<sup>6</sup> Through the location of God's unity primarily in relationships, Moltmann provides what he believes to be a suitable foundation for openness to the different 'Other'.<sup>7</sup>

### Openness to the World

What does this 'Other' include? Some of Moltmann's early work seems to restrict trinitarian openness to humanity alone.<sup>8</sup> Soon, however, he explicitly and unmistakably includes all of creation, above and beyond humanity. He speaks of God's openness to creation's history,<sup>9</sup> time,<sup>10</sup> the world,<sup>11</sup> and all of creation.<sup>12</sup> The result of this is, as Bauckham concludes:

The trinitarian history of God's relationship with the world is thus a real history for God as well as for the world: it is the history in which God includes the world within his own trinitarian relationships.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the language of God's openness is not restricted to the inclusion of creation *in* God; Moltmann also says that the Trinity's openness leads God to go *out* to creation. This is connected to the previous chapter's discussion of God's loving involvement in creation, which identified the Spirit and Christ at work in creation. The difference in *this* discussion is that it debates not simply the way in which Christ and the Spirit are at work, but the way in which their presence in creation contributes to the Trinity's openness. For Moltmann, for the Father to send Christ and the Spirit reveals the eternal openness of the Trinity.<sup>14</sup>

This sending is also a key to the process of God's inclusion of creation in the divine self. It is not that unknown and mysterious forces draw or compel creation into God, but rather that God's activity *gathers* creation. Therefore, for Moltmann, trinitarian openness in continuous creation takes

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<sup>6</sup> 'The Fellowship', p. 289. He follows this by emphasising the point that substance and subject are still elements of God's unity.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 2 of this work, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Such as: 'open to the future for all of forsaken humanity' ('The "Crucified God"', p. 298). However, even this is debatable as to whether he simply refers to the human part of a more universal openness. This is because he follows the previous statement with: 'that is, they point toward a new creation of all things'.

<sup>9</sup> *FC*, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> *CPS*, p. 56; *SpL*, p. 294.

<sup>11</sup> *CPS*, p. 56; *FC*, p. 85; *TKG*, pp. 19, 64; *SpL*, p. 294.

<sup>12</sup> *CPS*, pp. 55, 60, 62; *TKG*, pp. 90, 96.

<sup>13</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *CPS*, p. 56; *FC*, p. 85.

place primarily through the Son and the Spirit. It is God's 'seeking love', and 'by entering into [history] through his sending of the Son and the Spirit' God experiences the whole of history.<sup>15</sup> For Moltmann, the cross of Christ is indispensable for God's experience of history: 'the most concise statement of the trinity is God's work on the cross, in which the Father lets the Son be sacrificed through the Spirit'.<sup>16</sup> Moltmann's discussion of God's openness to creation, however, progresses beyond this event, as shown below.

#### *Accusations of Pantheism*

Moltmann does include a caveat when understanding the world as being *in* God. There is a need to 'distinguish between the one indwelling and the other' because 'they do not take place on the same level. [...] God's indwelling in the world is divine in kind; the world's indwelling in God is worldly in kind'.<sup>17</sup> While this does not specify the difference exactly it does at least demonstrate its presence, and signal that Moltmann's thought here is a refined and deliberate balance of ideas.

Differentiation is an important separator of Moltmann's theology from pantheist theologies. In his use of the term *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) to speak of God and creation's relationship, Moltmann has attracted the accusation that he comes 'close to pantheism', as already noted but not conceded by Bauckham.<sup>18</sup> Although Bauckham gives no references to these criticisms, there are similar accusations elsewhere: John McIntyre questions whether a mutually open, perichoretic relationship between God and creation is acceptable, because it confuses the two and does not leave enough difference.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Thomas McCall argues that Moltmann's use of '*perichoresis*' to describe intra-divine and divine-world relationships requires that the same word means two different things and introduces confusion to his arguments.<sup>20</sup> Matthew Bonzo also believes that Moltmann tries to mix divine perichoretic relationships, which are based on fundamental likeness, with the Divine/creation relationship, which is based on otherness. Therefore: "The very difference that allows God to stand over against the *creatio originalis* is called into question by the call to creation to give itself freely and totally over

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<sup>15</sup> *FC*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>16</sup> "The "Crucified God", p. 291, quoting Bernhard Steffen (cf. *CrG*, p. 264; *SpL*, p. 294).

<sup>17</sup> *GiC*, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Bauckham, 'Jürgen Moltmann', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. by David F. Ford, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 147-62 (p. 160).

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 198.

<sup>20</sup> McCall, *Which Trinity?*, pp. 157, 172.

to the divine community.<sup>21</sup>

Others, however, respond to these criticisms with the claim that Moltmann's thinking is 'trinitarian panentheism'. This describes a relationship of differentiation which helps 'to distinguish between God and creation without separating God from creation', and so avoids the charge of pantheism while it also allows for both the immanence and transcendence of God.<sup>22</sup> The confusion which Moltmann's use of the same word to describe relationships with different dynamics of likeness creates is unfortunate but not insurmountable.

### *Equal Openness to Nature and Humanity*

Moltmann's enthusiastic support for God's openness to all creation leads Deane-Drummond to criticise him for insufficient distinction between the divine love for humanity and that for the rest of creation. In order best to understand the relationship with nature required of humanity, she is concerned to understand the nature of the relationship between God and nature, which she believes is different from the relationship between God and humanity.<sup>23</sup> It seems, however, that Moltmann's intention is not to seek out or define the differentiation between God's love for nature and for humanity. Rather he tries to ensure that his theology gives sufficient weight to God's love for all creation. Any nuanced differences in the openness of the relationships certainly makes no difference, for him, to the existence of God's deep love for all creation.

## **Openness through the Spirit**

### **A Fellowship Marked by Reciprocity**

The previous chapter discussed the way in which the Spirit creates community in creation, and brings nature and humanity into relationship with God. A rounded theological architecture requires an exploration of the reciprocity of this relationship. Moltmann claims this must be present because '[f]ellowship

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<sup>21</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 126.

<sup>22</sup> Bauckham, 'Jürgen Moltmann', p. 160; Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, pp. 120, 124. See also Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, pp. 253-55; Steven Bouma-Prediger, 'Creation As the Home of God', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 32:1 (1997), 72-90 (pp. 78-81). Here Bouma-Prediger agrees that this is Moltmann's aim but is not entirely sure Moltmann completely succeeds. However, this is linked heavily to the doctrine of *zimsum*, the influence of which this research has already attempted to suggest can be downplayed in Moltmann's later work (see this work, p. 42).

<sup>23</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond, 'A Critique of Jürgen Moltmann's Green Theology', *New Blackfriars*, 73:865 (1992), 554-65 (p. 563).



is never merely unilaterally determined'.<sup>24</sup> There is surely a tendency within Christian theology to view the relationship between God and creation as one in which God supplies everything creation needs and creation simply receives in gratefully, in a rather one-sided transaction.<sup>25</sup> Moltmann's view of this relationship is instead marked by 'mutuality'.<sup>26</sup> For him, because the Spirit is 'poured out', creation 'has a closer relationship to the Creator than the act has to the actor or the work to the master'.<sup>27</sup> This view of the relationship, marked by reciprocity and mutuality, leads him to conclude that the Spirit 'allows [those] people [in fellowship with him] to exert an influence on him, just as he exerts an influence on them', although these influences should not be understood as equal.<sup>28</sup> Through the Spirit's own presence in every part of creation, there is an openness to experiencing the whole sweep of creation's history.<sup>29</sup> As the life of the world becomes God's experience, the importance of an ecological reformation to promote and protect this life grows clearer in Moltmann.

### Drawing Creation into God

For Moltmann there exists more than merely an openness to the Holy Spirit's own relationship with creation, since there is also the work of the Spirit to draw in creation so that it 'acquires a share in the inner life of the Trinity itself' and is enabled 'to participate in God's eternal life'.<sup>30</sup> Moltmann speaks of the Spirit as the power behind the unity of God and creation, which is ultimately completed only in the future, but is a task that continues in the present.<sup>31</sup> By 'unity' he refers to more than merely a drawing together of creation and God *next* to each other. As in his trinitarian thought, the unity brought about by the Spirit is a 'perichoretic relationship', in which 'God [is] *in* the world and the world [is] *in* God'.<sup>32</sup> He uses such phrases as 'an organic cohesion' and 'interpenetration' to describe the relationship which the Spirit brings between God and creation.<sup>33</sup> This bond allows creation to 'exert an influence' over

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<sup>24</sup> *SpL*, p. 218.

<sup>25</sup> A simplistic statement, but one in part demonstrated by opinions below that creation cannot affect God.

<sup>26</sup> *GiC*, p. 14; *SpL*, p. 218.

<sup>27</sup> *TKG*, p. 113 (cf. *EoG*, p. 77).

<sup>28</sup> *SpL*, p. 218.

<sup>29</sup> *GiC*, p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> *TKG*, p. 113 (cf. *EoG*, p. 77); *GiC*, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> *FC*, p. 91; *CPS*, p. 60; *TKG*, p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> *GiC*, pp. 17, 206, 258.

<sup>33</sup> *SpL*, p. 285.

the whole Trinity, not just over the Spirit.<sup>34</sup> It is as the Spirit draws creation into God that the world is united with Christ and his history, a history that includes the cross.<sup>35</sup>

## Openness through the Son

Before commencing the exploration of the openness of God to creation through the Son, it is necessary to note that Moltmann does not try to give the Son and the Spirit *separate* roles, although he does seek to discern their *distinct* roles in history: 'For through the Holy Spirit the history of Christ with God and the history of God with Christ becomes the history of God with us and hence our history with God.'<sup>36</sup> The openness shared within the Trinity only becomes complete openness with all creation through the work of the Son *and* the Spirit.

Moltmann primarily describes Christ's openness to the world through the incarnation. While Christ's significance for humanity in particular has, somewhat understandably, dominated christology debates, Moltmann considers that Christ experiences the life of the whole of creation. This demonstrates the Son's openness as he 'has dealings with it' and 'embraces it'.<sup>37</sup> From Christ's whole life on earth, however, it is the cross that he considers to be God's fullest expression of openness to the world.

### The Cross

Moltmann speaks of the 'God-relationship [being] first opened up' in the event of the cross, because it is this event which 'creates the conditions necessary' for an open relationship, or communion, to exist.<sup>38</sup> These conditions are created in two main ways. Firstly, as 'God was in Christ' so the Trinity is open to any relationships that Christ has.<sup>39</sup> It is thus through fellowship with Christ that creation is drawn into the trinitarian community. Through the 'brotherhood' which people have with the Son they can enter the trinitarian relationships, and the Father becomes the Father of many.<sup>40</sup> This language is heavily anthropocentric (and androcentric), the result of a mixture of the context and the date of these writings, yet the link between Christ's

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<sup>34</sup> *GiC*, p. 258.

<sup>35</sup> *FC*, p. 82; *CPS*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> *FC*, p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> *ExH*, p. 79 (cf. *TKG*, p. 116).

<sup>38</sup> *ExH*, p. 78; *CrG*, p. 285.

<sup>39</sup> *CrG*, pp. 285-86.

<sup>40</sup> *TKG*, p. 122.

relationships and the general trinitarian relationships remains constant as Moltmann's explicit intention to include all of creation grows.

The second way he describes the creation of a new relationship is less concerned with the unity of 'God in Christ' than with the separation of the cross: the 'Trinitarian self-distinction of God in the death of the Son on the cross is so deep and so broad that all those lost and abandoned will find a place in God'.<sup>41</sup> The Trinity 'throws itself open, as it were' so that the relationships formed by Christ can be included.<sup>42</sup> Therefore God's openness is in abandonment as well as in brotherhood.

### **The Cross: Changing Reality and Revealing Eternity**

Throughout Moltmann's work he appears to describe trinitarian openness in the cross in two divergent ways: as a new openness which stems from the cross, and as an eternal openness shown at the cross. Is this openness new or eternal? Alternatively, does this particular contribution to the new theological architecture describe a change in God?

On the one hand Moltmann speaks of a new reality of God's openness which is the result of the cross: 'In the giving up of Christ on Golgotha God is [...] opened up to the experience of history.'<sup>43</sup> He elsewhere states that in the cross 'all being and all that annihilates has already been taken up in God' and that 'the whole of man's reality is accepted by God in the cross'.<sup>44</sup> These sentences seem to imply that the Trinity was not open to the experience of history before the cross. Statements such as 'no relationship of immediacy between God and man is conceivable which is separated from [Christ] and his history' contribute to this conclusion.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, however, Moltmann sometimes comments that the cross reveals, rather than creates, a reality of openness, as in this statement:

God's essence is from eternity a love which is [...] ready to sacrifice and give itself up. [...] There was a cross in the heart of God before the cross was raised up on Golgotha. In the death of the Son the eternal heart of the Trinity was revealed.<sup>46</sup>

Elsewhere he puts the same idea a little differently: 'God's openness for the

<sup>41</sup> Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 53. It is interesting that the self-distinction of God on the cross, which has been criticised for introducing too much separation into God, is also here used as the process that unites all people.

<sup>42</sup> *TKG*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>43</sup> Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 54.

<sup>44</sup> *CrG*, p. 287; *HP*, p. 106 (this chapter (IV) is originally from 1960).

<sup>45</sup> *CrG*, p. 285.

<sup>46</sup> Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 54.

world is revealed in the suffering and death of Christ.<sup>47</sup> These statements imply that the openness was already present and that the cross demonstrated it. This supposes that God was always open and that the cross was the result of the openness as opposed to the originator of it.

This apparent contradiction in Moltmann's writing can be explained if it is seen as an attempt to comprehend both the uniqueness of this event and the eternal love and openness of the Trinity. To this end he must speak both of the cross as the revelation of God's *ever-present openness* towards creation and of God's *new experience* of the cross and the particular effect of this specific event on creation. Therefore, on the one hand there is the Trinity's eternal openness which constantly experiences and interacts with creation's history, and on the other, a decisive act at the cross to include and affect creation in a distinct way. This second event of openness is an expression of God's eternal openness, yet it changes creation in a way that is different to God's wider involvement in creation. While the Trinity's openness is eternal, the incarnation introduces something 'new' for God and creation.<sup>48</sup> Through these contributions, the theological architecture outlines, to a certain extent, a fluid relationship between the two.

## Process Concerns

Moltmann's work here leads him to the conclusion that God is open to the history of creation and assumes the experiences of creation, especially as is so powerfully demonstrated on the cross. The critical discussion concerning this area of his thought is vast. It includes concerns about the way in which he handles the concepts of the immanent and economic Trinity,<sup>49</sup> whether he has eternalised God's experiences of temporal history,<sup>50</sup> made creation's hope vulnerable,<sup>51</sup> or threatened God's perfection.<sup>52</sup> To discuss all the above would surpass the space available to this project, and none of these difficulties are fatal to Moltmann's proposal of God's openness and suffering with creation. In

<sup>47</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 128 (cf. *FC*, p. 124).

<sup>48</sup> *FC*, pp. 93, 123-24.

<sup>49</sup> Farrow, 'In The End', p. 436; Jeremy Thomson Law, 'The Future of Jesus Christ: A Constructive Analysis of the Development of the Eschatological Structure of Jürgen Moltmann's Theology: 1964-1996' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1998), p. 325-27.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1987), p. 109; Law, *The Future*, pp. 333-34; Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 160-61; Chester, *Mission*, p. 48; Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> Law, *The Future*, p. 335.

<sup>52</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 49.

order to keep the focus on the thesis's theme, this discussion will address only the fear that his theory of God's openness to creation is actually detrimental to the Trinity, and the relationship with creation, through God's entanglement in the process of creation.

In general, some have asked whether Moltmann has shifted into the category of process theologian.<sup>53</sup> But he is also swiftly defended against this charge. For example, Deane-Drummond takes some time to contrast his conclusions with those of process theology: 'his insistence that God created the world *ex nihilo*, and that the future of creation emerges from God's future rather than creation itself, distinguishes his view from process thought'.<sup>54</sup> Again Moltmann's trinitarian emphasis helps set him apart as this 'is a clear departure from process theology which resists a Trinitarian concept of God altogether'.<sup>55</sup> He would also insist that this trinitarianism incorporates the transcendence of God in such a way that it alleviates the charge of process theology.<sup>56</sup>

### God in Process?

Regardless of Moltmann's clear differences from process theology, for some critics he still remains too close to it. This too is an extensive debate in which there are many avenues of discussion, so only a selection of key points with some further analysis is possible.

To begin, for example, Jeremy Law is concerned about whether Moltmann has made God part of a common process with creation.<sup>57</sup> More specifically, many fear that he has set the Trinity's involvement with the creation and its history at such a high level that God is a 'product of history, or 'dissolved into history'.<sup>58</sup> In addition, God's freedom and sovereignty are said to be compromised, with the associated suspicion that, in Moltmann's work, God is dependent on creation and its history (with all the associated evils) for who

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<sup>53</sup> These concerns are noted though not necessarily shared by: Roger Olson, 'Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 36:2 (1983), 213–27 (p. 222); Farrow, 'In The End', p. 427; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 119, n. 137 (Neal also points to discussions that bring out the distinction between Moltmann's position and process theology).

<sup>54</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 297 (cf. p. 208; *GiC*, pp. 78-79; Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 206).

<sup>55</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 207.

<sup>56</sup> *CrG*, p. 264 (cf. 'The Crucified God', p. 14); *SpL*, p. 227.

<sup>57</sup> For example: Law, *The Future*, p. 321.

<sup>58</sup> Olson, 'Trinity and Eschatology', p. 221; Bauckham, *Moltmann*, p. 106-09; Badcock, *Light of Truth*, p. 210; Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 191.

the Divine will become in eschatological glory.<sup>59</sup>

Moltmann anticipates these accusations and maintains that openness defines God's relationship with creation without the 'dissolution of God in world history'.<sup>60</sup> Bonzo asserts that freedom is still the character of this relationship.<sup>61</sup> Joy McDougall reminds readers that in Moltmann's theology God is 'the source of the creative freedom that empowers the human community's transfiguration' and divine sovereignty remains.<sup>62</sup> Harvie also offers an understanding of Moltmann's work that helps clarify this problem. He emphasises that, for Moltmann, God actively shapes history from without as well as within.<sup>63</sup> This will also be identified in Moltmann's eschatology in the next chapter: the coming God indwells and transforms creation with anticipations of the fully consummated dwelling of God in creation which approaches.

Previous chapters examined the way in which, for Moltmann, the original act of creation was one in which God freely creates something other than God out of love. In addition, in the Trinity's ongoing relationship with the world there is loving activity throughout all of creation. The current chapter demonstrates the way in which Moltmann developed this thinking to the conclusion that love leads to openness. From here it will consider the way in which, for him, this openness leads to suffering when this 'loved Other' is suffering.

For Moltmann, God loves creation and therefore is willing to accompany it. This is not dependency, nor does it describe a deity at the mercy of a process. Rather, it claims that God does not 'become' through creation's processes, but that creation 'becomes' through God's process. The Trinity may be changed through a relationship with creation, but this is dependent on trinitarian love and openness. Admittedly, the changes themselves could be said to be, in a qualified sense, dependent on creation's experiences and

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<sup>59</sup> George Hunsinger, 'Review: The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God', *The Thomist*, 47:1 (1983), 129–39 (pp. 133, 136); Walsh, 'Theology of Hope', p. 73; Gunton, *Theology through*, pp. 72–73; Torrance, *Persons In Communion*, pp. 310–13; Miller et al., *Fortress Introduction*, p. 122; Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, p. 197–234; Ben Quash, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. by David F. Ford, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 106–32 (p. 116); Chester, *Mission*, pp. 45–49; Jeffrey Hensley, 'Trinity and Freedom: A Response to Molnar', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 61:1 (2008), 83–95 (p. 90); Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 119; McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 35.

<sup>60</sup> *FC*, p. 75.

<sup>61</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> McDougall, 'Return of Trinitarian Praxis', p. 195.

<sup>63</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 116.

actions. However, this is only possible given the higher reality that this process of change is ultimately dependent on God's love, grace, faithfulness, and the free act of creation. God's changes, and hence trinitarian history and being, are in fact dependent on God. Therefore the world, along with its history of good and evil, life and death, are not necessary to God's future as if compelled by some power external to God. Instead, Moltmann's theology is one in which God's free love stands at the beginning of all and remains the driving force of history, both of God and creation. Moltmann's efforts here also ensure that the new architecture is also freed of any notions of God's dependency on creation.

### 5.3 THE CASE FOR DIVINE SUFFERING

For Moltmann, the relationship which God has with creation is thoroughly trinitarian. While he himself recognises the inadequacy of the following statement, he has broadly described God's role as 'transcendent as Father, immanent as Son and open[ing] up the future of history as the Spirit'.<sup>64</sup> As this project has discussed each element in that statement, no analysis is necessary here. Moltmann has set out the trinitarian involvement of God in history from an early stage. Furthermore, for him, God's involvement in the history of all creation means that its history becomes God's history also. Therefore creation's suffering becomes God's suffering.<sup>65</sup> This reveals to him the depth of God's love for creation.

The issue of whether or not God suffers, and if so the manner of that suffering, is a particularly contentious subject. Therefore the following analysis will proceed carefully. It begins with an outline of the exact way in which Moltmann justifies his version of divine passibility and by drawing out the various strands of divine suffering in his work. In Moltmann's theology divine suffering cannot be described as simply an abstract philosophical concept; for him, we can 'only talk about God's suffering in trinitarian terms'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *CrG*, pp. 264-65.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264-65. This is in contrast to Deane-Drummond's reading that it is in *God in Creation* that Moltmann introduces this theme (Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 209).

<sup>66</sup> *TKG*, p. 25.

## Openness and Suffering

The openness of God to the world which stems from the perichoretic relationships of the Trinity, is for Moltmann the ‘seeking love of God’ as ‘his love seeks out the beloved beings he has created’.<sup>67</sup> It is Moltmann’s argument that this love and vulnerability moves the Trinity to suffer. Love leads to sympathy, which is openness, and therefore suffers when it meets suffering.<sup>68</sup> In his words: ‘God takes man so seriously that he suffers under the actions of man and can be injured by them’, and God ‘suffers with his forsaken creation because he loves it.’<sup>69</sup> Love is the sole reason for suffering.<sup>70</sup> This contribution to the new theological architecture points to a human love for creation that is also authentic enough to involve suffering.

In Moltmann’s earlier works the original act of creation points to God’s suffering:

The creation of the world is therefore not merely ‘an act of God outwardly’ [...] it is at the same time ‘an act of God inwardly’, which means that it is something that God suffers and endures. For God, creation means self-limitation, the withdrawal of himself, that is to say self-humiliation. Creative love is always suffering love as well.<sup>71</sup>

Yet even without an emphasis on the divine self-withdrawal in creation, God’s ‘resolve to create also means a resolve to save’.<sup>72</sup> Trinitarian love means that God is ready ‘to endure the contradictions of the beings he has created’, for ‘God’s being is in suffering and the suffering is in God’s being itself, because God is love’.<sup>73</sup> God has a passion for creation’s peace.<sup>74</sup> God is ready to redeem through suffering and ‘self-humiliation’.<sup>75</sup> Therefore the Trinity’s capacity for suffering is the foundation for its creative work, through which it maintains and repairs ‘breached’ communication, ‘open[s] up’ closed systems, brings liberation, and gives possibilities for life (including evolution). This creative power is seen through the power of God’s suffering to sustain creation.<sup>76</sup>

So, for Moltmann, the Trinity’s suffering is bound up together with

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<sup>67</sup> *SpL*, p. 299.

<sup>68</sup> *CrG*, p. 281; *TKG*, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> *CrG*, p. 280; *FC*, p. 98.

<sup>70</sup> *HP*, p. 148 (61).

<sup>71</sup> *TKG*, p. 59.

<sup>72</sup> *GiC*, p. 90. See Chapter 3 of this work, p. 36, for Moltmann’s development of God’s self-withdrawal in original creation.

<sup>73</sup> *GiC*, p. 15; *CrG*, p. 234.

<sup>74</sup> *PP*, p. 102.

<sup>75</sup> *GiC*, p. 90.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11 (cf. *TKG*, p. 60; ‘The Scope’, p. 103).



creation since the beginning of creation, which means God seeks ‘deliverance from the sufferings of his love’.<sup>77</sup> This suggests that the focus shifts to the ‘self-deliverance’ of God. Moltmann, however, rejects that idea and instead prefers to view God and creation’s deliverance as a ‘mutual happening’.<sup>78</sup> The Trinity’s struggle therefore remains focused on creation and its suffering.

For Moltmann, redemption and freedom ‘can only be made possible by suffering love’. As God ‘desires free fellowship with the world and free response in the world’, suffering is the inescapable consequence of such a creative love.<sup>79</sup> Such an immediate link between love and suffering needs to avoid the implication that love can *never* exist without suffering. However, the statement below does not contribute to the development of nuanced understanding:

The love with which God creatively and sufferingly loves the world is no different from the love he himself is in eternity. And conversely, creative and suffering love has always been a part of his love’s eternal nature.<sup>80</sup>

It is hard to accept that suffering has been an eternal part of the Trinity before all creation. Donald Macleod concurs at this point. He believes that Moltmann makes God’s suffering inevitable, almost normal, and that he neglects its anomalous character. He stresses that without sin God would not suffer, and that sin is a disruption, an ‘*anomia*’. Macleod implies that he would require Moltmann to emphasise that suffering *should not* be part of God’s nature.<sup>81</sup>

Moltmann does not actually discuss the suffering of the Trinity outside the context of the relationship with creation, but occasionally his words do seem to group *all* love together with suffering. This could imply that God did suffer outside of this relationship with creation and its evils. Different emphases in his language, however, can bring balance to the discussion. For example, elsewhere Moltmann offers the option of viewing God’s eternal love as ‘capable’ of suffering and sacrifice although not necessarily *actually* suffering.<sup>82</sup> This makes more sense of God’s eternal existence. Another

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<sup>77</sup> TKG, p. 60 (cf. CoG, p. 305).

<sup>78</sup> ‘Shekinah’, p. 175.

<sup>79</sup> TKG, p. 60 (cf. PP, p. 101; ‘The Scope’, p. 103).

<sup>80</sup> TKG, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Donald Macleod, ‘The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann’, *Themelios*, 24:2 (1999), 35–47 (p. 43). Macleod also claims that God is impassible until sin comes into existence, at which point God becomes passible and involved in pain and suffering. This is not the best way to use the words ‘impassible’ and ‘passible’. They are better used to indicate the ontological capability for suffering.

<sup>82</sup> Lapidé et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 54 (cf. ‘the Creator’s openness for redeeming

argument against the Trinity's eternal suffering is the sense in which Moltmann comments that God chose to suffer, 'the voluntary laying oneself open to another and allowing oneself to be intimately affected by him'.<sup>83</sup> God desires to suffer because of love, and this suffering flows out of the relationship God has with creation.<sup>84</sup> So it is that Moltmann can write of 'God's self-subjection to suffering'.<sup>85</sup> This implies that there was a state of not-suffering before that self-subjection.

In this way, Moltmann adds a qualification: it is only when there is love for a suffering and unloving creation that love inevitably brings suffering to God. Macleod's point does however show that Moltmann could emphasise more that God's love for creation is a gracious gift and lean away from language that, at least to some, makes God's suffering sound like simply a logical necessity.

On the other hand, Moltmann's talk of God's 'self-subjection' and 'voluntary laying oneself open' has brought criticisms from another angle. For some, he has made God's experience of suffering too controlled and not subject to risk, unlike creation's experience of suffering. Fiddes is concerned about theologies that express 'semi-passibility'. In Fiddes's words, these are theologies in which God 'voluntarily changes the divine self in response to the suffering in the world'. Fiddes implies that Moltmann fits into this category and points to his phrase that this suffering is 'God's supreme work on God himself'.<sup>86</sup> It is unfair, however, to put Moltmann in this category for this phrase does not refer to each instance of suffering which God endures. Rather it seems closer to his overall work to comment that 'God's supreme work on God himself' indicates that the Trinity brought itself into a loving relationship in which suffering would occur. Discussion has already outlined the way in which, for Moltmann, God's freedom does not equate to the freedom *not* to love the world. Accordingly, if love brings suffering as a response, and love cannot be denied, then God's freedom does not stretch to freedom over instances of suffering. Therefore, in his work, God's *suffering* is not best described as voluntary. A better description would be that God's *relationship* with creation, which is marked by suffering, was entered into freely. The result is that now God is held in suffering through that self same love and faithfulness. While

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suffering and his readiness for his own self-humiliation', *GiC*, p. 90.

<sup>83</sup> *TKG*, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> *CPS*, p. 160; *ExH*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>85</sup> *TKG*, p. 60.

<sup>86</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), p. 174; *TKG*, p. 99.

this is distinct from the involuntary suffering of the creature that never chose the relationships that harm them, it is still a long way from the ‘voluntary change’, and God ‘mak[ing] God suffer’, which Fiddes is worried about.

Another criticism of Moltmann’s general view of God’s suffering comes from Bonzo who questions whether that suffering is ‘real’ or whether there is any risk to openness to creation. This is because he believes, for Moltmann, that there is a ‘fail-safe’ in God’s own redemptive actions that makes suffering only temporary. For Bonzo, creation’s suffering is different because it is not fail-safe, but can only hope for God’s saving actions.<sup>87</sup> Firstly, in response, the criticism that God and creation are different in respect to the guarantee for the end of their suffering is debatable. For Moltmann, God has promised that all creation too will be redeemed and an end to its suffering come. Secondly, the question of whether suffering is truly suffering if it is only temporary and guaranteed to end seems an unfair one. If suffering was simply equated with fear then this might be plausible, but observing another who is loved in pain must surely be counted as authentic pain for the lover even if they can see an end. Bonzo is correct that there is a certain guarantee to God’s plan for creation but this speaks more of the worthwhile nature of the whole enterprise than it does about a lack of meaning.

Before this discussion proceeds, it is important at this point to recognise Moltmann’s view of what in creation actually causes God’s suffering. The answer to this is essentially: all the suffering of creation. Moltmann speaks of God’s own cry ‘in the groans of the hungry, in the torment of prisoners and in nature’s silent death pangs’, in ‘creation’s history of suffering’, and in the ‘death of countless other living things’ which are not human but have died from humanity’s selfish acts.<sup>88</sup> These are the things that he asserts cause God suffering. He sees God as concerned for nature and humanity alike: the whole of creation is loved and so any suffering within it is ‘to the agony of God’.<sup>89</sup> He is explicit that God’s suffering is based on the *cosmic* love of God.

## The Incompatibility of Impassibility and Love

Moltmann rejects divine impassibility, based on the implications for God’s love for creation if suffering is disallowed: ‘a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved. [. . .] [H]e cannot be affected or shaken

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<sup>87</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>88</sup> *FC*, pp. 75, 98; *GSS*, p. 20.

<sup>89</sup> *HP*, p. 35 (article from 1968).

by anything. [... He] cannot love'.<sup>90</sup> For Moltmann love cannot be true if the predicament of the object of that love (creation in its suffering) in no way affects the subject (God). Therefore, if one were to deny the Trinity's capacity for suffering then that would also eliminate the capacity for love.<sup>91</sup>

Moltmann argues that God's suffering does not and should not imply any 'deficiency in his being', but rather is based on the 'fullness of his being'.<sup>92</sup> The Trinity is open to change out of freedom and suffers because in that freedom and love it is receptive to creation's pain.<sup>93</sup> God is neither incapable of suffering or 'fatefully subjected' to it; God suffers in freedom and love.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, for Moltmann suffering is an inescapable part of the Trinity's involvement in the world if there is true loving involvement in a creation that suffers.<sup>95</sup>

Thomas Weinandy opposes this view. His opinion is that impassibility does not deny God's love. Rather, 'a passible God is actually less personal, loving, dynamic and active than an impassible God'.<sup>96</sup> For him, the immutable and impassible God is the ultimate standard of self-giving love, 'utterly and completely dynamic and active [...] and could not possibly become any more dynamic or active [...] and cannot become more passionate'. Weinandy considers that any change to God would have an impact on God's activity because his view of the Trinity is that 'the persons of the Trinity are not nouns; they are verbs and the names which designate them – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – designate the acts by which they are defined'.<sup>97</sup> Therefore because the Trinity's activity is perfect, and 'God is pure act', God cannot change. God is already in the most loving, active relationship, and this is matched by the Trinity's relationship with creation. Therefore, the Trinity cannot 'acquire more perfection' through change.<sup>98</sup>

Weinandy's view of God's immutability logically affects his view of impassibility and suffering, in which Weinandy believes he reflects patristic

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<sup>90</sup> *CrG*, p. 229.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237; *EoG*, p. 15.

<sup>92</sup> *CrG*, p. 238.

<sup>93</sup> *CPS*, p. 62 (cf. *FC*, p. 93).

<sup>94</sup> *TKG*, p. 23.

<sup>95</sup> For a selection of examples beyond the discussion above see *CrG*, pp. 220, 255-57, 264; *ExH*, pp. 71, 80, 83; Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 46, 50; *GiC*, p. 210.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), p. 26. For clarity, Weinandy's definition of passibility is this: 'that God experiences inner emotional changes of state, either of comfort or discomfort, whether freely from within or by being acted upon from without' (p. 39).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

thought.<sup>99</sup> For him suffering is ‘the loss of some good’ from a being, and thus equals change. For humans Weinandy asserts this occurs continually, whereas God ‘possess[es] all goods’ completely and cannot change so does not experience this loss: ‘Since the persons of the Trinity can never be deprived of their divine perfection, they never experience any inner *angst* over their own state of being which would cause them to suffer.’<sup>100</sup> Denis Edwards has also noted the way in which, for Weinandy, it is completely necessary to retain God’s ‘total otherness’ and ‘ontological distinction’, and that Weinandy believes that a suffering God undermines this.<sup>101</sup>

In Weinandy’s opinion, God’s active impassible love has ‘far greater significance’ than human suffering love because it bears more fruit: God is able to dispel the evil and suffering of the world.<sup>102</sup> The same argument would appear to suggest that human love, as seen in compassion and mercy, is of lesser significance or worth when it cannot solve a presenting problem. There are obvious dangers here, philosophical and pastoral. Even so, for Weinandy, love is best regarded by what it does and not what it feels. So in his proposition that God feels no suffering as a result of his love, Weinandy does not intend to detract from that love. He believes that God is still fully active in ‘goodness, commitment, affection, joy, kindness, as well as mercy, compassion, grief and sorrow’. These activities are, to Weinandy, more important for God’s love for the world than any ‘divine “emotional” self-expression’ which others might claim is vital for God to feel.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, Weinandy actually claims that God’s love is better off without suffering. Its absence ‘purifies [God’s] love of all selfish concerns, and so allows it to be thoroughly altruistic’.<sup>104</sup> This seems to be an odd claim. Firstly, it appears to contend that if the Trinity had any concerns of its own to address then selfishness would inevitably occur. Secondly, one might say, in fact, that the above position does not do justice to the concept of the Trinity’s sacrificial love. Weinandy’s view implies that God is not being selfless, if selflessness is understood as putting others before the self, because God’s ‘self’ will not be affected one way or the other. Thirdly, it seems to misunderstand the overall scheme of Moltmann’s (and surely others’) view of trinitarian suffering love. For Moltmann, even though he speaks of the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-112.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 226 (cf. p. 153).

<sup>101</sup> Edwards, *Breath*, p. 113 (cf. Weinandy, *Does God*, pp. 40-63).

<sup>102</sup> Weinandy, *Does God*, p. 229 (cf. pp. 165-8).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp. 227-29.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 226-27.

quest of God to find ‘deliverance from the sufferings of his love’, it is not that God acts primarily in order to alleviate divine suffering, as if that were the primary problem.<sup>105</sup> Rather, Moltmann’s work describes a situation where God loves creation and suffers because that love observes creation’s predicament. Therefore, the Trinity’s own suffering is not the root of the problem, but is a second order factor. The problem to be dealt with is creation’s pain, and as such God acts to heal that pain. For Moltmann, the end of God’s suffering is the mutual consequence, not the selfish aim.<sup>106</sup> This is not to say that we must conclude from his work that within the loving relationships of the Trinity there is not the desire to see the others’ pain dissipated. Instead, he appears to say that God’s suffering is not primarily seen as the concern, it is rather *the result of the concern* which God has for creation. Therefore the focus remains primarily on the suffering and the needs of creation.

Moltmann’s work obviously has a different philosophical focus to Weinandy’s and he sets himself against the foundations which Weinandy has in his work:

We must drop the philosophical axioms about the nature of God. God is *not unchangeable*, if to be unchangeable means that he could not in the freedom of his love open himself to the changeable history of his creation. God is *not incapable of suffering* if this means that in the freedom of his love he would not be receptive to suffering over the contradiction of man and the self-destruction of his creation. God is *not invulnerable* if this means that he could not open himself to the pain of the cross. God is *not perfect* if this means that he did not in the craving of his love want his creation to be necessary to his perfection.<sup>107</sup>

As Ryan Neal says, Moltmann ‘is not concerned with protecting God’s immutability and/or impassibility because he is primarily concerned with God’s faithfulness to his promise and in suffering’.<sup>108</sup> With such different starting points Moltmann and Weinandy are unlikely to receive each other’s criticism or come to a mutual conclusion. The wider theological community has by no means taken the views of those like Weinandy as the final word on divine passibility. Edwards, for example, disagrees with the conclusions which Weinandy draws from God’s total otherness. He argues that otherness

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<sup>105</sup> *TKG*, p. 60.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Shekinah’, p. 175.

<sup>107</sup> *CPS*, p. 62 (cf. *FC*, p. 93).

<sup>108</sup> Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 127. Neal proceeds to comment that this means Moltmann’s ‘doctrine of God is dictated by the criterion of God’s faithfulness (not his freedom) in the cross and resurrection’ (pp. 127-28). This however may neglect the fact that God’s promise stemmed from a free creative act. Faithfulness to creation must always come after God’s freedom to create.

should not rule out suffering. Divine suffering should be seen as analogical to human suffering, an ‘identification with creation that is proper to God’. The Trinity’s suffering can be seen as ‘*infinitely* beyond anything possible for human beings’ and ‘the very expression of God’s infinite otherness’.<sup>109</sup> The debate on God’s passibility is certainly not closed and Moltmann’s voice remains as a passionate call to take seriously God’s own suffering involvement in the suffering of creation.

## The Cross and Divine Passibility

For Moltmann the cross reveals ‘the eternal heart of the Trinity’; it shows that God ‘is capable of suffering, ready to sacrifice and give [Godself] up’.<sup>110</sup> Alongside his arguments for the reasonableness of divine suffering the cross stands as his evidence for a God who suffers. A person of the Trinity, God’s son, suffered on the cross. For Moltmann, this event works against the argument for divine impassibility: ‘The death of Jesus on the cross is the *centre* of all Christian theology. [. . .] All Christian statements about God, about creation [. . .] have their focal point in the crucified Christ.’<sup>111</sup> Therefore, in the light of the suffering of Jesus on the cross, ‘faith must understand the deity of God from the event of the suffering’.<sup>112</sup> ‘God and suffering are no longer contradictions’.<sup>113</sup>

This theme is not confined to *The Crucified God*, and Moltmann returns to it in his systematic contributions: ‘How can Christian faith understand Christ’s passion as being the revelation of God, if the deity cannot suffer?’<sup>114</sup> This is exactly the question his work poses to Weinandy, who claims that the cross does not demonstrate divine passibility but rather shows the scandal of the impassible God who would go to such lengths as to take on human flesh and suffer *as a human being*. For Weinandy then, divine passibility actually diminishes the uniqueness of the cross. So while ‘from all eternity’ God knew what human suffering was like through divine knowledge, it was not until the incarnation that God experienced it for God’s self ‘*in a human manner*’.<sup>115</sup> How can the incarnate Son of God suffer as a human being but not as God? For Weinandy, as Christ is wholly God and wholly man he retains

<sup>109</sup> Edwards, *Breath*, p. 113.

<sup>110</sup> Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 54.

<sup>111</sup> *CrG*, p. 210.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234 (cf. *HP*, p. 106 (article from 1960); *WJC*, p. 181).

<sup>114</sup> *TKG*, p. 21.

<sup>115</sup> Weinandy, *Does God*, pp. 173, 206.

the impassibility of the divine nature. To be otherwise would be not wholly God. Thus Christ 'is not deprived of any good which would cause him to suffer as God' but only deprived of 'human goods' in which he shared the human experience of suffering.<sup>116</sup> For Weinandy, the cross does not show that God divinely suffered for creation, but that God, fully and authentically, humanly suffered with creation.<sup>117</sup>

Moltmann's earlier work disagrees with this conclusion. He does not accept a doctrine of two natures of Christ and so thinks it impossible that the humanity of Jesus could suffer without the same involvement of his deity. Moltmann does not reject the stance of christology which states that Christ is fully God and fully human. Rather he simply wishes to hold, in deliberate contrast to positions such as Weinandy's, that Christ experiences his incarnate life, including the suffering of the cross, as fully God and fully human.<sup>118</sup> Waite Willis believes that Moltmann can draw support from Athanasius here. Willis argues that, given that for Athanasius, only as fully God is the Son 'worthy to suffer on behalf of all', '[t]here can be no doubt, then, that it is the intention of Athanasius to claim that God in the work of the Son somehow took on human suffering and death'.<sup>119</sup> As for the way in which Moltmann retains the uniqueness of the cross in the light of a wider cosmic suffering of God, that will be considered below alongside an account of the Son's particular suffering.

## 5.4 GOD'S SUFFERING AND CREATION

For Moltmann, authentic and loving divine openness towards creation opens up the Trinity to suffering, and has led to actions by God to assume the suffering of the world. Here is the deepest point of the relationship with creation, a bold statement that can be added to a theological architecture that seeks to value the whole world: God's love for the earth is such that God suffers with its pain and loss. Such an argument cannot permit indifference to creation's troubles. It calls for a radical reconsideration of ecological attitudes.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>118</sup> 'The "Crucified God"', pp. 286-88; *CrG*, pp. 91, 212-13, 235-43, 253 (cf. Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 195).

<sup>119</sup> W. Waite Willis Jr, *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 215-16.



Although God's suffering is always seen as trinitarian by Moltmann, the Spirit and the Son have their own particular role in it. In addition, he attempts to include and involve all the persons of the Trinity in each other's suffering. This discussion begins by looking at the way he understands the Spirit suffering with creation.

## The Suffering of the Spirit *With* and *In* Creation

At many points Moltmann has spoken specifically of the suffering of the Spirit with humanity. This will be the subject of a brief consideration before that of his inclusion of all creation in this suffering. From Jewish kabbalistic theology he appreciates in particular the concept of *Shekinah*, which he understands as the presence of God in the sufferings of God's people.<sup>120</sup> This idea comes originally from the Old Testament witness to the accompaniment of God with the Israelite people. For Moltmann, in his Christian context, this is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the people through their exile and their sufferings. The Spirit shares in those various sufferings, which include the people's pain, sorrow and death.<sup>121</sup> The presence of the Holy Spirit is not simply a sympathy for the victims of others but is a presence in all people, despite their 'most frightful errors'. The outcome of this for the Spirit's indwelling of these people is that the 'Shekinah is now alienated from God himself'.<sup>122</sup> There therefore exists 'a distinction in God [...] between God and the indwelling spirit [*sic*] of God'.<sup>123</sup>

This theme of the alienation of God in the *Shekinah* has aroused the concern of commentators, both negative and sympathetic. Bush finds Moltmann's appropriation of the term a little incoherent: 'the idea that God is a "Self" who cuts himself off from himself does not seem to be entirely consistent with his *social* analogy of the Trinity'.<sup>124</sup> Bush's concern is understandable. This alienation does not reflect the eternal, perichoretic, and loving relationships of which Moltmann is so rightly keen to highlight. On the other hand, another writer, Beck, correctly recognises that the *Shekinah* stems from the Spirit's solidarity with creation and in some way 'draws us up into the life of God'. Beck assumes from this that, for Moltmann, the *Shekinah* is 'not absolute' in

<sup>120</sup> *TKG*, p. 28.

<sup>121</sup> See *CrG*, pp. 282-83; *ExH*, p. 77; Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 50 (Moltmann here refers to Peter Kuhn, but seemingly agrees); *GiC*, p. 15; *CJF*, p. 34; *SpL*, pp. 47-51; *CoG*, p. 305; 'Shekinah'; *GSS*, p. 185; *EiT*, p. 288.

<sup>122</sup> *SpL*, p. 50.

<sup>123</sup> *CrG*, p. 283.

<sup>124</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 338 (cf. Chester, *Mission*, p. 27).

its separation from God. To say otherwise would bring difficulties and would lean towards tritheism.<sup>125</sup>

Moltmann does not restrict his conversations about the Spirit's suffering to humanity alone. As the predicament of the natural world became apparent to him he was increasingly determined to include the concerns of the wider creation in his work. In this way, the presence of the Holy Spirit in *all* creation, and suffering with *all* creation, is a theme that grows in his work from the 1970s: 'God himself hungers and sighs [. . .] in nature's silent death pangs. [. . .] God is affected by the world's history of suffering through his creative Spirit, [. . .]. His Spirit hungers, sighs and cries out for liberty.'<sup>126</sup> In *God in Creation* Moltmann deliberately takes the language of the *Shekinah* of God with people and mirrors it for the rest of creation:

But the same thing is true in its own degree of the indwelling of God in the creation of his love: he gives himself away to the beings he has created, he suffers with their sufferings, he goes with them through the misery of the foreign land. The God who in the Spirit dwells in his creation is present to every one of his creatures and remains bound to each of them, in joy and sorrow.<sup>127</sup>

The Spirit experiences, and is present in, the 'evolutions and the catastrophes of the universe' and is part of the unfolding history of creation with its highs and lows, 'participating in the destiny' of creation.<sup>128</sup> The Spirit is 'co-imprisoned' with creation, suffers because of its suffering, and experiences the world's 'annihilations'.<sup>129</sup> Moltmann also issues the reminder that these 'cries' of the Spirit often come from parts of creation that are victim to humanity's exploitation.<sup>130</sup> These themes run alongside the various aspects of the 'Spirit of life' seen in the previous chapter: where the Spirit is present to bring freedom and the power to live and grow, the Spirit is also present in the suffering of accidents and mistakes that stem from freedom.

On the whole it seems that Moltmann can effectively hold together the two dynamics of the Spirit's suffering with people *and* with nature. His discussions of the former need not be seen as exclusive of the latter. For him, the Spirit is present throughout all of creation and participates in all its

<sup>125</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 158-59.

<sup>126</sup> *FC*, p. 98. Although this was published in English in the late 1970s, the German publication date was 1977 and the article itself is a revision from 1972, so it is possible that these comments date from even the early 1970s. See also *GiC*, p. 69.

<sup>127</sup> *GiC*, p. 15 (cf. p. 97; *SpL*, pp. 50-51).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 96 (cf. 'The Scope', p. 103).

<sup>129</sup> *GiC*, pp. 68-69, 96-97 (cf. p. 102); *TKG*, p. 111.

<sup>130</sup> *SpL*, p. 77 (cf. *WJC*, p. 194, for Christ's involvement with humanity's victims).

experiences. Therefore, when he speaks of any particular instance of suffering in creation, whether human or otherwise, he naturally describes the Spirit's suffering in that particular context. For this reason he sometimes comments specifically on the suffering of the Spirit with people.

In addition, the Spirit's suffering is not exclusive to the Spirit alone. Moltmann has written that: 'God is affected by the world's history of suffering *through* his creative Spirit'.<sup>131</sup> There is little explicit material from him on this subject to explain exactly what he believes to happen. However, from his trinitarian theology we can conclude that no suffering of the Spirit is taken onto the Spirit alone in abstraction from the perichoretic relationship that exists between the three persons.

The above discussion has demonstrated the way in which, for Moltmann, the Spirit suffers both *with* creation in the pains of creation, and also *in* creation with its separation from God. However, both these conclusions have been questioned.

#### *Questioning the Spirit's Suffering*

Neal claims that he can detect a certain shift in Moltmann's work as it has developed from the centrality of the cross in *The Crucified God* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* towards a focus on the resurrection in later work. Neal sees this shift as a move from the negative experiences of life to positive ones, and that this move coincided with the growth of Moltmann emphasis on pneumatology and the 'Spirit of life'. The significance for Moltmann's pneumatology, Neal asserts, is that it 'seemed to pass over the importance of a theology of the cross', 'too easily slips into positive experiences of the Spirit', and 'seemed to lose sight of the notion of the Spirit suffering with and for creation'.<sup>132</sup> Neal admits that this is an unlikely conclusion to make about Moltmann's work, given the latter's attention to themes of pain and suffering. But Neal remarks that, when Moltmann speak specifically of the Spirit's involvement in the experiences of life he is usually 'one-sided in favor of fulfilled experiences, not disappointed failures'. Moltmann may commendably be trying to 'inform a culture of death with an affirmation of life', says Neal, but he should also relate the Spirit to its 'negative dimensions'.<sup>133</sup> So Neal calls for 'a coherent vision of the Spirit as fellow sufferer', rooted in the Spirit's involvement in the event of the cross to balance an emphasis on the 'Spirit of

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<sup>131</sup> *FC*, p. 98, emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 189, 198, 228.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92, 197.

the resurrection'.<sup>134</sup>

The research outlined above demonstrates that Moltmann has made great effort to present the Spirit as 'fellow sufferer'. Neal's desire to see this theme explored is wholly appropriate, yet such a claim as above is not wholly justified in relation to Moltmann. For instance, he states that Moltmann should have connected the Spirit to Jesus' all-inclusive suffering in *The Spirit of Life*. Neal claims that he 'comes close' in his work on the *Shekinah* but fails to do so in relation to the cross. This criticism is striking in that Neal points to a passage in *The Spirit of Life* for Moltmann's work on the *Shekinah*, while only a little later in the same work Moltmann asks the question 'Where is the Spirit in the death of Christ?' and proceeds to work through an answer.<sup>135</sup> Neal makes no reference to this. Beck, by contrast, notes how the Spirit was absent from Moltmann's work on the event of the cross in his early work, but importantly he also then makes reference to *The Spirit of Life* as the place where Moltmann begins to bring pneumatology and the cross together.<sup>136</sup> Neal's general comments do not seem fully to reflect the presence of the topic in Moltmann's work. Even critics of Moltmann's such as Tim Chester and David McIlroy consider the theme of the Spirit and suffering to be pervasive in his work.<sup>137</sup> Neal's comments about the lack of the Spirit's presence in conversations around the cross of Christ do have some validity if aimed at Moltmann's earlier work, but he develops this in time, especially by the period Neal makes his criticism. This particular topic will be considered in detail below as part of the discussion examining the trinitarian involvement in the cross event.

### *Balancing the Spirit's Suffering with the Cross*

Before considering the cross event, Neal's comments can be contrasted against the view that, in Moltmann's work, the Spirit has suffered so comprehensively with creation that even the cross seems to bring nothing new. It is fascinating that Neal can say that the Spirit does not adequately connect with suffering, while others can say that the Spirit suffers so much that the cross is rendered superfluous.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 198, 228 (cf. p. 199).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 199-200, n. 156. Neal points to *SpL*, pp. 47-51 and the subsequent discussion is found on pp. 60-68.

<sup>136</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 94-95, 148-49.

<sup>137</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 34; McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 74.

<sup>138</sup> However, this is not the only place where Moltmann is criticised from two differing directions. For instance, as above, he is criticised for embracing divine suffering, and for not making divine suffering authentic enough. In another example, Farrow notes that Moltmann has faced criticism 'both for abandoning the immanent/economic distinction and for not

McIlroy is one who holds the latter view. He believes that Moltmann, through the emphasis on suffering in his pneumatology, has unwittingly removed the reason for the cross. McIlroy believes that Moltmann's primary understanding of the cross is 'suffering solidarity' with creation. Yet, he asks, if this suffering was already included in the Spirit's experience why is the cross necessary? What additional purpose does it serve?<sup>139</sup> He admits that Moltmann also includes sin as a reason for the cross but finds Moltmann's definition of sin insufficient, in that it is 'quintessentially' violence against creation as opposed to 'violation of God's commands'. It is this violence against creation which McIlroy thinks, in Moltmann's thought, is dealt with by the Spirit's identification with, and consolation of, the victims.<sup>140</sup> For McIlroy, it seems that in Moltmann, the Spirit deals with the sin of the world. Therefore, why is the cross still necessary?

The question does not have a good foundation, however. Both McIlroy's description of Moltmann's theology of the cross and the definition of sin drawn from his work do not appear wholly accurate. Firstly, McIlroy's evidence for his claim about the cross is unconvincing. The pages he references do at least show the way in which, for Moltmann, solidarity with creation is *part* of Christ's suffering, yet in none of them does Moltmann indicate that this 'suffering solidarity' is his primary understanding of the cross. His understanding of the cross does emphasise the suffering of Christ with creation, but there 'is more in this [the cross] than Christ's *solidarity* [. . .] In this is the divine atonement for sin'.<sup>141</sup> On the cross Christ 'died "the death of all the living" so as to reconcile everything in heaven and on earth, [. . .] and to bring peace to the whole creation'.<sup>142</sup> That is not something which Moltmann attributes to the Spirit's work and so the cross is still necessary to his view of salvation history.<sup>143</sup>

Secondly, McIlroy's assertion that Moltmann defines sin as violence towards creation, and not the violation of God's commands, is debatable. It is true that he stresses that sin is violence against creation, but it is also much

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abandoning it' (Farrow, 'In The End', p. 436).

<sup>139</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 74. About suffering solidarity he cites: *FC*, p. 22; *TKG*, pp. 4, 99; *WJC*, p. 168; *JCTW*, pp. 38-40; Bauckham, *The Theology*, pp. 11, 15. About suffering of the Spirit he cites: *GSS*, p. 104; *TKG*, p. 111; *GiC*, pp. 68-69, 102; *SpL*, pp. 34-35, 47-51, 62, 64; *EiT*, p. 288.

<sup>140</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, pp. 32, 74. He cites: *HTG*, pp. 116-17; *OHD*, pp. 30-31; *WJC*, pp. 127, 254; *SpL*, pp. 132, 139, 171-73; *CoG*, pp. 90-95, 210; *EiT*, pp. 295-96.

<sup>141</sup> *SpL*, p. 136. Moltmann works this out throughout the chapter concerned (pp. 123-43. Cf. *GSS*, pp. 187-88; Moltmann et al., *Passion*, p. 76).

<sup>142</sup> *WJC*, p. 255 (cf. *SpL*, p. 134).

<sup>143</sup> He also argues for this view in *SpL*, pp. 212-13.

more than this. Close to one of McIlroy's chosen examples from Moltmann, is an argument for the specific need for *obedience* to the Sermon on the Mount. This indicates that Moltmann is concerned with the 'violation of God's commands'.<sup>144</sup> In other passages too, cited by McIlroy, Moltmann says that violence towards creation needs be included in a *broader* definition of sin. He writes: 'sin is not *merely* rebellion against God; it is *also* violence against life', and is connected to 'ecological death'.<sup>145</sup> For Moltmann, sin is violence and rebellion. Thus his theology of the cross grapples with issues beyond that which is included in the Spirit's suffering solidarity.

Randall Bush is critical here more generally than McIlroy. He claims that injustice is both suffered *and* overcome by the Spirit in Moltmann's thought. Therefore, according to Bush, it is hard to see what the Son's '*particular* experience of suffering in the Cross and overcoming of this suffering by the Resurrection' brings and why it is 'truly necessary'.<sup>146</sup> However, Moltmann has nowhere given the impression that the Spirit alone is the answer to all of creation's problems. As above in answer to McIlroy's concerns, the cross still contains particular redemptive suffering that the Spirit's particular suffering does not.<sup>147</sup> The following statement makes it clear that Moltmann's intention, from the beginning, is to keep the cross as essential to God's salvation plan:

[T]he earthly indwelling of God in a new creation without suffering, death and lamentation, is in no way the negation of the cross of Christ in the midst of this history, but rather the perfection of his lordship. Christian hope for the world is not directed towards an abstract other-worldly pantheism in which all that Christ has done to overcome the world disappears, but rather towards the fact that 'God will be all in all'.<sup>148</sup>

In proceeding to examine the suffering of the Son on the cross it will be apparent that Moltmann gives the Son's suffering particular significance that is different to that of the Spirit.

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<sup>144</sup> *WJC*, pp. 126-27. There is scope for further research to examine the interplay between the resistance to violence and obedience to God. Moltmann does make bold statements about violence being what sin really is (p. 127). There is though still space to interpret this as an addition to the definition of sin as disobedience.

<sup>145</sup> *CoG*, p. 90, emphasis added.

<sup>146</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 341.

<sup>147</sup> This is not to say that either the Spirit or the Son suffer without the other's involvement in Moltmann's thought. As seen above with regard to the Spirit, and seen below with regard to the Son, the suffering of God is always trinitarian.

<sup>148</sup> *HP*, p. 50 (from 1968). While this comes before Moltmann's pneumatology fully developed the same sentiment can still be found later in his work where he speaks of the cross as 'the true ground of the hope' of salvation (*CoG*, pp. 250-55).

## The Suffering of the Son *For* and *With* Creation

Below follows the consideration of Moltmann's view of the suffering of the Son and its contribution to a theological architecture that embraces all creation. That God's Son, the Christ, suffered in his death on a cross is one of the central tenets of the Christian faith. Moltmann does not diverge from tradition in this regard: Jesus took on suffering and death at the cross.<sup>149</sup> Also important to him is that Jesus actively and freely offered himself to it.<sup>150</sup> It is from a trinitarian basis that Moltmann originally constructed his trinitarian view of God's suffering, and so in addition, this conversation pays particular attention to the involvement of all three persons of the Trinity.

Moltmann displays an evident concern that the redeeming power of the suffering of Christ on the cross includes all of humanity's experiences, 'God in Auschwitz and Auschwitz in the crucified God'. For him, the cross 'redeems men from death'.<sup>151</sup> But while he affirms that the cross is an 'atoning event [. . .] of human guilt', he also claims that such an intent is not the whole story: there is a greater 'universal significance'.<sup>152</sup>

As early as the 1960s there is evidence that Moltmann wishes to avoid too narrow an interpretation of the cross: 'Not only the martyrs are included in the eschatological suffering of the Servant of God, but the whole creation is included in the suffering of the last days'.<sup>153</sup> For him, 'the suffering of the last days' refers to his belief that the suffering of the cross has eschatological significance for the redemption all things.<sup>154</sup> Shortly after this, in the early 1970s, he laments in an article the reduction of the scope of the cross by some, in this case historical critics, which leads to a negation of its significance for the 'whole world'.<sup>155</sup> In this piece he proposes that 'cosmic, historical and personal suffering' should all be taken into account in Christ's suffering.<sup>156</sup> The event of the cross thus has a broad reach; it is where 'God is confronted with the misery of all creation'.<sup>157</sup>

Moltmann's work repeats the theme of the universal or cosmic relevance

<sup>149</sup> *ToH*, p. 19 (p. 5 '02 ed.); *CrG*, p. 48; *CPS*, p. 85.

<sup>150</sup> *CrG*, p. 47; *CPS*, p. 85.

<sup>151</sup> *CrG*, pp. 48, 288; *ExH*, p. 73.

<sup>152</sup> *TKG*, p. 52.

<sup>153</sup> *ToH*, p. 137.

<sup>154</sup> See also: 'The fellowship of Christ's sufferings reaches beyond the community of Christ and its martyrs, for these sufferings are end-time sufferings, which take possession of *the whole creation*.' (*WJC*, p. 157.)

<sup>155</sup> *HP*, p. 40 (this particular article is from 1968).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

of the cross from this time onwards.<sup>158</sup> There is a sustained conversation on the subject in *The Way of Jesus Christ* where he discusses at length the implication of Christ's death.<sup>159</sup> For him, this death needs to have 'relevance for nature which is today suffering under the irrationality of human beings'.<sup>160</sup> He asserts that Christ 'died for the new creation of all things'.<sup>161</sup>

He also begins to say, not just that Christ suffers *for* creation, but suffers the very suffering *of* creation, and *with* creation.<sup>162</sup> The Son 'suffers the self-destruction of creation'; he is a martyr among other martyrs in nature.<sup>163</sup> Christ suffers the world's realities 'proleptically for the whole suffering creation' and suffers the 'death of all the living', 'violent death' as well as 'tragic death'.<sup>164</sup> The Son suffers all the sufferings of creation from beginning to end.<sup>165</sup> Here Moltmann makes a clear break from theologies which are concerned only with the punishment of human sins received by Christ. To speak of Christ's death as being *for* and *with* creation enables Moltmann to include, in different ways, both the guilt within creation and the suffering of the guiltless. This allows the cross to connect to the sufferings of creation as well.

Given the cosmic reach of Christ's suffering on the cross which Moltmann describes, Deane-Drummond wonders if there is a danger that his pneumatology of suffering could be 'weakened'. By 'channelling *all* the suffering of the cosmos into Christ's sufferings' she believes Moltmann may inadvertently lose the impact of his theology of the suffering Spirit.<sup>166</sup> Deane-Drummond would prefer Moltmann to allow for Christ to share in the pains of creation indirectly through the Spirit. If the Spirit is linked with creation's sufferings, then 'through the Spirit the whole creation participates in both the suffering and reconciliation in Christ'. She views this as easily compatible with Moltmann's thought.<sup>167</sup> Deane-Drummond arrives at this idea partly because she is not convinced that he effectively connects all of creation's sufferings to Christ's suffering on the cross. For her, the idea that the suffering of all of creation can be brought onto the crucified Christ 'is a little strained'.<sup>168</sup>

Bush also questions Moltmann's inclusion of all of creation's sufferings in

<sup>158</sup> *CrG*, p. 60; *CPS*, pp. 74, 222, 261; *FC*, p. 164; *CJF*, p. 68; *WJC*, pp. 155, 282.

<sup>159</sup> *WJC*, pp. 151-212.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195 (cf. p. 279).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155 (cf. p. 181; *CrG*, p. 61).

<sup>162</sup> *JCTW*, p. 38.

<sup>163</sup> *GiC*, p. 16; *SpL*, p. 130 (cf. *WJC*, p. 194).

<sup>164</sup> *WJC*, pp. 152, 169-70, 253.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>166</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 256.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 256, 262-63.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.



the cross of Christ. He asserts that it is not clear exactly *how* the particular suffering of the cross ‘also embraces and overcomes the problem of *universal* suffering’.<sup>169</sup> Bush’s confusion about the exact process by which Christ’s sufferings join with all creation’s is reasonable, yet it may be that this is neither a frailty unique to Moltmann, nor does it make his position unreasonable. Christian theology has long spoken of the particular suffering of Christ (which is not fully understood) and its relation to the suffering of all humanity (in a way that is also not fully understood, despite the efforts of some to claim otherwise). In this tradition, Christ came and died as a human. Accordingly, his solidarity with humanity is clear. Yet Christ also became flesh and a living part of creation. This suggests a solidarity with creation. Furthermore, Christ died and took on the sins of the world, so his atonement for human sin is clear. Yet Christ also ‘died *the death of all the living*’, the death of mortal creation.<sup>170</sup> This suggests that it is possible also to see a redemptive plan for all flesh and the whole earth within a traditional stream of thought, as Romans 8.18-24 indicates.

Deane-Drummond, however, is further concerned that humanity will find it more difficult to identify with Christ if his sufferings are all-encompassing: ‘While it might encourage us to become more sensitive to nature’s pain’, she says, ‘it could also have a different effect, namely to alienate us from the person of Christ’.<sup>171</sup> The problem which Deane-Drummond outlines is an understandable one, but this problem would not be removed if Christ’s sufferings were exclusively connected to humanity. Even then Christ’s sufferings go beyond what a human being can easily identify with.

Despite these concerns of Deane-Drummond and Bush, Moltmann does describe the way in which Christ suffers the sufferings of the whole of creation in a way that does not remove the significance of the Spirit’s sufferings. The universal affirmation of Colossians 1.20 (‘through him God was pleased to reconcile all things’) is a significant buttress to his efforts. The openness of the Spirit in creation is also an aid here, for according to Moltmann it is the Spirit who unites creation with Christ’s history.<sup>172</sup> So how can the cross embrace the sufferings of all creation? Moltmann’s answer is that the Son is incarnate in creation, and the Spirit is at work throughout all creation to join its history to Christ’s.

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<sup>169</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 298.

<sup>170</sup> *WJC*, p. 255.

<sup>171</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, pp. 300-01.

<sup>172</sup> *FC*, p. 82; *CPS*, p. 28.

*The Cross as Trinitarian Suffering*

From the relationship between the Father and the Son, and from the relationship of the Spirit to both, it is clear to Moltmann from an early stage that the cross has to be understood as a trinitarian event in which to speak of 'God's suffering', not just Christ's.<sup>173</sup> But more than that, the Trinity's suffering is not a 'self-contained' suffering, where the Father only suffers the Son's predicament, and the Spirit only suffers the Son and Father's predicament.<sup>174</sup> Rather the whole Trinity experiences something of creation's sufferings through the cross.<sup>175</sup>

To look beyond the physical sufferings of Christ, Moltmann also speaks of the Son's 'abandonment' by God the Father.<sup>176</sup> Further than that, he goes so far as to say that 'a rupture tears, as it were, through God himself'.<sup>177</sup> Moltmann's talk of 'death in God' (and only rarely, and in a specific context, 'death of God') is contentious enough to have drawn much discussion and criticism.<sup>178</sup> In the same way, his emphasis on the way the Father actively abandoned and forsook the Son is also debated, both in terms of the contradiction of the love of the Father, and the implications for the trinitarian unity.<sup>179</sup> However, this project will not engage with those discussions because its main focus lies in the way in which God suffers and shares in creation's history. If Moltmann's talk of death 'in' or 'of' God, or of the way in which the Father abandoned the Son, is unsuitable then the primary proposals nevertheless remain coherent.

For Moltmann it is plain that while the Son suffers death and separation from the Father, the Father must also suffer the death and separation of the Son whom he loves. This is not the understanding of *patripassianism* seen as an ancient heresy, rather it is 'patricompassianism'.<sup>180</sup> He points out that the Father does suffer, but 'not in the same ways as the Son'.<sup>181</sup> In fact, he

<sup>173</sup> *HP*, p. 106 (article from 1960); *CrG*, p. 222; *ExH*, pp. 80-81; *FC*, p. 74.

<sup>174</sup> *CrG*, p. 257.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 255-58; *ExH*, p. 81; *FC*, p. 75; Lapide et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>176</sup> *CrG*, pp. 33, 60, 151; *CPS*, p. 85.

<sup>177</sup> *ExH*, p. 80.

<sup>178</sup> See Fiddes, *Participating*, pp. 235, 238; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 280; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 111.

<sup>179</sup> See C. S. Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), p. 62; Fiddes, *The Creative*, p. 137; Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 297; Molnar, 'Function of The Trinity', p. 694; Gunton, *Theology through*, p. 79; Weinandy, *Does God*, p. 227; Williams, *On Christian*, pp. 121, 160-61; Gregory C. Higgins, *The Tapestry of Christian Theology: Modern Minds in the Biblical Narrative* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), pp. 129-30; Chester, *Mission*, p. 66; Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 93, n. 2; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 48-49 (nn. 44-45), 59-62, 119, 187 (n. 89); Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 106.

<sup>180</sup> *FC*, p. 73.

<sup>181</sup> *ExH*, p. 80.

goes as far as to say that while Jesus suffers ‘dying in forsakenness’, it is the Father who suffers death itself because the dead cannot suffer. The Father is the one who suffers ‘the infinite grief of love’.<sup>182</sup> At his strongest level of language, Moltmann states that through the suffering and death of the cross both Father and Son suffer: both are ‘in the deepest sense separated’, ‘to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction’. The Father forsakes and the Son is forsaken so the relationship breaks down. This leads to the deepest separation of death, and that broken relationship, for Moltmann, is the essence of the trinitarian suffering of the cross.<sup>183</sup> But even if this degree of separation is resisted (as many would wish to), the demonstration of the Father’s own suffering in the cross and the grief brought to the relationships there is clear. Moltmann notes that for him the relationships between the persons of the Trinity are central to God’s being and therefore the death of Jesus cannot simply be his suffering alone, but must be understood as a trinitarian event.<sup>184</sup>

Taking in account that last remark, and others like it, it is legitimate to comment that this discussion has only concerned Father and Son. It is not fully trinitarian and thus Moltmann’s readers were understandably disappointed to read the sentence that can describe the cross as ‘a trinitarian event between the Son and the Father’ without any mention of the Spirit.<sup>185</sup> The discussion so far has almost exclusively focused on Moltmann’s work from before 1980 in which he has not yet settled into his later habit of referring to all three persons of the Trinity in a ‘trinitarian’ debate. But this earlier pattern is not necessarily an unorthodox use of the word ‘Trinity’ by him, or an exclusion of the Spirit from the cross event. Rather it could be that, for him, it is simply that the trinitarian view of God which allows the identification of the Father as intimately connected to the suffering of the Son. The Spirit is not excluded, but one might say the Spirit was partially neglected in Moltmann’s discussions *in his early writings*. ‘Partially’ because even in his early writing he mentions all three persons of the Trinity in connection with the cross on a few occasions.<sup>186</sup> Elsewhere he at least links the Spirit’s *work* to the cross, if

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<sup>182</sup> *CrG*, p. 251.

<sup>183</sup> *HP*, p. 43 (article from 1968); ‘The “Crucified God”’, pp. 293-95; *CrG*, pp. 154, 254; *ExH*, p. 81.

<sup>184</sup> *CrG*, pp. 210-14, 253-54. In addition, see Chapter 2 of this work, p. 17.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254 (cf. D. Lyle Dabney, ‘Pneumatologia Crucis: Reclaiming Theologia Crucis for a Theology of the Spirit Today’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 53:4 (2000), 511–24 (pp. 520-21); Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 94-95, 243; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 73 (n. 24), 178 (n. 25), 182-3 (n. 57); Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics*, p. 109, n. 43). This pattern is repeated in *FC*, p. 93.

<sup>186</sup> *CrG*, pp. 210-14, 242.

not the Spirit's *suffering*.<sup>187</sup> This demonstrates that the awareness of the full trinitarian importance of the cross is present in Moltmann's work of the early 1970s.

Over time, however, Moltmann has developed the connection between the Spirit's suffering and the cross.<sup>188</sup> As was noted above, in *The Spirit of Life* he makes a concerted effort explicitly to make this connection. Beck outlines this development well: if the Spirit was with Jesus through his life then the Spirit was with Jesus through his death; the Spirit suffers 'but not in the same way'; the Spirit is a 'companion' in Jesus' suffering.<sup>189</sup> The Spirit was with Christ in his forsakenness.<sup>190</sup>

## The Trinitarian Suffering of God with Creation

Through the sufferings of the Spirit and the Son, Moltmann has developed a trinitarian view of God's suffering in connection with creation. Due to the trinitarian openness to all creation he can say that there 'is no suffering which in this history of God is not God's suffering'.<sup>191</sup> Divine suffering has to be understood as trinitarian; as the revelations of the Trinity's sufferings throughout history, as identified by Moltmann, which demonstrate that 'God suffers with us – God suffers from us – God suffers for us'.<sup>192</sup> Thus:

It is the suffering of the Creator who preserves the world and endures its conflicts and contradictions, in order to sustain it in life. It is the special suffering of Christ, who in his community with us and his self-giving for us, suffers the pains of redemption. It is, finally, the suffering of God's Spirit in the birth-pangs of the new creation.<sup>193</sup>

He observes this openness of God to the world most significantly in the indwelling of the Spirit and the incarnation of the Son, yet also reaches back to God's intentions in the original act of creation. This openness means that 'even for God himself within the Trinity' there is brought about something new: God experiences change for creation.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>187</sup> "The "Crucified God", pp. 293-95; *ExH*, p. 81.

<sup>188</sup> See Neal, *Theology As Hope*, pp. 178 (n. 25), 182-3 (n. 57); Kornel Zathureczky, *The Messianic Disruption of Trinitarian Theology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 137-38, n. 41; Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 157.

<sup>189</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 148-49 (cf. *SpL*, pp. 60-68).

<sup>190</sup> *SpL*, pp. 67-68

<sup>191</sup> *CrG*, p. 255.

<sup>192</sup> *TKG*, p. 4 (cf. p. 25).

<sup>193</sup> *WJC*, p. 179.

<sup>194</sup> *CPS*, p. 62 (cf. *FC*, p. 93).

## 5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has observed how the contributions of Moltmann's theology to the theological architecture include God's openness towards all creation. This theme is strongly trinitarian with attention given to the particular experiences of the Spirit's indwelling and the Son's incarnation. This openness is rooted in the Trinity's inner relationships as much as a love for creation. The Spirit and the Son are said to have distinct but not separate roles, as together they share in creation's life and draw creation into the Trinity's life. Concerns have been raised about Moltmann's theology in this area in relation to pantheism, process theology, and God's dependency on creation. Yet this reading of his work indicates that he protects himself from these dangers.

Divine openness and love leads, for Moltmann, to the conclusion that God suffers for creation. In his view, God's love for creation negates a belief in God's impassibility. While this position has been challenged, Moltmann still has the support of much of the theological community in this endeavour. Most importantly, for him, if the cross reveals God then it reveals a suffering God. This suffering is connected to all creation, not just humanity, and, for Moltmann, both the Spirit and Son touch all of creation's sufferings and do not make the other's experiences superfluous. At the same time the whole Trinity is involved in the sufferings of both the Spirit and the Son.

Through these developments Moltmann furnishes the theological architecture with a robust description of the relationship between God and creation that is authentic and mutual. He has tried not to anthropomorphise God yet wishes to explore what consequences God's love for creation has for the divine self. He considers God to have vulnerability because this is what he believes love to mean. Moltmann does not seek to use creation's vulnerability as a model for God's relationship with creation. To this end he offers a theology in which God's welcoming love means that in the relationship with creation God is willing to take on the bad as well as the good, the suffering along with the joy.

The love that God has for creation, explored throughout these last three chapters, is now extended from a creative, caring love to one that suffers with the pains of creation. This adds another level to the depth in which God loves all creation in Moltmann's theology. Not only is the mistreatment of creation in contrast to God's loving wishes for creation but it also brings a related agony to God's self. How much agony, and for how small a part of creation? These are unanswerable questions, yet Moltmann's work suggests that no-one

should be so quick as to assume that there are things in creation, however small, that are insignificant to God's love. For Moltmann, the Trinity's suffering with creation gives a strong lead to the recognition of creation's rights, dignity, and value.<sup>195</sup> This is one of the powerful arguments which Moltmann has towards a greater care of all of creation: if the way humanity treats the plants, animals and ecosystems of this world might actually cause God suffering then those actions should be brought swiftly to light and addressed. The ecological reformation is not simply for creation's sake.

Bauckham questions this conclusion. He worries that such a universal view of Christ's suffering with creation as a basis for the value of all nature and humanity can actually confuse humanity's ethical considerations. For Bauckham the solidarity of Christ with all things does not provide any distinction between the ethical impact of murder, animal cruelty, and even eating vegetables. He claims Moltmann's theology here is 'plainly inadequate' for these important ethical distinctions.<sup>196</sup> There are two responses to this. Firstly, it is important to note that Moltmann does not base the value of creation solely on Christ's solidarity with it. There are many avenues which Moltmann takes to provide a renewed vision of nature and humanity, which the task of this project is to show. For example, he incorporates the biblical witness to eat food. This means that the end-of-life-event of a vegetable is not likeable to murder.<sup>197</sup> Secondly, the task in which Moltmann is engaged gives a helpful context to interpretation. Moltmann attempts to rehabilitate a particular view of creation and so his effort is primarily directed to encourage his readers to consider that God's relationship with creation has true consequence for *all* creation. What is important is that plants and animals have value, in this particular instance, because of God's open relationship with them. So while Moltmann does not go on to explore explicitly the ethical nuances of God's relationship with plants, animals, and humanity, the accusation of 'plainly inadequate' does not give due recognition of the contribution he has made given the problem with which he is faced.

That God suffers with all creation is itself significant, yet there are also more positive implications beyond the negative side of this open relationship. In Moltmann's work the life of creation is intimately intertwined with God's life for pleasure: "The story of the conversion of his creatures to life is also

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<sup>195</sup> *CJF*, p. 68; *WJC*, p. 256.

<sup>196</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 211. This is not such a significant problem for Bauckham that he would reject Moltmann's work altogether for he is largely appreciative of it. In his opinion, Moltmann should be thanked for his exploration of a much neglected area (p. 212).

<sup>197</sup> *GiC*, p. 289.

a story of God's joy in his creatures.<sup>198</sup> For this reason the relationship shared between God and creation is one of mutual encouragement where the common life, which stems from God's life-giving work, grows from the participation of each in the other. For good or for ill, each participant is both influenced by and influences the others. Here life is shared. For Moltmann, this openness leads to greater unity and a final eschatological consummation of the relationship. The next chapter develops this idea. Another significant effect for creation is that it is enabled to participate in God's life and mission. Chapter 7 will return to this topic.

While the precise workings of the relationship between God and creation in the present are, for Moltmann, unknown to humanity, what is important for his contribution here to the theological architecture is that the core of God's relationships is love, for 'God loves the world with the very same love which he himself is in eternity'.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> 'The Scope', p. 103.

<sup>199</sup> *TKG*, p. 57.

# Chapter 6

## The Eschatological Goal of Creation

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks towards the future of creation and considers what Moltmann's eschatological view of creation offers to this gradually growing theological architecture. The entirety of his eschatology is too large a field, so it is necessary to restrict discussion to the future of creation in particular. This is one part of a more extensive theology.<sup>1</sup> Already this work has discussed the eternal Trinity, the origins of creation, and God's ongoing relationship with creation, all of which contribute to his construction of a view of the world and the Divine which powerfully advocates that ecological concerns are taken seriously. This chapter will further progress this aim and explore the shared future of all creation.

For Moltmann, nature and humanity are equally destined for a redeemed eternity. The volume of references which he makes to an eschatological hope that includes a future for all creation is impressively high and instances are present in his first major publication through to his latest.<sup>2</sup> This future shows continuity with his work on original and continuous creation, which leads to a shared future for God and creation. God works towards a perichoretic relationship with all creation that reflects the Trinity's own loving nature. The significance of Moltmann's eschatology for ecological attitudes is great. His work gives value to all of creation as it is, and value to the interactions which

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<sup>1</sup> For example: 'All these horizons of purpose and meaning emerge from the history of Christ. The first goal is justifying faith. The second goal is lordship over the dead and the living. The third goal is the conquest of death, and new creation. The fourth goal is the glorification of God through a redeemed world.' (*WJC*, p. 183.)

<sup>2</sup> For example: *ToH*, pp. 15, 33, 205; *EthH*, pp. 116-18. Many other examples will be seen throughout this chapter.



humanity has with nature. Accompanying this is hope and comfort for all those caught up in the unredeemed reality of creation today.

As this chapter continues, it proceeds with two caveats. The first is that the word ‘eschatology’ may not perfectly fit the subject matter at hand. Tim Chester points out that as all God’s work in creation is so closely connected to the divine redemptive work that it is difficult, ‘and at worst inappropriate’, to differentiate them.<sup>3</sup> T. David Beck asserts that ‘reserving the label “eschatological” for the age to come reflects the tendency of systematic theology to regard the present age as only quasi-eschatological’. For Beck the eschatological kingdom is inaugurated, now and not yet, present and future.<sup>4</sup> This thesis, with an ‘eschatological’ chapter, superficially shares the same problem. However, this chapter seeks to describe more closely Moltmann’s view of the eschatological *goal* of creation. For this reason ‘eschatology’ remains the best term to hand to delineate this chapter’s contents from previous discussions. The term ‘eschatological future’ thus distinguishes that future from the more immediate future. It does not imply that eschatology must refer only to distant events.

The second caveat really belongs to Moltmann. Given the subject of his work that this chapter studies (its concern with future events whose extent cannot be known), a certain amount of speculation of the unknowable has resulted. For him, this ‘expectant and creative imagination’ is necessary and helpful. Without this imagination he says that a consideration of creation’s future would be impossible and theology would be poorer in its absence.<sup>5</sup> That said, he does not consider the general hope of God’s plan for a future for all creation to be mere speculation. Of this hope he is certain, even if its precise shape is as yet unknown. To this hope, and the hope with which it infuses the theological architecture, this chapter now turns.

## 6.2 A COMMON FUTURE FOR NATURE AND HUMANITY

At the core of Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology is the inclusion of planet as well as people. This ensures that the high concern shown for non-human

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<sup>3</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 20, 154.

<sup>5</sup> *GiC*, p. 4.

creation throughout his theology remains consistent to the end; thus it can be reflected within the new theological architecture. This gives a firm platform to the call for an ecological reformation.

## Hope for *All* Creation

Moltmann has consistently used the phrase the ‘new creation of all things’. It appears at the very beginning of his work and continues throughout.<sup>6</sup> On other occasions he refers to a future for the ‘earth’ and for ‘creation’.<sup>7</sup> In these statements he has demonstrated a clear belief in an all-embracing character for God’s redemptive work. He elucidates the contrast between the redemption of humanity *from* the world and redemption *with* it.<sup>8</sup> It is this ‘redemption *with*’, and its potential to draw nature and humanity together, upon which he focuses.<sup>9</sup>

For Moltmann, this common future means more than that both nature and humanity have their own paths that take them to a future existence, for ‘[l]iving hope is always connected with relationships’.<sup>10</sup> For him, all of creation *shares* a common future, a future of ‘universal fellowship’.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere he states:

this means that – all together, each created being in its own way – they will participate in eternal life [...] one with another, they will enter into an unhindered communication towards every side, a communication which has been known from time immemorial as ‘the sympathy of all things’.<sup>12</sup>

The phrase ‘created beings’ can assume many meanings but in this case its context is ‘the sympathy of all things’, which for Moltmann includes all of creation.<sup>13</sup> This ‘unhindered communication’ does not imply that nature will

<sup>6</sup> *ToH*, pp. 15, 33, 205; *RRF*, p. 203; *HP*, p. 183 (1966); *CrG*, p. 352; *CPS*, pp. 63, 294; *FC*, p. 94; *SpL*, p. 9; *CoG*, pp. 70, 238-39 (here Moltmann affirms the view of certain nineteenth Century theologians and uses the phrase ‘all the things of nature’), 261; *The Source*, p. 124; *GSS*, p. 104; *SRA*, pp. 67-73; *EthH*, pp. 23, 41, 126.

<sup>7</sup> *RRF*, pp. 12, 41, 46, 119; *HP*, pp. 21-22, 26 (1966), p. 49 (1968), p. 144 (1961), p. 215 (1966); *ExH*, p. 60; *CPS*, pp. xxiii (preface from 1989), 69; ‘Hope’, in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. by Alan Richardson and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), pp. 270–72 (p. 272); *WJC*, pp. 45-46; ‘The Scope’, pp. 102, 106; *SpL*, pp. 57, 112; *CoG*, pp. xiii, xiv-vi; *GSS*, pp. 104-05; ‘Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit’, p. 252; *SW*, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> *SpL*, p. 89 (cf. *The Source*, p. 74).

<sup>9</sup> For an early example, see *HP*, pp. 21-22 (1966).

<sup>10</sup> *CPS*, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>12</sup> *GiC*, pp. 183-84.

<sup>13</sup> This is made more clear shortly after in the same work when Moltmann uses the phrase in connection with ‘all life systems’, and calls this sympathy ‘universal’ (*Ibid.*, p. 213).

then be able to relate to things around it just as humanity does, or appreciate eternal life in the same way. Differences will still remain: 'Human beings and nature have their own destinies on their own particular levels'.<sup>14</sup> The point here is not that these are separate destinies, for there is still a common future. Rather, it means that the destiny of each is not to become identical.

What a common future also means, for Moltmann, is that 'new creation doesn't abolish bodiliness', rather it 'renews it for eternal livingness'.<sup>15</sup> He comments on the reasonably prevalent reduction of salvation to the 'existential situation' of humanity, which at a popular level might be called their relationship with God or their 'spiritual' existence, and wishes to see 'physical and moral, economic and social' concerns also taken into consideration as well.<sup>16</sup> For Moltmann, these are all part of existence and therefore salvation needs to address them. Hope needs to relate 'to the whole man, to soul and body, [. . .] man in and with his conditions and his conditions in and with him'.<sup>17</sup> His picture of the future is one where physical and social existence are part of eternity, and therefore physical relatedness remains part of eternal life.

## Hope from God

There are many reasons for Moltmann's cosmic hope and the motivation for his contribution to this aspect of the theological architecture. First is God's character, actions and words. Following this is the pattern of creation's current existence as it is now.

### God's Character

Moltmann pays particular attention to the love and faithfulness of God. For him, as is demonstrated throughout this project, the divine love is for all creation and so God's future is for all things.<sup>18</sup> The Trinity's embrace reaches out to everything, not only figuratively speaking: 'the mutual relationships of the Trinity are so wide open that in them the whole world can find a wide space, and redemption, and its own glorification'.<sup>19</sup> God 'presses towards' the gathering of all things so that love may find its fulfilment, ultimately to bring

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> *The Source*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>16</sup> *WJC*, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> *HP*, p. 125 (1960).

<sup>18</sup> 'The "Crucified God"', p. 299; *CrG*, p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> *CoG*, p. 335 (cf. *CPS*, p. 135).

the whole of creation beyond the reach of sin and death.<sup>20</sup>

God's purposes thus include *all* of creation because God is faithful to all that the Divine has made.<sup>21</sup> Since the one who created all of creation is the same as the one who redeems it, for Moltmann, the two events must share the same scope: 'the Reconciler is ultimately the Creator, and thus the eschatological prospect of reconciliation must mean the reconciliation of the whole creation, and must develop an eschatology of all things'.<sup>22</sup> So the 'resolve to create also means a resolve to save'. For Moltmann, then, an intention and readiness to undertake the whole process that would complete creation was already present.<sup>23</sup> According to him, the way in which God remains true to the divine works is 'righteousness'. As God is righteous, hope is universal and all things have a right to life.<sup>24</sup> For this reason God would 'contradict himself' if God did not carry all of creation to the end.<sup>25</sup>

This general line of reasoning attracts a degree of critique from McIlroy even when Moltmann applies it, for example, specifically to his belief in the salvation of all humanity: 'in Moltmann's account, God's creative righteousness becomes a law which God is bound to obey'.<sup>26</sup> Chester's consideration of Miroslav Volf's work also provokes a complaint against the notion that God's love necessitates redemptive actions. Chester asks whether there are negative connotations for God's freedom. However, even as he brings this charge Chester offers a solution which is actually helpful for understanding why Moltmann can hold this view and *not* compromise God's freedom. Chester states: 'It is surely better to see the eschatological perspective in terms of the reaffirmation and fulfilment of God's purposes in creation.'<sup>27</sup> This is exactly what Moltmann does. For him, God's purposes are to bring all of creation to redemption because of the great divine love. This is obviously not what Chester intends, for he rejects universalism.<sup>28</sup> Yet it supports the principle that God set out, in love and freedom, to accomplish creation's redemption, and therefore intends to finish the job.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *CrG*, p. 264; *TKG*, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ps.* 145.

<sup>22</sup> *ToH*, p. 223 (cf. *GiC*, p. 39; *SpL*, p. 112).

<sup>23</sup> *GiC*, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> *ToH*, pp. 204-05.

<sup>25</sup> *CoG*, p. 259 (cf. p. 132).

<sup>26</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 130.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46, 215, 130.

<sup>29</sup> Chapter 3 of this work refers to this discussion in more depth (see 'God's Free Creativity', p. 29), while the discussion of creation's freedom alongside God's purposes continues below (see p. 154). McIlroy reminds us that there is still further thought needed on the way in which

## God's Actions

For Moltmann, God's active relationship with *all* creation demonstrates an eternal love for, and faithfulness to, the world. God's actions thus speak of a hope for all creation. In what way does Moltmann consider this to be so? His own words summarise his position well:

[T]he outpouring of the Holy Spirit 'on all flesh' *must* be followed by 'the resurrection of the body', just as the rebirth of men and women from the Spirit *must* be followed by the rebirth of the cosmos. The resurrection of Christ from the dead *must* be followed by the resurrection of all the dead, and the annihilation of death itself. The reconciliation of the world through Christ's death *must* be followed by the new creation of the world, just as the becoming-human of God *must* be followed by the transformation, transfiguration and 'divinization' of the cosmos.<sup>30</sup>

At least the three following topics emerge from this.

### *The Spirit's Activity in Creation*

The activities of the Spirit, already examined above, are for Moltmann part of the reason for universal hope. The Spirit sighs with all of creation and indicates that there is a longing for the redemption of all.<sup>31</sup> The Spirit enlivens all of creation and directs and sustains it towards new creation.<sup>32</sup> The Spirit indwells all creation, makes it holy and joins the world and God in an enduring relationship.<sup>33</sup> It is the Spirit who unites creation to Christ's history and brings the power of new creation to old creation.<sup>34</sup> For Moltmann, the Spirit is 'the pledge of the future' and 'the presence of the future' in the present, again God's promise of the new creation to come.<sup>35</sup>

### *Christ's Suffering and Death*

Moltmann states: 'in trying to measure the breadth of the Christian hope we must not wander off into far-off realms, but must submerge ourselves in the depths of Christ's death on the cross at Golgotha'.<sup>36</sup> As seen before in Moltmann's work, Christ's death and suffering was concerned not only with

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a universalism such as Moltmann's retains the freedom of humanity which assumedly has the choice to reject God (McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, pp. 53-54). The human aspect to universalism is however outside the focus of this project.

<sup>30</sup> 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 249.

<sup>31</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966).

<sup>32</sup> *CPS*, p. xxiii, writing in 1989; *WJC*, pp. 253-54; *SW*, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup> *CoG*, pp. 317-18.

<sup>34</sup> *CPS*, pp. 28, 287-88; *SpL*, pp. 9, 153.

<sup>35</sup> *HP*, p. 22 (1966); *CPS*, pp. 295-96 (cf. *ToH*, p. 68; *TKG*, p. 89; 'The Fellowship', p. 298).

<sup>36</sup> *CoG*, p. 250.

the predicament of humanity but that of the whole of creation.<sup>37</sup> That cosmic horizon of Christ's suffering leads to, and allows, a cosmic horizon for the redemption brought about by Christ.<sup>38</sup> Christ suffered and died for creation and therefore all of creation must experience the 'annihilation of death' and suffering, for Christ's death is 'the ground of liberation'.<sup>39</sup> So for Moltmann, Christian speculation on the future 'can only be satisfied' with a view of the transformation of all things; 'the whole of reality'.<sup>40</sup> The Son became human for the sake of all creation.<sup>41</sup>

### *Christ's Resurrection*

Moltmann believes that the whole history of Christ was open to all of creation, for the purpose of its salvation.<sup>42</sup> The resurrection finds itself at the pinnacle of this process: 'Hope recognizes the power and also the faithfulness of God in this story of the resurrection of the crucified one. Such an event cannot be forgotten!'<sup>43</sup> As with his view of the cross, when Jesus suffered for and with *all* creation, Moltmann understands the resurrection to include all and anticipate the general resurrection and new creation of all.<sup>44</sup> For him the resurrection is a clear sign of the things to come for all creation. It could be argued that for him there is no stronger promise of what is to come than Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead.<sup>45</sup>

Chester claims that in Moltmann's work the resurrection does not serve as a basis for any hope actually *in the present* but rather points only to an *eschatological* hope for resurrection. For Chester, this makes little difference for the present day.<sup>46</sup> Yet, for example, Moltmann's theology of the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost to bring the new experience of the cross and resurrection to creation shows a transformation of the present.<sup>47</sup>

### **God's Promises**

Hope for the future also comes, for Moltmann, from the promises of God. These promises have validity because of God's character and actions. Molt-

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 5 of this work, p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> *CrG*, pp. 60, 91-92, 224-25; *WJC*, p. 247; *CoG*, p. 233.

<sup>39</sup> *WJC*, p. 253; *CPS*, pp. 256-57 (cf. *ToH*, p. 137).

<sup>40</sup> *HP*, p. 36 (1968).

<sup>41</sup> *TKG*, p. 116.

<sup>42</sup> *ToH*, p. 164; *HP*, pp. 182-83 (1966); *CrG*, p. 106; *WJC*, p. 183.

<sup>43</sup> *HP*, p. 183 (1966).

<sup>44</sup> *ToH*, p. 21; *RRF*, pp. 33, 36-37; *HP*, p. 87 (1962); *CrG*, p. 173; *CPS*, pp. 287-88; *GiC*, p. 7; *WJC*, pp. 170, 247-53; 'The Scope', p. 105; *SpL*, p. 153; *CoG*, pp. 234, 338.

<sup>45</sup> *ToH*, pp. 69, 88, 171; *HP*, pp. 182-83 (1966).

<sup>46</sup> Chester, *Mission*, pp. 23, 150.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 4 of this work, p. 91).

mann readily speaks of God ‘promising’ the future new creation of all things.<sup>48</sup> Both the resurrection of Christ and the presence of the Spirit serve as parts of this promise but the foundations for this view are deeper still.

On a number of occasions, Moltmann considers scriptural verses which refer to the resurrection also to include the physical. In the gospel accounts he points to Matthew 19.28, where Jesus mentions ‘the renewal of all things’, which implies to Moltmann ‘the *rebirth* [...] *of the whole cosmos*’.<sup>49</sup> From the letters of the New Testament he highlights other verses. ‘[God] will give life to your mortal bodies’, speaks of the expectation of the physical nature of the resurrection.<sup>50</sup> 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 21.4 speak of the end of death, which for Moltmann is ‘of all the living’.<sup>51</sup> He understands ‘[Christ] will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory’, as an emphatic statement that is ‘not merely speaking in a spiritual sense’.<sup>52</sup> ‘I am making all things new’ thus means that nothing is lost and everything is ‘brought back again in new form’.<sup>53</sup> The subject of sabbath is an additional important part of the promise of a future for all things for Moltmann. He sees its foundations in the Christian Scriptures: ‘According to biblical traditions, creation is aligned towards its redemption from the very beginning; for the creation of the world points forward to the sabbath, “the feast of creation”’.<sup>54</sup> So he speaks of the sabbath as a promise of the future ‘built into the initial creation’.<sup>55</sup> Earlier discussion also should not be forgotten, namely his theory that ‘all flesh’, seen in various biblical passages, explicitly includes all life (animals and plants). This also influences his discussion of the future resurrection.<sup>56</sup>

## Hope through the Inseparability of Nature and Humanity

Having examined at the foundations for Moltmann’s hope of a future for all creation, now discussion moves to the way in which the interrelatedness and interdependency of creation also contributes to this hope. That the universe

<sup>48</sup> *ToH*, p. 337; *ExH*, p. 45; *CPS*, p. 256.

<sup>49</sup> *EoG*, p. 30 (cf. *WJC*, p. 249).

<sup>50</sup> Rom. 8.11; *CoG*, p. 69.

<sup>51</sup> *WJC*, p. 194; *CoG*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>52</sup> Phil. 3.21; *TJ*, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. 21.5; *CoG*, p. 265.

<sup>54</sup> *GiC*, p. 5 (cf. p. 6).

<sup>55</sup> *CoG*, p. 264 (cf. p. 266).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70. See the discussion in Chapter 4 of this work, p. 55.

was created in such a way speaks to him of its eternal destiny. For him, the Christian hope is for an eternal body, and there is no conceivable existence for a body without an environment to which the body relates. In observing the power of death over the body which affects all creation he states: ‘The corporeality which thus comes to the fore in hope is plainly the starting point for the solidarity of the believer with the whole of creation which, like him, is subjected to vanity – in hope.’<sup>57</sup> This theme is retained in the later, more overtly environmentally concerned writings:

[Humanity] is viewed as belonging within the enduring cohesion of the whole creation. Creation has its meaning for human beings, and human beings have their meaning for the community of creation. If we are to understand what human existence is, and what human beings are destined or called to be, we must see these human beings as belonging within the all-embracing coherences of God’s history with the world, the history of creation and the history of redemption.<sup>58</sup>

Moltmann continues to write of the involvement and dependency which nature and humanity share in this world, and which he claims is carried on into the redeemed eternity. Some of the phrases used are striking: ‘In physical terms, believers are bound together in a common destiny with the whole world and all earthly creatures’ and ‘human history is consummated in “the resurrection of nature”, because only in and through that is a “deliverance” of human life conceivable’.<sup>59</sup> For him, humanity is ‘embedded in nature’ and will remain so into eternity.<sup>60</sup>

This raises some interesting questions concerning the exact nature of an eternal existence with physical inter-relatedness. Humanity’s present experience of physical existence is apparently inseparable from the processes of material exchange and competition which inevitably lead to loss for some and gain for others. Moltmann anticipates some of these questions and poses them himself: ‘Will human needs and human dependence on food, air, climate and so forth be abolished?’ The answer for him is clearly ‘no’; that would result in an end to the ‘community of creation’ which lives together in interrelatedness. Was the interaction and co-support between nature and humanity only temporary? Again, ‘no’.<sup>61</sup> Moltmann also offers his own question in reply: ‘how are we supposed to eat and drink in the kingdom of God if there

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<sup>57</sup> *ToH*, p. 214.

<sup>58</sup> *GiC*, p. 189.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68; *WJC*, pp. 253-54 (cf. p. 274); *CoG*, p. 260.

<sup>60</sup> *CoG*, p. 132 (cf. *CPS*, p. 134).

<sup>61</sup> *WJC*, p. 262.



are no longer to be any bodily needs?'.<sup>62</sup> A simple response would be that such ideas were meant to be taken metaphorically or anthropologically, or that they speak of actions within the partially realised kingdom that is already present to creation. This, however, still leaves the question concerning the nature of a bodily eternal existence for those who believe in the resurrection of the body, a significant idea in Christianity. Moltmann is not the only one to grapple with the mystery of a physical resurrection of the dead.<sup>63</sup>

This component of Moltmann's eschatology is possibly vulnerable to a more general criticism of his work: that he is overly speculative, and on occasion goes beyond what is helpful.<sup>64</sup> For example, can Christian theology claim that the structures of creation as we know them (and that only partially) are set to remain forever? This would be a bold claim. Even so, Moltmann's basis for this approach seems to be: 'This is the way God made it and so this is the way it must be!' However, even Paul at the same time as a defence of the resurrection of the body speaks of its difference to the existing body: 'you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed'.<sup>65</sup> The difference, though, between seed and body does not really give any warrant for declarations that there can be *no* similarities. The seed and the body share many characteristics at the same time as not being identical, otherwise they would simply be separate entities.<sup>66</sup> The unpredictability of the future should not, therefore, disallow the speculation of similarities between creation now and in its future. Thus while Moltmann's reasoning may be speculative this is not prohibited. Indeed, Catherine LaCugna encourages speculation as long as its status as speculation is remembered.<sup>67</sup> Moltmann's central concern in these thoughts about creation's common future is that nature and humanity are recognised to be journeying together, and the concept of the redemption of one without

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 373, n. 62.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Cor. 15. The concrete nature of what physical co-dependency in eternity looks like is extremely difficult to envisage. If food is eaten then what of the supposed eternal permanence of all creation? However, the assertion of an eternal digestive system is a problem of speculative detail and need not detract from the wider implications of Moltmann's claim that all creation will exist in eternity.

<sup>64</sup> For example: Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 167; Richard Bauckham, 'Eschatology in *The Coming of God*', in *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. by Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), pp. 1–34 (p. 12); Chester, *Mission*, p. 27; Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 105; McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> 1 Cor. 15.37.

<sup>66</sup> Moltmann allows for this similarity and difference: 'Human beings and nature have their own destinies on their own particular levels; but in their enslavement and their liberty they share a common history.' (*GiC*, p. 69).

<sup>67</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, 'Philosophers and Theologians on the Trinity', *Modern Theology*, 2:3 (1986), 169–81 (p. 180, n. 24).

the other seems untenable to him. The inventive ideas that come with this concern can be welcomed for their contribution to the community's wider debate and their suggestions for ecological re-imagining.

## A Common Future

Above is Moltmann's reasoning for an eschatological future for all creation. This common future for nature and humanity is specifically one in which all of creation is newly created. He asserts that salvation is not a spiritual event for humanity's spiritual existence, rather it takes hold of the whole person and whole world together. There is not a separate future for nature from humanity's future. He gives various reasons to hope for a future that embraces *all* of creation.

This theme of a common future for nature and humanity is important to Moltmann's environmental concern as it speaks of a common hope for all of creation so that it is not given up in hopelessness, nor is its suffering ignored. This common future brings solidarity between nature and humanity which brings their lives together.<sup>68</sup> In this he provides a strong voice for the lasting value of all of creation that counters the depreciation of nature in many contemporary societies. He further contributes to a theological architecture that has no temporal boundaries for its care of creation.

## 6.3 A SHARED FUTURE FOR GOD AND CREATION

Moltmann speaks of an eschatology that does not only involve a future for God's creation, as in a new state of existence, rather he looks towards a new future in which God and creation *together* find something new; a 'closer fellowship'.<sup>69</sup> This 'sympathy of all things' to which he has referred is not simply for creation but includes God, and indeed centres around God.<sup>70</sup> The link between the Trinity and creation is such that: 'God comes to his glory in that creation arrives at its consummation. Creation arrives at its consummation in that God comes to his glorification.'<sup>71</sup> God consummates

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<sup>68</sup> *HP*, pp. 21-22 (1966).

<sup>69</sup> *TJ*, p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> *GiC*, pp. 6, 183-84, 213.

<sup>71</sup> *FC*, p. 94.

this relationship through the full reconciliation of creation to the Divine and the repair of the ruptures that have occurred throughout history.<sup>72</sup> It is also a relationship in which creation now fully knows and praises God.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps, however, the overriding image of the Trinity and the new creation, for Moltmann, is their unification. In this he holds together the concepts of relationality, care, and openness consistently through the future aspects of his theology. Incorporating this theme into the new theological architecture gives the latter a similarly consistent emphasis on the divine love for creation.

## Creation and God Unified

The language of unification seems to encapsulate Moltmann's vision of the future as it highlights the relational aspect of the goal of redemption. The loving, seeking openness of the Trinity towards the world finds its completion in 'the gathering and uniting of men and the whole creation with God and in God'.<sup>74</sup> The mission of Christ was aimed towards this goal, as is the activity of the Spirit.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, Moltmann presents it as a task of the Church if it is to reflect truly the divine love.<sup>76</sup> For him, God does not desire a future without creation safely present also.<sup>77</sup>

This union is more than the simple location of two separate entities alongside each other. It is a union which reflects the perichoretic relationships of the Trinity itself.<sup>78</sup> According to Moltmann, God's openness is one of the roots of salvation for creation. In a reflection of the Trinity's eternal perichoretic relationships he describes salvation's reliance on the openness of the Trinity 'for the reception and unification of the whole creation'.<sup>79</sup> It is this openness which means that 'the whole world can find a wide space, and redemption, and its own glorification'.<sup>80</sup> God is open so that all things can be 'gathered' together and both God and creation can find the 'joy of union'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *ToH*, p. 205.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281; *WJC*, p. 183.

<sup>74</sup> *CPS*, p. 60 (cf. *CrG*, p. 335; *CPS*, pp. 59-64; *FC*, p. 91; *TKG*, pp. 90, 96, 148-50, 157, 178; 'The Fellowship', p. 300; 'Some Reflections on the Social Doctrine of the Trinity', in *The Christian Understanding of God Today: Theological Colloquium on the Occasion of the 400th Anniversary of the Foundation of Trinity College, Dublin*, ed. by James M. Byrne (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 1993), pp. 104-11 (p. 105)).

<sup>75</sup> *CPS*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63; *FC*, p. 94; Lapede et al., *Jewish Monotheism*, p. 55.

<sup>78</sup> *CoG*, p. 295.

<sup>79</sup> *TKG*, p. 157.

<sup>80</sup> *CoG*, p. 335.

<sup>81</sup> *CPS*, pp. 60, 64; *FC*, p. 91.

This idea presents two perspectives: God in creation, and creation in God.

## God in Creation

An often repeated phrase of Moltmann's is 'all in all', and this sums up for him the presence of God in eternity.<sup>82</sup> God will be 'immediately' and 'universally' present in creation.<sup>83</sup> Another word which he uses regularly is the word 'dwell'.<sup>84</sup> The concept of indwelling helps his description sound less like a mechanical idea of God's location within creation in some spatial sense and more like the relationally orientated idea that God makes creation the divine home.<sup>85</sup> Here the idea of the eschatological sabbath comes into play. The end will reflect the beginning, in that the rest which God demonstrated in the sabbath day of the creation account will be reclaimed; God will come to rest in God's 'eternal sabbath'.<sup>86</sup>

Moltmann writes of the eschatological divine indwelling as the goal for God's *Shekinah*, particularly in *The Coming of God*.<sup>87</sup> He differentiates between *Shekinah* and sabbath: the latter is 'the presence of God in the time of those he has created' (or the 'presence of eternity in time'), and *Shekinah* is 'the presence of God in the space' of creation.<sup>88</sup> Yet he also links the two through the concept of rest, the '*menuhah*', which is the aim of both sabbath and indwelling. He also describes the sabbath as the initial promise and the *Shekinah* as the fulfilment, although this is not to restrict the concept of sabbath away from the fulfilment of creation. In addition, he writes of the arrival of God's *Shekinah* at its own rest and 'eternal sabbath'.<sup>89</sup> This rest is a vision for him of all the lands to be filled with God's glory, and humanity to be 'at one with God, nature, and [it]self'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>82</sup> *ToH*, pp. 88, 278, 281; *HP*, pp. 50 (1968), 87 (1962); *CrG*, pp. 264, 349; *ExH*, p. 40; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 125; *CPS*, p. 100; *FC*, p. 120; *GiC*, p. 288; *SpL*, p. 212; *CoG*, pp. 238, 294, 335; *GSS*, p. 185; *EiT*, pp. 50, 100, 310; *SW*, p. 60; *SRA*, pp. 32, 95, 152, 157, 168, 184-85, 207; *EthH*, p. 122.

<sup>83</sup> *ToH*, p. 282 (cf. *SpL*, p. 57).

<sup>84</sup> *RRF*, pp. 36-37, 61, 67; *HP*, pp. 49-50 (1968); *TJ*, p. 60; *CrG*, pp. 282, 335, 349; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 129; *CPS*, pp. 60, 100, 294; *FC*, p. 125; *EoG*, pp. 77-78; *GiC*, pp. xii-xiii, 5, 64, 96, 150, 183-84, 213, 288; 'The Scope', pp. 101-02; *SpL*, p. 57; *CoG*, pp. 266, 295; 'Shekinah', pp. 171, 176, 182-83; *GSS*, pp. 104-05; 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 251.

<sup>85</sup> *GiC*, pp. 5, 96; 'The Scope', p. 102.

<sup>86</sup> *EoG*, pp. 77-78; *GiC*, p. 288; 'The Scope', p. 102.

<sup>87</sup> *CoG*, p. xiii.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 295; 'Shekinah', pp. 182-83.

<sup>90</sup> *RRF*, p. 61; *CrG*, p. 282.

For Moltmann, God is active in creation to make creation into a suitable home, to rid the world of the negatives of ‘death, suffering, tears, guilt, and evil’.<sup>91</sup> Here is the work of God in history to bring about the perfection of creation and make it a home fit for God:

In the operation and indwelling of the Spirit, the creation of the Father through the Son, and the reconciliation of the world with God through Christ, arrive at their goal. The presence and the efficacy of the Spirit is the eschatological goal of creation and reconciliation. All the works of God end in the presence of the Spirit.<sup>92</sup>

Yet as well as God’s preparation of creation *in readiness* of the divine indwelling, Moltmann also speaks of God’s eschatological indwelling as *the event* that ultimately transforms creation. Creation is both prepared *for* God’s presence and ultimately transformed *through* God’s future fuller presence. God’s coming presence is that which brings ‘meaning’ and allows creation fully to take part in God’s meaning, and so it is this presence which consummates creation, makes it the new heaven and the new earth, and makes it ‘the house of God’.<sup>93</sup> It is the divine presence that conquers death.<sup>94</sup> So while Moltmann speaks of creation’s preparation to be fit to receive God, also God’s presence enables creation to be its true self and be ‘holy and glorious, good, whole, and beautiful’ as it reflects the indwelling God.<sup>95</sup>

This is not to forget the importance of the incarnation for the transformation of creation. Even though God’s future indwelling is pivotal, Moltmann’s Christ-centred eschatology still highlights Son’s crucial role:

This vision of an end of the history of torture, by the earthly indwelling of God in a new creation without suffering, death and lamentation, is in no way the negation of the cross of Christ in the midst of this history, but rather the perfection of his lordship. Christian hope for the world is not directed towards an abstract other-worldly pantheism in which all that Christ has done to overcome the world disappears, but rather towards the fact that ‘God will be all in all’.<sup>96</sup>

Both the work of Christ and the coming presence of God make decisive and indispensable contributions to history and the redemption of creation, for they are interrelated parts of God’s wider relationship with the world. A view of God’s indwelling as the turning point for creation’s transformation does

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<sup>91</sup> *RRF*, p. 61.

<sup>92</sup> *GiC*, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> *CrG*, p. 349; *GiC*, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Creation and Redemption’, p. 125; *FC*, p. 120.

<sup>95</sup> *GiC*, p. 279; ‘Shekinah’, pp. 182-83.

<sup>96</sup> *HP*, pp. 49-50 (1968).

not neglect the work of Christ because it is *Christ's* work which makes the eschatological future possible. In Moltmann's theology this is clear: Christ is 'the redeemer of the whole creation process'.<sup>97</sup>

## Creation in God

For Moltmann, God comes to dwell fully in creation at the eschaton. Yet this is not the full picture because his view of the eschatological future, as elsewhere, manifests the perichoretic nature of his trinitarianism:

To throw open the circulatory movement of the divine light and the divine relationships, and to take men and women, with the whole of creation, into the life-stream of the triune God: that is the meaning of creation, reconciliation and glorification.<sup>98</sup>

Moltmann demonstrates that he believes it is important that the consummated relationship between God and creation maintains both the dynamics of God in creation *and* creation in God. The 'eternal sabbath' is 'the rest of God and rest in God'.<sup>99</sup> The Trinity not only finds a home in creation but also becomes the home for creation.<sup>100</sup> In this way creation comes to a fully participative relationship with and in God.<sup>101</sup>

It is important to note that Moltmann does not claim that the perichoretic relationship of God and creation is exactly the same as the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity. This would certainly be problematic.<sup>102</sup> He states that the way God indwells creation and the way creation indwells God are distinguishable: 'God's indwelling in the world is divine in kind; the world's indwelling in God is worldly in kind.' What exactly do indwellings that are 'divine in kind' and 'worldly in kind' look like? Moltmann does not give a detailed breakdown of what these mean. He simply attempts to emphasise that God indwells creation most definitely *as God* and creation indwells God most definitely *as creation*. For he also highlights that the transformed creation is still 'finite and created', unlike God.<sup>103</sup>

A number of commentators show a certain uneasiness with this view of God and creation's future because it combines awkwardly with Moltmann's

<sup>97</sup> *WJC*, p. 286, explicitly referred to as the *creatio nova*.

<sup>98</sup> *TKG*, p. 178.

<sup>99</sup> *EoG*, p. 78.

<sup>100</sup> *GiC*, p. 5 (cf. *HP*, p. 36 (1968); 'Some Reflections', p. 106).

<sup>101</sup> *GiC*, pp. 150, 184 (cf. Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 73).

<sup>102</sup> For example, McCall, *Which Trinity?*, pp. 156-74.

<sup>103</sup> *GiC*, pp. 150, 184.

use of *zimsum*, and the creation of the *nihil*, in the original act of creation. In short, if in creation in the beginning it was necessary for God to withdraw the divine self to allow an ‘Other’ to exist, can this otherness be said to persist when God refills the space that was forsaken and creation fully indwells God?<sup>104</sup> Deane-Drummond disagrees and argues that as creation has always been essentially different to God its difference is retained even with God’s full indwelling presence.<sup>105</sup> Deane-Drummond’s point is persuasive, especially given the possibility of a shift in Moltmann’s emphasis to God as the ‘living space’ of creation.<sup>106</sup>

Moltmann is questioned similarly in relation to creation’s time: if God restricted the divine eternity in order to give creation time, but then goes on to derestrict it, this results in the unknown status of creation’s time.<sup>107</sup> A similar critique could be made of the notion of the freedom of creation coming through God’s self-restriction of the divine omniscience.<sup>108</sup> Does Moltmann take into account his own assertion that God’s *full presence* brings the fullness of free life to creation? One possibility for aligning these differing foundations for free is that a certain kind of freedom was given through self-restriction while a fuller freedom will come through divine indwelling. This invites the question of why this fuller freedom was not given in the first place. It seems better to concentrate on his idea that God, from the beginning, is the ‘living space’ of creation because this idea is more coherent with his work as a whole.

## A Good Future

This shared future is essentially a good future for all creation; it will have ‘status and being’, ‘everlasting life, enduring continuance, and eternal glory’.<sup>109</sup> Moltmann gives a statement early on which gives a good foundation for his approach to the future of creation: ‘God will dwell in [creation] with his essence. This is to say that the new creation corresponds to the essence of God and is illuminated and transfigured by God’s earthly presence.’<sup>110</sup> By itself, the phrase ‘corresponds to the essence of God’ could easily become a hostage to misinterpretation. Fortunately, however, he goes on to expand on

<sup>104</sup> Walsh, ‘Theology of Hope’, pp. 74-76; Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, pp. 254-55; Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 74, n. 10.

<sup>105</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 119.

<sup>106</sup> See this work, Chapter 3, p. 43.

<sup>107</sup> Law, *The Future*, p. 315; Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 217, n. 109.

<sup>108</sup> *CoG*, p. 282.

<sup>109</sup> *ToH*, p. 205; *SpL*, p. 9.

<sup>110</sup> *RRF*, p. 36.

the idea. He states that it means that creation becomes that which is fitting to be indwelt by God. Creation finds itself in *alignment with aspects* of God's essence, as opposed to somehow being re-made to be the *same* essence as God. That is, all things will share God's creativity, life, perfect communication, and play. These effects are accompanied by an end to pain and indifference because all things correspond to God's good essence.

It is in this new creation that death will be no more.<sup>111</sup> The threat of annihilation will be gone from the whole of creation.<sup>112</sup> For Moltmann, this gives a clear message of what humanity's attitude towards death and suffering should be, not just the death of humans but the death which troubles every part of creation: humanity should 'stand in solidarity' with creation and intercede 'on behalf of it'.<sup>113</sup> His desire for eschatology to inform ecology is clear.

In the new creation peace will reign over creation. It is to be a 'day of rest' for all things, human or otherwise.<sup>114</sup> For Moltmann this does not imply the separation of the good elements of creation from the bad, such as good people from bad people, or of the removal of humanity out of a natural world that restricts and harms. Rather, for him it is the transformation of everything to be what it should be; humanity to true humanity; nature to true nature; the relationships between everything made whole and healthy; God and creation's relationship consummated; *Shalōm* is found.<sup>115</sup> This 'bliss' of creation is again something which affects the present; the Holy Spirit is already at work to bring it about in creation, a work which humanity can hope for, correspond to, anticipate, and already participate or live in.<sup>116</sup>

For Moltmann this hope for an end to suffering makes a difference for all creation.<sup>117</sup> All of creation is 'enslaved' by death and 'transitoriness', which causes it to suffer.<sup>118</sup> He even goes so far as to say that nature 'lies in anguish', that creation 'eagerly await[s]' and is 'longing' for its freedom from suffering.<sup>119</sup> He is of course referring back to the New Testament, such as Romans 8 which describes the eager waiting of creation. But these are still difficult concepts to grasp; in what way do plants or other simple life-forms

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67; 'The Scope', p. 106; *SpL*, p. 74; *CoG*, p. xiii; *The Source*, p. 124.

<sup>112</sup> *ToH*, pp. 161-62; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 130; *FC*, pp. 125, 171.

<sup>113</sup> *ExH*, pp. 188-89; *HP*, p. 21 (1966).

<sup>114</sup> *ExH*, p. 176; *GiC*, p. 296.

<sup>115</sup> *ToH*, p. 329.

<sup>116</sup> *CPS*, p. 291; 'The Fellowship', p. 299.

<sup>117</sup> *RRF*, p. 136.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 93, 218; *HP*, p. 21 (1966); *CPS*, p. 83; *SpL*, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> *RRF*, p. 93; *HP*, p. 21 (1966); *CrG*, p. 101.



suffer?

These are not challenges for Moltmann alone; the whole of the Christian tradition has to wrestle with the meaning of those verses from Romans. He does, however, interpret them in such a way that every part of creation finds eternal life and bliss, which is not necessarily the view of all Christian traditions. Yet his work issues a strong challenge to take seriously the future of all creation. For him, the shared future of God and creation's perichoretic indwelling 'leads to a cosmic adoration of God and an adoration of God in all things'.<sup>120</sup> It also speaks of the importance of *this* creation which is being prepared to be God's home. *This* creation matters. Creation in God shows a future of perfect participation, and inspires such behaviour in the present. The picture of the future, for Moltmann, inspires the actions of the present so that people seek to align creation's present with its anticipated future. The eschatological goal gives a task to humanity.

## 6.4 CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY: FROM CREATION TO REDEMPTION

As well as the hope for a good future for God and all creation, Moltmann also considers the relationship of that eschatological future to the past, present, and more immediate future of creation. He seeks a balance between a view that says the future of creation is completely different to the present (discontinuity) and one that says the future is simply a product of the present (continuity). To settle on one or the other would be insufficient and dangerous. Complete discontinuity leads to a despair for all actions in the present as they will not make any lasting difference. Complete continuity also leads to despair because the extrapolation of current trends gives a very bleak picture of the future, and gives no hope for mistakes already made. The balance between the two in Moltmann's both makes available both encouragement and responsibility to the new theological architecture and the ecological reformation. Activity to aid creation in the present is meaningful while there is hope for the transformation of mistakes and inadequacies.

The discussion concerns Moltmann's use of the theme of discontinuity before an examination of the theme of continuity. There are various criticisms

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<sup>120</sup> GSS, p. 104.

of his work in this area to assess alongside a consideration of the way in which the two ideas fit together.

## Discontinuity

The theme of discontinuity has been understandably open to misunderstanding in Moltmann's work. From the beginning of his career he has seemingly spoken of a future which will not 'develop from the present' and is in 'contradiction' to it.<sup>121</sup> His theology points towards the 'new creation of all things'.<sup>122</sup> It is 'totally new': 'not by the development or evolution of the old [...] not out of the possibilities which we possess [...] the new shows itself as God's creative act. God's new reality is always like a *novum ex nihilo*'.<sup>123</sup> Some of Moltmann's statements of the discontinuous future seem to speak of discontinuity at such a high level that there seems to be a conflict with his view of a real future for this creation. For example: 'The new is preceded by the destruction of the old, that which has become guilty'.<sup>124</sup> And another:

The new creation does not emerge out of the restoration of the old creation; it follows from creation's end. Out of 'the negation of the negative' a Being arises that has overcome the conflict between being and non-being and is hence absolutely new.<sup>125</sup>

These are strong statements, yet their context warns us away from an overly literal interpretation. The previous two comments are directed at humanity as well as nature and so such an understanding would also necessitate humanity's destruction. This cannot, however, be Moltmann's intent as the discussions are directed at the hope for *all* creation through God's new creation. A further examination of the context gives more reason to moderate interpretation. The earlier quotation, for example, precedes the notion of a real hope for the past: the future comes 'like a spirit of resurrection into the dead bones (Ezekiel 37), creating hope against hope'.<sup>126</sup> It does not seem that all the old has been destroyed. Concerning the second quotation, while his focus may be on the newness of creation, at the same time he clearly finishes the chapter with an affirmation that the present creation is renewed and transformed.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *ToH*, pp. 102-06.

<sup>122</sup> *CoG*, p. 261.

<sup>123</sup> *RRF*, pp. 9, 12.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> *FC*, p. 164.

<sup>126</sup> *RRF*, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> *FC*, pp. 168-71.

The rejection of the 'restoration of the old creation' is a specific reference to the restoration of the old original state of creation (which subsequent discussion will demonstrate Moltmann certainly does reject), and following this trajectory 'creation's end' refers to the end of this current state of creation. Creation will be 'absolutely new' in that it will never have before existed without the 'conflict between being and non-being'. Hence the old way of things passes away; all is made new. The old has gone; the new life of creation has come.

Moltmann's point is that the future is very different to the present, that is, to what is seen in history. This future can only come about from God's intervention in some way to do something different. He asserts that because of this we cannot build a picture of the future through an extrapolation from present trends. This is not simply because there are too many variables for humanity to comprehend, but because the 'course of the world process' does not lead to the 'wholeness and unity of reality'.<sup>128</sup> For him, the future which is awaited is in conflict with life on earth in the present. History itself needs to be transformed, otherwise it leads to resignation that things will never change enough to reach the intended goal. The trends of history do not give much comfort.<sup>129</sup> Similarly evolution cannot reach the desired goal for creation.<sup>130</sup>

This is not a claim that there should be *no* extrapolation used to assess the development of the near future, only that it is not a tool to declare what the future will ultimately be. Rather it is a way to judge the successes of our current endeavours: 'Social policy only emerges when sociological, economic and purely scientific extrapolations are linked with ethical anticipations. [. . .] [T]he linking of what we know and can do with what we hope for and desire.'<sup>131</sup> Extrapolation is a vital part of humanity's struggle through life, but on its own it does not recognise that there is another movement sweeping through history.

Moltmann, however, makes us aware of an apparent criticism of his declaration in *The Theology of Hope* that extrapolation is not enough:

Hendrik Berkhof maintained the thesis: 'The future is an extrapolation of what has already been given in Christ and the Spirit.' He developed this further [. . .]: 'Eschatology can only exist as an extrapolation of experiences which we have of God in our own world and history.'<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *ToH*, p. 278.

<sup>129</sup> *RRF*, pp. 119, 196-98 (cf. *FC*, p. 48).

<sup>130</sup> *WJC*, p. 287 (cf. Southgate, *The Groaning*, p. 76).

<sup>131</sup> *FC*, p. 56.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Berkhof's theory of extrapolation seems to be more nuanced than the one Moltmann has presented and rejected. For Berkhof, extrapolation does not exclude God's work. In effect, Berkhof says: 'We cannot claim anything for the future which is not in continuity with what we have already seen of God.' It was outlined above that Moltmann bases his hope for the future on God's character, actions and promises. In this way his theory of hope from God is similar to Berkhof's theory of extrapolating from 'what has already been given in Christ and the Spirit'. For example: 'It is not human activity that makes the future. It is the inner necessity of the Christ event itself'.<sup>133</sup> Moltmann's proposal may have an additional emphasis on God's promises, yet essentially the argument seems to concern semantics. Both see God as definitive in the world's transformation but use extrapolation in different ways in the discussion. Unfortunately, the conversation between these two writers is hampered because of the opposite directions in which they think in this instance: Berkhof speaks clearly of the past moving into the future and God's work to get it there. For Moltmann it is the future that is moving into the past. He does not wish to extrapolate the future from the past because he simply does not believe that that is the way in which it happens. This is different to other critiques that call into question the discontinuity of the future with history itself.

Moltmann's rejection of an extrapolation from past to future has merit. For Christian theology simply to speak of the extrapolation of God's actions in history could be to miss the radical newness of the new creation. For instance, if the future is extrapolated from the impact already had by God on creation and society then a guaranteed outcome of goodness may not be obvious. God's work has evidently not made creation perfect. For Moltmann, it is important to recognise the great difference 'between the "realm of freedom," which we hope will ultimately free the whole creation from its misery, and the beginning of freedom here in the midst of a world full of bondage and slavery'.<sup>134</sup> In other words, God has not yet done all God will do. Therefore the extent of God's actions should not be extrapolated from the limited amount God has already done. Moltmann's emphasis on divine promises now grows in significance. While God's actions in the future will have continuity with those actions of the past, God has promised to do a new thing.

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<sup>133</sup> *ToH*, p. 216.

<sup>134</sup> *RRF*, p. 66.

### New Creation Verses Restoration

One noteworthy example of the discontinuity between the future and the history of creation is Moltmann's view that the new creation is not the restoration of an original, pre-fall, and perfect creation. Instead the new creation will be unlike creation has ever been, and is the ultimate goal of God's creative activity. Creation and redemption are part of one as yet unfinished process in which redemption is the guiding part and orientation, and original creation is not.

Concerning the state of original creation, Moltmann sees within Christian tradition the view that the world will return to the original perfect state that it had in the beginning.<sup>135</sup> He does not hold the view that creation should go back exactly to 'what it was' for several reasons. Firstly, for him this does not match the witness to the new creation in the Christian Scriptures, which he understands to declare that 'Omega is more than alpha'.<sup>136</sup> Secondly, God's relationship with creation is different in the end from at the beginning: 'God himself, with his eternal life and glory, will dwell in this creation and be "all in all"'.<sup>137</sup> Thirdly, Moltmann suggests a simple, more philosophically based objection: 'The restoration of the original creation would have to be followed by the next Fall, and by the next redemption'.<sup>138</sup> For him then, the new creation is not the restoration of creation to its original state. God will do something new.<sup>139</sup> These claims have inevitably brought him into conflict with others. Gordon Spykman, for instance, argues that the Christian Scriptures in fact describe a restoration to the original creation and he seems to assert that it is the potential for perfection which was present in the beginning that is restored.<sup>140</sup> Moltmann could still argue in reply that what is important is to remove the potential for *imperfection* which was present in the beginning.

For Moltmann, the original creation contained the promise of what is to come and in that sense the new creation corresponds to the old. However, it 'surpasses everything that can be told about creation in the beginning'.<sup>141</sup> The creation in the beginning was good, although its goodness was not in its completeness but in its identity as the beginning of a process that would end with an eternal creation. It was from the beginning an open creation, 'not

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<sup>135</sup> *CoG*, p. 263.

<sup>136</sup> *RRF*, p. 36.

<sup>137</sup> *CrG*, p. 270; *CPS*, p. 100.

<sup>138</sup> *CoG*, p. 263.

<sup>139</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 121; *FC*, p. 164; *GiC*, p. 207.

<sup>140</sup> Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 255.

<sup>141</sup> *GiC*, p. 207.

perfect but perfectible'.<sup>142</sup> The new creation is the arrival of that perfection (although he insists it does not lose its openness<sup>143</sup>).

This leads Moltmann to reason that 'in this light creation at the beginning appears as "incomplete"'.<sup>144</sup> Is this a rejection of the goodness of God's initial creative activity, as if it was not good enough?<sup>145</sup> No, rather it is a wish to see the original creation as the beginning of an ongoing journey that has not yet reached its destination. He does not wish to view creation and redemption dualistically, as if they were two separate processes.<sup>146</sup> Rather, he sees redemption and creation as part of the same process which spans the whole of history, a process which captures the 'whole divine creative activity': creation in the beginning (*creatio originalis*), continuous creation (*creatio continua*) and new creation (*nova creatio*). He laments that 'creation' has often been taken only to refer to the original act and wishes to see them as equal parts in the overarching scheme of God's work to complete creation. Moltmann warns that if original creation and redemption are seen as separate actions then either the act of creation is 'down-graded' to a 'preparation for redemption', or the new creation becomes nothing more than a return to the beginning, 'rewinding the clock'. *Both of these mean that creation as it is today loses value.*<sup>147</sup>

## Continuity

As well as the emphasis on discontinuity between the eschatological future and what precedes it, Moltmann also has a definite interest in continuity between the two. He affirms that the present does affect what will happen in the future to a certain extent. The corollary of this is that the ecologically motivated actions of today contribute to creation's future. In addition, he claims that this continuity is brought about by the future's effect on the present. This is accomplished both by the direct activity of the 'Coming God', through Christ and the Spirit's work, and by the inspiration to act in ways that bring the present into continuity with that future.

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<sup>142</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 124 (see n. 2 for a definition of 'open' in this context). Moltmann sees the same process at work in an individual who becomes a Christian: they are by no means complete, they are simply on the 'path' (*GiC*, p. 8).

<sup>143</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 130.

<sup>144</sup> *CoG*, p. 264 (cf. 'Creation and Redemption', p. 125; *FC*, p. 120; *GiC*, p. 196).

<sup>145</sup> Some are uneasy with implication from Moltmann's work that creation in the beginning was not all it could or should be (Chester, *Mission*, pp. 162, 181; Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 82).

<sup>146</sup> *GiC*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55; *WJC*, p. 286.

For Moltmann continuity between present creation and future redemption is vitally important if there is to be any meaning for actions done in the present. If there was no continuity then no action could have any lasting significance, which would lead to ‘an abstract negation of the world and its history’.<sup>148</sup> He speaks of the continuity found in the resurrection of the dead: ‘Raising is not a new creation; it is a new creating of this same mortal life for the life that is eternal’.<sup>149</sup> He even goes so far as to say that eternal life ‘carries the scars of mortality [. . .] Everything that has put its mark on this life remains eternally. Otherwise we should be unable to recognize ourselves in eternal life’.<sup>150</sup> This raises questions concerning the level of healing which creation can expect in its redemption. It also puts an importance on the acceptance of responsibility for present actions, knowing that they have eternal consequence. This continuity is, for Moltmann, in the end a gift. It comes from ‘the faithfulness of God’ to rescue what is lost through time, not because humanity’s actions have the power to last for eternity.<sup>151</sup> Importantly, these affirmations of continuity are found in both Moltmann’s early and later work.

One significant reason for continuity in Moltmann’s thought connects to the idea of the continual process of original creation through to redemption. That is, if the Trinity’s actions in the present are aligned with the goal of the future redemption, then there is every reason for God’s acts, or actions inspired by God, to have an impact that lasts.<sup>152</sup> Otherwise “‘the [redeeming] Spirit of Christ” has no longer anything to do with Yahweh’s *ruach*’.<sup>153</sup> For Moltmann the Spirit’s present activity, such as ‘world sustaining’ and ‘preservation’, is part of creation’s redemption and perfection.<sup>154</sup> Therefore God’s active love within history is a ‘foretaste’, for those who recognise it, of the coming future.<sup>155</sup>

Another factor supporting continuity is that for Moltmann it is the future which comes to the present and brings salvation with it. It does not therefore match his wider theology to say that God’s actions in the past and present build up with momentum and will one day flower into the promised future. It is perhaps more fitting to say that the great promised future has shock waves which run back through history, which point to it, lead to it, and anticipate it:

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<sup>148</sup> *RRF*, p. 197.

<sup>149</sup> *CoG*, p. 75.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>151</sup> *RRF*, p. 12.

<sup>152</sup> *SW*, p. 53.

<sup>153</sup> *SpL*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>154</sup> *CPS*, p. 192; ‘The Scope’, p. 103.

<sup>155</sup> ‘The “Crucified God”’, p. 299; *CPS*, p. 257.

A promise directs the present which is effected [*sic*] by it towards the *novum* of fulfilment and, in so doing, turns the present into a front line for the breaking up of the old and the breaking in of the new. [...] Through Christ's resurrection and through hope aroused, the future of God exerts an influence in the present and makes the present historical.<sup>156</sup>

Or alternatively, it is not the culmination of God's actions throughout the past and present that create the future, but the presence and effect of the future throughout history that has shaped the past and present. Moltmann comments that God's 'future takes control over the present in real anticipations and prefigurations'.<sup>157</sup> He even claims that 'the whole eschatology of the history of Christ' is 'a result of the workings and indwellings of the Spirit through which the future that is hoped for enters into history'.<sup>158</sup> He does not mean that God's present and past actions are mere reflections of the future, or necessarily lesser events. They are crucial to the future, although in a way that is determined by the future.<sup>159</sup> In the case of the Christ event, Moltmann sees this as the in-breaking of the future into history to set decisively the trajectory of history. In Christ we find the 'qualitatively new future [and] the end of history in the midst of history'.<sup>160</sup> Likewise, the Spirit 'is the presence of the future' which makes the 'eschatological new [...] the new thing in history'.<sup>161</sup>

There is therefore continuity with the future because the future is already found in the present. History is made continuous with the future, by the future, and for the future. Therefore Moltmann prefers not to say that continuity runs 'from the old to the new' but rather 'from the new to the old'.<sup>162</sup> A person's actions can thus have that continuity in that they seek to anticipate that future. Humanity can live out a demonstration of what is to come.<sup>163</sup> In fact he feels that humanity *should* do this 'with responsibility', and 'participate in the eschatological, liberating history of God'.<sup>164</sup> This responsibility makes

<sup>156</sup> *HP*, p. 183 (1966).

<sup>157</sup> *RRF*, p. 209 (cf. p. 197: there are 'correspondences, analogies, directions, and tendencies' with the future that shape history).

<sup>158</sup> *CPS*, p. 34.

<sup>159</sup> 'Theology as Eschatology', pp. 10-11.

<sup>160</sup> *RRF*, p. 198. It seems Moltmann would be wary of saying this event changed or altered the course of history because it was always God's plan to redeem creation to live into eternity. Also this raises the question: are only some actions of God as consequential as the cross, are some actions merely reflections of the future? Or are in some way all actions a decisive in-breaking of the future?

<sup>161</sup> *CPS*, p. 295 (cf. p. 34).

<sup>162</sup> 'Hope and Reality', p. 83.

<sup>163</sup> *FC*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>164</sup> *HP*, p. 183 (1966); *FC*, p. 47.



creation's situation an important consideration as humanity moves into the future.

### **There is Hope for *This* Creation**

One important instance of eschatological continuity with the present in Moltmann's work is the claim that there is hope specifically for *this* world. His consistent message throughout this chapter is that there is hope for all creation, not simply a hope for *any* eternal creation, but for this particular one.<sup>165</sup> There are those within Christian tradition who claim that salvation is only for humanity. Such views do not necessarily mean that there is not a new heaven and a new earth, but rather that this earth which surrounds us is destined for destruction and replacement and is not included in the redemptive process. Moltmann is an ardent opponent of views of such discontinuity for two reasons. Firstly:

'After us the deluge' – life led and actions performed according to this motto do indeed lead to deluges, financial, nuclear and ecological. Succeeding generations will sink under the mountains of debt, atomic waste and the ravaged environment. The eschatology of the 'last Big Bang' is catastrophic, and catastrophes are its result.<sup>166</sup>

In this view in which destruction is the end point, Moltmann fears that destructive choices are easier to make. In his opinion, people will treat creation in the same way as they perceive its future to lie.<sup>167</sup> This can be imagined as the following question: 'What does it matter what happens to this forest if it is all destined for the fire?' However, with this question it should be remembered that not everyone lives with such an emphasis on the future as Moltmann does. Many people pay more attention to the immediate present. For this reason many people who may not believe in an eternal future for nature will still seek to maintain the health of creation simply for the benefits it brings in the present. Nevertheless, Moltmann is surely right that anything specifically good in a person's attitude towards the world is unlikely to result from a belief that the world has no future. His stress on a future for this creation speaks instead of a strong positive attitude towards the world. Certainly, within his framework of the future's determination of the present, a vibrant future for creation is essential.

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<sup>165</sup> See also *GiC*, p. 296; *WJC*, p. 262; *CoG*, p. 27.

<sup>166</sup> *CoG*, p. 202.

<sup>167</sup> *WJC*, p. 274 (cf. *CJF*, p. 15).

Secondly, Moltmann identifies a theological problem for the expectation that ‘the deluge’ is part of God’s plan. He terms such unwanted visions of a brutal future, specifically when they are linked to God’s desired path for creation, as ‘apocalyptic eschatology’.<sup>168</sup> He lists explicitly such things as a nuclear war, ecological collapse or an economic meltdown which leads to catastrophe for the poorer nations in particular, but alongside this it is obvious that he includes the view that God would destroy the creation which God so loves. Such a ‘deluge’ is incompatible with his theology.<sup>169</sup> According to him, the problem with this view is that anyone who interprets the destructive tendencies of the contemporary world as part of God’s purposes ‘is providing a religious interpretation for mass human crime, and is trying to make God responsible for what human beings are doing’.<sup>170</sup> This, says Moltmann, is ‘the height of godlessness and irresponsibility’. Eschatology should concern about salvation in its wholeness, a ‘hope for the beginning of God’s new, just world’. For Moltmann, this should lead to resistance of cynicism and indifference, a rejection of destruction, and the defence of the creation which is threatened by human activity.<sup>171</sup>

Some readers of Moltmann believe that his work does not display such a whole-hearted commitment to creation’s future. Douglas Schuurman and Steven Bouma-Prediger claim that Moltmann actually speaks of creation’s destruction at the eschaton. Both cite the same passage in *The Future of Creation*: ‘The new creation does not emerge out of the restoration of the old creation; it follows from creation’s end.’<sup>172</sup> However, as already noted, there is good reason not to read this too literally.<sup>173</sup> As if in response to this assertion, Bouma-Prediger expands his critique to claim that Moltmann expresses the same sentiment in later work. Bouma-Prediger reads this passage: ‘The promise is caught up and absorbed in its fulfilment: when what has been promised is realized, the promise is discarded.’<sup>174</sup> He then reports this as:

when the kingdom is fully consummated, creation will be “discarded

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<sup>168</sup> *CoG*, p. 202. However, he recognises that it is a misuse of the word ‘apocalyptic’, that true apocalyptic theology has nothing to do with such violent notions (p. 218). He often uses the word apocalyptic at other times with no negative connotations intended.

<sup>169</sup> For example: ‘it is understandable that the whole of creation should have been brought into being for the sake of that redemption’ (*GiC*, pp. 277-78); ‘[if] Redemption destroys creation, the gospel destroys the law, and faith becomes the enemy of every known reality’ (*RRF*, p. 14, commenting on Marcion’s views).

<sup>170</sup> *CoG*, p. 203.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216-18.

<sup>172</sup> Schuurman, *Creation*, p. 97; Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, pp. 244-46; *FC*, p. 164.

<sup>173</sup> This work, p. 155.

<sup>174</sup> *GiC*, p. 63.

(*abgetan*).” In short, the *novum* of the new creation does not represent the renewal but rather the annihilation or abolition of creation.<sup>175</sup>

This misleading, and misrepresentative, statement is probably made by Bouma-Prediger because in the passage concerned Moltmann refers to creation as the ‘promise’ of the kingdom.<sup>176</sup> Yet Bouma-Prediger neglects to follow Moltmann’s argument in his very next words:

If the world as creation is the real promise of the kingdom of God, it then itself belongs to the history of the kingdom and is not merely its ‘stage and backcloth’; for at the end of this history it is destined to be revealed in its eternal transfiguration.

While Moltmann may use ambiguous language, the clear thrust of the passage is that creation points to its own future, like a promise, and when this future is reached there will no longer be a promise, just the eternal creation. Then promises will not be needed; they will have been fulfilled. As it is, while the promise remains, it calls for all life to be upheld.

## Judging the Balance

Moltmann has included both discontinuity and continuity in his writing. Yet he has been criticised for not actually achieving a balance between the two. Schuurman is a major critic of Moltmann’s work on discontinuity, particularly the non-restoration of creation. He speaks of the radical discontinuity between creation and redemption in Moltmann’s work that does not allow for continuity. Unlike many others who critique this area, Schuurman’s main concern is the discontinuity between original creation and new creation.<sup>177</sup> He also thinks that Moltmann’s eschaton is ‘creation-annihilating’ and therefore ‘world-denying’.<sup>178</sup> However, Schuurman’s reading of this theme in Moltmann is unreliable. One example of where Schuurman seems to distort his writings is his quotation of this phrase: ‘Future as *adventus* can, however, very well bring something which is principally new and radically transforming, which is neither in its reality or in its potentiality already in existence.’<sup>179</sup> From this

<sup>175</sup> Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening*, p. 246 (cf. Walsh, ‘Theology of Hope’, p. 76).

<sup>176</sup> *GiC*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>177</sup> Schuurman, *Creation*, pp. 4, 9, 83, 149, 161.

<sup>178</sup> Douglas J. Schuurman, ‘Creation, Eschaton, and Ethics: An Analysis of Theology and Ethics in Jürgen Moltmann’, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 22:1 (1987), 42–67 (p. 50). See also Schuurman, *Creation*, p. 82, n. 7, where he seems to equate Moltmann rejection of restoration with an affirmation of the replacement of creation.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Theology as Eschatology’, p. 15.

Schuurman claims that, for Moltmann, the eschaton is ‘exclusively future’, ‘not continuous at all with human experience’, and ‘opposes present reality’.<sup>180</sup> This is a very strong conclusion to take from a comment that the future can bring ‘something’ new. The article concerned, however, gives an even greater reason to doubt Schuurman’s assertions. Moltmann goes on to say, in the next paragraph: ‘The new must not be completely new [. . .] in the reception of its own advance it establishes continuity.’<sup>181</sup> Moltmann merely opposes a view that seeks *complete* continuity with history, similar to the rejection of extrapolation that we saw above.

Harvie also reads Schuurman as misunderstanding Moltmann’s view of the eschaton. He notes that Schuurman thinks that Moltmann claims the original creation is lost and the new creation is utterly discontinuous with it, whereas Moltmann actually includes a strong theme of continuity and hope for this creation. Harvie also believes that Tim Chester, whose criticism joins the debate below, has relied heavily on Schuurman’s work and follows him in that misunderstanding.<sup>182</sup> It is partially with this reliance on Schuurman that Chester states that Moltmann’s view of the future stands in ‘utter contradiction to the present’ and gives no hope for actions in the present.<sup>183</sup>

Beck, whose reading of Moltmann is both interesting and informative, favours a balance between continuity and discontinuity in him. For Beck, Christ and the Spirit’s work show that God is already at work and that the eschaton is already partly, but only partly, realised.<sup>184</sup> He feels, however, that Moltmann over-emphasises discontinuity, especially in his earlier work, but still to a certain extent in his later work.<sup>185</sup> For example, Beck examines three kinds of eschatology: ‘consistent’ (which over-emphasises discontinuity); ‘realized’ (which over-emphasises continuity); and ‘inaugurated’ (which balances continuity and discontinuity).<sup>186</sup> He says that he can identify all three in Moltmann’s work, although most often there are references to ‘consistent’ and ‘inaugurated’ eschatology.<sup>187</sup> However, the examples Beck gives of Moltmann’s use of the less favourable ‘consistent’ and ‘realized’ eschatologies seem in fact to be examples of where Moltmann uses an ‘inaugurated’ approach to balance continuity with discontinuity.

<sup>180</sup> Schuurman, *Creation*, p. 94.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Theology as Eschatology’, p. 15.

<sup>182</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics*, p. 24, n. 47.

<sup>183</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 90 (cf. pp. 85-90, 125, 131-32).

<sup>184</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 21 (cf. pp. 45-48, 82).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 127, 203-04, 227, 243 (cf. Neal, *Theology As Hope*, p. 211).

<sup>186</sup> Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-38.

One particular instance where Beck gives a less sympathetic reading of Moltmann is where he is critical of the inclusion of the image of 'seedtime and harvest' to show the relation of the future to the present. Unlike the images of 'spring and summer' and 'sunrise and noon' (the other images Moltmann employs), Beck feels that 'seedtime and harvest' conflicts with 'Pauline inaugurated eschatology' because instead of the language of 'first fruits' (the now and not yet of the eschaton) the seedtime/harvest image describes a change from one thing to something quite different. Beck interprets this as an example of consistent (discontinuous) eschatology.<sup>188</sup> It is difficult to find such a criticism reasonable. Firstly, the context points to Moltmann's intention to use three images that describe a continuous progression: spring becomes warmer into summer; the sun climbs higher to noon; the seed bursts forth into fruitful life. His aim is to say that the future has some presence already: the seed is the thing that becomes the harvest. Secondly, the extent to which the seedtime/harvest image contains discontinuity can hardly be described as un-Pauline. For Paul himself states, in the same chapter as the mention of 'first fruits', that the body today is likened to the seed that brings forth something new in the eschaton.<sup>189</sup>

There are those who read Moltmann in a more positive light. Harvie issues a reminder that Moltmann's theories of the future's contradictions with the present need to be observed with 'great precision' so it is clear that he retains the reality of human participation in God's ongoing transformation of the world.<sup>190</sup> Jeremy Law is also largely affirming of Moltmann's balance between continuity and discontinuity. Law recognises that Moltmann might be read in a present-denying way but offers some of his own points to defend Moltmann's approach, two of which it is helpful to cite:

First, it must not be forgotten that the transformation to new creation is not merely for transformation's sake. It is fundamentally about consummation. Consummation confirms, reinforces and underlines the value of that which is already good; it is not its enemy. [...] Third, everything good about present existence may be taken as a prolepsis of the kingdom. The rubric of consummation suggests to me that this prolepsis is not one of mere formality, but of sacramental substance. Prolepsis may thus become a way of affirming not disparaging the present.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp. 203-04; *The Source*, p. 11.

<sup>189</sup> 1 Cor. 15.35-39. If the question of Pauline authorship were to be raised then Beck affirms his belief in 1 Corinthians bearing the authorship of Paul (Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 25, n. 1).

<sup>190</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, pp. 23, 28.

<sup>191</sup> Law, *The Future*, p. 128.

Here Law reminds Moltmann's critics that consummation has always had its roots in God's faithfulness to creation, and therefore his themes of discontinuity and transformation are still able to affirm the present creation, and to sit alongside continuity, as he intends.

To summarise, readings of Moltmann have been examined which to various extents (some to the extreme) overemphasise the presence of discontinuity, and/or neglect his strong themes of continuity and hope for *this* creation. These do not do justice to the usefulness of his eschatology for ethical considerations, including environmental ones. Particularly for Chester and Schuurman, Moltmann seems to present a scheme in which any action in the present will find itself radically transformed in the eschaton, and thus have a meaningless quality to it.<sup>192</sup> For them, his view of the promise of a future which brings possibility and hope to the present is also one that promises to change completely whatever is done.<sup>193</sup> Yet, if his work as a whole is taken into consideration, this evidently is incorrect.<sup>194</sup> The criticisms show the possibility that many isolated sentences in Moltmann's work may be interpreted in order to advocate radical discontinuity, but often even the paragraphs and pages around them alleviate these concerns, and beyond them his wider writings are able to continue to show the balance of his views.<sup>195</sup> The present is not lost, there is continuity, and the future brings hope, there is discontinuity. Moltmann retains a tension, and in this way the present and its actions still have meaning.

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<sup>192</sup> See also Vincent J. Genovesi, *Expectant Creativity: The Action of Hope in Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 107-08; Walsh, 'Theology of Hope', pp. 58-59 (pointing to Langdon Gilkey's work).

<sup>193</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 86 (cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), pp. 239-40, n. 62; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 3*, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 175-76).

<sup>194</sup> Schuurman states that this balance is present (Schuurman, *Creation*, pp. 8, 84, 101 (n. 60), 114), but seems to downplay its existence and ignore it in his conclusions. This may be because he believes not so much that Moltmann shows balance but more that he swings between two contradictory positions of continuity and utter discontinuity (Ibid., pp. 103, 159). Chester shows a similar recognition of continuity in Moltmann's writings without allowing it to balance his overall view (Chester, *Mission*, p. 125).

<sup>195</sup> For instance, Moltmann states of his earlier work: 'I called resurrection a *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) and a *nova creatio* (new creation), my purpose being to point to the creative God and the eschatologically new character of his activity. This gave rise to misunderstandings, which I hope my present exposition has cleared away.' (CoG, p. 150, n. 50.)

## A Transcended Continuity

This section has shown that Moltmann wishes to retain both continuity and discontinuity between present and future. Discontinuity provides hope that things can be different and gives the assurance of transformation. Pain and mistakes need not endure forever. Continuity encourages the significance of the present as it is the future being made manifest. There is a consequent call for participation in the world's healing and transformation. Continuity is also important for him because he believes it is important to remember that there is goodness already present in creation.<sup>196</sup> Continuity speaks of the redemption of creation as the transformation of an incomplete project, not the recovery of a lost cause.

Jeremy Law considers that the balance between the two is essential.<sup>197</sup> Has Moltmann succeeded in this task? Randall Bush and Tim Chester find an ambiguity between the openness of possibilities and the certainty of hope for transformation, which stem from continuity and discontinuity respectively.<sup>198</sup> However, it appears instead that there remains a healthy intended tension, and not necessarily ambiguity, regarding the exact balance of continuity and discontinuity in Moltmann's scheme. For all this mystery the two need to be held together:

A meaningful mediation seems to result only if the transcendence which is beyond history is linked with man's act of transcending within history; if in the midst of the critical difference one believes in the possibilities of correspondence, and if, conversely, in the possibilities of correspondence the qualitative difference is kept in mind.<sup>199</sup>

Continuity can be located in the present, *through* the anticipation of and participation with the coming future. For Moltmann, the universe must be transformed (discontinuity) but that is not to say that the coming future does not already bring transformations into the present that are likenesses of the future. As he says of a person: 'He acquires continuity in the midst of changing conditions in as far as he acquires future.'<sup>200</sup> Yet from this should not be understood that any person (or any other part of creation) could attain such a state that, when the eschaton comes, there would be no need for transformation. For Moltmann, such perfect continuity is unattainable. To

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<sup>196</sup> *WJC*, p. 287.

<sup>197</sup> Law, *The Future*, p. 250.

<sup>198</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 295; Chester, *Mission*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>199</sup> *RRF*, p. 198.

<sup>200</sup> *HP*, p. 108 (1960).

describe the continuity of present day actions with the eschaton is not to claim that anything may be created today which needs no further transformation. The inference to take from his work is that, when thinking of ecological considerations, the implication of continuity is most appropriately expressed in the belief that humanity's actions in the present can be in step with God's coming transformation of creation, but are not the complete sum of that transformation. An action which affects the world in such a way as to have continuity with God's coming future for creation is an action which can only be said to tread the same path as God's transformative work, not to actually reach the final destination.

Discontinuity will thus be found with the present, through the transformation of that which is broken, and the new creation of that which is lost. Even that which has continuity will be transcended to reach as yet unknowable qualities, while still it retains its identity. In this sense creation can know that the present still matters. At the same time there is still a future approaching to change it: 'the conferral of a new form to its being-as-it-is'.<sup>201</sup> This not to undo the present (radical discontinuity), but is its respectful and loving bringing-to-completion. This continuity Moltmann calls 'historical continuity', which he differentiates from 'ontological continuity'. For him, the old, and everything that made it what it is, puts on something new to become something new and complete but retains its identity.<sup>202</sup> 'We shall all be changed'.<sup>203</sup> Humanity will not finish itself or this creation until the mixture of discontinuity and continuity within it, and the whole creation, is transcended and transformed by the coming God who will bring 'the feast of eternal joy'.<sup>204</sup>

This means there is hope for the permanence of humanity's actions as they are caught up in, and contribute to, God's transformative work in all creation. At the same time there is hope for the redemption of humanity's failures as the coming God makes all things new. Continuity brings responsibility and consequences for humanity's actions. Discontinuity brings comfort that nothing shall be lost. The present is affirmed and the future is made secure. Does the presence of this comforting discontinuity threaten ultimately to make the present meaningless? No, for the destination is not all that matters. The *journey* to the future is important too, as is the contribution that creation makes to it. There are pressing needs within creation on the way to the future. That is the conclusion from the previous chapters on Moltmann's view

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<sup>201</sup> *SW*, p. 52.

<sup>202</sup> *RRF*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>203</sup> 1 Cor. 15.51b

<sup>204</sup> *CoG*, p. 338.



of the past and present work of God. Each created being's contribution is important, and each part a created being is allowed and enabled to take by others is important too. According to Moltmann, creation has been invited to participate in God's creative work.<sup>205</sup> The freedom given by this invitation should neither be abused nor thought meaningless. The future may be secure but the shape of the journey made by the contribution of each part of creation remains to be seen. For this reason Moltmann can speak of shaping the ecological future 'with responsibility and confidence'.<sup>206</sup>

## 6.5 CONCLUSIONS

Moltmann's description of the eschatological future for *all* creation means that his theology is universal in the fullest sense, and can contribute the benefits of this universalism to the new theological architecture. The concerns of this thesis have moved this chapter's discussion away from the debate surrounding universal human salvation and towards the cosmic framework of his thought. This broader scope includes a hope for all creation which has, for Moltmann, an extensive foundation: what is already believed about God; seen in God's work; trusted from God's promises; and deduced from the nature of existence. These together produce the multifaceted argument that is Moltmann's defence of a future for all creation.

For him, this future is also one where God's openness towards creation comes to fruition. The relationship between God and creation becomes the consummated *perichoresis* which reflects, as far as is possible for the Divine/non-divine relationship, the trinitarian relationship itself.

Finally, this coming future is one that both transforms creation to a new state of being, and preserves and makes imperishable the identity of creation and its unique contributions to history. In this way Moltmann seeks continuity and discontinuity. He has admirably expressed two necessary parts to a hopeful eschatology. There still remain questions as to what exactly might remain from the present, and what may be lost, but the main point endures that there is hope for what is not as it should be and lasting significance for what is of value or achieved. The possibility found in his work that actions in the present which do not contribute to God's transformative work, which are

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<sup>205</sup> This has been touched on in the last three chapters but will be considered more fully, at least in relation to humanity, in the next chapter.

<sup>206</sup> *HP*, p. 183 (1966).

not continuous with God's coming future, will leave their scars on creation is an additional admonishment towards responsibility for all actions.

A major contribution of Moltmann's cosmic eschatology to the new theological architecture is that creation matters. God's continuing care of creation into eternity adds again to the depths to which Moltmann understands God to love creation and give it value. Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that this value comes not only from its interdependency with humanity, nor its status as loved *today* by God. Creation's status is not simply one of temporal utility, or even a temporal, valued companion. Rather it matters from now until eternity. It has always mattered and shall always matter. The implications of this for an attitude towards the environment are serious. The meaning of existence now points to the need to find the right relationship with the whole of creation. It is not sufficient simply to treat nature well enough to survive. The need to share a healthy relationship with the environment will never pass, not even in eternity. Nature and humanity share a common existence, a common journey, and a common future. This is one of the legacies for ecological thought from Moltmann's eschatology.

As well as significance for the picture of creation in Moltmann's work, this chapter also speaks of the significance of his eschatology for the actions performed within creation. This raises the significance of humanity's actions in relation to the natural world. The future will not erase the efforts of today, it will heal and transform them. These efforts are not inconsequential or wasted, however, and to neglect them has consequences which, while not fully understood, are nonetheless real. This is important for the next chapter as it examines elements of Moltmann's anthropology which have a particular bearing on humanity's actions. This chapter, however, has contributed to the new architecture the lasting importance of these actions. In conjunction with the hope for their redemption, this lasting importance helpfully brings together the confidence and responsibility which Moltmann wishes to see in humanity and their concern for the future of all creation.



# Chapter 7

## Theological Anthropology

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter's aim is to assess the usefulness of certain elements of Moltmann's theological anthropology for the construction of this new theological architecture. While he has written much on the topic of humanity, the present study selects four specific themes which have in common a challenge to human behaviour. Moltmann wrote of the importance of 'transforming the present' as far back as almost fifty years ago.<sup>1</sup> A glance at many of his subsequent publications reveals similar sentiments. For example: 'Theory and practice cannot be separated [...] christology and Christian ethics cannot be separated.'<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores four avenues by which his theology makes that connection more explicit. Firstly, Moltmann argues for a refinement of humanity's perspective on its relation to nature, and a recognition of the damage that human claims of superiority have done to a vital relationship. Secondly, he proposes trinitarian love and action as a pattern for humanity's aspirations. Thirdly, is the proposition that there exists an invitation from God to join in the divine mission to bring life and transformation to the world. Fourthly, and finally, Moltmann remarks on the difference that hope can, and should, make to a person's life in the present.

Each of the four themes exhibits its own significance for a responsible theological anthropology, and thus all are appropriate to be included in the new theological architecture. In addition, the strengths of one will enhance the effectiveness of the others. In this way, the inclusion of these themes together in the new architecture increases its overall capability to generate a positive response.

The themes will be outlined below in order to understand their roots

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<sup>1</sup> *ToH*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *WJC*, pp. 41-42 (cf. *TKG*, p. 8).

in Moltmann's work and the benefits of their interconnectedness. Certain implications for creation issues will become apparent, although these will largely be explored in the Chapter 8, where their worth as promising avenues between theology and ecological responsibility in particular will be demonstrated. However, neither this chapter nor the next aims to present these themes as the only route by which Moltmann's theology, or the new theological architecture, might successfully lead to reconsidered action. Rather, they comprise four contributions which can be extracted from Moltmann's work in order to enrich the new architecture's journey beyond theory alone.

## 7.2 REDUCING HUMANITY'S PREDOMINANCE

As the discussion of terminology at the beginning of this thesis indicated, Moltmann asserts that when thinking about humanity's obligations, it is important to consider the language selected. '[A]n ethics of ideas and definitions' is required.<sup>3</sup> This concern includes specifically ecological ideas. Human attitudes are influenced by labels for the world which give humanity precedence ('our environment') or are divisive ('nature *out there*'). It is necessary, then, for the new theological architecture to include Moltmann's placing of humanity in the same overall category as the non-human world so that humanity is *part* of creation, and not hierarchically above it.

### Physical Co-Dependence

Moltmann has been eager to keep informed of the scientific perspectives on the place of humanity within the cosmos. In brief, humanity is as much an integral part of the universe alongside everything else. It is nature that 'brings forth' humanity, along with all other instances of life seen on earth. Humanity must find its identity as a 'product' of nature.<sup>4</sup> Humanity is part of the greater organism of nature, where collective lives co-mingle and interpenetrate. All living things in the world share continual and inescapable relationships with others.<sup>5</sup> For Moltmann, if humanity does not recognise this it will not truly be

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<sup>3</sup> *EthH*, p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> *GiC*, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; *WJC*, p. 46; *SpL*, p. 225; *CoG*, p. 21; *GSS*, p. 99; *SW*, p. 15.

able to understand itself.<sup>6</sup> This all-inclusive community means that humanity is wholly dependent on nature for its life and, therefore, for humanity to try and extract itself from this community is likely to end, and to a certain extent already is ending, in disaster.<sup>7</sup>

Moltmann has consistently sought to bring many areas of his theology to bear on the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, including to a certain degree in his early work. He even relates this topic back to his trinitarian theology and notes that the mutuality of existence reflects the perichoretic nature of the Trinity.<sup>8</sup> This, for him, forms part of the basis for the *imago Dei* which will be considered below.

## A Rejected Relationship

To conclude that humanity is part of creation is not necessarily to claim that the relationship is fully integrated. For Moltmann, the rejection by humans of the relationship shared by nature and humanity is one of the problems at the root of the environmental crisis. In order to escape this crisis, thoughts of 'self-liberation from nature' and its control must be laid aside in favour of 'co-operative' existence. Humanity has made its relationship with the rest of creation hostile and uncaring. It aims for the 'possession of nature' instead of 'peace with nature'.<sup>9</sup> By ignoring or misunderstanding the importance of this relationship, humanity has, for Moltmann, lowered the quality of life of all things and restricted possible recovery and growth.<sup>10</sup> These observations are not unique to his theology, or indeed to theology itself, and this problem has become a subject for contemporary science. Christian theology, however, does bring its own particular contribution to the debate, within which Moltmann has his own unique approach. He wishes to try and repair damage caused by traditional views that allowed humanity to become more privileged than nature, or caused humanity to neglect the fate of the non-human, apparently inferior, remainder of creation. For him, it is not that humanity should not understand itself as distinct from the rest of creation, but that this distinctiveness does not make humanity the centre of all things. Humanity must balance its uniqueness by remembering it is still a dependent

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<sup>6</sup> *GiC*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>8</sup> *CoG*, p. 301.

<sup>9</sup> *CrG*, pp. 348-49 (cf. *RRF*, p. 218; *GiC*, p. 137).

<sup>10</sup> *CrG*, p. 350; *ExH*, p. 183; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 133; *FC*, p. 129; *GiC*, pp. 23-24, 127, 137; *WJC*, pp. 56-57; *GSS*, pp. 7, 76, 100; *SW*, p. 33.

part of the whole natural community.<sup>11</sup>

## Unity, Humanity, and Nature

Part of Moltmann's contribution to this theological architecture is the claim that nature and humanity should *both* be included as important considerations in any ethical decision making. The identity, value, worth, and needs of humanity have long been defended by Christian tradition and have guided much of the Christian community's action. In constructing this new architecture, the importance Moltmann places on the identity, value, worth, and needs of the whole creation is a significant petition for these also to be guiding principles for attitudes and action. Humanity's predominance must diminish in order to accord the appropriate attention to the rest of creation.

### 7.3 CORRESPONDING TO GOD

A further part of Moltmann's anthropology useful to this theological architecture is the idea that God's actions act as a pattern for humanity. The theology surveyed by this research so far has related numerous divine actions directed to the care of the earth. While the previous section was concerned with shared futures of nature and humanity, this theme of correspondence starts with Moltmann's work on what he considers to be a specifically unique feature of humanity: being made in the image of God. However, not all the conclusions brought out from this section are thus only applicable to humanity. Moltmann gives the impression that, for example, while 'image' concerns a certain correspondence to God's relationality, parts of nature also correspond to the relatedness of the Trinity. However, the overall picture at this point is unique to humanity.

#### *The Imago Dei*

Part of Moltmann's basis for the idea of human correspondence with the Divine is the concept of the 'image of God'. In order to begin constructing the identity of this attribute as particular to humanity, at least for Moltmann, it is necessary to ask both what is unique to humanity, *and* what it shares with the

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<sup>11</sup> *GiC*, pp. 31, 190.

rest of creation. In his estimation the latter is required because the *imago Dei* does not simply refer to natural differences between nature and humanity.<sup>12</sup>

Firstly, humanity's uniqueness is indicative for this image. Moltmann recognises that humanity is given a certain power over nature (the tasks to name the animals and subdue the earth).<sup>13</sup> However, for him, this particular unique feature of humanity is only useful if carefully nuanced. For example, the image should not be represented by dominating rule. Rather bearing God's image gives responsibility to humanity, as God's creation, to rule over it in *stewardship*.<sup>14</sup> This distinction is important for Moltmann as it means humanity does not reflect this image more as it accumulates power in order to rule. Therefore, seeking more power would *pervert* the image of God in human beings and not fulfil it.<sup>15</sup> The present situation of humanity is one in which it has accumulated much power to control creation. Responsibility is required in exercising that power 'for nature' through creativity and not destruction.<sup>16</sup> To rule over nature in the image of God requires renouncing dominating power and striving for community, peace and solidarity with all creation.<sup>17</sup> That is what humanity's uniqueness contributes to Moltmann's vision of the *imago Dei*.

Secondly, Moltmann considers what humanity shares with nature in order to construct his view of the image of God. With animals, for example, it is 'their living souls, their living space, their food, and the blessing of fertility'.<sup>18</sup> He recounts the way in which in the beginning of the biblical narrative it was the human being who needed a helper and was thus demonstrated to be a socially dependent being. This, in itself, is a minor point, but it does point to his view of the interdependency between all creation which was outlined in

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224 (cf. 'Creation and Redemption', p. 119; *FC*, p. 115).

<sup>14</sup> It then appears more complicated when Moltmann claims that as God's image, 'human beings [...] rule over other earthly creatures as God's *representatives* and in his name' (*GiC*, p. 220). Also he writes: 'According to the Bible, human beings' creation in the image of God is the ground for their rule over the world.' (*SW*, p. 48.) Yet these affirmations of rule can perhaps be explained by Moltmann insisting that the command to rule *follows on* from the *imago Dei* and is not located *in* that image. This rule is also meant to reflect the love and respect of God for creation.

<sup>15</sup> *GiC*, pp. 224-25 (cf. 'Creation and Redemption', p. 133; *FC*, p. 129).

<sup>16</sup> *Man*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>17</sup> *CPS*, pp. 173-74. Graham Buxton provides an interesting approach with regards to *imago Dei*, namely that all of creation's value would be best served if all of creation were recognised to be *imago Dei*, not just humanity (Buxton, *The Trinity*, pp. 276-82). His discussion is interesting, and has effectively the same goals as Moltmann (to highlight 'nature's integrity and worth' (p. 278)).

<sup>18</sup> *GiC*, p. 188.



the previous section.<sup>19</sup>

The investigation of the similarities and differences between nature and humanity highlights both humanity's need to avoid predominance within creation, and its social dependency. Beyond this, however, the precise nature of the *imago Dei* is not yet clear, nor is its full potential for human action, ecological or otherwise. Thus Moltmann continues in a more direct manner:

As God's image, human beings are God's proxy in his creation, and represent him. As God's image, human beings are for God himself a counterpart, in whom he desires to see himself as if in a mirror. As God's image, finally, human beings are created for the sabbath, to reflect and praise the glory of God which enters into creation, and takes up its dwelling there.<sup>20</sup>

The first two of these three points indicate the theme of humanity's correspondence with God with such words as 'represent' and 'mirror'. This theme is significant in Moltmann's work in connecting theology and human activity and is worthy of some attention. It has both general application, in that the divine relationships serve as a pattern for human life, and specific usefulness, in that the divine love for creation challenges similar human behaviour. There are also two associated points to draw from Moltmann. Firstly, for him, the image of God includes the human body.<sup>21</sup> This is not necessarily a suggestion that there is a likeness between the physical form of a human and a supposed form for God. Rather it appears to be an affirmation that the implications of the *imago Dei* are not confined to so-called spiritual or intellectual concerns; they reach out also to physical existence. Secondly, even though humanity has not lived up to the requirements of being God's image because of its sin and desire for power, for Moltmann, the *imago Dei* is still retained in humanity. This results from God's faithful maintenance of the divine relationship with, and presence in, humanity.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Moltmann is criticised by Deane-Drummond for his emphasis on this social dependency being a *difference* between nature and humanity. She disagrees with his claim and points out that it ignores the scientific observations of sociality in nature (Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 150). It is also possible that Moltmann overplays the significance of the lack of a biblical reference to the creation of helpers for animals. They were, after all, not created as lone individuals either. The biblical narrative may simply not have focused on this. However, Moltmann does not sustain this difference in his other emphases on all creation's interdependence.

<sup>20</sup> *GiC*, p. 188. Deane-Drummond notes that Moltmann is moving away from a traditional Jewish understanding of *imago Dei* by including more than simply a 'similarity of physical form' (Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 259). However, Moltmann remains within the bounds of orthodox Christianity with these thoughts.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Fellowship', p. 292.

<sup>22</sup> *GiC*, p. 233.

## A Divine Pattern for Humanity

For Moltmann, to be made in God's image and to be God's likeness and correspond to the Divine are related perspectives. The image of God has long implied to him 'something that corresponds to God himself and is meant to do so', in which the Creator finds 'his echo'.<sup>23</sup> If this is so then the depth of God's love, within both the trinitarian relations and those with creation, will serve as a pattern for human life. This has the potential to shape human action in various ways, including in supporting the ecological reformation.

In the following discussion it is important to remember that in Moltmann's thought 'God' means 'Trinity'. He does not, however, claim a correspondence between the *persons* of the Trinity and humanity as persons; it is rather the relationships of the Trinity to which humans are called to correspond, in an *analogia relationis*.<sup>24</sup> For Moltmann, this focus on relationships suggests two possible forms that this correspondence may take. Firstly, a *community* may seek to correspond to God as Trinity through loving webs of relationship. Secondly, an *individual* may seek to correspond to God as Trinity, by bringing the way she or he relates to creation more in line with God's relational love.<sup>25</sup> This thesis will not explicitly discuss the ways these two dynamics will guide correspondence differently, but their existence offers clarification to practical considerations: for Moltmann, correspondence to the Trinity is more than an individualistic enterprise, yet can also occur as an individual when there is no sympathetic community forthcoming.<sup>26</sup>

In Moltmann's work, humanity's correspondence with God takes the Trinity in both its inner and outer relationships as an example, that is, in different aspects of the same divine love. He considers God's dealings with the world a good place for humanity to begin to find correspondence to God.<sup>27</sup> Briefly outlined, God's outer trinitarian relationships in Moltmann's theology are defined by their creativity and care, their openness and desire for reciprocal relationships, and their perseverance though rejected by the other. They are, in a word, loving. This multifaceted relationship is one to which he believes humanity can correspond in its relationships with the natural

<sup>23</sup> *Man*, p. 108 (cf. *GiC*, pp. 219-21).

<sup>24</sup> *GiC*, p. 77 (cf. Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 48).

<sup>25</sup> *GiC*, pp. 239-43.

<sup>26</sup> Joy McDougall suggest that, for Moltmann, the correspondence which the community seeks relates more to the inner trinitarian relationships, while the individual's quest for correspondence looks more to the love of God for creation (McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, p. 160).

<sup>27</sup> *GiC*, pp. 77, 229.

world.<sup>28</sup> This correspondence is no doubt found by Moltmann, to differing extents, in all humanity, regardless of faith. Yet a Christian faith in particular looks to the act of love of the cross of Christ, and finds there its measure for correspondence to God's love.<sup>29</sup>

In addition Moltmann writes of human beings as the '*imago trinitatis*', a correspondence to the inner love and relationality of the Trinity.<sup>30</sup> As his whole concept of the Trinity is a relational one based on love, the associated correspondence looks to the 'eternal, inner love of God'.<sup>31</sup> He does recognise that the perfect state of the mutual relationship shared by the Trinity is essentially unobtainable for humanity, at least in terms of complete correspondence, but nevertheless partial correspondence is both possible and appropriate.<sup>32</sup>

The concept of *perichoresis* is useful again at this point because Moltmann finds the image of mutual interpenetration and reliance a good descriptor for human life. Again the term 'relationship' is crucial to this discussion, for to him *perichoresis* cannot be expressed in any other way.<sup>33</sup> In terms of the wider human community this correspondence is then only found when humanity reflects the *perichoresis* of God, when it: forsakes individualism; is in fellowship and united; rejects one-sided relationships of privilege, power and hierarchy; and, lives in 'mutual need and mutual interpenetration'.<sup>34</sup>

## Criticisms of Moltmann's Work on Correspondence

### *Overly Speculative?*

Moltmann's use of the Trinity as an example to which humanity can correspond has provoked varying criticisms. They are usually focused on the inner relations of the Trinity. McIlroy, for example, believes that Moltmann privileges the inner relations of the Trinity over the outer relations in discussions concerning correspondence. For McIlroy, this means Moltmann is too speculative and abstract.<sup>35</sup> Warner Jeanrond also is wary of assuming too much

<sup>28</sup> *HP*, p. 18 (1966); *SpL*, p. 122; *GSS*, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> *CrG*, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> *GiC*, pp. 216, 259; *SpL*, p. 160.

<sup>31</sup> *GiC*, p. 77 (cf. 'The Fellowship', p. 293).

<sup>32</sup> 'The Fellowship', p. 289; *GiC*, p. 225.

<sup>33</sup> *GiC*, pp. 258-59, 307.

<sup>34</sup> *CPS*, p. xvii (writing in 1989); *TKG*, pp. 157, 192, 198-200; 'The Fellowship', pp. 289-94; *GiC*, pp. 16, 216, 258; *CJF*, p. 56; *HTG*, pp. 63-64; *SpL*, p. 160; 'Some Reflections', pp. 110-11; *GSS*, pp. 83, 101.

<sup>35</sup> McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, pp. 2, 235-36.

concerning the inner life of God. He prefers it when Moltmann turns instead to God's relationship with creation.<sup>36</sup> Bauckham asserts that Moltmann's mistake 'has been to abstract the Trinity in itself from God's trinitarian history with the world' and that it would be better to focus on the outer relations of the Trinity.<sup>37</sup>

Moltmann's critics doubt that too great a focus on the inner relations of the Trinity is a useful place to seek ethical direction for humanity. One problem, already identified, is that human knowledge of the inner relations of the Trinity is limited. For this reason, there is a danger that anyone could claim too much about God. That unease reflects Miroslav Volf's general concern (which he does not explicitly link to Moltmann's work) with drawing too many practical concepts for humanity from the doctrine of the Trinity. For him that could bring theology and anthropology too close, resulting in either a reduced view of God or an elevated view of humanity.<sup>38</sup> Yet Volf maintains that this task is still necessary, for the nature of God must influence 'the way Christians—and by extension all human beings—ought to live'.<sup>39</sup> Others too are supportive of the approach taken by Moltmann. Chester, for example, claims that there is great potential in the concept of correspondence with God's inner life. For him, the inner love of God serves as a key motivation for human action.<sup>40</sup> Moltmann is therefore not alone as he seeks an analogy between the relationships of the Trinity and human relations, as Bauckham rightly acknowledges.<sup>41</sup> While speculation may occur, describing God as love is at the heart of Christian theology.

In addition, this criticism is rooted in the view that Moltmann has focused on the inner life of the Trinity and disregarded the relationship which God has with creation. However, his writings have demonstrated that these two dynamics can, in fact, be held together, as already argued above. For him, along with correspondence to the love of the Trinity for creation, a similar correspondence also exists with the inner love of the trinitarian relationships, and vice versa. Moltmann himself writes that people 'correspond to the inner

<sup>36</sup> Jeanron, 'The Question', pp. 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, pp. 163-64.

<sup>38</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 198.

<sup>39</sup> Miroslav Volf, 'Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity', in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. by Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), pp. 3-12 (p. 4), referencing Matt. 5.48.

<sup>40</sup> Chester, *Mission*, pp. 201, 222. Chester writes primarily of human action in the areas of mission and social action as opposed to environmental concerns, but the source of action being in God's love is the same general principle. See also Buxton, *The Trinity*, p. 272.

<sup>41</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 177 (cf. Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 46).

relationships of God to himself – to the eternal, inner love of God which expresses and manifests itself in creation'.<sup>42</sup> This brings this discussion back to his view that the love which the Trinity has in eternity is the same love with which the Trinity loves the world.<sup>43</sup> In this way, through correspondence with both God's inner and outer relations, his theology provides a broad foundation for that correspondence which provides a less speculative basis for ethical direction than is feared by the critics above.

*Theologically Inappropriate?*

Timothy Harvie expresses a further concern: 'the type of perichoretic life maintained by God *in se* and the social life of creatures needs to be differentiated'.<sup>44</sup> This concern about Moltmann's theology is shared, among others, by Bauckham, who thinks that to suggest that human society could be modelled on God flattens God and reduces the divine otherness, for 'God is God in three inconceivably different ways' and as such cannot be something to which humanity can correspond.<sup>45</sup> Bauckham's criticisms in this quotation are founded on both the otherness of God, and Moltmann's emphasis on the difference between the persons of the Trinity. Bauckham, because of the latter, does not think correspondence can work, because the trinitarian person's relationships are so radically different to ours:

The idea of the social Trinity as a model for human community encourages us to think of the differences in the [various inner] trinitarian relationships [. . .] as no more significant than the differences in human relationships within the kind of community Moltmann envisages.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, for Moltmann, correspondence does not imply equivalence, either between humanity and the otherness of God, or between human communities and the diversity of the Trinity's inner relationships. An *analogia relationis* does not require God and creation to have exactly the same relations. Moltmann's work shows agreement with Bauckham and Harvie in its desire to keep God and creation distinct, even into the eschatological future when humanity reaches its true identity.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, a biblical mandate for his

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<sup>42</sup> *GiC*, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> *TKG*, p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 127 (cf. Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 177-8).

<sup>45</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 179 (cf. Farrow, 'In The End', p. 427: 'Is it right to seek in human relations an *analogia trinitatis*?' Farrow writes little more than this on the subject as it is a review article).

<sup>46</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 178.

<sup>47</sup> *GiC*, pp. 150, 184. He also writes of a great condescension and humiliation on God's part in being represented through creation (p. 78).

idea is possible: 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you'; 'Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another'; 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'<sup>48</sup>

The inner relationships of the Trinity provide the example of perfect, eternal, perichoretic relationships of love. These relationships are unique to God's perfection yet still give humanity a direction to aim for in their own relationships. This again demonstrates that both the inner and outer relationships of the Trinity are instructive for humanity's correspondence to God. The outer relations demonstrate an openness and love that always looks to the other and desires greater community in the face of rejection and setbacks. The inner relations give the example of perfect, mutual, self-giving love, which is an inspiration and encouragement to humanity.

#### *Threatens the Ontological Difference between Humanity and God?*

Matthew Bonzo's criticism of Moltmann's call to correspond to God centres firstly on the assertion that in his theology God is too different from humanity. Secondly, Bonzo claims that when Moltmann writes of the creation of the world in the forsaken *nihil* this means that human identity is forever known by its otherness to, and forsakenness by, God. Therefore, for Bonzo, Moltmann makes humanity's journey towards correspondence 'the end of being human'.<sup>49</sup> Bonzo's reading of him is thus that to become more like the *imago Dei* is to become less human. This may not follow, however. Firstly, Bonzo assumes that Moltmann sees humanity's very identity in otherness and forsakenness.<sup>50</sup> This claim derives from Bonzo's understanding of the negative potential of the *nihil* in Moltmann's doctrine of creation. Chapter 3, however, already gave reason to question this view of Moltmann's theology concerning the *nihil*, which softens Bonzo's conclusion here.<sup>51</sup> In a further critique, he believes that Moltmann's use of the Trinity as an ethical blueprint for life sets humanity on a path of becoming too similar to God, in a way that threatens God's otherness.<sup>52</sup> It has been demonstrated that this is not the case.

#### *Correspondence Conflicts with 'Participation'?*

Bauckham is critical of Moltmann's attempt to follow both the paths of correspondence to the Divine and participation in the Divine:

<sup>48</sup> John 15.9; 13.24; Matt. 5.48.

<sup>49</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 110 (cf. pp. 1-8, 43-44, 82-92, 126-30).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 110, for example.

<sup>51</sup> See this work, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> Bonzo, *Indwelling*, p. 8.

Moltmann is trying to hold together the two rather different ideas: that (a) the life of the Trinity is an interpersonal fellowship in which we, by grace, participate, and (b) the life of the Trinity provides the prototype on which human life should be modelled.<sup>53</sup>

For Bauckham, participation is a better concept to implement. He considers the concept of the correspondence of humanity to the Trinity to be flawed. Bauckham's concerns appear to stem from an assumption that correspondence happens when a human stands outside the relationships of the Trinity. Thus by definition it excludes participation.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, this chapter has above defended Moltmann's use of correspondence and rejects the idea that his use of the term moves to the extreme which Bauckham fears. As this chapter will also attempt to show, the intention of Moltmann's work is to argue for correspondence and participation as complementary concepts of the wider process of humanity's relationship with God. The interrelated nature of these two themes is highlighted in his own work: 'In their correspondence [...] human beings also participate in God's relation to the world'.<sup>55</sup> One could further argue, beyond Moltmann, that there are no human actions which correspond to God's love that do not also contribute to God's mission to bring love to all creation. At the same time one could claim that there is no participation in God's work on earth that does not draw the participant to echo the Creator's love. The capacity of correspondence and participation to strengthen each other is clear. For Moltmann, humanity not only participates in God's relationships with creation but also looks to God for the defining character of these relationships. Thus correspondence shapes humanity's participation, and participation is the context that enables correspondence.

## Correspondence as Growth: Growing in Love

This discussion has demonstrated that correspondence is linked to the whole loving life of God, in inner and outer relations. Correspondence is not an assumption of similarity between God and humanity but a call to grow more like the Trinity's loving nature, within creation's identity and limits as creation. God's completeness is beyond humanity's reach, yet some appropriate measure of correspondence is not impossible. For Moltmann, the correspondence

<sup>53</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 177 (cf. *TKG*, pp. 157-58, 198-200).

<sup>54</sup> Bauckham, *The Theology*, p. 177-79.

<sup>55</sup> *GiC*, p. 151 (cf. p. 77; *Man*, pp. 108-09; McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 7, 15; Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 202). Others have also taken this view (see Willis Jr, *Theism, Atheism*, p. 216; Fiddes, *Participating*, p. 50; McIlroy, *A Trinitarian*, p. 14, n. 57).

already exists to a certain extent. In the make-up of creation as ‘reciprocal in-existence’ there is already a reflection of divine indwelling.<sup>56</sup> Human beings, specifically created to be God’s image on earth, are ‘intended’ to show God’s love and are made for this purpose.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, even if they have not reached full correspondence, the task remains to attempt. This seems a reasonable use of ‘analogy’ in *analogia relationis*.

## 7.4 PARTICIPATING IN GOD

Next in this survey of theology-to-action within Moltmann’s anthropology is another dynamic in his work that has already briefly been mentioned; namely that humanity is created to participate in the life of the Trinity in its openness to a relationship with all creation. ‘Participation’ means simply to take part in something. We have already seen that, for Moltmann, humanity is an integral part of creation, and as such takes part in the ongoing history of creation. The word ‘participation’ might adequately describe what humanity does in creation. In this context, however, the discussion is restricted to the theme of human participation in God’s history with creation. Considering the love for creation which characterises God’s relationship with the world in Moltmann’s work, there is clear potential for this theme to offer a constructive element to the new theological architecture for ecological reformation. The exploration of that potential will occur mainly in the next chapter; the present section will investigate Moltmann’s understanding of this concept in more general terms.

### Ideal Participation

It is important to note that while Moltmann often describes a high aim for humanity’s participation in God’s relationships this is an ideal rather than a present reality. As with so many aspects of his theology, there is a difference between the present and what is hoped for. Albeit for him, the goal for the human takes much of its meaning from the concept of participation:

Mission is participation in Jesus’ own messianic mission – no more, and no less. Jesus’ mission is the reason for ours, and defines our mandate

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<sup>56</sup> *CoG*, p. 301.

<sup>57</sup> *GiC*, p. 77.



and our potentialities. So we have continually to test our aims and methods against Jesus' own mission.<sup>58</sup>

The above quotation also reinforces the mutually complementary nature of correspondence and participation. Here, in its participation, humanity uses Jesus' work as a benchmark. Yet participation builds on correspondence to state that humanity can, and (for Moltmann) is intended to, *join in* the work of God. Humanity is called to do more than its own independent work, even if that work was *like* God's work.

In addition, while above Moltmann mentions Jesus alone, his wider discussions are less exclusive.<sup>59</sup> His intention is clearly to involve humanity in all of the Trinity's various works, whether the Father's love, the Spirit's care, the Son's suffering, or any other of the diverse divine activities. Through God's openness, this work exists for humanity to participate in, waiting for people to perceive it through their faith in God.<sup>60</sup> This allows humanity to suffer with God and share God's joys.<sup>61</sup> It also brings freedom to humanity, since true freedom is participation in God's liberating freedom.<sup>62</sup> The relationship of the Trinity to creation reflects, in one way, the kind of relationship that humanity will itself have with creation: one where the 'other' does not always act lovingly or respond in kind to love. This shared experience of the Divine and humanity can be helpful to people who seek to act out love in a broken world. There is comfort in the knowledge that God shares in human striving, and that humanity shares in God's striving.

Participation brings humanity into an intimate relationship with God. As God is open to include creation in a perichoretic relationship, Moltmann writes of the human community's participation in the 'inner life' or 'eternal Being' of God, and describes the trinitarian fellowship's openness to give 'a share of itself'.<sup>63</sup> He also calls this a participation in the divine energy.<sup>64</sup> Earlier in his career he described it thus: 'communion with Christ is full life in the trinitarian situation of God'.<sup>65</sup> This highlights that the participation to which God invited humanity is not only participation in the divine works but in the trinitarian relationships of love towards all creation. The inclusion of relationships as well as work suggests that this participation in God is not

<sup>58</sup> *PP*, p. 72.

<sup>59</sup> For example, *GiC*, p. 151.

<sup>60</sup> *RRF*, pp. 36-37; *CPS*, pp. 225, 287-88; *SpL*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>61</sup> *CrG*, pp. 264, 352; *The Source*, p. 133.

<sup>62</sup> *RRF*, p. 67; *TKG*, p. 220.

<sup>63</sup> 'The Fellowship', pp. 289, 292, 294 (cf. *GiC*, pp. 97-98, 162; *HTG*, p. 63).

<sup>64</sup> *SpL*, p. 115.

<sup>65</sup> *CrG*, p. 286.

merely utilitarian, a simple task of completing a given work. Rather, it is a shared giving of love in the presence of each other.

## Empowered Participation

In Moltmann's work, participation in the relationship of God with creation cannot take place without the Creator's permission, nor indeed without the Creator's help:

We cannot 'make' a messianic way of life. [...] This way of life is created by the Spirit where people, personally and collectively, discover their life and the history of their lives in the comprehensive history of Christ, and participate in the history of God's dealings with the world.<sup>66</sup>

As we saw earlier in this project, it is the Spirit who brings life to creation and enables it to live and find community. Likewise it is the Spirit who enables and empowers creation to participate in God's life-bringing work.<sup>67</sup> Sometimes, as above, Moltmann writes that the Spirit brings unity between humanity with Christ. At other times participation through the Spirit also refers to a unity between humanity and the general creativity of God.<sup>68</sup> Paul Fiddes has suggested that in Moltmann's thought creation is so reliant on the Spirit's transforming work that there is a risk that the world's contribution to God's goal of glorification is merely God's own work.<sup>69</sup> Randall Bush follows this with more certainty: 'Moltmann makes God the *sole* actor in creativity.'<sup>70</sup> Yet these accusations suppose that in Moltmann's theology the response of the human to God's Spirit does not change the outcome. Chapters 5 and 6 already explored this problem in relation to eschatology and God's openness. For Moltmann, humanity's own activity and response to God is indeed significant for the continual life of creation.

This reliance on the Spirit is intended as an encouragement to the Church; it is empowered by God: 'The powers of the new creation are meant to enter into the Christian community', and: 'The one who is born again [...] lives in the presence of the Spirit [and is set] in the common movement of the Spirit'.<sup>71</sup> Yet an emphasis on the Spirit's help is not intended by Moltmann to suggest

<sup>66</sup> *CPS*, pp. 287-88 (cf. pp. 197, 294).

<sup>67</sup> *ToH*, p. 212; *HP*, p. 108 (1960); *CPS*, pp. 65, 279, 306, 309; *GiC*, p. 163.

<sup>68</sup> *GiC*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>69</sup> Fiddes, *The Creative*, p. 85.

<sup>70</sup> Bush, *Recent Ideas*, p. 295. Bush also states that Moltmann gives little reason for thinking that humanity's contribution to the divine life is positive (p. 296).

<sup>71</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 128; *CPS*, p. 279.

that only activity within the Christian community qualifies as participation in God's relationship with creation. In his theology, the presence and work of the Spirit has a universal embrace. His work thus questions whether the help of the Spirit to enable human participation should be restricted to believers.

### **The Role of Faith in Participation**

Chapter 4 considered the criticism that Moltmann needs more discernment when he claims the Spirit is present and active.<sup>72</sup> This is a connected concern: 'What Moltmann fails to do is distinguish between the type of work the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the Church and that which is achieved in society and nature.'<sup>73</sup> Harvie's own view seems to be that the Spirit is at work throughout creation, regardless of faith.<sup>74</sup> Yet he does not wish to be so universalistic as Moltmann. He believes that Moltmann should pay more attention to the different nature of the Spirit's work in a person with no Christian faith.

Harvie summarises how, for Moltmann, with regards to the Church it is the Spirit that enables and empowers work for God's kingdom.<sup>75</sup> Harvie also notes that Moltmann argues for the Spirit's work outside the Church.<sup>76</sup> Harvie is content for these two statements to coexist. Yet the following contribution from Moltmann introduces a problem:

There are apparently two ways of access to the community of Christ. On the one hand through faith in Christ, mediated through Word, sacrament and fellowship; on the other hand through shared work for the kingdom of God.<sup>77</sup>

Harvie interprets Moltmann to be arguing that there is access to the community of Christ that is completely separate to faith in Christ 'through work for the Kingdom in political action and praxis commensurate with the Kingdom' ('work for the kingdom' in this context equates to participation in God's kingdom work). Furthermore, given that it is the Spirit who empowers kingdom work, this implies to Harvie that the Spirit enables and empowers kingdom work outside of the believing community. Harvie responds with the question: 'To what extent may the Spirit's work be experienced outside of

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<sup>72</sup> See this work, p. 88.

<sup>73</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 84 (cf. Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, in the History of Christian Thought and in Recent Theology* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), p. 155).

<sup>74</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics*, p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>77</sup> *SpL*, p. 242.

confession of Christ?’<sup>78</sup> Harvie’s own answer to this question is that whatever the experience of the Spirit outside of faith in Christ is, it should not include kingdom-bringing work. For Harvie, to conclude that this particular element of the Spirit’s work can be present regardless of faith implies that confession of Christ is not necessary for the Church to participate in kingdom work. He outlines his understanding of Moltmann’s argument:

With the Church, the qualitative (that is, ethical and liberating) mission comes from the accomplished work of Christ in the history of promise among the people who confess his lordship. In society, however, such confession is not needed for the efficacious work of the Spirit in historically mediating the ethical life of the Kingdom. Yet Moltmann fails to relate the two. Why is confession of Christ needed for the Church and not for society in order for the experience of the Spirit which enables a life commensurate with the Kingdom?<sup>79</sup>

Harvie admits that it seems right to see a certain amount of unity between the works of different people that share same ethical aims; when society mirrors the Church in its considerations and actions there exists an element of common purpose. Critically for Harvie, however, ‘differentiation may be perceived in the *telos* of such ethical action’. Harvie believes Moltmann has made the ultimate goal a ‘universal society’ that reflects God’s standards for loving interrelationships, and as such has led himself to claim that secular society’s actions towards this goal share an aim with the Church. In contrast, Harvie wants to emphasise that the goal of the Spirit’s work is to bring about ‘a living, submissive recognition of Jesus Christ’ and that the idea of a ‘universal society’ must be inseparable from this. For this reason the work of the kingdom has to include faith in Christ, otherwise it is ultimately not connected with the kingdom of God. For him, outside of faith, the Spirit ‘calls society to repentance and living relationship with Christ’ in order that kingdom work *may then* ‘be made manifest’. Harvie contends that there exists the following order to the Spirit’s work in the world: the Spirit brings a person to relationship with Christ, ‘thereby enabling’ the Spirit to empower work that flows out of this relationship: that is, kingdom-building work.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the kingdom of God is not fundamentally about patterns of behaviour but about a relationship with Christ. Therefore, for Harvie, it is inappropriate to claim ‘access to the community of Christ’, or ‘shared work for the kingdom’, solely on the basis of behaviour and not also the relationship with Christ

<sup>78</sup> Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics*, p. 73.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85 (cf. pp. 43, 73-74, 82).

through faith.

Harvie claims faith is essential for the Spirit's kingdom-building work. In contradiction to this is Moltmann's understanding that *all* the Spirit's work builds up the kingdom. As this study of his overall project shows, for Moltmann, there is the same kingdom-focused eschatological orientation to all of God's work and presence in creation.<sup>81</sup> For him, it appears that while a person without Christian faith may not consciously act with the '*telos*' of God's kingdom in mind, that does not preclude a contribution to God's life-giving work as they seek to live out their own life-orientated lives. This orientation towards life comes from the Spirit's universal work.

## Incomplete Participation

It has been demonstrated that Moltmann describes the ideal that humanity fully participates in God's trinitarian relationship with creation. In reality there is a whole spectrum of possibilities for building a detailed picture of that participation in the present day. Importantly, however, his work argues that deeper and more conscious participation should always be sought.

### Inclusive Non-Conscious Participation

There is a theme that emerges from Moltmann's work, alongside *the Church* participating in God's mission, and humanity participating *through recognising Christ's history* in the world. That is: *universal involvement*.<sup>82</sup> As in previous chapters, his universal approach means that the Spirit and Christ are at work in *all* things, that the Trinity is open to the suffering and joy of *all* things, and that the future draws *all* things to God.<sup>83</sup> Moltmann explicitly refers to both 'all things' 'in God' and 'in the movement of God', *and* God in all things; the Divine-creation 'perichoretic relationship'. In this relationship the Divine 'allows his creatures to exert an influence on him'.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Beck has attempted to argue that Moltmann's theology leans towards the presence of the Spirit *outside* of the believer not being an eschatological presence, this quality of presence being restricted to the believer alone. His argument is not compelling for reasons similar to above: what work of the Spirit would not have lasting value and thus not be considered eschatological (Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 159-63, 179, 207, 210, 248-52, 258)?

<sup>82</sup> This fits well with Samuel Powell's plea for a theology of participation that recognises both its universal nature and the unique significance of the 'new mode [...] available in Christ' (Samuel M. Powell, *Participating in God: Creation and Trinity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), p. 46).

<sup>83</sup> Criticisms of these positions are found throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

<sup>84</sup> *GiC*, pp. 163-64, 258 (cf. *SpL*, p. 221).

This universal connectedness between God and all creation means that it would be impossible to find something that had no effect *in* creation, and therefore *on* creation, and as such that did not play any part in God's history with creation: 'Anyone who infringes life, infringes God. Anyone who does not love life, does not love God. God is a God of the whole of life, of every life and of the shared life of us all.'<sup>85</sup> If participation is understood as playing a part in God's relationship with creation, as it is for Moltmann, then the implication from the rest of Moltmann's work is that all living things are involved in this participation, whether for good or ill, knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or otherwise. Concerning human beings in particular, while he argues that there is an invitation from God to participate consciously and more deeply in God's relationship with creation, for him all of humanity must already unconsciously participate in this to a certain extent. It would thus seem that, like his theology of the image of God, participation is a gift to humanity that cannot be entirely lost. It should, however, be noted that non-conscious participation may be a long way from *constructive* participation.<sup>86</sup>

### **Limited Conscious Participation**

If participation is like correspondence in that it is a gift that always remains to a certain extent, then it is also similar in that it can fall short of its ultimate goal. For Moltmann, humanity's participation is limited both by the level of each person's engagement with tasks commensurate with God's mission, and also by the incomplete presence of God.

With regards to people's actions, Moltmann returns many times to the idea that humanity's thirst for power pulls it away from its work towards God's goals of peace and reconciliation, particularly in its relationship with nature.<sup>87</sup> For him, in Christianised societies this problem comes from a misunderstanding of the image of God which he specifically locates in rule and dominance.<sup>88</sup> This shows again the importance to Moltmann of the idea of correspondence to God's loving relationality. There are other reasons why people may not fully and intentionally participate in the divine work in creation, one of the more obvious being the absence of belief in God or God's activity. Even those who claim to follow Christ, however, will readily admit that they do not always perfectly succeed at that task. So while each person, whether aware of it or not, participates in God's great project of creation,

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<sup>85</sup> *GSS*, p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> For example, when a person acts in a way that is counterproductive to God's purposes.

<sup>87</sup> *RRF*, p. 26; *TJ*, pp. 81-82; *GiC*, p. 22; *WJC*, pp. 68, 157.

<sup>88</sup> *GiC*, p. 21.

not all (and none consistently) will consciously participate for good in the trinitarian relations with creation.

For Moltmann, the above limitation to creation's participation will come to an end. He has regularly written of his belief that humanity and the whole of creation will only arrive at complete participation in God's relationships when God is fully present in creation.<sup>89</sup> This does not necessarily result in Moltmann claiming rocks and grass will consciously participate in God's relationships. Rather, he can be understood to mean that all consciousness that *can* be aligned to God's way *will* be. For now, participation is partial and provisional.<sup>90</sup> This does not mean, however, that there is no scope for its growth in the present.

## Deeper Participation

Given the differences between the ideal of participation and the reality that it often takes, a useful distinction can be made, beyond Moltmann's own, between participation in *God's history with creation* on the one hand, and participation in *God's love for creation* on the other. The first is inescapable while the second requires an alignment with God's purposes, although the dividing line may not be as simple as Christian faith. Moltmann's work encounters an enquiry as to whether an alignment with God's purposes could include those who act in a love that is in accordance with God's work without conscious knowledge of it.

There is great importance in the recognition that every living thing, including each human being, plays its part in God's relationship with creation whether consciously or not, whether consciousness is even possible. The inclusion of people in this is a vital issue relevant to the exploration here and is at the heart of human responsibility. However, Moltmann's discussion of participation is not simply aimed at enabling humanity to recognise that it has a relationship with God. There is a deeper meaning sought: humanity is asked to play a role in God's eschatologically orientated work to sustain and redeem life. He clearly wants to encourage a more conscious participation in God's history with creation. He writes of not being satisfied with the Church's claims that it fulfils its responsibilities when it merely proclaims the gospel and rightly administers the sacraments. For him, true participation occurs as

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<sup>89</sup> *RRF*, p. 36; *CrG*, p. 349; 'Creation and Redemption', p. 130; *FC*, p. 125; *GiC*, pp. 5, 183-84, 213; 'The Scope', p. 102; 'Shekinah', pp. 182-83.

<sup>90</sup> *GiC*, p. 5.

the Church joins in with God's liberation and unification of all things, and when it shares God's joys and sufferings through all of creation.<sup>91</sup> It is the presence of the Holy Spirit which both empowers people to this end and leads them to openness to the whole world.<sup>92</sup>

While this discussion is specifically concerned with the Church, again Moltmann's universal pneumatology expands this concept so that the Spirit draws all people, regardless of faith, to a deeper concern for God's desires and to a greater participation in God's mission. For Moltmann, peace with nature will come as a person allows the Spirit to work, but this work of the Spirit is still ongoing in those who are not aware of who the Spirit is in the same way that a follower of Christ might claim to be.<sup>93</sup>

Moltmann believes that humanity is asked to participate more than it currently does, in joining the active love of God for creation, both in ways that are possible now and ways that cannot be realised until the future full indwelling of God occurs. He has hope for this possibility, for he believes that an experience of God changes a person. This brings encouragement that a small amount of participation helps a person to participate at the next level.<sup>94</sup> God's activity in creation, as Moltmann has described it, clearly points to an eagerness on God's part to work in people's lives. Therefore, for him, God wishes the participation of creation in God's own love to be an ever deepening reality.

## 7.5 LIVING IN HOPE

The last of this chapter's four themes for inclusion in the new theological architecture concerns the place of hope in Moltmann's connections between theology and ethical action. Hope is an important element of his theology, along with his keenness for eschatological themes. Hope is also, for him, intrinsically linked to love. Following a discussion of that link is a survey of three different ways in which he sees hope's interaction with humanity's efforts in the world. These will all contribute to the shaping of this new architecture's overall thrust towards ecological reformation.

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<sup>91</sup> *CPS*, p. 65.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>93</sup> *GiC*, p. xiii.

<sup>94</sup> *SpL*, p. 6.



## Love, Hope, Love

God's love has been at the root of every chapter in this project. It is Moltmann's consistent description of God's being and actions. It would have come as no surprise when a book dedicated to both Jürgen Moltmann and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel was given the theme of God's love as the reason for hope. The editors remind the reader that, for Moltmann, the love of God seen in the cross of Christ is the foundation of all Christian hope.<sup>95</sup> The previous chapters showed that God's love is seen in the various divine actions, and that this love is at the centre of God's character. Moltmann's emphasis on God's relationship with creation thus points towards a hope of eternal life with God for all creation.

This hope, which God's love produces, is in return an agent for the growth of love in the human being towards all that is hoped for. For Moltmann, hope leads to passionate desire for change as love seeks out that promised future.<sup>96</sup> It is hope that gives love its strength to act. For him, love 'allow[s] for the unawakened possibilities' of the other, which stem from hope.<sup>97</sup> Humanity's love is the manifestation of its hope. An analogy would be that hope gives the map of the journey and love walks along it.

## Loving Hope Produces Action

This hope, which originates in love and blossoms into love, is a strong advocate for action. From the beginning of Moltmann's career the following quotation has succinctly encapsulated hope as the motivational force which drives his work:

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.<sup>98</sup>

Three key points in Moltmann's work outline the way in which hope affects action: hope reveals the present to fall short of its potential; hope encourages a person to make the present more as it should be; and hope gives a sureness

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<sup>95</sup> Frederic B. Burnham, Charles S. McCoy and M. Douglas Meeks (eds), *Love: The Foundation of Hope: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel* (San Francisco, CA & London: Harper & Row, 1988), p. x.

<sup>96</sup> *ToH*, p. 337.

<sup>97</sup> *Man*, p. 117 (cf. *RRF*, p. 176).

<sup>98</sup> *ToH*, p. 16 (cf. *EoG*, p. 11).

that the present will one day become what it should be. These can be summarised as aim, motivation, and encouragement.

### **Reveals the Distance between Future and Present**

Chapter 6 investigated Moltmann's picture of the future which the hoped for consummation of all creation brings. However, there is an additional dynamic to the consequences of hope: hope identifies that the present is not what it should be. In his words, the person who looks to the redemption of creation 'sees that this world in which he lives is alienated from its true nature'.<sup>99</sup> Hope, by its very nature, looks for the incomplete present to change. The present cannot therefore fully satisfy. The hopeful will 'remain inconsolable until redemption comes'.<sup>100</sup> In this way, hope allows humanity to see something of what is beyond the present, or the 'fulfillment of history', and so orientate itself to God's work.<sup>101</sup>

If a person is aware of both the present and a hoped for future, they are provided with the point of origin for their journey and their destination. In this way hope supplies specifics for the aim of human activity as it is shaped by our hoped for destination.

Chester highlights a criticism of Moltmann in this respect, using the work of Stephen Williams.<sup>102</sup> Chester argues that for many people hope does not include 'every tree and flower'. Therefore hope will not encourage a responsibility for every part of creation.<sup>103</sup> For Chester and Williams, Moltmann's all inclusive eschatological future paints an incorrect view of what is certain. For them, Moltmann only discusses an optimistic human hope which may well meet with disappointment.<sup>104</sup> In Chester's opinion, there are many people and other living things for which there is not hope, or at least not a certain hope, which nevertheless need care. Chester and Williams do not deny the importance of hope but, in summary, they believe that biblically speaking *not everything or everyone* has a certain future. Therefore hope does not act as the most suitable governing factor for *all* human activity. Chester claims that the needs of what *is* function as a more appropriate focus for activity than a view of what *will be*. For him, as well as Williams, the scope of what a Christian is called to love is much more inclusive than what can be hoped for

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<sup>99</sup> *CPS*, p. 212.

<sup>100</sup> *CoG*, p. 93.

<sup>101</sup> *ExH*, p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> Chester, *Mission*, pp. 119-32.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

with certainty.<sup>105</sup>

Nevertheless, Moltmann is correct in his affirmation that if a person has hope for some future then this informs the aim of their activity. The problem presented by Chester, that the strength of Moltmann's argument is significantly weakened if one adopts a non-universalistic position, would be a significant problem if 'hope' was the sole basis for the scope of human activity. However, this is not so in Moltmann's work, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate.

### Seeks to Bridge the Gap

In Moltmann's theology hope not only gives the course of the journey but also provides the reason to make the journey. The present is incomplete, thus the future goal is desirable. This leads humanity to set out for this promised land. For him, hope for a different future should never lead to a wallowing in the present. Instead the hopeful person 'strives' for the future 'unrestrainedly and unreservedly' to reach it and help it come.<sup>106</sup> The hopeful person is only satisfied by action: 'Without hope in action faith's hope becomes ineffective and irresponsible.'<sup>107</sup>

Hope therefore looks to change the present, to work against current weaknesses which the future has revealed and to conform them to the future.<sup>108</sup> Hope looks to what of the future is possible now and 'grasps' it to make it a reality.<sup>109</sup> Hope moves the person to correspond to their future.<sup>110</sup> The fact that Moltmann's theology is one of hope for *all* creation means that this argument inevitably leads to action that takes *all* of creation into its consideration:

Thanks to its hope [the church] cannot surrender any individual person or any part of creation. 'Catholic' is therefore not an adjective describing the church's state; it is an attribute describing its movement, its mission and its hope.<sup>111</sup>

For Moltmann, this mission would not exist without hope: 'Anyone who believes that the world is going to end in catastrophe will not make a new

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 108. The context of this quotation is a criticism of Miroslav Volf's work, yet the principle is the same.

<sup>106</sup> *ToH*, p. 337 (cf. p. 18); *RRF*, p. 218.

<sup>107</sup> *FC*, p. 113 (cf. *ExH*, pp. 172-73).

<sup>108</sup> *ToH*, p. 335; *RRF*, pp. 32, 198, 202, 219-20; *ExH*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>109</sup> *HP*, p. 183 (1966).

<sup>110</sup> *RRF*, p. 218.

<sup>111</sup> *CPS*, p. 349 (cf. *RRF*, pp. 92-93; 'Hope', p. 272; *WJC*, pp. 45-46).

beginning, because it is pointless.<sup>112</sup> All other topics discussed in this chapter (the reduction of humanity's predominance, correspondence to God, participation in God) would similarly be meaningless for Moltmann without hope for the future. The previous chapter's work on the inclusion of continuity in his eschatological thinking shows that, for him, the belief that a person really can contribute to this promised future increases hope's motivational force. This hope gives people the 'creative expectation' that allows them to 'bring forth projects for the future' which is so vital to Moltmann.<sup>113</sup>

Chester again raises a concern about this element of Moltmann's thought. His critique takes a twofold approach. Firstly, for Chester, hope is essentially an ambiguous incentive, or motivation, for ethical activity. While it might move people to action, it can equally persuade them to do nothing and wait for God to sort the world out.<sup>114</sup> Secondly, therefore, Chester argues that 'eschatology alone cannot shape mission or social ethics. By itself it is highly ambiguous'.<sup>115</sup> This assertion shapes Chester's critique of Moltmann and suggests that Chester is under the impression that hope is the sole basis for ethical activity in Moltmann's work (or at least its primary basis to the extent that other concerns have no significant power). In summary, Chester's concern is twofold: hope is an ambiguous motivator, and in Moltmann's theology hope is effectively alone as this motivator.

In the first concern, Chester is correct. However, this is not in contradiction to Moltmann, who states as much explicitly: Hope 'can fill the present with new power, but it can also draw power away from the present'.<sup>116</sup> Chester is aware of this statement yet he somewhat misleadingly introduces it: 'Ultimately even Moltmann himself acknowledges this'.<sup>117</sup> This implies that Moltmann has reached the end of three decades of expounding hope's virtue for ethical action only to realise that it is a shaky foundation. However, in Moltmann's earliest works he indicates that he is aware of this danger, alongside his belief that withdrawal from the present should not be the Christian response to hope.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>112</sup> *EoG*, p. 28 (cf. *ToH*, p. 35; *RRF*, p. 220; *CPS*, p. 166).

<sup>113</sup> *SpL*, p. 122.

<sup>114</sup> Chester, *Mission*, pp. 122, 194, 199-201, 223 (cf. Sokolowski, *A Theological Response*, p. 63, who suggests that the ethical import of a vision of the future is a 'matter of interpretation rather than logic').

<sup>115</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 199.

<sup>116</sup> *CoG*, p. 153.

<sup>117</sup> Chester, *Mission*, p. 199.

<sup>118</sup> *ToH*, pp. 33-35, 100 (p. 263 also contains an interesting discussion on the interaction of hope with other topics, such as the way in which this hope is to come about); *RRF*, p. 119; *HP*, p. 220 (1966). See also *WJC*, p. 26. Thanks are due to Roy Kearsley for pointing out that

It is therefore agreed that hope has the potential to be ambiguous for ethical activity. However, Chester overstates the implications of this for Moltmann's project. Chester's second claim is that hope is the leads the charge in Moltmann's work on ethical action and therefore hope's ambiguity threatens this work with ineffectiveness. Chester's solution would not be to remove hope from consideration, but instead to make love the guiding principle.<sup>119</sup> However, as this chapter demonstrates, Moltmann does not leave hope as the sole motivator or director of ethical activity. This ambiguity is not left to blow wherever it will. His approach to ethical activity is varied, as this chapter demonstrates. As well as this, he includes the idea of love at many stages, which gives him a confidence that hope and love together meet the challenge of hope's ambiguity.<sup>120</sup> This suggests that Chester has exaggerated Moltmann's position and thus criticised a view that Moltmann does not hold.<sup>121</sup>

### **Gives a Sureness**

In addition to an aim and motivation, for Moltmann, hope also gives a certainty about the future which acts as an encouragement in the present. In his thought, while actions have a dependency on hope, hope itself is not entirely dependent on humanity's actions.<sup>122</sup> For him, humanity's hope is not based on its own ability to realise the future, nor on their continual success in allowing the Spirit to work through them: 'The future in which we hope is never identical with the successes of our activity'.<sup>123</sup> Humanity's actions cannot realise this future and so cannot be the foundation for hope.<sup>124</sup> This resonates with the discussion about discontinuity between the present and God's coming future, and the hope which this brings. For this reason humanity's hope does not come primarily from the potential in its own life. Rather it is hope itself that creates the potential. Hope is the starting point. This allows humanity's hope to persevere through the disruptive present.<sup>125</sup>

In Moltmann's eyes, the absence of hope creates a despair which must

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there are other ambiguous motivators, such as grace and forgiveness, which while they can produce divergent responses are still important (cf. Rom. 6.1-2).

<sup>119</sup> Chester, *Mission*, pp. 121, 200-01, 221-23.

<sup>120</sup> For example, *CoG*, p. 153.

<sup>121</sup> Chester does point to places where Moltmann includes themes outside of hope, but seems to treat them as anomalies in his work which should have been developed but were not (Chester, *Mission*, pp. 200-01).

<sup>122</sup> *ToH*, p. 120.

<sup>123</sup> *RRF*, p. 220.

<sup>124</sup> *HP*, p. 107 (1960).

<sup>125</sup> *ToH*, p. 31; *CoG*, p. 57.

be overcome. This is pertinent to the ecological reformation. If there is despair concerning nature's future then he believes that there will not be peace between nature and humanity, whereas hope will give meaning to all of creation.<sup>126</sup> The result is that while human hopes can be frustrated, they 'cannot be destroyed'.<sup>127</sup> In fact, for Moltmann, disappointment makes hope wise and gives it 'open eyes', for it is not 'blind optimism'.<sup>128</sup> Yet hope is still a certainty that the destination will be reached.

Hope strengthens humanity to endure the present, but Moltmann does not claim that it makes disaster more bearable. On the contrary, due to the contrast hope draws between the future and the present, the latter is 'often rather more unbearable', and hope also 'makes us deeply vulnerable to the pain of disappointment'.<sup>129</sup>

## Hope: The Power of the Future in the Present

The previous chapter showed the way in which, for Moltmann, hope plays its part in helping humanity to realise it shares a common journey with all of creation. In addition, hope is the power for people to live 'wholly' with a life of love and joy.<sup>130</sup> It does this because it gives humanity a direction for its actions, motivates people to work for the future, and encourages them along the way. Through all these things the 'promise' of the future 'exerts influence on present through hope'.<sup>131</sup> Hope gives a power in the present in order to help realise the future. Similarly it helps give this power to the new theological architecture

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<sup>126</sup> *CrG*, p. 350 (cf. *ExH*, p. 16).

<sup>127</sup> *ExH*, p. 36.

<sup>128</sup> *EoG*, p. 14.

<sup>129</sup> *Man*, p. 116; *PP*, p. 113.

<sup>130</sup> *CoG*, p. 66.

<sup>131</sup> *ToH*, p. 18.

## 7.6 CONCLUSIONS

### Interconnectedness of Themes: A Fourfold Approach

One of the strengths of Moltmann's anthropology which can be transferred to the new theological architecture is the imaginative interplay of diverse topics. The benefits of this approach are plainly seen in his development of several diverse arguments for the implications of theology for human action. If any of the four themes in this chapter were expected to guide human activity adequately by itself, as some critics feared, then the result would be a weak foundation for that activity. However, his methodology has not been to claim that just one of these four is the definitive link between theology and action. The key to understanding the way in which Moltmann views theology's interaction with human activity is to recognise that these four themes are cooperative and strengthen each other. One or another may come to the fore on different occasions, yet overall is still balanced by the others. The next chapter will explore the value of these approaches for the ecological reformation. For now, however, the way these four themes interact is observed.

The reduction of humanity's predominance, for Moltmann, places nature and humanity alongside each other, both of which are creations loved by God and equally included in God's future. This balances the other themes by means of a reminder that the scope of God's love and mission encompasses all creation, and therefore hope needs to be equally broad. This inclusive view encourages a rounded approach to human activity and avoids its restriction to human or unworldly concerns.<sup>132</sup>

The theme of correspondence considers humanity to constitute the image of God. This entails a correspondence to both the inner and outer loving relationships of God. That standard of love should be remembered when considering Moltmann's other themes. Whatever relationships and actions are prompted through the other themes, correspondence encourages them to remain interwoven with God's love.

The theme of participation demonstrates that human beings are participants in God's history with creation, whether consciously or not. This adds certain strength to the approaches elicited through the other themes: particip-

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<sup>132</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 62, also recognises this balance.

ation reminds the person that they are not involved in a solitary project. That life is participation also claims that a person's actions are not inconsequential but are part of the meaningful and purposeful history of creation with God. This also adds a certain responsibility for people to act.

A hope for the consummated future can lead and motivate humanity into action. When hope is added to the other themes it provides a goal that transcends present reality and an encouragement that this goal will be reached. Hope means that actions prompted by the other themes are freed from hopelessness and despair. This gives them power to move forward.

## Idealism versus Realism

Another constructive addition to this new architecture is Moltmann's description of aspirational concepts with which humanity will engage in a whole range of ways. No one person embraces them perfectly. While, for example, some claimed that those of faith participate in God's relationships and those without faith do not, Moltmann does not work with such delineations. Each theme describes a dynamic that is in everybody's life to varying degrees, though always with potential for development.

For Moltmann, the acknowledgement that humanity is still, like nature, a part of creation is more than simply an acknowledgement of physical interaction. He seeks a deeper journey into a relationship of solidarity between the individual and all creation around them. This requires a quality of relationship with creation which humanity has not yet attained in full, and which does not simply appear with faith but must grow and develop. The theological notion of *one* creation serves to inspire the human to a deeper relationship with all things.

Concerning the theme of correspondence, Moltmann believes the image of God is not fully lost in any human being. Correspondences with God's love can be seen to various extents in the actions of all people, for God's Spirit is at work in all. When, through faith, the being and activity of the triune God is discerned, then focus is created and the reflection of the divine love can be consciously sought, although the *imago Dei* is not fully restored. Correspondence remains limited, for Moltmann has never claimed equivalence between the relationships of the Trinity and any relationship within in creation, and certainly no equivalence between the persons of the Trinity and humanity. Nevertheless, the Trinity remains 'a source of inspiration for human



community life'.<sup>133</sup>

The theme of participation holds the most interesting combination of reality and aspiration. There is a difference between non-conscious and conscious participation in God's history and mission in creation. All are engaged in the former, for good or for ill, because it is inescapable, while those who discern the work of God can seek to align themselves more fully and intimately with that work and so participate actively. As with other themes, however, humanity is said to participate only partially in the Trinity's open relationships. Humanity's participation is limited, aside from its acceptance or not of the invitation, both because humanity does not fulfil its potential and because it does not have the same capability to bring and secure the future.

In a similar sense the theme of hope is present yet partial and it does not separate people into hopeless and hopeful. There is a particular hope which Moltmann's Christian theology holds for the future of all things with God that should encourage believers to realise this future. It would be a mistake, however, to claim that those who do not hope in Christ do not hope at all. Hope is present in all peoples in various forms. Even if this hope is not centred on Christ it can still share such characteristics as hope for life, love and goodness, that will lead people in similar directions. Again, Moltmann has not claimed that Christian hope instantly transforms the person into their future goal. Hope encourages and leads people to take steps into the unknown.

The exploration of the four themes addressed in this chapter has therefore described two things: a dynamic present in all humans, and a further goal towards which every person that recognises it can still strive. These in themselves can function as inspiration and motivation for humanity to act. Yet, as various parts of this study have highlighted, Moltmann's theology also offers to this theological architecture an encouragement to humanity that the journey towards these goals can be developed through the complementary mix of a person's faith, the Spirit's enabling power, and Christ's work.<sup>134</sup>

## Potential for the Ecological Reformation

This area of Moltmann's work has contributed to the theological architecture in a variety of ways. Firstly, each of the four topics discussed in this chapter

<sup>133</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 298 (cf. McDougall, 'Return of Trinitarian Praxis', p. 196).

<sup>134</sup> See especially Chapter 4 of this work (pp. 85, 95), and above (p. 187), although the work of Christ and the Spirit to transform the world, and humanity with it, is discussed throughout this research.

carries its own encouragements and mechanisms by which humanity's general attitudes and actions may be informed and shaped by theological beliefs: humanity should not assume a position over nature; it can use God's actions as a pattern; it can join in God's works; it can respond to God's future. Secondly, the combination of these four topics together lends to this architecture the resilience which comes from a supportive web of ideas. Weaknesses in one approach are compensated for by strengths of others. Thirdly, by highlighting the difference between what should exist and what does exist, in terms of humanity's embrace and utilisation of the dynamics of the topics discussed, Moltmann's work gives a reminder of the need for progress. Fourthly, and significantly for the concerns of this thesis, each of the four approaches has potential for application in specifically ecological ways.

The humble approach to humanity's place within creation which Moltmann advocates has great potential to challenge human attitudes towards nature. His work has maintained that all of creation should be remembered when considering humanity's actions. This in itself issues a reminder to humanity, but he goes further to argue that people should bring their regard for nature nearer to the value they place on human beings.

When humanity is called to correspond to God it is the God who loves all creation. As Moltmann's wider theology has gathered together various aspects of that love for the whole world it has formed a substantial resource from which these correspondences might be drawn. God's love for creation is extensive and varied in its effect. To correspond to this wide love is to consider many facets to humanity's attitude towards its surroundings.

Furthermore, humanity is called to participate in God's history with creation. This is the history of God's love for all creation and the divine activity to give it life, preserve and transform it. Moltmann's theology has proposed an all-encompassing vision of the Trinity's involvement in creation. For humanity to seek deeper participation in such a relationship is to immerse itself in a similarly comprehensive regard for all life, its preservation and potential.

Finally, life shaped by hope is life shaped by a hope for all creation. Moltmann's eschatology is tenaciously cosmic. Therefore the love, aims, motivations and encouragements produced by hope are all directed at nature's life as well as that of humanity. For him, hope is a powerful influence on today's world. His wider theology's hope of a future for all creation makes this an influence for ecological action.

As stated above, this research does not claim these four themes to be the

only methods by which theology might elicit responsible action. They are simply four topics that show great potential for the aims of this thesis. In order to explore more fully the benefits of these themes to a new theological architecture for ecological reformation, the next chapter will illustrate the way in which each theme provides a profitable opportunity to draw out the environmental implications stemming from the wider theology of this new architecture.

# Chapter 8

## The 'Ecological Reformation'

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter's main task is to explicate the potential of Moltmann's contributions to the new theological architecture as they appeal for a transformation of the attitude of a person towards the world. This attitude is a significant basis for their interaction with it.

The discussion will investigate the implications of the four main themes of the previous chapter for the ecological reformation when they are connected to the wider theological topics of this thesis. Through this it will illuminate the way in which the new theological architecture drawn from Moltmann's work not only includes theory but also provides many avenues by which to move towards this reformation. This is a most valuable part of the new architecture that is able to contribute towards an ecological reformation of Christianity and society.

This chapter contributes to this thesis by strengthening the bridge between so-called systematic theology and the active response of a person. This chapter does not attempt to address the concrete nature of the possible ecological reformation, except in certain, limited suggestions that serve to illustrate the directions in which Moltmann's work points. Comprehensive answers to such questions should be provided by economic and ecological experts.

### 8.2 RESTORING ALL CREATION'S IMPORTANCE

The various aspects of the new theological architecture discussed throughout this research lead to ecological reformation through giving particular attention

to creation itself. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Moltmann argues that humanity needs to learn to see itself as *part* of creation, rather than *above* it or superior to it. This reduction of humanity's precedence leads to a reaffirmation of *all* creation's importance. From Moltmann's work on this, there are four parts of creation's identity which are particularly noteworthy in their appeal to the renewal of humanity's attitude towards the earth.

## One Community

For Moltmann, given that the *whole* universe is the creation of God, there is already a oneness present between humanity and the rest of the cosmos.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, his consideration of the activity of God in all creation demonstrates God's loving care for nature and humanity. This speaks of their unity through their common journey. So for Moltmann, nature and humanity do not have independent lives but God desires that all live together.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this is also the hope which Moltmann believes includes a future for all creation. This hope moves him to look beyond a utilitarian acknowledgement of mutual need and move towards compassion for the other that also travels towards a shared goal.

Moltmann describes nature and humanity's common journey, past, present and future, as one in which humanity has an interdependence with nature that will not end but will stretch into the future. For him, it is important to recognise that nature and humanity exchange energies and materials, and that physical processes bind them. Even so, his basis for this claim is deeper than merely the physical relationship.<sup>3</sup> A purely physical co-dependency could unevenly result in indifference towards nature by humanity unless a problem affected their own interests. As such, he looks to further dimensions of this relationship.

This joint journey is another part of Moltmann's stimulus to retrieve the notion of community with nature. He suggests an annual day on which people stop to recognise the hurts they have inflicted on the world and seek reconciliation.<sup>4</sup> This part of his work is a reminder of the great importance of the community of creation. It is not a temporary thing for the eventual

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<sup>1</sup> *CPS*, pp. 212-13.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Chapter 4 of this work, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Sokolowski shares this view and expresses himself helpfully: 'We might add that the connection that human beings feel to creation is more than a physical relationship but also deeply spiritual – an ineffable exchange of wonder and awe.' (Sokolowski, *A Theological Response*, p. 19.)

<sup>4</sup> 'Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit', p. 252.

gain of one or the other. Rather, this community carries nature and humanity together into the future. From this he claims that love for Christ must lead to love for the earth, a love that seeks true reformation.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, for Moltmann, it is vital to take the goal of a whole-earth community into consideration and respond in active movement towards it.<sup>6</sup> This is in order for humanity to find its right place, to rediscover its own identity as part of creation as a whole, and thus allow life-giving relationships to flourish.<sup>7</sup> He believes one step in the direction of wholeness with nature is a person's acceptance of the wholeness of their own soul and body, because the recognition of this wholeness serves to increase the appreciation of unity with the physical world in general.<sup>8</sup> Through this, he believes that humanity can contribute to the reparation of the damaged relationship because, for him, a greater sense of community can reduce alienation and 'liberate nature from human oppression'.<sup>9</sup> It can promote life and lead to respect for the rhythms of the wider world.<sup>10</sup> For humanity to live in awareness of community would be to live in balance with nature, not at its expense or in opposition to it. In this way humanity would have more motivation to slow down production and expansion in order to pay attention to the required harmony and equilibrium within creation.<sup>11</sup> Creation's identity as a community prompts a radical measure of society's progress: success should be measured by the benefit to the whole world, not only one community, nor even the whole human species.

## God's Creation

Moltmann's work highlights that all creation belongs first and foremost to God. The relationship which he outlines between God and creation, particularly the loving care, openness and vulnerability, signifies the seriousness of this ownership. For him, the fruit of this view is significantly different to that of the view of nature as the property of humanity, or of no-one in particular, which he believes is particularly destructive.<sup>12</sup> To view creation as belonging to God is to reassess the rights which humanity has assumed over nature.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *CoG*, p. 279.

<sup>6</sup> *FC*, p. 112; *GiC*, pp. 3-4; *SpL*, p. 248.

<sup>7</sup> *GiC*, p. 189; *CoG*, p. 260; 'Shekinah', p. 172; *SW*, pp. 168-69.

<sup>8</sup> *GiC*, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48; *GSS*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> *GiC*, p. 3; 'The Scope', p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *GiC*, pp. 137-38; *GSS*, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> *ExH*, p. 184; *EoG*, p. 27; *SW*, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> *GSS*, p. 112.

It is to respect the world as humanity respects God and to recognise the importance of the divine rights over creation.<sup>14</sup> Divine ownership requires that humanity treats nature with dignity and protects it from harm.<sup>15</sup> Respect, dignity, and protection are valuable components of an ecological reformation.

Moltmann's response to God's rights over creation also contains the idea that people sanctify creation.<sup>16</sup> But he does not mean by this that somehow we could change the status of creation's holiness. Rather, to sanctify in this instance is to '[learn] to see life and love it as God sees and loves it: as good, just and lovely'.<sup>17</sup> Practically speaking this entails the protection of life from destruction and violence.<sup>18</sup> This prompts Moltmann to suggest so specific an action as a lower use of energy and technology in daily life. At the same time he offers an extension to the traditional Christian 'great commandment' to love God: 'You shall love God and this earth and all your fellow creatures with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might!'<sup>19</sup> 'Sanctification' is another theme in Moltmann's work that argues for reverence and love for nature.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of 'sabbath', the day of rest, one of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, is a further practical response that Moltmann sees as relevant to God's ownership of the earth.<sup>21</sup> He writes that this commandment is especially important, and has great significance for all creation because the sabbath is an event for nature as well as humanity.<sup>22</sup> The concrete application of this, as he understands it, is to give rest and peace to animals and the land, a time when people do not demand productivity.<sup>23</sup> Sabbath is a special day that affords creation the privilege of simply 'being', when it is released from the demands of society. The sabbath also serves as a special effort to reclaim the harmonious relationship that should already exist between nature and humanity, for it is a celebration of the value of all creation which also leads to a recognition of the need for nature's liberation from its troubles and injustice, as well as the injustice of the poor who try to survive on ravaged land.<sup>24</sup> So 'sabbath', in Moltmann's thought, adds rest, peace, and justice for the earth to

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<sup>14</sup> *GiC*, p. 21; *GSS*, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> *CJF*, p. 15; *SpL*, p. 97; *The Source*, p. 49; *GSS*, p. 111.

<sup>16</sup> *SpL*, pp. 171-79 (cf. *CPS*, p. 354).

<sup>17</sup> *SpL*, p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> *CPS*, p. 339; *SpL*, pp. 171-72.

<sup>19</sup> *SpL*, p. 172.

<sup>20</sup> *EoG*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *GiC*, pp. 276-77; Ex. 20.8-11; Deut. 5.12-15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 284-85, 289; *CJF*, pp. 63, 81; *The Source*, p. 85.

<sup>23</sup> *CPS*, pp. 269-70; *GiC*, pp. 6, 286; *WJC*, p. 121; *SpL*, p. 97; *GSS*, pp. 113-14.

<sup>24</sup> *GiC*, pp. 285-89; *CJF*, p. 61; *WJC*, p. 121; *EthH*, pp. 113-14.

the environmental implications of theology.

## Intrinsic Value

The third part of creation's identity which Moltmann highlights, and which contributes to the new architecture's appeal for an ecological reformation, is *the intrinsic value of creation*. For him, this results from more than simply God's ownership. The reformation is more than environment care for *God's* sake. In Moltmann's work, the fact that God lovingly created the world gives the latter its *own* inherent value and rights, as does the trinitarian presence and caring activity throughout creation.<sup>25</sup> For example, the covenant made by God with Noah after the Flood is a covenant with 'every living creature'.<sup>26</sup> For Moltmann, this was a declaration of nature as a partner in God's covenant relationship, and gave nature its own rights.<sup>27</sup> The fact that in his work openness shapes the Trinity's relationship with creation only serves to increase creation's value. For him, that God would suffer for all creation raises the value of the natural world to 'infinite value' and 'uninfringeable dignity'.<sup>28</sup> According to his eschatology, it is *this* creation that has a future, *this* creation whose value carries it into eternity.

There are implications here for the ecological reformation. For Moltmann, the rights of nature have to be affirmed and 'respected and balanced out' with human rights, rather than demoted to a lower priority.<sup>29</sup> Such a balance requires nature's needs to be considered at all levels of decision making, from local to national and international. Moltmann hopes for a reduction of human hostility towards, and domination over, nature as humanity learns to value the earth because of God.<sup>30</sup> He calls for reverence and adoration for the divine presence in nature that leads to reverence and respect for the natural world itself as well.<sup>31</sup> For him, to respond to this intrinsic value in nature will liberate both nature and humanity, draw them together, and reform the relationship.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, to see the value which creation has within itself increases its value for humanity: humanity can learn from the rest of creation. Moltmann

<sup>25</sup> *CJF*, p. 68; *WJC*, p. 307; *The Source*, p. 49; *GSS*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 9.12.

<sup>27</sup> *GSS*, p. 110; *EthH*, pp. 112-13, 125.

<sup>28</sup> *WJC*, p. 256 (cf. *CJF*, p. 68).

<sup>29</sup> *GiC*, p. 3 (cf. *ExH*, p. 184); *CJF*, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> *SW*, pp. 168-69.

<sup>31</sup> *CJF*, pp. 14-15; *SpL*, p. 10; *GSS*, pp. 22, 101-04.

<sup>32</sup> *GiC*, p. 98.



writes that nature has much wisdom to teach humanity concerning how to live. As humanity accepts that it is part of creation it in turn realises that nature is not an inferior partner. In fact humanity, as a relative 'latecomer' to the earth, 'has every reason to enquire about the wisdom of the [rest of the] living and their ecosystems'.<sup>33</sup> Here respect and learning can grow together. The ecological reformation is not only beneficial for nature. Furthermore, learning from the whole of creation is to understand nature itself more fully and the effects of humanity on it. Similarly, a lack of learning from and about creation gives humanity little basis to understand its own actions. In this way, ecological reformation deepens knowledge which itself enables that reformation to be more effective.

Moltmann himself advocates a 'communicative knowledge' of creation.<sup>34</sup> The search for knowledge can, he claims, come from a desire to segment, analyse, understand, and then dominate. This does not lead to a greater relationship or the joy of unification together. To seek 'communicative knowledge' is to be part of that which is known, in order to find mutuality and union. For him, this kind of community brings joy, and this type of knowledge is the truest kind.<sup>35</sup> The search for 'communicative knowledge' is thus a step in the direction of ecological reformation.

## Vulnerability

The final strand of creation's identity deserving brief mention here is the vulnerability of creation which is the result of the balance between the freedom God gives it and the promise of future consummation. Moltmann writes of the way in which the needs of the world provide the concrete form of people's actions.<sup>36</sup> That in itself is not a novel idea. However, within the Christian worldview, there is the danger that an affirmation of God's overall control of history downplays attention to the world's issues. Moltmann's view of God's interaction with creation, especially as seen in evolution, is a part of his theological case for the presence of risk in creation.<sup>37</sup> The risk is that not everything will happen exactly as God wishes because creation is allowed to grow and develop free from full control. The vulnerability that stems from the risk element in God's loving care suggests the necessity of an acceptance

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<sup>33</sup> *SW*, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> *GiC*, pp. 2-3, 32, 69-70.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> *SpL*, p. 235.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 4 of this work, p. 77 (also Chapter 3, p. 48).

of responsibility by humanity for the way its actions affect nature. People exist in a relationship with something vulnerable, therefore it is important to be sensitive to the needs that arise. This requires humanity to give greater thought to the effect its actions have on the world, and indeed to give thought to the effect on the world of nature's own actions.

This strand, along with the three above, presents a case that the theological contribution to creation's identity has serious implications for the potential ecological reformation. It brings a radical challenge to the attitude with which humanity approaches the natural world.

### 8.3 CORRESPONDING TO GOD'S LOVE FOR CREATION

The discussion now moves to a consideration of humanity's response to who God is, rather than its response to creation. God's relationships, both within the Trinity and with creation, provide the theological architecture with an example that offers to shape humanity's own relationship with the world.

#### God's Trinitarian Love

Moltmann's work on God's inner relationships has constructive implications for humanity's correspondence to the Divine in the area of environment care. This eternal intratrinitarian love serves as one of the standards by which to encourage the deepening of humanity's relationship with nature.

The theme in Moltmann of human correspondence to God's love appears intended to lead humanity to take the eternal, perichoretic, inner love of the Trinity as a real example for its own relationships. The need for this love to shape all the interactions within creation is clear to Moltmann because all life is already intertwined: 'There is no such thing as a solitary life.'<sup>38</sup> God's *perichoresis* suggests that this connectivity should have love at its centre. So for Moltmann, the divine love can be 'brought to bear on the relation of men and women to [...] the whole of creation'.<sup>39</sup> There is a challenge here to renew the community between people and nature to reflect 'God's wisdom

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<sup>38</sup> *GiC*, p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> *TKG*, p. 19.

and God's beauty'.<sup>40</sup>

There is a further lesson useful to an ecological reformation which the divine unity-in-relationships brings. It can be difficult for humanity to acknowledge a strong unity with nature because the two are so different. Yet God's unity, in Moltmann's theology, is one where relationships of love are more key than similarity between persons. This meant that God is open to what is not divine. A similar approach to nature and humanity opens up the latter to see unification with the world as a real possibility.

In these ways, this exploration outlines a theological architecture which has the ability to redefine the kind of relationship that is available and desirable between people and planet. Moltmann's work on the Trinity is one foundation of this architecture, and correspondence puts loving interactivity at the heart of the goal of ecological reformation. Deane-Drummond notes that trinitarianism in itself does not automatically lead to 'harmonious' life between nature and humanity.<sup>41</sup> That is true, but this is only one of many links in Moltmann's work between theology and environment care. Even in its basic form, his work on the relationships of the Trinity contributes to a theological architecture that values the quality of all relationships.

## God's Love for Creation

God's love for creation is at the core of this thesis. Many aspects of this active love are a particular stimulus to humanity for ecological reform.

The original act of creation is not something a human person could replicate, yet the *outward looking love* of God is. For Moltmann, the act of creation from nothing, *ex nihilo*, can have no human analogy.<sup>42</sup> However, his discussion of this topic still allows opportunity to apply a measure of correspondence. For example, God's love looked outside the self to find a new avenue through which to flow down, in a great act of selflessness. Moltmann himself does not make this link but his work nevertheless challenges humanity to look beyond the natural boundaries of their love (friends and family) and to cultivate a love and care that continually *looks outwards* to others and, importantly for this discussion, to the earth.

A further way in which humanity might correspond to the God's creative activity concerns *divine freedom*. Moltmann describes the way in which this

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<sup>40</sup> *CJF*, p. 56; *GSS*, p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> *GiC*, p. 73.

freedom in the act of creation was not *to choose* to love, rather it is the freedom *to love*. This means that he has often written that human freedom does not equate to an excuse for domination.<sup>43</sup> In his theology, an act of domination is neither free nor loving. If humanity is to correspond to God's freedom then, within his doctrine of creation, humanity's freedom is not best understood as the choice to do whatever it wants. It is rather the freedom to follow its true destiny: simply to love, and in this context, simply to love creation as a whole.<sup>44</sup> Moltmann's theology suggests that God created humanity for this, not simply to have arbitrary choices. The benefit of that assertion for human attitudes towards environment care is clear. To look for a fulfilled life, a major force that drives people, need not be the search for more power and unbounded possibility. This often results in the oppression of the weak, in this case the natural world. Instead, from Moltmann's work, a fulfilled life is really one that grasps its true purpose: to love the earth and everything in it.

A third stimulus for consideration, specifically from the original act of creation in Moltmann's theology, is the idea that God is the 'living space' for creation. In his doctrine of creation there appear divergent ideas of what kind of space God created for creation to enter into. His later view, which is more helpful to this project, was that God allows creation to exist 'within him'.<sup>45</sup> According to this view, God brings forth the conditions for life to exist. This is divine hospitality towards creation, to allow it room alongside God's own self. These are acts to which humanity's efforts can correspond as it makes a space in which creation can thrive. Such values heighten awareness of the way in which society often restricts nature, and identify which human areas and developments are hostile to nature. Initial illustrations of such a reformation in more concrete terms could be: a greater inclusion of plants and animals in human environments, especially excessively urban areas; concessions in land use made by humanity to create a more hospitable space for nature; household assessment of the extent to which the natural world is allowed to thrive in, and on, their own property. This application of Moltmann's work claims nature's 'living space' should be a priority for people.

Moltmann's study of the divine loving care after the original act of creation shows that the Trinity is *continually and passionately involved with*

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<sup>43</sup> *RRF*, p. 69; *TJ*, p. 44; *CrG*, pp. 331-32; 'The Cross and Civil Religion', in *Religion and Political Society*, ed. by Jürgen Moltmann and the Institute of Christian Thought (London: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 14-47 (p. 45); *TKG*, pp. 213-16; *SpL*, p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> In fact, Moltmann also mentions that too much power can reduce a person's freedom to do the right thing (*TKG*, p. 214).

<sup>45</sup> *CoG*, p. 299.

*and for creation.* It is more than merely an attitude or feeling. Deane-Drummond highlights the way in which this particular aspect of humanity's correspondence to God is a consistent element in Moltmann's work: 'Our rôle as stewards of creation only makes sense in this context of love and care for creation, which reflects the loving attitude of our creator.'<sup>46</sup> For him, our rejection of this turns us into God's caricature instead of the divine image.<sup>47</sup> Divine involvement in creation therefore is an example to humanity to be similarly practically involved in creation as a whole.

For Moltmann, God's love is orientated towards *service*, especially as seen in the incarnation of Christ. Jesus' life on earth was for others. With a focus on service, Moltmann adds weight to his rejection of the power of domination. An example of this dominating power would be, for him, the 'seizure of power over nature' which he believes Christianity has often generated.<sup>48</sup> Thus he claims that the Old Testament command, 'fill the earth and subdue it', needs to be reinterpreted as: 'free the earth through fellowship with it'.<sup>49</sup> God's serving of the earth continues to persuade Moltmann that there is a similar service which humanity can provide for the natural world.

Accompanying service is God's *openness towards creation and the resultant suffering*. For Moltmann, God allows that creation has an effect on the Divine. This demonstrates what love is, and the extent to which love will go. To correspond to the Divine here would be to allow the plight of nature affect humanity too. This openness carries a further message that, for example, the gift of 'living space', or God's care, does not. To correspond to God's openness, humanity would need to open itself to receive the challenges and problems of nature as its very own.<sup>50</sup> The newly formed, authentic, mutual relationship would ask humanity to suffer for creation, and take nature's pain on to itself.<sup>51</sup> Here Moltmann's work reminds readers of the high standard involved in authentic relationships.

In this project's assessment of Moltmann's contributions to the new theological architecture, love is identified as characteristic of God's relationship with humanity *and* nature. This love, in turn, looks outwards. It is generous, passionate, selfless, and willing to suffer. As his theology seeks those qualities in humanity's relationships, it issues a call for the radical reformation of

<sup>46</sup> Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 298.

<sup>47</sup> GSS, p. 132 (cf. Deane-Drummond, *Ecology*, p. 151).

<sup>48</sup> GSS, p. 97 (cf. SW, pp. 47-48).

<sup>49</sup> Gen. 1.28; FC, p. 129 (cf. 'Creation and Redemption', p. 133; SW, p. 50).

<sup>50</sup> SpL, p. 248.

<sup>51</sup> HP, p. 148 (1961); ExH, p. 76.

attitudes towards the natural world.

## 8.4 PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S LOVE FOR CREATION

For Moltmann, the call to humanity to participate in God's relationship with the natural world contributes significant direction to the inclusiveness and goals of humanity's activity in the world. For him, God gives the ability, especially to humanity, to seek, discern, build and reject relationships within creation.<sup>52</sup> Moltmann sees this ability as most constructively used in joining in consciously with the life-giving work of God. Furthermore, humanity is invited to work *alongside* God, not in isolation. This means that the Trinity draws humanity into the loving and caring relationship that is had with creation, not simply the same *kind* of relationship, but that *actual* relationship by which God gives love and life, creates fellowship, and suffers alongside creation.

### Universal and Intimate Love

To participate in the Trinity's relationship with creation, according to Moltmann, is to participate in a relationship that is universal in its scope. This means that God's love looks to every part of creation. Furthermore, this love is not distant. It is intimate. As such it touches everything, since God is present in all the world. For Moltmann, humanity's participation in this love brings its own limited concern, alertness, and empathy to bear on animals, trees and flowers as well as on people.<sup>53</sup> In his thought, nothing is excluded.

God's suffering results from an active love which accompanies and redeems creation. This requires of humanity its participation in the life-giving relationship of God with the world, including those sufferings. It is not an easily discarded theme: for Moltmann, Christ waits for his people in the suffering of the world.<sup>54</sup> In the theological architecture constructed thus far, humanity is therefore not only required to act for creation because it recognises that God suffers for it, nor merely because it should seek to *reflect* God's suffering love. Rather *participation in* that suffering leads humanity into solidarity with

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 4 of this work, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> *SpL*, pp. 9-10 (cf. David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 263).

<sup>54</sup> 'The Cross and Civil', p. 46.

creation. Nature's trouble therefore becomes humanity's trouble. This is a further aspect of the way by which God's suffering for creation appeals for humanity to recast its relationship with the natural world.

For humanity to recognise and consciously develop this breadth and depth of participation would be to involve itself yet more deeply in the community that comprises creation.<sup>55</sup> If God's relationship with nature touches every part of it then ideally that is where humanity's participation in that relationship will lead. This does not describe the details of that participation so much as emphasise the scope of it. In Moltmann's theology, the Spirit is at work in all the world in situations both good and bad. His theology's incorporation of participation invites people to assume a similar involvement in creation.

## Giving and Preserving Life and Fellowship

The gift and preservation of life, which for Moltmann is an important aspect of God's love towards creation, is also open to humanity's participation.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the previous chapter noted that, for him, humanity is *already* part of God's relationship with creation. Humanity's interaction with nature affects the trinitarian work to bring life; they either aid it or frustrate it.<sup>57</sup> For Moltmann, an active participation in that work is a priority for humanity's energies. His stance that there is an invitation to do this argues for a human responsibility to defend nature where its life is threatened and to address its needs.

However, the account of Moltmann's views on the Spirit's work to bring life also encountered the problem that death is an intrinsic part of this planet's life.<sup>58</sup> If the drive to preserve life were carried out so enthusiastically that no living thing ceased to be living, then most living things, paradoxically, would starve. While no comprehensive answer can be given to the paradox of life and death, it can at least be acknowledged: the life of all living things is a priority, but the life of any particular given thing is not the only priority to consider.

What can be taken from this problem to aid the practical outcomes of participating in God's giving and preserving of life? Again, while Moltmann's work gives no comprehensive answer, his primacy of love enables some guiding considerations to emerge, namely: a theology of life results in death

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<sup>55</sup> *SpL*, p. 259.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> 'We "quench" the Holy Spirit when we quench life.' (*The Source*, p. 54.)

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter 4 of this work, p. 80.

being avoided where possible, and when death is necessary to preserve life it should happen with sensitivity to any effects (such as the experience of an animal in an abattoir, or the effect of the extraction of excessive materials from the earth). The possibilities and necessities are beyond the scope of this project, yet an approach that seeks to participate in the life-giving work of God will be an invaluable aid to ecological reformation.

As in the discussion about correspondence, life cannot be a solitary entity in Moltmann's theology. Everything lives in the 'cosmic interrelations' which God brings about.<sup>59</sup> Life only occurs in the context of relationships of all levels. If these interactions were to cease then life would die. This vital work of God is another part of the care in which humanity can deepen its participation, in Moltmann's view. Although he does not precisely comment this, this aspect of participation requires ecological reformation to understand and respect the various interrelating ecosystems of the world more fully, so as to minimise the impact of human activity on them. As an illustrative example, on a smaller scale, those with space, such as gardens, could seek education as to what is needed in their area in terms of flora and fauna. Those with no responsibility for 'green space' could shop for responsibly sourced resources or food and thereby maintain the health of ecosystems outside of their locale. Humanity would not only encourage the harmony of nature through these things, but would also develop its own relationship with nature. For Moltmann, this is part of God's work in this world and thus it can be included as part of the theological architecture's guidance for humanity.<sup>60</sup>

## The Coming Future

In the theological architecture which is being constructed from Moltmann's contributions, God's work to bring about the eschatological future for creation is also a task in which humanity can participate. Humanity cannot participate in that future itself until it arrives, but, for Moltmann, it can participate in the presence, and coming, of the new creation in the present day.<sup>61</sup> For him, this is an amazing feat, to bring God's glory through participation in the consummation of creation. This describes a dynamic in which humanity's actions are *directed towards* God's perfect future and actually *contribute to* this future.

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<sup>59</sup> *GiC*, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> *CPS*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiii (writing in 1989); *FC*, p. 102.



One aid here to the ecological reformation stems from Moltmann's idea that God works for all creation to have perfected relationships that facilitate a mutually connected future of all creation and God.<sup>62</sup> This is the eschatological orientation of the participation already described above. The fullness of life is not yet attained since the world is not complete. Humanity must strive to continue in its actions.<sup>63</sup> God's work is to liberate nature, as well as humanity, so the invitation issued to humanity is to work towards this goal.<sup>64</sup>

## 8.5 LIVING IN HOPE FOR CREATION

What happens when the hope which this new theological architecture has for all creation drives, guides, and inspires the reformation towards earth care? Or in other words, in what way does hope for creation encourage a reformation of the attitudes of a person towards the world? Following the pattern of the related section in the previous chapter, Moltmann's theology presents implications for the love, aim, and motivation which humanity can have in regards to the rest of creation. To succeed in such areas strengthens further the overall effectiveness of this new architecture.

### Engenders Love for Creation

Like the other aspects of Moltmann's connections between theology and human attitudes, for him a *hope* for creation breeds love. It does not lead towards a disdain for the present, but rather towards an affirmation of life, of love for *all* life, nature and humanity.<sup>65</sup> This hope and this love subsequently lead to suffering through the state of creation. For him, hope awakens humanity to the pain of the present because it reveals exactly the contrast between the joyful future and the imperfect present. It identifies the present time with painful clarity.<sup>66</sup> Love then also draws humanity closer to the rest of creation, and again sets a contrast between the state of creation and the desired peace. According to Moltmann, this makes all of creation's suffering

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<sup>62</sup> *CPS*, p. 59.

<sup>63</sup> 'Creation and Redemption', p. 123; *FC*, p. 119; *SW*, p. 37-38.

<sup>64</sup> *CrG*, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> *ToH*, pp. 34-35, 225, 337; *RRF*, pp. 58, 61-62, 176; *Man*, p. 117; *EoG*, p. 30; 'Hope', p. 272; *SpL*, p. 153; *CoG*, p. 66.

<sup>66</sup> *ToH*, p. 223; *RRF*, pp. 61, 198; *CPS*, p. 112; *PP*, p. 113.

humanity's sufferings too.<sup>67</sup>

In this way, a hope for all creation leads humanity to view nature's concerns as its own, and to join in solidarity with nature in its suffering. Moltmann has often claimed that hope for a new future brings solidarity with oppressed people.<sup>68</sup> Yet he also indicated that this solidarity of humanity with humanity extends to include the whole of non-human creation.<sup>69</sup> Thus, for him, a universal hope enables ecological reformation as it enriches the attitudes of people and produces love for creation.

## Supplies an Aim for Creation

Within the theological architecture that has been constructed from Moltmann's work, the hope for all creation also serves to provide an aim for humanity's activities. For him, it is that the *future* provides a sought-for goal. The alternative is unattractive to him: 'Whoever claims to orient himself *in* history by orientating himself *to* history is like a shipwrecked sailor who clings to a wave. He is going to sink.'<sup>70</sup> As it is, Moltmann believes that the 'desired future' of creation must take precedence over simply what is observable today and the 'calculable' future.<sup>71</sup> In the great stress he places on the need for creation's future to direct the actions of the present, he exposes a potential weakness in his system: what if this future's vagueness makes his calls for action impotent?

This does not seem to be the case. While the specific outcome of creation's future is still relatively mysterious, Moltmann has provided certain key ideas which define that hope: creation will have unity within itself and with God; it will have a good existence of freedom and creativity; death will be no more; there shall be peace.<sup>72</sup> This future thus gives guidance: unity, freedom, life, rest. These are qualities of life which can shape the aims of human activity in this world. That perfect, eternal life is the goal of creation and it is that to which Moltmann's theology requires people to orientate themselves in their attitudes and actions of the present day. Through this contribution, the new architecture reforms ecological attitudes so that humanity's goal cannot simply be the survival of humanity.

<sup>67</sup> *RRF*, p. 61; *CrG*, pp. 19, 59; *CPS*, pp. 167, 284; *GiC*, p. 268; *CoG*, p. 93.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. *RRF*, pp. 17-18, 198-99.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28; *HP*, pp. 16-17, 213 (1966); *ExH*, pp. 188-89; *CPS*, pp. 212-13; *FC*, pp. 102-03; 'Hope', p. 272; *WJC*, p. 270.

<sup>70</sup> *RRF*, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> *FC*, p. 56.

<sup>72</sup> See this work, p. 152.

## Motivates to Act for Creation

Hope stirs people to action. That is Moltmann's belief.<sup>73</sup> Through a hope for all creation, his theology seeks to inspire this hopeful activity to include the realisation of the natural world's future, to transform it into 'the recognizable world of God'.<sup>74</sup> For Moltmann, this requires attempt the task with real vigour, in a 'struggle for the liberation of God's creation from godless and inhuman powers'.<sup>75</sup> In fact, his project contains stronger language than simply a request:

It is necessary to arise and go to the place to which the promise points, if one would have part in its fulfilment. Promise and command, the pointing of the goal and the pointing of the way, therefore belong immediately together.<sup>76</sup>

Encouragement and obedience are thus brought together to work in tandem in this theological architecture's call for a new relationship between humanity and the earth; in short, an ecological reformation. Since in his thought there is continuity in humanity's actions with the eschatological future, there is a 'practical responsibility' for the earth's future.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Moltmann's work contains threads of discontinuity between creation's present state and its eternal future. This brings additional encouragement: humanity's contributions to this world's development will be transformed but still retain their identity, contributing more to the good of the earth than people can currently imagine. Therefore, through the inclusion of a hope and responsibility for all creation, this emerging theological architecture seeks to make action for creation's sake a high priority in humanity.

## 8.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate, in an illustrative rather than exhaustive way, the potential of the new theological architecture to work towards ecological reformation. The possible outcome is nothing less than a transformation of the attitude of a person towards the world, which is a

<sup>73</sup> See the previous chapter's section on hope, p. 193.

<sup>74</sup> *RRF*, pp. 59-60 (cf. pp. 127-28; *HP*, p. 220 (1966); *ExH*, p. 176; *CPS*, pp. 176, 196, 291; *FC*, p. 47).

<sup>75</sup> *HP*, p. 47 (1968) (cf. pp. 198, 220 (1966); *RRF*, p. 40).

<sup>76</sup> *ToH*, p. 120.

<sup>77</sup> *ExH*, p. 41.

significant basis for their interaction with it. Through conversation between various elements of his theology and the interplay of themes explored in the previous chapter, this discussion made several conclusions. Firstly, it has illuminated something of the multitude of connections encouraged by Moltmann's work on God, creation, and the human response. The fruit of the interrelatedness of his work is clear to see, and the unity of his argument testifies to the coherence of this aspect of his work. Further to this, the discussion has explored connections beyond to Moltmann's own, such as the example for humanity of divine unity through relationships, and correspondence to God's provision of 'living space' for creation. Through these it has become possible to develop Moltmann's own explicit appeals, albeit modestly. Also, this investigation has highlighted the pervasiveness of ideas such as creation's value and the reasons for love of this earth in his thought. This has underlined the persistence of these ideas throughout his work.

This analysis has outlined the provision of a variety of routes by which Moltmann's wider, systematic conclusions yield persuasive arguments for the reshaping of a person's attitude towards their relationship with nature. This significantly enhances the potential of the emerging theological architecture for the desired goal, the so-called ecological reformation.



# Chapter 9

## Conclusion

### 9.1 THESIS AIMS

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore and analyse the extent to which Moltmann's work has contributed to a 'new theological architecture' that seeks to help facilitate an 'ecological reformation' of Christian thought and action, and society. The exploration has not aimed to set out the many concrete forms such a reformation may take. The focus has rather been on Moltmann's efforts to give a theological rationale for such a reformation. As his theology was investigated it became quickly apparent that the theological architecture was not something given in one extended consideration. Rather it can be constructed from various elements throughout Moltmann's works. This research noted that the potential for this new architecture developed with the increase in the wider trend of debate about ecological concerns. However, it was also plain that Moltmann began to take up these concerns early and advocated environmental care before it was as widely promoted in various disciplines as it is today.

Exploration began with the fact that the content of the theological architecture was not explicitly defined by Moltmann, except that it needs to reintegrate God's presence into nature and 'human culture once more into [...] the earth'.<sup>1</sup> The survey of his wider theology suggested a broader, yet still simple, description: it was one that reassessed God's relationship with creation and humanity's position within this relationship, and created the thinking-space in which humanity can re-imagine its relationship with, and responsibilities for, the natural world.

The starting point for the research was also derived from the fact that Moltmann described the ecological reformation as a change to a new way of

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<sup>1</sup> *GSS*, p. 225.

living where earth and ecology, not economy and progress, are the primary guides of societies. The study suggested that Moltmann seeks this reformation in a number of ways. There was a call to individuals or groups to take on an attitude towards the earth that will cause them to live differently in relation to their care of it. Moltmann's arguments which the research outlined had their foundations in God and Christian thought. This naturally gives him more common ground with Christian readers for whom the flow of his thought will most likely be compelling or attractive. Yet discussion revealed that for Moltmann there still may be interest for others, for instance, in his passionate argument for the active protection of *all* life or the need for harmonious relationships throughout *all* creation. Beyond these proposals for direct changes it became clear that Moltmann also thinks that Christian theology must 'get involved in the public affairs of society'.<sup>2</sup> In this way he encourages the Christian communities who see the need for the ecological reformation to influence wider society through their example and participation in public discourse. This emerged as an additional way in which the theological architecture can seek to move non-theological societies towards this reformation.

This study has approached Moltmann's work in a largely systematic way, not because it incorporates all of his work but in that it moves through most of his major areas of interest to gather themes for treatment by this thesis. The themes were selected on the basis of their potential to construct a theological architecture that helps facilitate an ecological reformation. They were addressed always with this purpose in mind, rather than to solve contentious issues within theology or other related problems within particular doctrines. The structure of the thesis followed a theological view of history, moving from original to new creation, before proceeding to study the implications of theology for a consideration of potential implied responsibilities and responses. This latter part of the study highlighted the potency of the variety of distinct, yet interrelated, ways by which Moltmann understood the connection between theology and everyday actions.

Moltmann's lengthy and prolific writing career has required the project to focus on the overall content of each theme, although it has also identified the way in which certain themes have emerged and matured over time. Each discussion offered an in-depth treatment of the primary texts followed by a thorough analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The thesis made detailed use of secondary literature, especially those commentators concerned with Moltmann's enthusiasm for environmental issues. It also located elements of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

his work which were an aid to ecological reformation but which he himself had not explicitly discussed in relation to this subject.

## Review of Aims

The above approach was constructive for several reasons. As noted, the chosen definition for the theological architecture was a helpful benchmark, in that it focused the attention of the project on themes of God-and-creation and humanity's responses and responsibilities. The systematic attention to Moltmann's work revealed the consistency of certain ideas throughout his corpus. This added to the weight of his arguments, displayed the deep foundations available to the new architecture, and ensured that the breadth of Moltmann's writings were addressed. The chapter order based on a theological timeline, from cosmic beginning to new beginning, presented an intuitive journey through the history of God's relationship with creation. This created a clear and orderly path with which to navigate selected subjects. This structure did make it impossible to discuss certain doctrines in a discrete way (such as pneumatology and christology). Various aspects of these doctrines were split over more than one chapter, which disrupted discussion of overarching doctrines. However, the approach taken was preferable and effective for the selected task.

The exploration of the diverse approaches to theological foundations for human activity was particularly productive. It complemented the wider systematic approach in order to make this project practically orientated. Tracking the development of certain ideas over time enabled this research to answer certain possible criticisms of a given position. For example, the move from God's creation of a 'godforsaken space' to that of a 'living space' for the world, enabled a response to questions about the problems of a godforsaken *nihil*. Regular analysis was crucial because certain of Moltmann's ideas remain problematical and their effectiveness required examination. The contribution of secondary authors enriched this analysis and provided many of the points of conjecture that were probed.

Research enabled a theological architecture to emerge from Moltmann's work because it showed that he incorporated *all* creation into the theological discourse. For him, God's loving relationship is with *all* creation, and this was variously demonstrated. Another facet of this architecture was that it encourages human activity to be related to God's own activity in a variety of ways. This presented a challenge to humanity to 'love all their fellow



creatures with the Creator's love'.<sup>3</sup> The architecture was also shown to emerge from some parts of Moltmann's work in which he himself had not specifically discussed its ecological importance. Certain sections of Chapter 8 are evidence of this (such as correspondence to God through creative love, or the provision of 'living space' for creation).

There follows a more detailed review of the project.

## 9.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 'THEOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE'

Following an introductory first chapter, Chapter 2 commenced the study with a brief account of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity. This chapter explored the inner trinitarian issues in isolation, as far as was possible, from the theme of God's interaction with creation. Moltmann's trinitarianism offered the emerging theological architecture two foundational principles. Firstly, love is at the centre of Moltmann's theology. God is love, which gives rise to the creative question: what are the implications of this for Moltmann's desired new architecture? Secondly, love works itself out through relationships. For Moltmann, these trinitarian relationships are perichoretic. It is this type of relationship which he sets as the goal for all God's relationships. These two themes are useful for an architecture that reassesses the Trinity's relationship with *all* creation.

The research then moved to the beginnings of God's dealings with creation, the beginnings of creation itself. Moltmann outlines a purposeful and free creativity on God's part. All creation is intended, valued, and desired from the beginning. This highlights creation's status in the emerging architecture. In addition two aspects of the Trinity's relation to creation stand out. Firstly, God makes space for creation, not literally but in the sense that God allows something else to exist alongside the divine self. This lends the theological architecture an element of God's sacrificial willingness to share, which is key to our relation to our environment, the earth. Secondly, God is the 'living space' of creation, or the environment in which it grows, emphasising the value bestowed on the earth and implied responsibility towards it. This continues to inform the dynamics of generosity, hospitality, and openness in Moltmann's

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

view of the God-creation relationship. The implications of these thoughts for humanity's interactions with all creation already begin to emerge.

Following the theological timeline of creation attention then turned in Chapter 4 to Moltmann's work on God's continual love for creation, particularly in loving activity within creation. The identification of the Spirit's presence throughout creation was a significant contribution to the project's aims. It offers a universal affirmation of the value of creation and begins to emphasise the intimacy of the trinitarian relationship with creation. Moltmann's insistence on the Spirit's work outside the Christian community puts in place an important foundation for the appreciation of *all* of humanity's ability to contribute to God's goals for the earth. After the discussion of 'presence' followed exploration of 'activity'; God's life-giving activity in all of creation. Attention to primary works discerned Moltmann's enthusiastic presentation of this being through the work of the Spirit, but also to some extent through the Son. Life is a divine gift to the earth and relies on God's constant work. The theme of 'life' is thus included as a major factor of this new architecture of God's relationship with creation. This life-giving activity serves as an indicator of creation's value, an example to follow, an invitation to participate, and a sign of the hope that embraces all. In addition, the manner of God's activity is such that it demonstrates the gift of freedom to creation. This may seem a minor point, yet it presents an argument to use that freedom with responsibility, which is a necessary part of an architecture able to produce practical reformation.

Chapter 5 investigated a further aspect of God's love for creation in Moltmann's work, namely the divine openness to include creation in the trinitarian *perichoresis*. It found that he used the topics of pneumatology and christology to explore this openness more evenly than the theme of God's care. The perichoretic aims of God's relationship with creation conveyed the depths to which that relationship extends. The trinitarian openness to bringing creation into a shared life lends a mark of authenticity to this relationship. The Trinity's interaction with creation is not simply a matter of observation and interference. There is rather a journey *together* in which the joys and crises are experienced *together*. Moltmann's subsequent conclusion from this openness was the reality of God's suffering for, by, and with creation. This is a striking contribution to the theological architecture: the depth of love which God has for creation means that even the Divine suffers with the predicament of the world and everything in it, even to the point of sharing in its death. The description of the relationship between God and creation which

emerges becomes one in which the life of both Creator and created is deeply interconnected. This, building on earlier chapters, continues to expand the basis for all of creation's value.

In the sixth chapter the study shifted forward to examine creation's future. The inclusion of this eschatological consideration ensures that the embrace of the whole universe by the new theological architecture is comprehensive in relation to time as well as space. In other words, God's love for *all* creation remains a focus into eternity. The future includes all of creation. No part of it is omitted. Therefore, creation's value is eternal, not temporary. Furthermore, the emerging architecture contributes some specific goals of creation. The world's destiny is one of perichoretic life with God. There will be peace, no more death or suffering, and no threat of annihilation. This goal in itself begins to present an aim of human active reformation to which to aspire. Finally, the inclusion of Moltmann's work on the importance of the presence of both continuity and discontinuity between the present and the eschatological future enhances the overall effectiveness of this new architecture. Continuity suggests a responsibility on the part of humanity: the actions of today help shape the future. Discontinuity brings confidence and hope: God will redeem the mistakes and tragedies of today. Moltmann holds these two in tension and presents an argument that ecological challenges need to be addressed by humanity, yet can also be faced with a certainty that God will complete the divine work in a way beyond humanity's imagination.

Having completed the overview of the history of God's relationship with creation, the discussion could move in Chapter 7 to consider certain themes that emerged from Moltmann's anthropology. Each selected theme described an aspect of theology's implications for human reformation. In turn they each provided motivation towards theologically directed human activity while together they presented a stronger, combined argument for this practical edge to the theological architecture. Firstly, the need to shift humanity from a place of dominance over nature brings the natural world's concerns alongside human concerns. Secondly, to seek correspondence with God makes the trinitarian patterns of relationship humanity's own patterns. Thirdly, the theme of participation provides an invitation to make God's work part of humanity's work. Fourthly, to live in hope inspires today's activity to reach for the good future of creation. This mutually strengthening, fourfold approach gives a particularly strong base from which to consider humanity's activity in ecological reformation. Moreover, these themes contributed to a theological architecture towards ecological reformation in that Moltmann highlighted the

possibility for, and benefits of, a deeper refinement of human activity through these approaches.

Chapter 8 further defined the substance of the theological architecture in that it brought the theological history of God and creation, according to Moltmann, into dialogue with the findings of the previous chapter. This exploration thus focused attention on many compelling arguments for ecological reform which unfolded from each of the four approaches that motivated and shaped action. Firstly, over the course of Moltmann's work, it demonstrated that he presents a status for creation that repeatedly affirms its intrinsic value and rights, its ownership by God, and the need to recognise that creation needs to be one harmonious community. These conclusions were shown to argue in a variety of ways that humanity should respond positively to nature. Secondly, in its correspondence to God, humanity is offered the example of a deliberately chosen love for creation that incorporates service and suffering, hospitality and intimacy. Thirdly, Moltmann's advocacy of participation in God's relationship with creation invites humanity to join in the universal, loving, and suffering activity to bring life, fellowship and a future to all creation. Fourthly, the hope for the new creation of all things, for Moltmann, inspires a love for all things and the desire to contribute to creation's good future. Analysis concluded that the various arguments together demonstrate that the high status given to the whole of creation throughout all of his theology enabled the new theological architecture to argue for a parallel seriousness by which all creation is cared for.

## Summary of Contributions

From the above, three general themes emerge that summarise the contributions of Moltmann's work to a theology architecture for ecological reformation.

### *The God-Creation Relationship*

Moltmann has developed a system in which humanity, nature and God all have a deeply integrated relationality. In this love and relationships are at the core. Thus, there is mutual interaction between God and creation which is of a loving character and stretches from the very beginnings of the universe into eternity. This love is demonstrated in many ways and entails many different actions and responses by God, from giving life to experiencing death, from the preservation of creation to its transformation. This is the beginning from which Moltmann urges a human response that treats the rest of creation

similarly.

#### *All Creation's Status*

Through the God-creation relationship, nature's place in the whole history of God and creation is affirmed. Moltmann's work emphasises that creation is God's possession. The world is not humanity's to do with as it wishes. Creation's ideal way of interaction is described as one community of mutual cooperation and respect. Through God's love for it, all that exists is given great value.

#### *Human Activity*

In addition, Moltmann has provided a detailed and thoughtful account of the motivation for action which theology supplies. His multifaceted, fourfold approach has great potential to enhance, reinforce or support any one of his specific arguments (for example, participation in God qualifies and deepens the implications of correspondence to God). This furnishes the theological architecture with an impressive case for ecological reformation. The architecture that can be drawn from Moltmann's work thus includes an appeal that several forces be permitted to shape attitudes towards creation: a theological understanding of the nature of creation; the pattern of life that God demonstrates; the offer to share the Trinity's relationship with creation; and a full grasp of the hope which all creation has for a rich future.

The accumulation of these ideas creates a well rounded approach towards creation that encourages humanity to take an ecologically sensitive approach to life.

## **Problematic Issues**

As the research into Moltmann's contributions to this new theological architecture was implemented problems were encountered. None created an insurmountable obstacle, yet they required further clarification or development. These shall appear here in order of their occurrence within the thesis.

During the analysis of Moltmann's doctrine of creation, it was observed that he essentially argued that, because God desired an 'Other' to love, God *had* to create. This assertion points to the surprising assumption that the Trinity is not self-sufficient. The point is certainly speculative, but Moltmann appeared to suggest that the inner love of the Trinity does not allow the members of the Trinity to be eternally selflessly loving without needing a

creation as an object of divine love. This point has little impact on the understanding of God's relationship with creation in the present because the original act of creation has already occurred, nevertheless it seems to contradict Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity's inner selfless love.

Also concerning the theme of original creation, Moltmann's use of the concept of *zimsun*, or self-restriction, raised a potential problem for this project. He suggested that God's self-restriction is necessary to give creation space and freedom. Yet when eschatological concerns were examined, it was observed that it is God's derestriction, the full indwelling of creation, that gives creation the fullness of life and brings it its 'living space' and freedom. This raised the question of what it is that truly gives creation its space and freedom; God's presence or God's withdrawal.

During the examination of Moltmann's thought on the self-withdrawal of God, his problematic view on the creation of the *nihil* also emerged. The *nihil* appeared to be an overly threatening concept in Moltmann's work. It presented problems of the origins of godforsakenness and sin. This predicament was alleviated by the discovery of the later theme of God as 'living space' for creation, yet Moltmann has not renounced earlier statements. Does he wish to hold the ideas of *nihil* and 'living space' in tension? Further work that could clarify discussion on God's self-restriction and provision of a hospitable space for creation, would be a useful line of inquiry.

A further issue appeared in connection to God's loving care of creation, although it is not exactly of Moltmann's making. The question was raised of the role of death in his scheme. This study explored a theology of life, yet death's place in the flow of life is not fully accounted for. At times it is the enemy, at other times it is paradoxically the life-giver. How does Moltmann's work on the Spirit of life align with the dynamic of death in creation's on-going existence? A detailed exploration of the way in which death might be integrated into his wider project would be particularly useful, especially with relation to the preservation of life and the processes of evolution.

Also Moltmann's pneumatology and his christology were not found to have made the same impact on his work on God's life-giving love. Both are significant, and there were many similarities concerning the Son and the Spirit, yet his work on pneumatology seemed to link to ecological discussions in more involved and creative ways. It would be beneficial to the theological architecture as a whole if in Moltmann the account of the Son's work was as inspiring and thought-provoking as that of the Spirit. For this reason further work on the implications of his christology for environment care would be

useful.

In the discussion of God's openness to the world, this research found Moltmann to regard suffering almost as an inevitable consequence of love. He received the accusation that his language sometimes failed to allow love and suffering to be separate entities, although he never claimed this much directly. It seems preferable to consider the love shared within the Trinity, when creation did not exist, to be absolutely free of suffering. With this it could be stated clearly that suffering does not flow as a logical necessity from love. Rather, suffering results as love is given to that which is imperfect.

Two further issues arose in connection to Moltmann's eschatological work. The first is that this project found the goal of creation to remain vague. His descriptions supplied ample specificity for an inspiring vision of creation's future, yet the potential for more remains. His conclusions raised questions for this study concerning the significance of the future of individual trees, plants, and animals, for example. He claimed that their individual futures are important, yet the practical implications of this must be worked out if the ecological reformation is to advance. Will the redemption to eternal life of every tree that ever existed be the only way to satisfy God's love of trees? Also, it is not clear how the specific redemption of *all* plants and animals benefits the ecological reformation. Further work could be pursued on the benefits of a general hope for creation.

The second issue connected to eschatology which this study raised is the question of the nature of eternal existence when it includes the continued physical interdependency of creation. The thesis reported that this was one of Moltmann reasons for the hope of all creation: creation exists with the interdependencies it has and always shall. The idea of continued community is an attractive one. However, its more idyllic aspects must be squared with more mundane ones: what of the need to eat? What is there to eat if everything is imperishable? This theological problem is not Moltmann's alone. Yet his insistence on outlining the specifics of the physical reality of the resurrection would be matched well by a parallel insistence to grapple with the implications of these details.

## 9.3 FINAL CONCLUSION

The results of this study are as follows. Moltmann does not single-handedly present the complete theological architecture, but he does make a major contribution towards building one that constantly informs, exemplifies, invites and inspires a deeper relationship with, and appreciation of, the rest of creation by humanity: that is, an *ecological reformation*. Thus, while certain modifications and developments would be helpful, his contribution is highly significant and powerful, and is fertile for further expansion by others. The emerging architecture brings together many innovative ideas and connects them so that, through their interconnectivity, they form something new which is coherent and forceful. In Moltmann's theology it is difficult to ignore environmental concerns through being absorbed in a doctrine, since his keenness to consider the implications for both humanity and the earth do not allow it.

### Further Research

Apart from the questions that arise from the problematic issues above, the conclusions of this thesis would benefit from at least the following further research:

There is potential for experts in the field of biblical studies to conduct more detailed studies of Moltmann's use of biblical texts. He has a particularly adventurous approach and investigation of the strengths and weaknesses of his work here would be an additional help to an evaluation of the effectiveness of his work.

This thesis outlines the themes in Moltmann's work that contribute to the new theological architecture. Are there other components that would complement it? The architecture, as it stands, is helpful but cannot be expected, as a collection of Moltmann's pioneering achievements, to be complete. It needs to grow to be more comprehensive of theological ideas, incorporating more implications for attitudes towards the environment.

Lastly, an obvious avenue for further reflection is the continual development of the concrete actions that stem from this ecological reformation. As was previously noted, while this project has been able to give some indication of the practical application of Moltmann's work there is a greater amount which remains to be discussed. This, and the tasks above, would complement existing conclusions: Moltmann's contributions have given a weighty and



thought-provoking exhortation to see God, nature, and humanity in a new, relational light in order that an *ecological reformation* might flourish.

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