

11-2008

**An Examination of the Contemporary Viability of Moltmann's  
Personal and Cosmic Eschatology for Evangelical and Roman  
Catholic Theology**

Chris Wiley

GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY VIABILITY OF MOLTSMANN'S  
PERSONAL AND COSMIC ESCHATOLOGY FOR EVANGELICAL AND ROMAN  
CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL  
STUDIES

BY

CHRIS WILEY

PORTLAND, OREGON

NOVEMBER 2008

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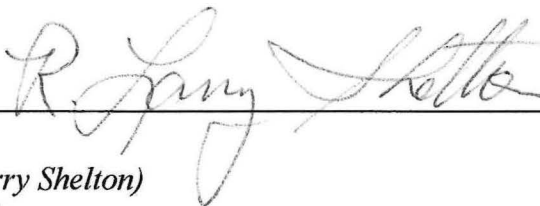
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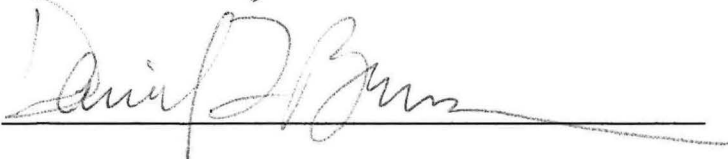
**Title:** AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY VIABILITY OF  
MOLTMANN'S PERSONAL AND COSMIC ESCHATOLOGY  
FOR EVANGELICAL AND ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

**Presented by:** CHRIS WILEY

**Date:** DECEMBER 12, 2008

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Larry Shelton)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Daniel L. Brunner)

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

‘To love a being is to say, “Thou, thou shalt not die.”

- Gabriel Marcel, *Mystery of Being: Faith and Reality*, 171.

This thesis is dedicated to my Grandmother Juanita Hope Ramer (1917-2008). Her love, support, and encouragement kept me on the right path when doubts could have easily led me astray. Her life inspired me to be aware of and appreciate one’s story, family history, and legacy. Her death challenged me to consider Christian love and hope, not simply as virtues, but as forces that connect us with the hereafter, with what will be.

With regard to the dreadful preparation of this thesis I would like to thank my girlfriend Angela Reneri for her patience and love; My mother for her words of encouragement; My father for taking the time to review my early drafts; Eric Lopez for his comments and corrections, as well as Dr. Shelton and Dr. Brunner for their feedback throughout the writing process.

## ABBREVIATIONS FOR JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S BOOKS IN ENGLISH

*TH* Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian

Eschatology

*EH* The Experiment Hope

*TKG* The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God

*GC* God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God

*WJC* The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions

*COG* The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology

## ABSTRACT

The following thesis will examine and critique Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology as compared and contrasted with the views of Joseph Ratzinger and Millard Erickson. These two theologians are chosen to represent critics from two schools of thought in response to Moltmann's theology of hope, namely those critical of his theological method and those critical of his political theology. This examination focuses on the viability of Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology in contemporary Evangelical and Catholic theology. This study begins with a review of Moltmann's methodology and general treatment of themes in his theology as they pertain to eschatology. This is followed with a review of Erickson and Ratzinger, their contributions to eschatology, and criticisms of Moltmann's treatment of eschatology in general. The next section focuses on Moltmann's chapter on individual death and resurrection in COG. This examination will then be reviewed alongside Ratzinger's personal eschatology. This process is then repeated in light of Erickson's treatment of personal eschatology.

The third section focuses on cosmic eschatology by examining Moltmann's fourth chapter in COG. This section on cosmic eschatology draws primarily from the doctrine on the "new heaven and the new earth," which is typically treated in systematic theology under the heading of historical eschatology. An account of both Ratzinger and Erickson's work on this doctrine is then given to assess viability. Concluding thoughts are then given on the overall viability of Moltmann's eschatology in contemporary Evangelical and Catholic theology and suggestions are offered for further consideration and study.

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional Catholic and Protestant final chapter on eschatology in dogmatics or systematic theology was largely reconsidered in the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> This began in 1906 when Albert Schweitzer, alongside Johannes Weiss, argued that the Kingdom of God according to Jesus was “the transcendent act of God breaking into history to affect his final purpose for his creation.”<sup>2</sup> This argument altered the traditional interpretation of the kingdom as the *telos* (goal) of an ethical ideal and led to an eventual reinterpretation of Pauline theology. The eschatology of the New Testament (NT) was drawn into question as both Jesus’ message and Paul’s thought were shown to have focused on “the imminent arrival of God’s kingdom.”<sup>3</sup> This reexamination soon led Karl Barth to claim famously, “If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology, there remains in it no relationship whatever with Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Here “eschatology” is not referring to the doctrine of last things; rather it signifies a “question about the truth of Christian theology” with the intent of calling into question the very definition of theology and Christian identity within Western culture.<sup>5</sup> At this time, the “historicity” of Christianity and the sense of its character of hope were not altogether evident. A most emphatic response came with the publication of Jürgen Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* (1964), which set out to treat the

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<sup>1</sup> On this point see Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Dowers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 606-07.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Bauckham, “Eschatology” In *Oxford Guide to Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, et. al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 306. More particularly, Schweitzer held that Jesus believed the apocalyptic kingdom would bring his present age to a sudden end.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London, England; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 314.

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Sauter, “Protestant Theology” In *Oxford Guide to Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, et. al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 255.

entire scope of Christian theology as eschatology. For him eschatology was no longer the last doctrine; instead, it became “the medium of Christian faith as such.”<sup>6</sup> This interpretation became a counter position to the dominating theological schools of Barth and Bultmann at that time. Both interpreted eschatology in light of a “theology of crisis” which developed out of the experiences post World War I. According to this interpretation it is the transcendent entering into history that brings forth the final act or “crisis.” Each worked out the details of this interpretation differently. For Barth the *eschaton* is “the presence of eternity in every moment of this present history.”<sup>7</sup> During these moments the end of time as we know it is near. Bultmann provided an existential interpretation of eschatology in the Bible and saw the eternal moment to be a qualification of God’s revelation. When the *kerygma* is heard one is faced with a choice that brings about greater awareness of the eschatological moment.<sup>8</sup> Through faith one is made aware of the presence of this moment in time. In opposition to these interpretations Moltmann constructed a new concept of the future and asserted, “the eschaton is neither the future of time nor timeless eternity. It is God’s coming and his arrival.”<sup>9</sup> His work has since become a classic and brought to the fore not only eschatology but also a reemphasis on Christian hope and expectation.

Having established in one broad, admittedly one-sided, stroke the centrality of eschatology early on in his career Moltmann then made several other theological

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<sup>6</sup> Bauckham, 307.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 22. Moltmann found that both Barth and Bultmann “undercut the social relevance of Christian eschatology.” See Robert Cornelison, “The Development and Influence of Moltmann’s Theology” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55, 1 (2000), 21.

contributions between 1972 and 1996. The close of this period came with a more concise treatment of eschatology proper in *The Coming of God* (COG). This return to eschatology intended to treat not only the issues within the doctrine of last things but also the criticisms that had been raised about the dimensions of eschatology since the time of his *Theology of Hope* (TH). Moltmann's work as a Reformed theologian on the doctrine of eschatology had sent waves splashing into both Protestant and Catholic communities by asserting, "A proper theology should be constructed beginning with its future goal. Eschatology should be not its end, but its beginning."<sup>10</sup> I have been intrigued by the waves of influence his work on eschatology has caused and what impact it has had on the doctrinal theology of other Christian denominations. Are his theological contributions on eschatology viable to other denominations and their respective views on doctrine? What can be said of his most recent work on eschatology (COG) with regard to other contemporary treatments? This thesis will explore and address these questions by way of comparison with two other representative parties and seek to assess the contemporary significance and viability of his eschatology as articulated in COG within Evangelical and Catholic academic circles.

In particular, Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology will be examined and critiqued as compared and contrasted with the views of Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) and Millard Erickson. I have chosen these two theologians as representative critics from two schools of thought with regard to Moltmann's theology of hope, namely those critical of his theological method and those critical of his political

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<sup>10</sup> TH, 16.

theology.<sup>11</sup> Erickson's work will help to illuminate what has been said of the former, while Ratzinger will assist in the same manner to address and clarify issues of the latter. The choice of Erickson and Ratzinger is predicated largely on their outspoken respect for continuity and tradition in Christian theology, direct critique of Moltmann's contributions and treatment of doctrine, and their perspectives on the future directions of Christian theology. That being said, this essay will not provide a thorough account of Erickson or Ratzinger's views on eschatology. The examination will be in large measure on the viability of Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology in contemporary Evangelical and Catholic theology. Historical eschatology, which typically covers the millennium, rapture, general judgment and Second Coming (*parousia*), will receive lesser consideration and merely be treated in a limited context due to the sheer breadth of material between the three theologians considered here and elsewhere, especially in light of Moltmann's political theology. To thoroughly examine and discuss historical eschatology in the manner described would constitute a separate study devoted specifically to that topic.

This study will begin with a review of Moltmann's methodology and his general theological treatment of themes within eschatology. That will be followed with a brief review of Erickson's and Ratzinger's contributions to eschatology and their primary criticisms of Moltmann's treatment. Those methodological considerations will comprise Part I. The next section will focus specifically on Moltmann's chapter on individual death

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<sup>11</sup> There have been several articles in the past two decades that have drawn attention to these two aspects of Moltmann's work. See Stephen Williams, "The Problem with Moltmann" *EuroJTh* 5:2 (1996), 157-167; Richard Clutterbuck, "Jürgen Moltmann as a Doctrinal Theologian: The Nature and Possibilities for its Development" *SJOT* 48, 4 (1995), 489-505; Kevin James Gilbert, "Jürgen Moltmann's Theological Method: Evangelical Options?" *Restoration Quarterly* 41, 3 (1999), 163-178; George Wong, "Reflection on Messianic Ecclesiology of Jürgen Moltmann" *Theology and Life* 28 (2005), 159-171.

and resurrection in COG. The themes discussed in Part I of this essay will thereby be incorporated into the discussion of the topics treated under the heading of Personal Eschatology. This examination will then be read alongside Ratzinger's personal eschatology. His critique of Moltmann reviewed in Part I will be considered as well any additional questions that can be raised when comparing and contrasting their views on individual death and resurrection. This process will then be repeated in a like order and method contrasting Moltmann with Erickson's treatment of personal eschatology.

The third section (Part III) will then shift to cosmic eschatology. This examination will specifically consider Moltmann's fourth chapter in COG. What has been gleaned from the section on personal eschatology will be applied to the new themes and ideas reviewed under this heading. The section on cosmic eschatology will draw primarily from the doctrine on the "new heaven and the new earth," which is typically treated in systematic theology under the heading of historical eschatology. Since Moltmann provides an expanded account of what is formally considered final states, comparisons and criticisms will be drawn from material treated by Ratzinger and Erickson as historical eschatology. The fourth and final section will then review the conclusions drawn through comparison and critique of Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology. Concluding thoughts will be given on its viability in contemporary Evangelical and Catholic theology and suggestions will be offered for further consideration and study.

## PART I

### METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to provide a detailed account and critique of Moltmann's eschatological perspective in COG, then to compare it with the work of Ratzinger and Erickson, a review of the main contours of Moltmann's methodology is necessary. Accordingly, this part of the study will cover the general methodological principles behind the themes that have played an integral role in his contributions to Christian theology and/or dogmatic contributions. These themes are Christian hope, the future, and Christology. All will be assessed in light of his contributions to Christian eschatology throughout his career. This treatment of themes is not exhaustive and will not consider with any depth his contributions to ecclesiology, trinitarianism, creation, or pneumatology. The intent will be to focus on how these themes come together to comprise his views regarding personal and cosmic eschatology. These topics will then be explored at greater length in the subsequent sections, which focus on these horizons of eschatology within COG.

In addition, this part on methodology will also introduce the doctrinal work of Ratzinger and Erickson. This final chapter of Part I will be devoted to providing a brief account of each theologian's perspective on eschatology. Here the intent will be to give a fair account of their perspectives on the practice of doing theology in general and treatment of eschatology in particular. This account will then introduce some of the key criticisms (offered by both Ratzinger and Erickson) with regard to Moltmann's specific theology and will provide some of the groundwork for evaluation in Parts II and III. The rest of the evaluation will be based on the actual points of agreement and divergence between Moltmann, Ratzinger, and Erickson.

## CHAPTER 1: THE CRITERION AND DOCTRINE OF HOPE

### *A Spark of Hope*

Earlier on in his theological career Moltmann set the course for his subsequent contributions to theology by stating, “Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.”<sup>12</sup> Moltmann found that hope was more than simply a theological virtue. Rather, it was the defining and “differentiating characteristic” that changes the contours of theology to that of eschatology.<sup>13</sup> Eschatology was defined as “the doctrine of hope” rather than the literal doctrine of last things.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis on hope however, was not purely original; it had been drawn from conversations with Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch who’s 3-volume work, *Principle of Hope* inspired Moltmann to shape his theology through the mode of hope. Bloch’s philosophy had “rediscovered the centrality of an eschatology intimately related to messianic impulses in Jewish and Christian scriptures.”<sup>15</sup> For him this meant that a traditional linear understanding of history had to be reconsidered. According to Jewish and Christian eschatology, historical meaning was *not* drawn from perceptions toward the past brought into the present and thus into the future.

In other words, it was not teleological and our modern understanding of history cannot derive meaning from the scriptures with this perception. Instead, scripture reveals that the messianic impulses find meaning in the future. Their historical orientation holds

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<sup>12</sup> *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, translated by James Leitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 17.

<sup>13</sup> M. Douglas Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 8.

<sup>14</sup> Moltmann, “Hope and History” *Theology Today* 25, 3 (1968), 370.

<sup>15</sup> Cornelison, 18.

that “meaning of the past and present is fundamentally conditioned by the expectation of the future.”<sup>16</sup> The orientation is based on God’s promises and not an end goal. The future is opened up to possibility and expectation of the coming Messiah but for Bloch the hope this engenders, which is the “substratum of all religion,” is a historical process and something humans project into the future.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the transcendent is located in the future but merely comprised of our hopes and anticipations.

What Moltmann found in this philosophy was essentially twofold: he found a practical relationship between the transcendent and the concrete historical future (this will be unpacked in more detail below) and a seemingly neglected eschatological dimension in the Bible that was, arguably, socially relevant. This dimension was a hope in Christ and his future (rather than a future with no God), grounded in faith, which serves as the motivation for theological discourse. With hope as the guide, Moltmann sought to create a dialectical process that could free theology from the constraints of modern dualism (found in his study of Barth and Bultmann) by seeking out a “mediating element” that promises an open future.<sup>18</sup> For him the Bible is a book of God’s promises that is oriented toward the future. Further, the hope for all creation is based on the Resurrection and coming Kingdom of God.

The details that underlie the standard set by hope were fleshed out in *Theology of Hope* (hereafter cited TH), where the Resurrection of Christ and his crucifixion are “interpreted by the themes of dialectical promise, hope and mission.”<sup>19</sup> This perspective

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Moltmann, and M. Douglas Meeks, *The Experiment Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 45.

gave his theology a Christological outlook able to focus on the history of Jesus but also an open future (this will be explored below). The intent and guiding methodological idea underlying the centrality of eschatology and Christological focus has a strong practical character. This focus was a departure from the transcendent God described by Barth, which Moltmann found unavailable and distant, opting instead for an immanent God of history. What was retained in his study of Barthian dogmatics was the central conviction that the church and its identity as a Christian community must be retained and not assimilated into the surrounding culture. Moltmann kept this understanding but added that the task of the Church was to change the world in anticipation of the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup>

What can also be found in his early work, and returned to in COG, is his openness to dialogue. His early conversations with Bloch led him to explore the historical foundations of Christianity in Jewish thought as well as the parallels between Marxism and Christianity. The latter has certainly been a basis for critique, as we will see, but also reflects a general openness to dialogue that has continued throughout his career. He does not view his theology as a closed systematic work brought together by him alone, but rather as a contribution to an ongoing discussion and thus a dialectical relationship where ideas are brought to the proverbial table and assessed as to their validity.

### *The Problem of the Future*

Another unique feature of Moltmann's theology, as mentioned above, is its Christian interpretation of history. In TH, Moltmann concluded that the modern

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 1995), 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6. This orientation toward praxis informs his public theology but will not be explored here in detail.

experience of history is understood as ‘crisis’.<sup>21</sup> What remains of our experience of history is the change and alterations that break up traditional routines and customs of social life. He observed that the historical method of the sciences has sought to describe the laws of history and thus make history comprehensible thereby curbing the social uncertainty brought about by ‘crisis’ and mastering history in an effort to avoid it. What concerns us here is that he finds that the historic future can no longer be sought in the “continuation of the past,” through traditions and repetitious activity but instead “the new must be found in it.”<sup>22</sup> The effort to know history has essentially been an effort to combine the Greek *logos* with an ever-changing experience of reality in order to find some unchanging truth in the essence of history. In this effort history is lost since it tends to “bring about at the same time an abrogation, a negation and annihilation of history.”<sup>23</sup> To find *logos* or true being in history is similar to trying to combine Parmenides concept of being with the Heraclition concept of flux. One concept will collapse the other, as the two are diametrically opposed conceptions of existence.

Here the Greek ideas and terminology are dispensed with in order to consider the concept of history drawn from Hebrew prophecy and thought. If history is understood in terms of crisis then we are left with inevitable loss, but to the prophet history portends a future state of being. Prophecy tells of an eschatological future on earth that is “measured

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<sup>21</sup> *Hope*, 232. See also A.J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History: Jürgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University, 1988), 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 233. “The logos of the *eschaton* is promise of that which is not yet, and for that reason it makes history” (165).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 258. Moltmann’s criticism of the static or cyclical nature of Greek (*logos*) thinking in favor of a Hebrew linear orientation to the future has been refuted by studies that have shown that both Hebrew and Greek sources provide examples of both. In addition, it has been argued that Moltmann imposes a Blochian-Marxist view of history onto the Hebrew Scriptures. Moltmann later combined both conceptions of time into his thought. See Randall Otto, “God and History in Jürgen Moltmann” *JETS* 35,3 (Sept. 1992), 375-376.

in terms of the promise of God.”<sup>24</sup> Here Moltmann contrasts the observational and objective method of the historian with the participating and subjective account of the prophet, only to show that the historian’s methods lead to “meaningless caprice.”<sup>25</sup> According to Hebrew prophecy the past is interpreted with an eye to the future and the meaning of the future is a call or mission to the present. The emotionally and religiously appealing prophetic concept of history aims at an open history, full of the new and possible. In addition, this reflects Moltmann’s methodological principles since ‘history’ is given a distinctly biblical definition; and in his later work this account draws heavily from the influence of Jewish thought, as the categories introduced below will show.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Adventus and Novum*

Moltmann uncovers two eschatological categories further to describe the future as understood through prophecy and God’s relationship to future in time, referred to in Latin as *Adventus* and *Novum*.<sup>27</sup> The former is introduced to denote how Christian theology can speak of history eschatologically. If the conditions of temporal reality are in a constant state of flux then what is future exists in the process of the past and is therefore indistinguishable from past or present. What is notable here is that future is altogether equal to past time and present time. Thus, it becomes apparent that when we speak of what is ahead in the ‘future’ there is “nothing new under the Sun.” Moltmann argues that this understanding of the future in time does not coincide with salvation history. He asserts that *adventus* denotes a concept of time that refers specifically to “what is

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> This is stated to show that Moltmann has since the time of TH intended to engage in open dialogue with other schools of thought and yet retain and support Christianity and its unique identity.

<sup>27</sup> These categories are described in TH but also referred to in CG (25-29).

coming.” As distinguished from ‘future,’ *adventus* indicates an approach or arrival in time and thus coincides with the Greek *parousia*, i.e. the messianic hope in the message of the prophets (and apostles). Taken together, Moltmann finds two specific meanings: (1) that this refers to a future in Christ, his “coming presence in glory”; and (2) presupposes a new transcendent reality located in the future, in what is to come, which means that the transcendent holds the future as necessary reality.<sup>28</sup> Within this concept of time there is not past without the future and the same holds for the present. The “transcendental future” is then the key that holds the coming of God’s glory and “source of time.”<sup>29</sup> Moltmann furthermore argues for an advent-like concept of time that supports his case for a coming God. This concept also entails that at the time of the advent hope the state of temporal time will come to an end in order for eternity to begin.<sup>30</sup>

The latter category referred to above is another word of biblical origin that refers to the historical side of the expected future.<sup>31</sup> *Novum*, or the new thing (Is.43:18), is what the prophets introduced after 587 B.C. as the new hope in light of the historical experience of exile. Hope is expressed in light of God’s judgment of the past and as the promise of renewal. This renewal is not a restoration of the old but rather the past created anew, where God’s actions in the past (in order to establish a covenant relationship) serve as analogies of God’s faithfulness in what lies ahead. The salvation of God’s people

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<sup>28</sup> *Coming of God*, 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>30</sup> Bauckham, *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 18. “Thus, the eschatological transformation of time into eternal time is not only the fulfillment of time’s promise, but also redemption from transience, death and final futility.”

<sup>31</sup> *Coming of God*, 27.

shifts from what is remembered of the past to what is expected in the future.<sup>32</sup> God's promissory history is directed toward the *novum* in the historical future. 'The new thing' is especially stressed in the NT with the Greek *kairos* (see II Cor. 5.17) and is analogous to the resurrected Christ in glorified form.<sup>33</sup> History is thereby described as eschatology, through reference to the eschatological categories of *novum* and *adventus*, and thus in terms of Christian theology.

### *Christological Eschatology*

As was implied above, the resurrection of Jesus is staked as the "genuine *novum*" that marks the beginning of eschatology.<sup>34</sup> Christian eschatology for Moltmann is thoroughly Christological in that it "proclaims the future of the risen Lord" based on the history of Jesus, his mission, death on the cross, and resurrection.<sup>35</sup> More specifically, he finds that Christology and eschatology are intricately related and thus must be seen in relation to each other. This is reflected in his treatment of both eschatological and Christological topics. TH was followed by the publication of *The Crucified God* (CG), and then later *The Way of Jesus Christ* (WJC), which preceded COG. He has consistently treated both topics individually yet set side-by-side. The question remains, however, as to whether or not his thought has remained consistent throughout. His early conclusions will be reviewed here and the latter work will unfold in Parts II and III of this study.

The basis for Christian hope stands and falls with the cross and resurrection. With his construction of a Christian view of history in TH he explains that God has revealed

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 28. Meeks, *Origins*, 75. Meeks writes, "Thus the visions of the new acts in terms of the old acts of God always bring to life more than was present in the old acts."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>34</sup> Bauckham, *All*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> TH, 17. Bauckham, *All*, 2.

his identity in the “infinite contradiction” of these events in his world history.<sup>36</sup> By this Moltmann means to show that rather than viewing Christ’s identification with God’s *being* as an end of history for the believer, what is known of these events ought to provoke the believer to awareness of and engagement with history. This ought to engage believers because what we are presented with in the cross is reality, as we know it, in its suffering and godforsakenness. The resurrection, not traditionally understood, is the negation of the reality of the cross in all its deadliness and the beginning of “the general resurrection of the dead.”<sup>37</sup> In this way he constructs not only an eschatologically-oriented history but also a Christological history.

Moltmann’s reflection on the life and ministry of Jesus has been treated in dialogue with Jewish sources in order to reconcile the Jewish Jesus with the Christian Jesus. This has been no easy task but led to a greater awareness of his messianic status and the general apocalyptic outlook toward the cross. Understood in the purview of Israel’s promissory history, the cross not only meant the death of the Messiah, not to be stated lightly, but the death of promise, hope, and God. Here Moltmann employs descriptors such as *deadliness*, *godforsakenness*, and *hopelessness*. The cross signifies the absence of God and hope, standing in utter contradiction with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It should be emphasized here what the resurrection then means according to Moltmann. His Christological eschatology is constructed against the backdrop of a logical progression to a promissory history. The resurrection points to the *parousia* and is

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<sup>36</sup> Meeks, *Origins*, 97.

<sup>37</sup> Otto, “The Resurrection in Jürgen Moltmann” *JETS*, 35, 1 (March 1992), 82.

a promise of new creation.<sup>38</sup> The *parousia* symbolizes the renewal that is to come and the immanence of God in time. Moltmann understands it to be a liberating event much like the Exodus and therefore a *novum* that reflects the past actions of God in history. It is an advent hope concerning the future of the world and utterly changes the interim period between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the *parousia* that marks the end of history.<sup>39</sup> The meaning of the resurrection then opens up the categories for eschatology, as stated above, and is “an apocalyptic symbol for the hope that where death is concerned God at last proves his divinity in the end.”<sup>40</sup>

This understanding of the resurrection also introduces two points yet to be explored, which concern the Easter appearances and the lived life of Jesus. These points lead into Part II and will resume with an examination of Moltmann’s personal eschatology in CG. We will see how the emphasis on the history of Jesus “against an eschatological horizon” determines what can be said about personal and cosmic expectations for the future.<sup>41</sup> The appearance of Christ as documented in the Gospels speaks of his “pre-reflected glory,” unrecognizable even to those who knew him, which then would suggest again the utter renewal of the old in the new. The witnesses saw in Christ his transfigured bodily form, transfigured “precisely of this transient and mortal

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<sup>38</sup> Here Otto helpfully explains that Moltmann uses the language of promise to explain the resurrection and is not at all concerned with the historical validity of the resurrection. In fact, he calls for an existential interpretation *à la* Bultmann and believes that any object verification robs it of its true significance. See Otto, 83; CG, 173.

<sup>39</sup> The advent Hope will also change how Moltmann understands the “resurrection of the dead” which will be explored in Part II.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *WJC*, XV. The *parousia* is thus treated in detail in *WJC* but much less in *CG*. In the latter he follows that general linkage between the *parousia* and coming Kingdom of God in history relegated to historical eschatology. Even their Bauckham raises questions over its implied and not explicit presence. Where it is mentioned in his chapters on personal and cosmic eschatology, it will be introduced but otherwise not carefully examined. See Bauckham, *All*, 8-10.

creation in its bodily and material form.”<sup>42</sup> What was revealed was not transcendent in the sense of ethereal and otherworldly, but rather a foretaste of the new creation in time as evidenced by the resurrected bodily form of Christ.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7.

## CHAPTER 2: RATZINGER AND ERICKSON ON ESCHATOLOGY

The focus of this chapter will be on reviewing the eschatological view and methodology of both Joseph Ratzinger and Millard Erickson. The primary goal will be to delineate their individual approaches to eschatology and criticisms of Moltmann's eschatology, as set forth in his earlier work selectively reviewed in chapter 1.<sup>43</sup> What is fleshed out in this chapter will then be applied in Parts II and III as a way to examine his mature work on eschatology in *COG*. What follows then will not only guide my examination of Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology, but will also supplement what is said in the chapters on Ratzinger and Erickson that follow.

### *Ratzinger on Eschatology*

In 1977, Joseph Ratzinger wrote a book on eschatology, as part of a proposed series of volumes on Roman Catholic theology.<sup>44</sup> There he reflected on his appointment as chair to dogmatics at the University of Tübingen in 1966, where he taught for close to 3 years alongside a young Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>45</sup> This was a time of exceptional social protest in Germany and Tübingen took on many of the young radicals who spoke frequently of protest and violent revolt. A so-called student movement had its epicenter at the University of Berlin, but many students flocked to Tübingen to study under Ernst Bloch. His Marxist analysis of Christianity, while influential to Moltmann, fueled social protest among the students and forced Ratzinger into a "contra position."<sup>46</sup> This all-

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<sup>43</sup> The goal in chapter 1, as articulated in the introduction was to review Moltmann's understanding of eschatology and his general methodological principles.

<sup>44</sup> *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Translated by Michael Waldstein, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977, Reprint, 2007), 212.

<sup>45</sup> John Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI: A Biography of Joseph Ratzinger* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000), 100.

together negative encounter led him to believe that the unity of the Christian faith was being broken apart by Marxist ideology.

In Ratzinger's eyes, Moltmann was guilty by association. When Ratzinger set out in 1977 to "restore correct appreciation of eschatology to Christian life," TH and other so-called forms of political or liberation theologies were in his sights.<sup>47</sup> His critique stems from the idea that these theologies integrate Marxist ideas, which distort their understanding of the Kingdom of God. This will in turn relativize Christian doctrine for the sake of revolution. As he states, "The Kingdom of God, not itself a political concept, cannot serve as a political criterion by which to construct in direct fashion a program of political action and criticize the political efforts of other people."<sup>48</sup> Instead, the Kingdom of God should be understood as a moral norm, which informs political activity.<sup>49</sup> Within Catholic dogmatics this would fall under the heading of moral theology and not eschatology, since the Kingdom of God is significant for political ethics but not as a political action in itself.

The place of hope in Christian eschatology must then be understood as "evangelical and not political."<sup>50</sup> While questions concerning the future and its relation to the present are welcome in a study of eschatology, hope and its practical application ought to be linked to the presence of Christ, the bearer of hope and promise. He finds that the real promise of faith must be sought in the living history of Christianity and not lost

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>48</sup> *Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>50</sup> Allen, 102.

in “the preoccupations of the present.”<sup>51</sup> Christian hope under the guidance of a political agenda will only erode its meaning and center in Christ, amounting to nothing but “a deceptive surrogate.”<sup>52</sup> The Church must work to preserve and maintain the true hope found in eschatology.

This hope finds its starting point in Christ and not in an agenda.<sup>53</sup> The resurrected Christ bears the future in himself as both death and life are brought together in him. He is where the answer to the Kingdom is found, since he is the bridge between the already and not yet. The Kingdom was central to his ministry, which he proclaimed as being at once present and still to come, revealing moreover that he was “the Kingdom in person.”<sup>54</sup> This understanding within the living history of the Church is transformative *ad vitam aeternam* (to eternal life), and ought not link with ideologies that draw upon past prophetic traditions so as to assert contemporary agendas of progress. Within eschatology this amounts to a definite promise of life after death but not “a better life before death.”<sup>55</sup>

Properly considered, eschatology treats all of the four last things: heaven, hell, judgment, and resurrection. Ratzinger believes that the developed personal eschatology must not be neglected as a result of the “gains implicit in a recovery of the more ancient

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<sup>51</sup> Aidan Nicoles, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI, New Edition: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (New York, NY: Burns & Oates, 2007), 114. Here it should be added that what Ratzinger means by “living history” is likened to the history of philosophical thought where the ideas of Plato and Aristotle are still viewed as originators to the whole body of knowledge that constitutes what is.

<sup>52</sup> *Eschatology*, 59

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. “Our point of departure is a person not a program.”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Allen, 102.

corporate and cosmic eschatologies [sic].”<sup>56</sup> What is important is that the Kingdom of God described therein be both present (in the acts of the Spirit) and soon to come, concerning the salvation of all.<sup>57</sup> In this way Christianity can maintain the correct estimation of eschatology as a doctrine of theology.

### *Erickson on Eschatology*

One way to compare Ratzinger and Erickson’s theology to that of Moltmann would be to describe the former as translators and the latter as a transformer.<sup>58</sup> Erickson, himself employs this description and asserts that his task as a translator theologian has been to retain and communicate, “certain key doctrines or basic beliefs” to contemporary culture.<sup>59</sup> A transformer, on the other hand, finds that the older doctrines are bound to a particular historical context and therefore cannot be restated today without offering a considerably different message. Erickson opposes this idea and believes that there are doctrines that remain “true and unchanging” at the center of Christianity and these must be translated to the next generation.<sup>60</sup> Thus, throughout his career Erickson has sought to clarify and articulate theological topics and doctrines in an academically respectable and accessible manner.

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<sup>56</sup> Nicoles, 113-14.

<sup>57</sup> *Eschatology*, 44-45. This statement is not intended to convey or suggest universal restoration or salvation. Although, it is said that Ratzinger “has been influenced enough by Origin to leave open the possibility of universal reconciliation.” See Allen, 102-03.

<sup>58</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 122. Erickson adopted this principle of theological work from his doctoral mentor William Hordern.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> Bradley Green, “Millard J. Erickson” In *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holdman, 2001), 324.

Reviewing his treatment of eschatology with regard to the Moltmann's early work will help to reveal his particular methodology.<sup>61</sup> Erickson arranges doctrines in the traditional loci and treats eschatology as one of 12 headings in systematic theology. Thus, he argues that Moltmann's interpretive motif (eschatology) "allows theology to be distorted by undue emphasis" on the eschatological category of scripture.<sup>62</sup> Since it is not the only biblically based motif, one should try to account for all the possible motifs and not view all through one and thereby misrepresent the others. Moltmann admitted as much about TH, and held that the two volumes that followed (in '73 and '77) were equally one-sided; no *one* should be seen as an attempt to present a systematic theology.<sup>63</sup> In what follows, one ought to consider Moltmann's attempt to provide a formal account of eschatology in CG, perhaps more in line with Erickson's principles. If one does not take into account the other motifs then their theology will become selective rather than comprehensive according to Erickson. An arguably more comprehensive interpretive motif is reflected in Erickson's own systematic theology, namely the "magnificence of God."<sup>64</sup> This is intended to account for all the traditional attributes of God and thereby provide a solid reference point for the study of God, comparable to Barth's word of God or Tillich's ground of being.

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<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, Erickson's criticisms pertain to Moltmann's early work in TH and peer reviewed submissions prior to 1977. It is also notable that even in a revised edition of *A Basic Guide to Eschatology* ('98) Erickson fails to account for Moltmann's later work, particularly in CG ('96). See Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998) 44-49.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 51. By interpretive motif Erickson is referring to the theme that unites the account, like a thesis, to be developed into a theology. See also *Christian Theology*, 80-81, 1170.

<sup>63</sup> James Wakefield, *Jürgen Moltmann: A Research Bibliography ATLA Bibliography Series*; No. 47 (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>64</sup> *Christianity Theology*, 82.

Thus, his treatment of eschatology contributes to this unifying motif by uncovering the relevant scriptural passages about eschatology and reviewing the historical issues related to matters of eschatology. It is with respect to this process that Erickson finds Moltmann reflecting a kind of “eschatomania,” in that the Christian faith is understood to be so entirely eschatological that it is found everywhere in the NT and “attached as an adjective to virtually every theological concept.”<sup>65</sup> Here the disagreement is clear: Moltmann finds eschatology to be of sole significance to the Christian (for reasons stated in chapter 1) and Erickson does not. He finds that a balanced view should be taken where one realizes that “because the biblical sources vary in clarity, our conclusions will vary in degree of certainty.”<sup>66</sup> That being said, it is argued that Moltmann’s future oriented hope is ambiguous and therefore unclear if it is this-worldly or other-worldly.<sup>67</sup> Is the hope directed at God’s promises coming to pass on this earth or will there be a deliverance from this world as we know it and fulfillment elsewhere? If the attempt is to link the future with an ethic, then should we expect the promises to be fulfilled on this earth? And, if so what would that entail?

In addition, he finds that the emphasis on the future should not be overdrawn since it pertains to more than the future.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, what the future will be is not entirely clear nor is the role of the Church. If Moltmann means that the *new age* has begun then what is the ecclesiological role of the Church in preparing the world for the

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<sup>65</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1158-59; *Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 362.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1170.

<sup>67</sup> *Basic Guide*, 51. A similar argument has been voiced elsewhere. See Stephen Williams, “The Problem with Moltmann” *EuroJTh* 5:2 (1996), 157-167.

<sup>68</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, 363.

coming God, and what should be anticipated in the expected future state? Erickson is in agreement that Jesus introduced a new age, but holds the traditional view that “victory over the powers of evil has already been won, even though the struggle is still to be enacted in history.”<sup>69</sup> The transformation that Moltmann finds enacted in the resurrection and radical opposition to the cross puts a considerably different spin on the problem of evil. He would most likely seek to avoid describing the event in terms of victory and defeat. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether Moltmann’s account of individual and cosmic eschatology is ambiguous regarding God’s promises and whether their future fulfillment is found in this world or the next.

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<sup>69</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1161.

## PART II

### INDIVIDUAL DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The purpose of this section is to provide a critical review of Moltmann's treatment of personal eschatology in COG. Chapter 1 will review the topics treated therein (death, sin, resurrection, and the intermediate state) and consider what has, or has not, changed methodologically in terms of what was previously considered in Part I. The criticisms raised in Part I, chapter 2 will also weigh into this examination, where applicable. Chapters 2 and 3 will then introduce Ratzinger and Erickson's personal eschatology as compared to our review in chapter 1. These chapters will not offer an exhaustive account of either theologian, but will instead consider the relevant theological points of agreement and divergence between Moltmann's views and those of Ratzinger and Erickson. This will be done with an eye toward addressing the criticisms (raised in Part I, ch. 2), potential points of agreement, or topics that warrant further investigation.

## CHAPTER 1: MOLTSMANN'S PERSONAL ESCHATOLOGY

The event of death is arguably the ultimate problem of life, but it is nevertheless the defining feature of being mortal. Awareness of death may belie the day-to-day consciousness of contemporary society at large, yet its eventuality features prominently in individual lives awaiting realization. To acknowledge willingly its presence is uncommon, but when it is brought closer through the death of a loved one it becomes impossible to ignore. At that moment the personal experience of loss breaks down the fragmented, moment-to-moment experience of our reality thereby raising questions about what ultimately endures.

### *Death*

For Moltmann the question about death is ultimately based on our experience of life. The question is, “will love endure?”<sup>70</sup> In COG, he devotes several pages to explaining how the concern we have for the well-being of others and ourselves, or lack thereof, is about love. This is couched in the grander story of God’s history of love. A problem noted in this sociological observation is whether the individualized Western world has lost the sense of historical narrative and an awareness of past lives. Much of what we experience in the modern world is ahistorical. So to conceive of our experience of love for others and ourselves in the past and present as having any grander connection to those before or after us is almost unimaginable. Yet in this, “he sees the future of our mortal lives anchored and transcended in a history of love.”<sup>71</sup> To understand this history of love one must then assume two points: 1) that ultimately the problem of life is not

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<sup>70</sup> COG, 53.

<sup>71</sup> Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 205.

death but a conflict between love and death. When confronted with death our concerns about loss are rooted in love and fears about the loss of what is loved. Our interest in life and living is tied to the meaning that is found in loving and being loved. When a loved one is lost or a person is faced with the eventual loss of life, questions about what endures after death also connect with issues of what is fair or just. What is found in God's promises to his people and in the history of Jesus is that "justice is God's concern and first option."<sup>72</sup> Thus what the history of God shows is how his love extends "beyond the limits of death in order to put right what has never achieved its rights."<sup>73</sup> In the conflict between love and death, love endures in God's love for life and livingness.

2) In God's history of love our "individual awareness is embedded in collective awareness of the generations."<sup>74</sup> What has been lost in modern society is the connection between the personal and the collective. Moltmann moves to reclaim the collective history of God's people by showing the historicity of Christian thought through reconnecting the individual with all who await redemption in the coming God. This perspective removes the divide between the living and non-living and finds all directed toward the future and thus together in the present awaiting the future.

These points appear to usurp somewhat the meaning of "personal" in the title of this section. However, in what follows we will see that this is not an ideological shift but instead a conscious departure from the existential ("my death is my own conscious end") and western individualized ("My life and death is all about me") worldviews. The aim is to reconnect with a much more collective Christian history and theology. His conviction

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<sup>72</sup> *COG*, 118.

<sup>73</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, 206.

<sup>74</sup> *COG*, 52, 54.

is that the unique Christian identity is rooted in a common hope that unites all in Christ and his future.

### *Death and Sin*

Moltmann argues that there are two contradictory views in Christian theology pertaining to death and sin. The first is the Augustinian idea that “death is the result of sin;” and the second is the more modern idea that “death is the human being’s natural end.”<sup>75</sup> Beyond and in contrast with these two conflicting ideas an alternative idea is proposed that brings together the essence of both. In what follows, the two ideas will be reviewed and set against Moltmann’s proposal that death is “a characteristic of frail, temporal creation which will be overcome through the new creation of all things for eternal life.”<sup>76</sup>

The idea that physical death is a consequence of sin is traced back to Pauline thought about death, specifically Rom.6:23, “the wages of sin is death.” Moltmann attributes this view to Paul’s rabbinic thought and connects it with Jewish apocalypticism, since the idea is hardly traceable within the Hebrew Bible.<sup>77</sup> With this interpretation Paul suggests that there is a metaphysical link between “act and destiny” that has resulted in death for all humanity.

This idea was examined at the Councils where it received the label of Original sin. It was determined at the Council of Trent and Orange that all human beings die as the inevitable result of Adam’s first sin. According to this Catholic doctrine the “wages of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Although it is curious that here he makes no mention of the relation between this idea and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

sin” are causally linked to the physical death of the body and are determined to be what results in eternal death.<sup>78</sup> Redemption, in turn, would then be the reconciliation with God through grace and “when the dead are raised to eternal life.”<sup>79</sup> But this would then mean that there are two punishments: the first being the death of the body and the second being the possible eternal death (which equates to both physical and spiritual damnation). Thus, sin is found in the body but it affects the soul and without grace will lead inevitably to eternal death.

According to Moltmann, liberal Protestant theology in the nineteenth century broke from this idea of a causal connection and relegated sin to a strictly religious and moral experience. Physical death is a natural occurrence not to be understood within a religious framework. It is then presupposed that there is a separation between persons and nature.<sup>80</sup> What can be said of death according to religious experience is speculative at best and applicable to what is known scientifically about death. In this context of belief and understanding Schleiermacher determined that death is not caused by sin, but it is through sin that it acquires spiritual power over human beings, since “it is not by death, but, as scripture says, by the fear of death, that we are subject to bondage.”<sup>81</sup> This determination amends the modern understanding that physical death is separate from causal sin; therefore sin “has only subjective consequences and effects.”<sup>82</sup> However,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.; Schleiermacher, Friedrich, H.R. Macintosh, and J.S. Stewart, *The Christian Faith*: Edited by H.R. Macintosh, and J.S Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2<sup>nd</sup> English edition, 1976), 316.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 88.

within this paradigm (the separation of person from nature) there is no redemption of the body as it is replaced with the doctrine of the immortal soul.

From this review Moltmann not only redefined what we know of sin but also how we might understand death (and its relation to sin). The idea that death is the “wages of sin” must be limited only to humans. What needs to be removed is the anthropocentric perspective within Christian theology that sees “humans as the origin of all unhappiness in the world.”<sup>83</sup> The only causal connection that can be made is that sin is spread from humans to other humans and non-human creation, which results in death. This connection reveals a seemingly unexplored notion that sin is not only severing relations with God but also an act of violence against life itself.<sup>84</sup> We can say that sin leads to death, in so far as it works together with death, but this is a correlation and not a causal connection. In other words, sin is mutually related to death. Here it seems that Moltmann opts to view death and sin from what Christians know of the future rather than what is known of the beginning. From this perspective he finds that “death of all the living is a sign of the first, temporal and imperfect creation.”<sup>85</sup> The fact that this creation is imperfect suggests that death, as a feature of the created order, has brought about sin. Psychologically speaking, sin is the result of desiring to be free from the constraints of mortality, of willing to be more like God. Therefore, he concludes, “we do not die as a punishment either for our sin or Adam’s. Nor do we die in the personal judgment of God.”<sup>86</sup> It is best to observe that

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.; See also Moltmann, “The Blessing of Hope: The Theology of Hope and the Full Gospel of Life,” *JPT* 13, 2 (2005), 154.

we do die a so-called natural death, but this death is shared (is a universal occurrence) with all of creation. All creation is waiting to be redeemed and is in need of this “redemption of the body” (Rom. 8.23). Nature, in this non-anthropocentric view, can be understood theologically as “the state of creation which is no longer creation’s original condition, and is not yet its final one.”<sup>87</sup> This view also lends itself to the idea of an “ecological doctrine of redemption,” which is freed from the separation of person and nature and the expectation of salvation only for religious persons. According to this understanding, Christ’s resurrection ought to be viewed as “the beginning of the transfiguration of the body and of the earth.”<sup>88</sup> When we die we join the rest of creation not in fear of judgment but in love in union with the sighing creation (Rom. 8.19) and in hope, awaiting redemption in Christ.

#### *Immortality of the Lived Life?*

Moltmann’s understanding of the resurrection of the body can easily be described as both integrative and Christological.<sup>89</sup> As was said in Part I, the latter characteristic is meant to imply that his eschatological categories develop out of and are based on his Christology, i.e. his understanding of the resurrection of the body is informed by his interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>90</sup> However, one will also find here that this interpretation is also trinitarian, and this will be examined in what follows. The title

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>89</sup> Bauckham, *All*, 11-14. Bauckham uses these descriptors to outline Moltmann’s whole eschatology in *COG*.

<sup>90</sup> *COG*, 77. Moltmann states, “When we want to discover what death and resurrection really are, we have no need to search for an answer in ourselves, or from other people, or from past and future. We have to look at them in the death and resurrection of Christ.”

of this section also suggests the former, namely that Moltmann intends to incorporate two other elements into the resurrection of the body: the whole extent of the lived human life, and all created life. To address those details, we will describe Moltmann's interpretation of the resurrection of the body pursuant to three points: 1) That God's Spirit of life in relationship with the human spirit is the continuance between life as we know it and the life here after; 2) Christ's resurrection also shows us that the power of resurrection is not a new act of creation but creating anew the same body or mortal life; 3) And that this mortal life is also and always a life before God which is to say a whole life that will be transformed upon the resurrection of the body.

When speaking of what endures at death Moltmann directs attention to the Spirit of life. "This Spirit, the life-giver, is in community with Christ already experienced now, in this life, as 'the power of the resurrection,'" Moltmann argues.<sup>91</sup> He locates the life giving powers with the Spirit (the breath of life), which interpenetrates the whole of the mortal life (or lived Gestalt) and thus connects it with the eternal life. The divine Spirit connects with what we often refer to as the human soul. This connection is best understood in terms of its relatedness to God and therefore as the "immanence" of his Spirit. Conversely, his Spirit is "the transcendence of the human spirit."<sup>92</sup> The latter, being immortal, connects what is now with what will be since, in this relationship the mortal life is connected to its source.<sup>93</sup> This connection cannot be severed in death, because death is not stronger than God, or dissolved by human sin. Therefore in its very relatedness it is immortal. This is also exemplified in the *imago dei*, which reveals not a

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 71, 74.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 72. "The Spirit of life which comes from God and goes to God is immortal."

one-sided relationship of Creator to creation, but a reciprocal relationship between human beings and God via the Spirit.<sup>94</sup>

What this distinguishes is that upon creation of the earth God willingly chose to have a particular connection to human beings. This connection is none other than the divine Spirit of life that brings life (through breath) and returns to God upon death. The Spirit of life is also expressed in Christ through the resurrection. The two are inseparable. In Christ one sees the reality of death and the fullness of life in resurrected form. Just as his disciples understood and interpreted their lives as analogous to Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, so too should all believers. And, likewise the believer should recognize that in that act Christ was transformed from a mortal state to a state of glory. Death was not a "separation of the soul from the body" or the end of the relationship with God, although this idea is expressed in various forms in the OT; rather the relationship did not change and the soul was not separated but became a *Novum* of Jesus' mortal life. This lack of separation indicates that what was did not cease to be or become annihilated but was retained and made whole. He still bore the scars of the cross and was identified by them.

In analogy to this, believers will see their deaths too as part of the process in which this whole mortal creation will be transfigured and be born again to become the kingdom of glory. 'The resurrection of the body' means the metamorphosis of this transient creation into the eternal kingdom of God, and of this mortal life into eternal.<sup>95</sup>

According to this description believers do not lose what was the full extent of their lives or the subjective account of their lives. Their "lived Gestalt" is what God identifies them

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<sup>94</sup> Moltmann asserts this point against what he finds to be a one-sided relation of God to humans according to Barth, or human beings to God according to Rahner. It remains to be seen if this will be a point of contention for both Erickson and Ratzinger in what follows. See *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

by because this is the human spirit's relationship with God. God always sees the whole person whether or not the person is actively relating to God. What is raised is the whole self, which means the entire personal identity is renewed and made perfect. Moltmann describes this by referring to the biblical passages that emphasize God calling us by name. God redeems us not by restoring our soul (or human spirit) alone or by giving us new bodies like the angels; rather, we are identified by name and our whole identity is redeemed.

Finally, what can be said is that our whole lived life is entirely before God, in life and death. This relatedness means that God's love for us is for whole persons, even though we live fragmented and imperfect lives. We are made in his image, live before him, and are loved by him. The Spirit of life remains with us and our covenant partnership is permanent. In this sense death should be understood as a transformative experience and not an act of separation. Death in the abstract may indicate a separation but Moltmann does not think this applies to the death of a human being since, "God's relationship to people is a dimension of their existence which they do not lose even in death."<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the dead also continue to be "before God although in a non-restricted form." Though in a separate time and space, believers and the dead are all present before God in the "divine wide space which binds us together."<sup>97</sup> As established in the previous section, there is no division between person and nature according to Moltmann. In death

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 77. Bauckham adds "The transformation of time and space in the new creation is a gathering of all the temporal moments of historical time and all the spaces of this creation's space into a kind of temporal and spatial compresence." See *All*, 15.

the whole human being, both body and soul, passes into immortal existence and is raised in Christ into the kingdom of glory.

### *Intermediate State?*

Lastly the question remains as to the state of the dead. There are, however, indications in what has been said so far as to where they may be. For Moltmann the idea of entering into a state of purgatory upon death is only partly correct, as we shall see. However, he finds that this and other popular Christian ideas concerning the state of the dead (soul sleep, immediate resurrection) are deficient because they fail “to take Christ as point of departure.”<sup>98</sup> Christ is our resurrection hope and the way to the coming kingdom of glory. Thus, it is in error to begin from an anthropological thesis and not from the center of Christian theology, which is Christ. What can be said on this point is that there is an “intermediate time” between his resurrection and “the general resurrection of the dead.”<sup>99</sup> In his resurrection we have been reconciled with God, and he reigns as Lord over the living and the dead. However, we still await the end of death itself.<sup>100</sup> This “intermediate time” is of Christ’s lordship and history directed toward the coming kingdom of glory. Death will be destroyed at the consummation of his rule, which occurs when the kingdom is passed to the Father. Thus, what can be said is that during this time between Christ’s resurrection and the general resurrection “anyone who dies in fellowship with Christ dies in fellowship with the One who is preparing the way from the coming kingdom.”<sup>101</sup> This time can be best understood relationally as “Christ’s time *for*

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> In other words, Moltmann calls this the “eschatological provisio” which states that while “Christ has already been raised from the dead, we have not yet been raised.” See Ibid.

human beings” living and dead. Since death does not limit Christ, both the living and the dead have fellowship with him. Those who did not know him in life have time (albeit not time as we know it) to know him and experience his “rectifying love.”<sup>102</sup> What must also be added is that in this way human beings living and dead are in relationship with him and since this relationship is one of dialogue (and not one of silence) according to scripture, then there is accountability and reconciliation. According to Moltmann, the only thing that remains of the doctrine of purgatory is Christ’s time with the dead, which is full of acceptance, purifying love, and transfiguration.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the dead like the living are in the fellowship of Christ, and anticipate God’s future in him.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 105. See also Rom. 8:38, 14:9.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 106; Moltmann has also described this as a process of “future glorification.” See *GC*, 226-27.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2: RATZINGER'S PERSONAL ESCHATOLOGY AND CRITIQUE

There is a certain consternation mixed with composure in Ratzinger's treatment of Moltmann's theology of hope, and yet the latter's formal treatment of eschatology (in COG) may help quell the former's dismay. To be more precise, it seems that Moltmann, while not in any way abandoning his earlier project, has found a greater appreciation for tradition than what is reflected in his early work. What remains to be discovered is if this complements in any way Ratzinger's treatment of personal eschatology and whether or not Moltmann provides a viable contribution to Roman Catholic eschatology. In order to uncover the comparable as well as the contrasting features of his work, the sections of this chapter will follow a pattern similar to that of the previous chapter. And, for the sake of clarity, the following sections will align to give a fair but not extensive account of Ratzinger's treatment of each topic.

### *Death*

The question of death naturally leads one to the question of human life and its meaning for Ratzinger. If one desires to confront the difficult reality of death, he or she will inevitably raise questions about the meaning of life. Thus, a Christian theology of death interprets the ethos of death in the Bible to bring content to the questions about death and life. Moltmann would caution that there is no "biblical concept of death" to be found, but this is not what Ratzinger aims to uncover.<sup>104</sup> Rather, by tracing the ethos of death in the Bible one can draw certain conclusions about what death means in Christianity.

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<sup>104</sup> COG, 78.

Christian faith is first and foremost an “assent to life” as a gift of God.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the reality of life is given meaning only in communion with God, i.e. the source of life. In this communion we find true reality but this reality is also revealed in community with one another as it too reflects this reality. This community is the essence of the image of God within us brought forth in relatedness. Ratzinger finds this idea captured best by the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, which reads, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” What is conveyed here is the experiential certitude that reality equals communion with God and come what may in life (e.g. eventual death), this relationship will remain. This idea and hope is validated in the risen Christ. Therefore, “Communion with God, which is the native place of indestructible life, finds its concrete form in sharing in the body of Christ.”<sup>106</sup> The answer to death is God in Christ, who conquered death and offers eternal life to all. The dark realm of *Sheol* described in the Hebrew Bible is no longer for those who enter into communion with God and thus find themselves in his presence upon death. When a believer is baptized into the body of Christ, the conditional existence of his or her life becomes unconditional.

The first point also grants meaning to the problem of suffering. If Christian faith affirms life lived in communion with God, then life is shown to be more than physical existence. Faith integrates the spiritual into the biological dimensions of life. Not to exchange the spiritual for the biological, but to enrich the latter in light of the former. Therefore, human suffering does not ruthlessly permeate our lives without meaning. It is given meaning in the Spirit and is understood in relation to the Passion of Christ. Christ

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<sup>105</sup> *Eschatology*, 101.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

exemplifies the “truth and justice and locus of real living” and reveals how “without the Passion life does not discover its true wholeness.”<sup>107</sup> While this should not lead one to deliberate suffering, one should not view suffering as inconsistent with human nature and as having no greater significance.

From these two points one might conclude that similar to Moltmann, Ratzinger locates the affirmation of life in Christ and our relationship with him. And yet, while he does not raise the question as to whether love will endure, it seems plausible that he would accept that question as valid. However, Moltmann’s account of God’s love in history seems less acceptable. True, the Christian life is one of truth and justice, but can it not be said that life is a battle between love and death where God seeks justice for all those whose rights have been violated? Behind this idea of God’s history of love are presuppositions that Ratzinger would seemingly oppose. While this history focuses on a covenant relationship between God and humanity, the supposition is that this is a history of God’s liberating acts “on behalf of Israel and in Christ.”<sup>108</sup> Moltmann would presumably further argue that since all oppressed people are made in the image of God, the call of the Church should be to seek liberation for all oppressed people.

Ratzinger would counter by adding that this liberation brought people into the freedom of Christ not necessarily from slavery, oppression, or suffering. According to the NT freedom is found when taking up the status of the Son in baptism and fulfilling the law in Christ (Gal. 4:21).<sup>109</sup> This means that those in a relationship with God identify and

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> D. Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 86.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 87.

participate with his being. To identify with the triune nature of God is in turn identification with the crucified Christ and this is where love is found.<sup>110</sup> There seems to be a distinction here between the natural and the supernatural. Ratzinger locates freedom and community in the triune God and identification with his being. Moltmann understands God's liberating acts and covenanting to reveal freedom and community in time. Ratzinger's ontological identification with Christ brings one into the fullness of being (ontological freedom) but this could also equate to martyrdom in this world. To be made in the image of God is therefore to identify with the Trinitarian God. It seems that Moltmann would agree but posit that rights are established in this image according to the biblical witness, and that in Christ all are liberated. In the end, Ratzinger would conclude that like his understanding of the Kingdom of God (see Part I, ch. 2), Moltmann offers a Marxist interpretation of the image of God, which develops into a political criterion that then conflicts with the politics of this world.

Ultimately, for Ratzinger the temporal truth that one discovers in Christ leads to a fullness of being that brings life everlasting. His personal eschatology retains a firm personal focus as opposed to Moltmann's recovery of a corporate eschatology. That means that in this life one enters into communion with God, in the body of Christ i.e. Catholic Church, and finds justice in relationship with him. This relationship is what remains beyond death. So similar to Moltmann he finds that in Christ death is defeated: on the cross, at one's death, and at the end of time. What happens upon one's death? What is to be expected? To these questions we now turn.

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<sup>110</sup> One can see here that the disagreements between Moltmann and Ratzinger in large measure rest upon the definition of terms (truth, justice, image of God, and communion with God).

## *Immortality of the Soul*

If Moltmann's understanding of the image of God is drawn into question, then one may reconsider his explanation of the Spirit of life that connects us with our creator. One may wonder how it is that his interpretation of the image of God can be labeled 'Marxist.' Both Ratzinger and Moltmann use the language of 'relatedness' and 'love' to describe how it is that humans are made in the image. The only variation that Moltmann appears to offer is in his description of the Spirit of life,<sup>111</sup> which appears to be interchangeable with the term 'soul.' This is accounted for in his review of scripture where 'spirit' is sometimes referred to as 'soul.' In this, a distinction is made between *his* 'Spirit' and the 'spirit.' The former refers to God's Spirit and the latter the human spirit. Moreover, it appears that the relative infrequency of the term 'soul' in the Hebrew Bible leads Moltmann to opt for the language of spirit. This is specifically referred to as the 'Spirit of life.'

Ratzinger would disagree with the implications of this development and opt for the language of soul and body. He finds that while the early Church had a Christological account of the death of immortality, what it lacked was anthropology to distinguish between what perishes and what abides in death. Here he is willing to incorporate the terminology of Plato and Aristotle brought together in the work of Thomas Aquinas. In Aquinas he finds, "The human spirit is so utterly one with the body that the term "form" can be used of the body and retain its proper meaning. Conversely, the form of the body is spirit, and this is what makes the human being a person."<sup>112</sup> Here he is willing to incorporate the use of "form" from the Platonic tradition to describe how the soul

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<sup>111</sup> See page 28.

<sup>112</sup> *Eschatology*, 149.

“belongs to the body as ‘form,’ but that which is the form of the body is still spirit.”<sup>113</sup>

Ratzinger considers this formulation vital for the faith and an original product of Christian thought. Moltmann, on the other hand, appears to not even evaluate the formulation.<sup>114</sup> However, it can be posited that he would oppose the idea that this terminology was in need, and that it is in any way uniquely Christian. It appears that his account of personal eschatology makes a conscious effort to stay within Judaeo-Christian sources. Yet his development retains ideas most notably inspired by Ernst Bloch. Thus, while there may be an effort to keep the faith separate from Greek thought, the use of philosophy to illuminate ideas is retained by both theologians. One is no more guilty than the other of drawing from outside the tradition. Yet the question remains, does the terminology truly help to clarify or only muddy the content of the Christian faith concerning death and immortality? This question will be considered in the final section to which we now turn.

### *An Intermediate State*

It is assumed that Ratzinger (as Pope Benedict XVI) would retain the idea of purgatory, but his concluding thoughts on the intermediate state only allude to it being a possible state after death. Much is left as mystery. However, what is asserted is that those in relationship *with* Christ or in communion with God are with Christ. How this is so,

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. Aquinas’ own explanation is as follows: “Now it is clear that the first thing by which the body lives is the soul. And as life appears through various operations in different degrees of living things, that whereby we primarily perform each of all these vital actions is the soul. For the soul is the primary principle of our nourishment, sensation, and local movement; and likewise of our understanding. Therefore this principle by which we primarily understand, whether it be called intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body.” See Peter Kreeft, *Summa of the Summa: The Essential Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologica* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1990), 253.

<sup>114</sup> The idea of the immortal soul developed in the *Phaedo* is considered but no mention is made of its development in Augustine or Aquinas—both of which are reviewed by Ratzinger. See *COG*, 58-65; *Eschatology*, 140-150.

how the dead are with Christ varies between Moltmann and Ratzinger. Like Moltmann, he too considers this to be a “time with Jesus,” which begins in one’s temporal existence and extends beyond death where one is only drawn closer to God.<sup>115</sup> But is this intermediate time (Moltmann) or state to be understood as one’s purgation, where one is purified in relationship with Christ, cleansed of a sinful nature? Although not explicitly stated the anthropological implications behind the use of the term soul suggests this much. Moltmann’s explanation moves in a different direction.

In his formulation it is not clear how the human spirit is with Christ during this time. One does not expect the mystery to be explained in full but clarification is needed. At death the spirit in its relatedness is with God in Christ. Does this actually avoid the dualism Moltmann desires to dispense with? Two ideas are disclosed on this point. 1) The body remains with the rest of creation awaiting the coming God. 2) The dead are dead in Christ and with Christ the dead will be resurrected. While the body remains with creation it appears the spirit moves into a different time and space found in Christ. However, there still appears to be a separation that occurs at death. Ratzinger accounts for this by defining the soul as form of the body and can therefore say that the soul is with Christ in death and retains the characteristics of the person in life. This remains somewhat unclear in Moltmann’s explanation.

Another interesting point of divergence between the two theologians concerns the understanding of sin and hell. Ratzinger would posit that the soul is brought into right relation (in love) to Christ immediately after death and would add that this process may be painful. Thus the idea of purgatory remains. In addition, hell is a necessary place of damnation that results from a willing rejection of Christ. If human freedom is the real

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<sup>115</sup> *Eschatology*, 131.

deal, as found in scripture, so to must be the possibility of Hell. He writes, “Christ, descends into Hell and suffers it in all its emptiness; but he does not, for all that, treat man as an immature being deprived in the final analysis of any responsibility for his own destiny. Heaven reposes upon freedom, and so leaves to the damned the right to will their own damnation.”<sup>116</sup> Moltmann would find that this understanding undermines the love of God and the extent to which he is willing to go to restore his creation. Justice is found, not within the *polis*, but in God who brings life and livingness, not death and destruction. The history of Christ reveals that justifying faith is about “the redeeming lordship of Christ over the dead and the living.”<sup>117</sup> People cannot be punished for their own incomplete and transient state for eternity. However, one must ask: Does this endless love erode the meaning of human freedom? Can we not will our own demise, or is our fate without consequence in the end because all will be made right before God? For Moltmann, sin and transgression are features of a transient condition that will be healed and restored. In the restoration process, which takes place for the individual upon death and for all creation in the coming of God, the “hell” of emptiness and separation will no longer be.

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<sup>116</sup> *Eschatology*, 216. Moltmann would reject this presupposition altogether. He writes, “...it is inhumane, for there are not many people who can enjoy free will where their eternal fate in heaven or hell is concerned...Anyone who faces men and women with the choice of heaven or hell, does not merely expect too much of them. It leaves them in a state of uncertainty, because we cannot base the assurance of our salvation on the shaky ground of our own decisions.” See Moltmann, “The Logic of Hell” in *God Will Be All in All*, 44-45.

<sup>117</sup> *WJC*, 182.

### CHAPTER 3: ERICKSON'S PERSONAL ESCHATOLOGY AND CRITIQUE

In chapter 2 (Part I) Erickson's general views regarding eschatology were highlighted along with several questions he has raised about Moltmann's theology of hope. This chapter will now add to what has been discussed thus far by introducing aspects of Erickson's own treatment of personal eschatology, focusing on the points of divergence between his treatment and Moltmann's personal eschatology, introduced in chapter 1 (Part II). Due to the nature of Erickson's questions raised in the introduction, much of what follows will focus on the methodology guiding Moltmann's personal eschatology as compared to that of his. This focus will contribute to the overall assessment by providing a critical account of his conclusions so far. In addition, what must be considered in this chapter is whether or not his method and personal eschatology are viable contributions to Evangelical theology.

#### *Death*

Erickson approaches the doctrine of death in personal eschatology just as that of any other topic in theology. He identifies all the relevant questions about death as well as its various aspects. These features are examined according to the biblical teachings and historical treatments and then the essence of the doctrine is identified in order to capture its contemporary expression, in that order.<sup>118</sup> The intent is to provide, as much as possible, a somewhat scientific approach to any particular doctrine. There is a glaring difference here between what Erickson sees as an analytical process and Moltmann considers an adventure.<sup>119</sup> One can expect further discontinuities beginning on this point. They may differ on the process of doing theology but can they manage to find agreement

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<sup>118</sup> *Christian Theology*, 63.

<sup>119</sup> Gilbert, 169.

on other matters concerning death? Death is to be thought as cessation of life in its bodily state and a transition into a different mode of existence, Erickson concludes.<sup>120</sup> Following the Biblical witness he distinguishes this physical event from that of spiritual death and eternal death (also referred to as second death; Rev. 21:8). Thus, “physical death is the separation of the soul from the body; spiritual death is the separation of the person from God; eternal death is the finalizing of the state of separation –one is lost for all eternity in his or her sinful condition.”<sup>121</sup>

Moltmann’s attention to doctrine concerning matters of personal eschatology certainly fails to address the various kinds of death distinguished in scripture. But rather than viewing this to be an obvious oversight one should note that from what has been said of his personal eschatology thus far, he would altogether disagree with Erickson’s interpretation. For one, physical death should not be understood as the separation of the soul from the body, but rather as a process whereby the person returns to creation but is at the same time with Christ awaiting the coming God.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, the idea of spiritual death could not be. All are related to God and through Christ there is no separation too exceptional that would result in a spiritual death. This explanation viewed alongside Erickson exposes Moltmann’s more radical viewpoints, e.g. universal reconciliation. Similarly, eternal death could not be because in the end “nothing will be lost.”<sup>123</sup> Human sin, understood as that which is causally, rather than directly linked to death (as penalty

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<sup>120</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1175.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 1175.

<sup>122</sup> *COG*, 71.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

for sin) cannot sever one's relation to God. God's love is stronger than death and sin is understood to be that which has resulted from our human inability to endure mortality.

Both are in agreement that death is something unnatural but even on this point distinctions are in order. Moltmann offers an alternative to the general anthropocentric account of sin and death, which finds humans alone to be responsible for all death and destruction in the world. Historical and sociological evidence would reveal that humans are terrific contributors to death and destruction in the world nonetheless. Collective death is instead evidence of an imperfect creation, which will be transfigured in the coming God. Death is a collective experience that is shared with the rest of creation that awaits the indwelling Kingdom of God. Erickson would counter that Moltmann's definition of sin undermines real conversion and places great confidence in the coming God. This is the expected result of his selective treatment of scripture and lack of clear methodology.<sup>124</sup> Humans are responsible for sin and the consequences of sin stem from our collective and individual choices to not do God's will according to Erickson.<sup>125</sup> Thus, death is an unnatural consequence of sin for believers and unbeliever alike, but the believer can avoid both spiritual and eternal death. Sin is shown to have made death a reality through Adam, i.e. there was only potential death in the beginning and the possibility for eternal life.<sup>126</sup> This conclusion is the result of a clear synthesis of biblical teachings concerning both death and sin.

What can be said thus far is that Moltmann's conclusions are not drawn from the use of a clearly defined and fluid methodology. His contributions in COG show a

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<sup>124</sup> Gilbert 167; Erickson, *Basic Guide*, 51.

<sup>125</sup> *Christian Theology*, 613-17.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 1177.

synthesis of material from scripture, history of Christian doctrine, other cultural perspectives, and contemporary interpretation but little can be said beyond this observation. Generally speaking, Evangelical methodology may be said to operate within a threefold criterion of scripture, tradition, and culture.<sup>127</sup> Following this criterion should assist us in uncovering further similarities and dissimilarities. On the surface Moltmann's synthesis of material appears to work within this criterion, but we must recall here that between him and Erickson tasks differ. Moltmann, as a "transformer" believes theology is about, "defending the Christian faith against the doubt and criticism of the modern spirit apologetically. On the other hand it must show that the Christian faith has therapeutic relevance to the sickness of the modern spirit and the perplexities of the modern world."<sup>128</sup>

Therefore, it becomes somewhat clearer that Moltmann understands his task to be less rigid than that of Erickson's but equally relevant to the larger apologetic task. Returning to the prospect of death one can then see that the difference in methodological principles results from a difference in task. As "translator" Erickson concludes that death is unnatural and a curse that "has been removed by the death and resurrection of Christ."<sup>129</sup> In contrast, Moltmann's conclusion employs an eschatological method that understands the doctrine of death in terms of the future.<sup>130</sup> This interpretive lens views death as a sign that what is natural in creation is in need of redemption. Believers should

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<sup>127</sup> Gilbert, 164.

<sup>128</sup> Moltmann, *Theology Today* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989), 54, quoted in *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>129</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1190.

<sup>130</sup> This was briefly referred to in part I (9, 14-15). Bauckham describes this eschatological method as "reading history backwards on the principle that the order of knowing reverses the order of being." See "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross," *SJT* 30.4 (1977), 305.

therefore “see their deaths too as part of the process to which this whole mortal creation will be transfigured and be born again to become the kingdom of glory.”<sup>131</sup> The emotional appeal of this conclusion can easily tempt one to accept the conclusion without reviewing the premises. Yet his premises about the history of Israel and promises of God compel him to interpret scripture in a way that does not conform to Evangelical method.<sup>132</sup> His method allows him to interpret scripture as a source of Christian tradition and not with the primacy that is found in Erickson’s account. He is able to provide an account that dismisses passages that speak of other kinds of death in order to focus primarily on the Passion of Christ and its future meaning.

If Moltmann does not uphold the primacy of scripture then what can be said of the remaining criterion? To answer this question what has been said of his understanding of tradition as source of theology will be recalled and considered along with contemporary culture. These two criteria will now be evaluated in comparing and contrasting Moltmann’s account with Erickson’s interpretation of the resurrection of the body.

### *Resurrection of the Body*

Erickson compiles all the direct and indirect statements in the Bible that refer to the resurrection of the body and concludes “the special connection which exists between

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<sup>131</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, 205-06.

<sup>132</sup> Gilbert, 175-77, provides an extended discussion. He points out that Moltmann uses much of the same terminology as Evangelicals when describing Scripture and revelation but in many ways employs different meanings. Moltmann actually reinterprets revelation in a way that allows for imagination and creativity. He suggests that this reinterpretation employs a Kantian scheme (phenomenal-noumenal) to retain a sense of meaningfulness in the biblical text. The late philosopher Paul Ricoeur, claiming to have linked the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, suggested, “a text has semantic autonomy and projects a referential world which is independent of the ‘real’ world. The logical nexus between thought and knowledge is poetic language, functioning to redescribe and translate reality through metaphor.” This idea is behind Moltmann’s method of interpretation. Thus, this leads to a rejection of propositional revelation in favor of new sense of meaningfulness found between the text and reader. See David Allen, “A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority,” *JETS* 43,3 (2000), 501-05.

the resurrection of Christ and that of the believer argues that our resurrection will be bodily as well.”<sup>133</sup> Yet the biblical evidence alone is unclear about what this in fact means. What is the nature of the difference between the natural body and the resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:42-44)? Erickson attempts to infer from the explicit and inexplicit statements in Paul’s letter and the Gospels what this might entail but can only conclude, “there is a utilization of the old body, but a transformation of it in the process.”<sup>134</sup> It is at this point that he opts for the same language employed by Moltmann and describes the resurrection as some sort of “metamorphosis” and “transformation” whereby the identity of lived life is retained.<sup>135</sup> In this case, both are able to draw similar conclusions about what the biblical text says about the resurrection of the body.

One notable distinction however concerns what can be said about the state of the resurrected body. Moltmann suggests the Easter appearances of Jesus in resurrected form indicate that the believer’s resurrected form will bear the marks of our lives, just as Jesus’ body still retained the marks of the cross. One is compelled to ask what that would then mean for those who are seriously injured during the course of their lives. It is this writer’s understanding that Moltmann means to say that just as Jesus’ followers were able to identify him by the marks of the cross, so too will our resurrected form be comprised of the identifying features of our lives. There are, of course, other implications here that would require further explanation. It appears that Moltmann wants to argue that the memory of our lives lived in relationship with Christ will not be lost. Erickson does not touch on this particular idea but does note that Jesus’ resurrected form will not be the

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<sup>133</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1204.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 1205.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 1206.

form that a believer assumes. He directly states, “our resurrection body will be like Jesus’ present body, not like that body he had between his resurrection and ascension.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, that body was transitional and not yet a completed form. He also adds that the characteristics of that body do not coincide with what is said elsewhere of our resurrected bodies.<sup>137</sup> Moltmann does not note this dissimilarity nor does he make the distinction between Jesus’ resurrected form and the form he assumes upon his ascension. The idea that this ascension is another transition that may involve further transfiguration may have been overlooked but it certainly appears to enrich his theology. In Moltmann’s Christological eschatology there is a clear sense that Christ goes ahead of us and to prepare a way, indeed it is about Christ on the way. To say that this process involves a further transformation or transfiguration is not contrary to this line of thought. However, there does appear to be a distinction between what has happened and what will happen. These two theologians are working with different historical presuppositions, so what has been said of Moltmann’s understanding of history (in Part I) must not be overlooked.

There are two points still to be considered regarding the resurrection of the body. The first concerns the use of historical sources of theology upon examining what has been said of the resurrection. Here it seems that Erickson has not led by example. Moltmann appears to engage in more dialogue with other sources of theology (including Judaism and Hinduism) than that of Erickson. However, Ratzinger is perhaps the best example of the three with regard to engaging with past and present sources of theology. Moltmann makes a conscious effort to engage not only with Christian sources but also with sources outside the history of Christian thought. Despite the relatively brief

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 1205.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

consideration of other sources concerning the resurrected body, Erickson is usually strong in this area of his methodology. What is most consistent with regard to Erickson's Evangelical methodology is his interaction with the biblical text. Moltmann's theological method is dissimilar on this point and instead leans another direction by focusing on "the revelation of God found in the matrix of human interaction with history."<sup>138</sup> This broader understanding of revelation allows Moltmann to speak of the resurrection, recapitulated with new ideas, in a more symbolic fashion ("a heuristic device") in order to interact with contemporary culture.<sup>139</sup> This ties back with what was said of his use of scripture and is in clear disagreement with the Evangelical method reflected in Erickson's eschatology.

### *Intermediate State*

Like Jesus' resurrected form, believers and unbelievers assume an "incomplete condition" after they are judged at death according to Erickson.<sup>140</sup> He retains a classical Protestant understanding of the intermediate state, which understands the human being to be in a kind of disembodied condition. He finds this to be in no way absurd but rather quite feasible.<sup>141</sup> In this condition believers will experience "blessedness" and unbelievers will find themselves in "misery, torment, and punishment."<sup>142</sup> Since this condition is considered intermediate, it would follow that the final state is simply more

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<sup>138</sup> Gilbert, 173. Here Gilbert rightly points out the Moltmann understands there to be a dialectical relation between God and history. This is a clear strand of Marxism that has been retained since the time he wrote *Theology of Hope*. In this way Moltmann's method understands history in a way that is very different from Evangelical method. See also *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1189.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

intense, i.e. the blessed experience the full presence of God and the tormented experience Hell.

This understanding differs from Moltmann's on several points:

- 1) Moltmann distinguishes between believer and unbeliever but finds that even in death Christ's love cannot be underestimated. All are capable of being redeemed from their broken state. On this point he invokes the words of Origen, among others.
- 2) Erickson retains the distinction between act and destiny that Moltmann criticizes and finds to be odds with what he understands to be the full understanding of redemptive hope and grace. He argues, "Forgiveness of sins does not mean dispensing with punishment. It means repealing the law of act and destiny."<sup>143</sup> God's grace breaks apart this law and inserts the *Novum* into our temporal existence. Thus, Moltmann finds there to be disconnect between the Christian understanding of grace and ideas concerning the last judgment.
- 3) In this account little is said of Christ and his presence with the dead. Moltmann focuses primarily on the dead being in a time of fellowship with Christ. He also finds that here both believers and unbelievers will be found experiencing this fully redemptive relationship. In this he suggests that there may be a purging effect that occurs through a process of reconciliation but no lasting torment. Indeed, Moltmann moves away from the idea of hell by asserting a universal process of reconciliation. Erickson would find that this view does not seriously consider God's loving judgment and seems to ignore human freedom, thus leaving humans

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<sup>143</sup> COG, 115.

ultimately unaccountable. Part of this can be explained by looking at Moltmann's understanding of sin, which can be roughly defined as a result of human deficiency and brokenness. This can only be described as a universal condition that hardly merits accountability and blame.

### *Summation*

In the last few chapters Moltmann's personal eschatology has been reviewed and examined by comparing and contrasting his work with both Erickson and Ratzinger. In this investigation several points have been drawn out that may support or discredit his viability within Catholic and Evangelical theological communities. When compared with Ratzinger's personal eschatology it was found that Moltmann's historical presuppositions conflicted with Ratzinger's understanding of history. Moltmann argues that there is a dialectical relationship between God and history wherein God's love opposes death and seeks justice for those who are oppressed. In contrast, Ratzinger argues that justice is found through identification with Christ. This identification with his being reveals the source of truth and justice and connects the believer to immortality. There is a focus on the communion between the believer and God in the body of Christ and not on the broader relation between God and history. Therefore, within the conflict Moltmann describes between love and death there is found a dialectical principle that fortifies a broader political theology Ratzinger would oppose.

What was also uncovered in this comparison is Moltmann's move away from anthropocentric language when describing the resurrection of the body. His discussion of the "Spirit of life" appears to be a move away from talk of the "immortality of the soul" which is retained by Ratzinger. The latter draws upon the historical sources (Plato,

Aristotle, and Aquinas) to provide a sufficient anthropology for Christian theology.

Moltmann desires a more inclusive and uniquely Christian perspective by working only from the biblical text to describe the Spirit. Working along this line leads to a description that is noticeably open to all of creation and does not focus solely on persons. Ratzinger's argument for the immortality of the soul has the necessary terminology to provide a detailed and traditional account of what may occur at death, but has he said too much? On the other hand can Moltmann's non-anthropocentric yet paradoxical account support a better contemporary explanation? What can be said of creation if personal eschatology speaks only of the "form" sloughing off the body? Does Ratzinger's position support hope for an otherworldly ideal at the expense of this world?

In chapter 3, Erickson's account of death helped to reveal Moltmann's somewhat unclear use of scripture. For Moltmann, scripture becomes part of the larger Christian tradition and does not remain the primary source of God's self-disclosure. In addition, Erickson like Ratzinger speaks of both believers and unbelievers taking on a disembodied condition upon death. This viewpoint differs from Moltmann's account just as it does with Ratzinger. Yet Ratzinger, unlike Erickson, speaks of believers being with Christ, which partially counters Moltmann's argument that most popular Christian ideas about the intermediate state do not retain Christ as a starting point. It was found that Erickson supports the idea of believer's experiencing "blessedness" but this might not refer to the presence of Christ. Moltmann differs quite radically here by describing *all* the dead as with Christ.<sup>144</sup> Rather than experiencing immediate judgment, as with Erickson, all will

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<sup>144</sup> This is based more upon the developments in his Christology, namely the theology of the cross. He finds that since the Christ died for the reconciliation of the world with God there can only be reconciliation of all in the end. He understands Christ's "descent into hell" to be an existential experience of godforsakenness on the cross and evidence that nothing will be lost in the end. The modern understanding

be in direct relation with Christ. There is no judgment that may lead to ultimate torment; rather only reconciliation, which culminates with the coming Kingdom of God. In summary,

Hope for the resurrection of the dead is therefore only the beginning of a hope for a cosmic new creation of all things and conditions. It is not exhausted by personal eschatology. On the contrary, every personal eschatology that begins with this hope is constrained to press forward in ever widening circles to cosmic eschatology.<sup>145</sup>

In closing, this section dealing with matters of personal eschatology has found several points at which Moltmann's personal eschatology offers alternative explanations to that of Ratzinger and Erickson. The question to be asked here is not whether or not he succeeds but how viable his alternative explanations are within Catholicism and Evangelicalism respectively. Up against Ratzinger, it was found that his understanding of history remains problematic, as well as his understanding of human freedom and sin. There are certain similarities between him and Ratzinger concerning the intermediate state, but they diverge on matters of divine judgment. This divergence is seen again in Erickson's argument for immediate judgment at death. With Erickson, methodological differences (on scripture and history) were also found that will likely recur in Part III and make any question of viability within Evangelical circles problematic. With these concluding thoughts we now turn to matters concerning cosmic eschatology.

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of justice no longer captures this "costliest grace." See *COG*, 252,254,279. See also Müller-Fahrenholz, 213-15.

<sup>145</sup> *COG*, 70.

### PART III

#### COSMIC ESCHATOLOGY

In this third and final part the seldom-developed subject of cosmic eschatology will be critically reviewed. In the first chapter Moltmann's understanding of the cosmic dimensions of eschatology will be analyzed in the same fashion as that of personal eschatology in Part II. The following chapters will then review this examination alongside what has been said thus far of Erickson's Evangelical eschatology and Ratzinger's Roman Catholic eschatology, respectively. In order to avoid overextending the ideas of either Erickson or Ratzinger in this area of eschatology the viewpoints of other Evangelical and Roman Catholic theologians will be introduced in order to provide insight into details not breached by our respective representatives.<sup>146</sup> The intent here, like in the previous chapters, is again to explore critically Moltmann's contributions to this area of eschatology in order to assess the viability of these contributions for contemporary Evangelical and Roman Catholic theology.

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<sup>146</sup> Here I have in mind the work of Evangelical theologian Wayne Grudem and Roman Catholic theologian Peter Phan.

## CHAPTER 1: MOLTMANN'S COSMIC ESCHATOLOGY: FROM TEMPORAL CREATION TO NEW CREATION

The development of a cosmic eschatology is in part the result of Moltmann's conviction that "there can be no eternal life for human beings without the change in the cosmic conditions of life."<sup>147</sup> He accepts no artificial split between person and nature or soul and body. His thought thus moves to renew the connection between cosmology and eschatology in order to account for the change in cosmic conditions and avoid what would otherwise be an inevitable Gnostic account of redemption.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, salvation is for him inconceivable without "a new heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1). If the death and resurrection of Christ redeemed humanity, then this hope for Christ is not a Gnostic hope to depart from nature but a prelude to the expected *Novum*, i.e. new creation of all things. This account of Moltmann's cosmic eschatology will first look at his understanding of the future of creation based on the promise of the Sabbath and Shekinah theology. In order to follow his logic concerning the future conditions, time and space will then be explored in greater detail. Brought together these two aspects comprise his description of "the new heaven and new earth."

### *Between Sabbath and Shekinah*

The hope for the future of creation must not be hope for a restoration of what was in the beginning. It is incorrect, according to Moltmann, to understand creation 'in the beginning' to have been perfect and complete. He makes a distinction here between the *primal* creation of the beginning and the *new* creation of the future. A restoration of this primal creation, based on the idea that it was spoiled by sin and will be restored by grace,

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<sup>147</sup> COG, 260.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

would understand eschatology to be about a return to the beginning. This logic leads to a cyclical account of the Christian drama of redemption, where “the restoration of the original creation would have to be followed by the next fall, and by the next redemption – the return to the same without end.”<sup>149</sup> In order to avoid this circular logic and retain the uniqueness of a Christian cosmology the finality of the end must be preserved and the liberating effects therein must hold an “added value” that prevents the idea of another Fall.<sup>150</sup> Here he recalls Paul’s words about the restorative power of grace over sin in support of the idea of an individual and cosmic liberation from the very possibility of sinning and death.

The Christian hope for this liberation is then focused not on the return to the old but the new creation. What can be learned from the beginning, viewed in light of the future, is that (according to Jewish tradition) it was fitting for the Creator but not necessarily complete.<sup>151</sup> In this way creation it is still open to the future and the effects change, if time is understood as having begun with creation. The only evidence in the beginning of what will be is found in the Sabbath, which is sanctified and is evidence in the primal creation of its future glory.<sup>152</sup> This future is the final consummation of the primal creation when the temporal conditions will undergo the transition to eternity. At this point Moltmann explains that the old is not lost in the transformation but is presupposed in the new creation. The emphasis is on the renewal of all things and therefore understood to be the old creation brought into completed form. Here we return

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<sup>149</sup> *COG*, 263.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 264. “If we call the end ‘the completion’ of creation, then in this light creation at the beginning appears as ‘incomplete,’ that is to say it is a creation that has only begun.”

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

to the idea that nothing is lost in the event. In the renewal Moltmann wishes to link together the Greek category of *anamnesis* (a remembering or recollection of a past life) with the eschatological category of *Novum* in order to show how all that has been since the beginning can be brought together in the end.<sup>153</sup> Whether or not this idea holds must be explored further but what can be said at this point is that the promise for this consummation is found in the Sabbath.

The Sabbath links the beginning with the end and posits the temporal presence of God in his creation. The Sabbath as a time of remembrance, restoration, and hope is part of the first creation or “first heaven and first earth” and tells us of the end of God’s creative activity and rest. Moltmann links this time of rest with Shekinah theology to describe the promise of the end transition to eternal creation. The Sabbath speaks of a time of God’s rest but the Shekinah tells of his spatial desire to dwell in his creation. In other words, Shekinah theology tells of a history of God dwelling in the midst of his people, in historical spaces. “Creation begins with time and is completed in space” according to Moltmann.<sup>154</sup> The history of the Shekinah in the OT speaks of God’s presence in various places (such as the Ark and in Zion) and also shows that this presence shifts to time after the destruction of the temple (586 BCE). It is here that he links the time of the Sabbath with the future Shekinah.

In this way the End-time Shekinah can be understood as the moment when time is itself fulfilled in the universal indwelling of creation. Moreover, if the language of the incarnation is understood in the framework developed in the OT, the time when the eternal dwelt among us as Jesus can be said to point ahead to the risen Christ, as the

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 266.

anticipation of God's Spirit in the new creation.<sup>155</sup> In this description of the time of the Sabbath and the end Shekinah there are two ideas that must be explored in greater detail: 1) the consummation of the earth; 2) the end of time and space. Exploring these two ideas separately will help to bring together the bigger picture that Moltmann describes as "the new heaven and new earth."

### *The Consummation of the Earth*

Moltmann draws upon the ideas of Johann Beck to describe the consummation of the earth. Beck understood the consummation to be the establishment of a new organism in which all conditions of sin and death are eliminated without the destruction of creation itself.<sup>156</sup> This new condition is the completed state of the beginning and not a return to what was originally created. The earth is united with heaven and becomes part of a universe filled with the "divine presence."<sup>157</sup> In order to describe this unification both Moltmann and Beck draw upon the Christological idea of mutual *perichoresis*.<sup>158</sup> Accordingly, "the new heaven and new earth" essentially become one whole. The new earth is a heaven in so far as it is interpenetrated with divine spirit. This does not lead to a complete unification, but rather mutual interpenetration that maintains and preserves diversity, similar to what is said of the nature of the Trinity.

This explanation also connects the expectation of the world to come with the resurrection of the dead by describing the new earth as a "world in which the raised

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 277; J.T. Beck, *Die Vollendung des Reiches Gottes: Separatabdruck aus der Christlichen Glaubenslehre* (Gütersloh, Westphalia: 1887), 95-96.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 278.

live.”<sup>159</sup> Eternal life fully connects with temporal life, bringing the very conditions of temporality to completion. In addition, Moltmann explains that we should expect this to occur not from above but rather from within the earth. By this he means to suggest that the idea of a heaven and earth brought together in the future implies that there “is a hidden presence of Christ in the earth.”<sup>160</sup> He draws this idea from the passages of Isaiah that speak of the earth bearing the life of salvation.<sup>161</sup> There is room for this within his messianic theology but the small number of passages that employ this theme may be overstretched to support his argument. There is no consideration of evidence to the contrary. One gets the impression from this that Christ is imminent and present now and at the consummation, but at the same time Moltmann is unclear about Christ’s role in the latter event. Yet, with this idea he is able to conclude, “This earth, with its world of the living, is the real and sensorily experienceable promise of the new earth, as truly as this earthly, mortal life here is an experienceable promise of the life that is eternal, immortal. If the divine Redeemer is himself present in this earth in hidden form, then the earth becomes the bearer or vehicle of his and our future.”<sup>162</sup>

### *The End of Time and Space*

Moltmann’s understanding of the end of time is based on Paul’s description in 1 Cor. 15:52, which introduces the idea of an eschatological moment. He describes this moment as the last day in time when “all the dead will be raised at once” in “the presence

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>161</sup> See Isaiah 45:8 and 53:2.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

of eternity to all times.”<sup>163</sup> In this eschatological moment he sees nothing less than “the exit from time into eternity.”<sup>164</sup> This moment is to be understood as the converse of what occurred in the beginning. He explains this in terms of God’s self-restriction and derestriction. Primal creation was the result of God’s self-restriction and creativity. In this act God limited his omnipresence in order to create space for creation. Conversely, the eschatological moment will be an act of derestriction and redemption whereby God’s omnipresence will consume creation.<sup>165</sup> This will mark the end of time and beginning of eternity. Moltmann refers to this transition as time’s fulfillment or *aeonic* time in order to indicate that entry into eternity consists of a “reversion” of time.<sup>166</sup>

As was suggested above this transition also marks the end of space. Since, according to Moltmann, the earth as we know it is a living space provided by a withdrawal of God’s omnipresence, the derestriction would equal a loss of that space once provided. What we experience now is what Moltmann refers to as the hiddenness of God or the “veiling of his glory.”<sup>167</sup> The consummation is when his hiddenness will be no more and his glory revealed. In order to understand how this occurs without the destruction of creation, Moltmann again turns to Shekinah theology. In it a theory of contraction is used to explain how God’s presence can be in an earthly place such as a sanctuary as is described in the Hebrew Bible. It appears that according to this theology

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. This idea comes from the Lurian Kabbalah and is referred to as *zimsum* (see pg. 296). This was explored in greater detail in GC. Here Moltmann presupposes what was said in GC and does not explain it at any length.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 294-295. “In the aeonic cycles of time, creaturely life unremittingly regenerates itself for the omnipresent source of life, from God.”

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 296.

the Shekinah can dwell within a particular place and withdraw itself without in any way being separated from God in heaven. He finds that this theology resembles, in terms of content, elements of the doctrine of the Trinity and the *Kenosis* described in Phil.2:5-11.<sup>168</sup> Tracing this history of the Shekinah throughout the Hebrew Bible and the NT he finds that the revelations of the end of time are linked with the final return of the Shekinah.

This is to say that the end glory of the Kingdom of God is nothing less than the full and unrestricted presence of God. Israel's hope for the final indwelling of Shekinah is "the foundation of the Christian hope for the new heaven and the new earth."<sup>169</sup> At this point he expands on his previous explanation of God's self-restriction to explain or reiterate, "creation is destined to be the dwelling space for God. The history of God's indwellings in people and temple, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, point forward to their completion in the universal indwelling of God's glory and its manifestation."<sup>170</sup> Just as the Trinity is explained in terms of transcendence and immanence, the eschatological end-time is described as a moment when creation experiences not only the transcendence but also the immanence of the Creator. The space provided for creation becomes once again the living space of God without the dissolution of either. But if God will dwell among the earth we should consider this to be a cosmic Shekinah, since this appears to be the unmediated presence that enters into all things. Moltmann describes this cosmic indwelling in terms of holiness and glory. Just as the Sabbath was considered hallowed

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

and sanctified so too will all that is redeemed upon God's eschatological indwelling. In other words, "The presence of the divine life becomes the inexhaustible source of creaturely life, which thereby becomes the life that is eternal."<sup>171</sup> This is the goal of all creation and the fulfillment of both time and space in the consummation of the world.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 319.

## CHAPTER 2: RATZINGER ON THE FINAL STATES AND CRITIQUE

The first difficulty that arises when considering Moltmann's cosmic eschatology alongside the pertinent details of Ratzinger's eschatology is the fact that much of "the details are beyond conceiving."<sup>172</sup> What Moltmann's is willing to say toward this end appears to go far beyond what Ratzinger would suggest. The latter directly states that "the new world cannot be imagined" and follows what can be said based on biblical interpretation and scientific data to a reasonable end.<sup>173</sup> It can be said here that Moltmann's theological imagination and virtue of curiosity allow him to operate along different presuppositions. But this does not end the comparative analysis and critique concerning the cosmic dimensions of eschatology. Despite this obvious difference, the important question to be asked of these two theologians is, "What is the content of the Christian expectation concerning the consummation and new world?" Indeed, no one is able to say with any certainty what all will occur in that end-time, but what is the contemporary content of Christian hope regarding heaven and earth? In order to address these questions in this chapter, while continuing to adumbrate the viability of Moltmann's contributions, the following critique will focus specifically on the details concerning heaven and earth.<sup>174</sup>

### *Heaven*

As was explained in the previous chapter, Moltmann finds a definitive connection between heaven and earth in the consummation. By this I do not mean the heaven in

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<sup>172</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 192.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>174</sup> This decision is not made to exclude what is said of Hell as a possibility after death. Hell is not, however, considered to be a place and therefore is not a topic of cosmic eschatology. It is a matter of personal eschatology.

“new heaven and new earth” (Rev.21:1) or the spatial features of creation that will be considered below, but the place and condition of eternal life. If heaven is linked to the presence of God then God’s indwelling in the consummation brings heaven to earth. This explanation brings together aspects of the future that Ratzinger would rather explain separately. Part of this can be explained by the fact that Ratzinger’s vision of eschatology is thoroughly personal and relational. Thus, heaven is explained christologically as a place one enters into “when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ.”<sup>175</sup> It is an ontological location of our existence based on our union with Christ. What is traditionally said of heaven according to biblical revelation can be linked back to this being with Christ. Indeed, “Christology is the criterion of the hermeneutics of eschatological statements” for both Moltmann and Ratzinger; however, Ratzinger would add “eschatology is anthropology conjugated in the future sense in Christological terms.”<sup>176</sup> What one finds in this perspective is that one’s union with Christ is a gradual ascension to a heavenly realm. Thus, this ascension presumes a vertical orientation to an ethereal place.

Moltmann appears to move away from this tendency and once again away from a traditional anthropological focus. He speaks instead of the cosmic Christ and the cosmic promise of liberation and renewal. This is a critical response to an anthropological Christology that focuses on the salvation of the soul and consequently leads to a disregard

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 234. Ratzinger states, “Heaven, in the period of the postponement of the definitive banquet, in the absence of final perfection, means being drawn into the fullness of divine joy, a joy which infinitely fulfils and supports and which, incapable as it is of being lost, is in its pure fullness ultimate fulfillment.” See Ibid., 189.

<sup>176</sup> Peter Phan, “Roman Catholic Theology” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222.

or pure instrumental valuation of nature.<sup>177</sup> Accordingly, faith in Christ is a personal matter but should be christocentric and not anthropocentric.<sup>178</sup> The former may include the broader dimensions of the doctrine of redemption but this has not been the case with the latter tendency. In an effort to explore the implications of an open christocentric view Moltmann introduces the possibility that Christ is within nature rather than outside of nature.<sup>179</sup> This is a panentheistic alternative that would not be a viable option for Catholic dogma but may perhaps challenge contemporary Roman Catholic theologians to consider the broader dimensions of Christology.<sup>180</sup> Can being with Christ be extended to non-human, non-rational creation? This possibility would be inconceivable according to traditional Thomistic hierarchy of being.

With Ratzinger, the anthropological dimension is persistent throughout and the Thomistic definition of the soul allows for a description of heaven that is apart from creation.<sup>181</sup> The soul enters into a heavenly place through union with Christ and when the Lord returns for the final consummation he enters from outside creation.<sup>182</sup> This prompts more questions concerning Moltmann's account of heaven and the consummation. If the Lord does not enter from outside of creation, then how is the consummation new or

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<sup>177</sup> *WJC*, 274.

<sup>178</sup> *WJC*, 276.

<sup>179</sup> This helps to explain the question asked in Part II, chapter 2 about how the body can return to creation upon death and yet be with Christ.

<sup>180</sup> What can be said of nature being with Christ? The messianic content of the Hebrew Bible appears to suggest a kind of relationship between nature and the coming Messiah. Is this a significant connection that ought to be explored further in light of the modern ecological crisis?

<sup>181</sup> By creation I mean the material and spatial composition of the universe. By nature I mean "the present condition of the distorted creation, which is replete with beautiful things but also with terrible disasters." See Moltmann, "The Resurrection of Christ and the New Earth" *Communio Viatorum* 49,3 (2007), 142.

<sup>182</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 192.

qualitatively different from temporal progress? One could argue that the shift in perspective away from focusing on the future of human being has possibly made the nature of heaven superfluous and inflated the future consummation. Heaven is not so much the place of our final rest as it is located in God's rest and cosmic Shekinah.<sup>183</sup> Prior to that event, intermediate time is spent with Christ anticipating the coming Kingdom of God established in the consummation of the earth. One suspects that this is a deliberate step away from the personal focus on reaching heaven in order to suggest that humans do not rest till all of creation rests in union with God. Thus, eternal life is not limited to the final destiny of humanity. Heaven as relatedness to Christ would then consist of a broader place and broader communion.

### *Earth*

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) issued a statement concerning the end-time that described the presence of the kingdom on earth as "mysteriously present."<sup>184</sup> This vision moves away from the idea that the kingdom is otherworldly and instead suggests a hidden kingdom yet to be disclosed. Similarly, Ratzinger speaks of the kingdom returning to perfect the earth, as part of the final organism, completing the "innermost drift of cosmic being," envisioning the earth becoming qualitatively different matter. One detects that the kingdom's mysterious presence would certainly not be found in distorted matter. Not until that corrupt form is removed can that which is holy be

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<sup>183</sup> Moltmann, "New Earth," 148-49. "Human Beings have come from earth and belong to earth and do so both in time and eternity. If heavens open for them, it is heaven on earth."

<sup>184</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 39 in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1975) quoted in Phan, "Eschatology and Ecology: The Environment in the End-Times" *Dialogue & Alliance* 9,2 (1995), 110.

found. According to Ratzinger there is no presently conceivable connection between matter and spirit:

If the cosmos is history and if matter represents a moment in the history of the spirit, then there is no such thing as an eternal, neutral combination of matter and spirit; rather there is a final “complexity” in which the world finds its omega and unity. In that case there is a final connection between matter and spirit in which the destiny of man and of the world is consummated, even if it is impossible for us today to define the nature of this connection.<sup>185</sup>

On the one hand this definition seems to fortify Moltmann’s vision of consummation in terms of perfecting creation; on the other hand it differs categorically with Moltmann’s panentheistic concepts and understanding of history.<sup>186</sup> With Ratzinger there is still a sense in which the earth will remain the home of the human community and will also be a part of the final consummation. Moltmann does not seem to be content with this vision as it continues to imply that as *home* the earth was created for humanity. Thus, his conviction and theological imagination press forward into details about the end-time that some may consider “fanciful ruminations.”<sup>187</sup> But it would be unwise to disregard the details without considering whether within the Roman Catholic framework one can speak of God’s love for the whole creation if all of nature will be perfected in the end?<sup>188</sup> Indeed, the consummation seems to bring about a “final complexity” and not the disposal of the earth.

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<sup>185</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2004), 358.

<sup>186</sup> See Müller-Fahrenholz, 137-142.

<sup>187</sup> Phan, “Eschatology and Ecology,” 112. See also Müller-Fahrenholz, 218.

<sup>188</sup> Phan, *101 Questions on Death and Eternal Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1997), 228. Phan suggests that the divine-human communion is inclusive of the whole material universe and seems to suggest that more can be said about this broader community.

In conclusion a notable feature of this comparison is the relative absence of heaven in Moltmann's cosmic eschatology. Both Ratzinger and Moltmann consider heaven to be a place in God's presence but one has the sense that Moltmann finds it to be a continuation of the relationship with Christ at one's death that opens up to all creation with God's cosmic Shekinah and consummation of the earth. His so-called Christian-Marxist vision of hope in TH is retained within this messianic eschatology, which asserts that all creation is oriented toward hope, a "system open to the future."<sup>189</sup> In that consummation the earth will be restored or completed according to Moltmann, but Ratzinger refers to that as perfecting rather than fulfillment. With the latter there is no clear connection between the resurrection of the body and the consummation of the earth. Must these remain two separate events? The solid connection within nature between the resurrection of the body and the consummation of the earth in Moltmann's eschatology seems to present a viable contribution for contemporary Roman Catholic eschatology. Yet within the carefully articulated dogmatics of the Roman Catholic Church this possible connection in our future hope may be exegetically unviable.

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<sup>189</sup> A.J. Conyers, "The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28, 2 (2001), 153.

### CHAPTER 3: ERICKSON ON THE FINAL STATES AND CRITIQUE

In this last chapter Erickson's eschatology will once again be compared with what has been said of Moltmann's cosmic eschatology. Similar to Ratzinger, we will look specifically at what is said of heaven and earth during the end-time. A brief account of Erickson's viewpoints will help to elucidate Moltmann's ideas and enable us to venture into the similarities or dissimilarities between them. With this particular horizon of Moltmann's eschatology it will also be necessary to consult another Evangelical source on details unexplored by Erickson. This will in turn provide further insight into the overall viability of his contributions in this area. In closing, these details will be summarized for concluding thoughts regarding Moltmann's personal and cosmic eschatology.

#### *Heaven*

In line with what we have previously detected, Erickson's theological conclusions regarding heaven are based primarily upon scripture. Reviewing the text he finds that heaven can be understood as synonym for God or the abode of God. From this he is able to conclude that heaven is essentially the presence of God.<sup>190</sup> Moltmann, as we have shown, shares this conclusion along with some of the other basic features one can expect according to scripture. Both find that it is a place full of God's glory, absent of evil, and sharing in his rest. However, Erickson mentions the latter feature without mention of the Sabbath or God's desire to rest in the beginning. Instead, he describes heaven in terms that pertain almost exclusively to matters of personal eschatology. It is said at the outset that a description of heaven is of cosmic importance but much of the content therein

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<sup>190</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1234-1235; *Christian Doctrine*, 396.

returns to what the believer or unbeliever should expect. It appears that what he means by cosmic is synonymous with collective eschatology.

Moltmann does not spend much time exploring the content of heaven, as does Erickson. The latter characterizes heaven as a place and state (to be distinguished below) of perfected knowledge, retained identity, service, and worship.<sup>191</sup> Within the cosmic scope that Moltmann has in mind, this content appears to be simply implied. If God brings creation into completed form and removes all temporal evils by revealing his full presence then one can assume that those in his presence (heaven) will participate in the ways Erickson describes. But this then leads to the second point regarding heaven according to Erickson.

Heaven is considered to be in another realm or dimension.<sup>192</sup> More particularly, he finds that it should be understood to be primarily a state, or one might say condition, entered into more than a place one will go. Both ideas are conveyed in scripture but he suggests that the former is a safer conclusion since we are speaking of “a condition of blessedness.”<sup>193</sup> Wayne Grudem, on the other hand, would emphasize the latter by noting that the narrative of Jesus’ ascension to heaven suggests that it is indeed a place.<sup>194</sup> While the characteristics of heaven may emphasize a particular condition, the localization of heaven somewhere in the universe is not inconceivable. This seems to parallel Moltmann’s emphasis on God’s hiddenness and current undisclosed presence in the space-time universe. The idea that there is “a localization of heaven in the space-time

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<sup>191</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, 397,399.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Grudem and Jeff Purswell, *Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 466.

universe” may amend the notion that heaven is somewhere above, based on a literal understanding of people ascending to it in scripture. But what Grudem seems to be stressing is that God dwells in a place that we cannot yet sense or perceive.<sup>195</sup> If this is so, it would seem that this localization is not so much above as it is undisclosed. Indeed as Paul himself wrote, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Do these conclusions coincide or contradict Moltmann’s conceptions of heaven? From what has been said thus far it appears that in some sense the Evangelical perspective coincides with some slight modifications. If heaven were understood as more of a condition then it would seem to enhance the separation of the soul from the body. One’s soul passes into another state of being and is no longer connected with the temporal bodily condition. This is an acceptable process within Erickson’s theology but appears to dismiss the Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on our bodily state that Moltmann has attempted to recover in his personal eschatology. This is perhaps an area for further exploration. If the Evangelical position on heaven places greater emphasis on heaven as a place, there is still the Western tendency to consider it above us. However, within the scope of cosmic eschatology this may be a more profitable emphasis alongside Moltmann’s contributions. For him, heaven is the presence of God brought to earth; prior to this event it seems to be a place unrevealed in God. It is only featured at the consummation when its location is on earth. Is this to say that the coming God brings heaven to earth and only then heaven will be a place? Prior to this consummation it is either an undisclosed hidden location or indeed a state of being. Bringing together heaven

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 467.

and earth seems to commit Moltmann to viewing heaven as a place but this seems to be a viable position according to Grudem. If this is so then what can be said of the earth during the consummation?

### *Earth*

Much of what Erickson says of the earth is found in his doctrine of creation and humanity. The emphasis on the personal dimensions of eschatology appears to leave little room for discussion on the cosmic conditions during the end-time, whereas Moltmann's handling of personal eschatology presses forward into broader dimensions to not exclude the rest of creation from discussions of the future. This is not to say that Erickson overlooks questions about the new earth; he discusses the purposes of the earth in God's plan elsewhere,<sup>196</sup> but only to point out that what is said in the text infers that the renewal of the earth is an incidental feature of the consummation. In turn, Moltmann's focus on the new earth may have been overemphasized and possibly too theologically speculative. Erickson does not introduce aspects of messianic Judaism as does Moltmann, so it could be argued that the relationship between NT eschatology and the messianic expectations of the Hebrew Bible is a relevant feature of Christian cosmic eschatology.

However, some have argued that the theories utilized by Moltmann in the development of his cosmic eschatology are highly questionable.<sup>197</sup> In order to explore details otherwise considered unknowable he is willing to piece together eschatological statements and theories from the prophets and apocryphal literature to creatively explore the broader horizons of eschatological expectation. Thus, one must wonder what method is being employed to connect these ideas with NT eschatology.

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<sup>196</sup> *Christian Theology*, 399, 402.

<sup>197</sup> Conyers, "The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology," 149-151.

Perhaps the most apparent differential between Erickson and Moltmann concerns the purpose for the renewal of the earth. The latter links hope and creation together in such a way that the earth, as with the rest of creation, is “subject to change, and a system open to the future, not a closed system complete in itself.”<sup>198</sup> Erickson would agree that creation is open to the renewal implicit in the consummation, and there also is a connection between the believer’s glorification and this process, but he would assert that this is in order to provide a perfected environment for glorified humanity and the New Jerusalem.<sup>199</sup> He would be critical of the prominent place given to the created order in Moltmann’s evaluation and the removal of hierarchy, which is a notable feature in the Epistles and Revelations. Moltmann’s use of *perichoresis* leads him to presume that all of creation is to participate in God’s future indwelling and that all of creation will be vindicated and involved in what will be the New Jerusalem. Once again, it is notable that Moltmann’s conversational relationship with the biblical text differs significantly with Erickson’s commitment to the dictation of the text.

On this note, Wayne Grudem appears to have granted more attention to the topic of a new creation. Without exploring the more speculative features, he is able to note that “(God) will perfect the entire creation and bring it into harmony with the purposes for which he originally created it.”<sup>200</sup> Grudem appears to stick with the idea of perfecting creation rather than describing it as a process of completion or of making it whole. Yet this statement also supports the idea that creation is restored to its past condition rather than transformed into a perfected whole. Perhaps what makes it new is the unity of

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<sup>198</sup> *GC*, 264..

<sup>199</sup> *Christian Theology*, 1012-13.

<sup>200</sup> Grudem, 469.

heaven and earth. The hope for the future is lessened by the idea that the consummation involves a return to what was originally “very good” (Gen. 1:2). Or, in the alternative could this be evidence of God’s promise in the original creation pointing ahead to what will be fulfilled in the future, when the renewed earth will be “perfected by the glory of God?”<sup>201</sup> Grudem does not specify what he means by this, but instead sticks to a rather literal reading of the text when he notes, “The physical creation will be renewed in a significant way.”<sup>202</sup> Thus, the most apparent discrepancy here returns to Moltmann’s ambiguous use of biblical phrasing and theological language combined with the theory of contraction to detail God’s indwelling of creation.<sup>203</sup> Clarification is needed in order to combine in any significant way his ideas concerning the earth with those of Erickson or Grudem.

### *Summation*

In this assessment of the cosmic dimensions of Moltmann’s eschatology it has been shown that Christian hope for future glory is revealed in promise and fulfillment. The promise is found in the beginning Sabbath, which is understood to be a time, instilled in the primal creation that looks ahead to God’s future rest. This event is coupled with the Shekinah theology in order to reveal God’s desire to dwell fully in his creation. God’s rest in the end-time will be a full indwelling of the space restricted for creation. This derestriction will fulfill both time and space in the final consummation in order to complete the first heaven and earth. Moltmann describes this consummation by way of

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>203</sup> This has also been noted by Stephen Williams, see “Reviews,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, 3 (November 2000), 348.

*perichoresis*. The new earth will be heaven because it will be completely interpenetrated with divine spirit and will complete all temporal conditions. Thus, God's kingdom is found in the full revelation of his presence to all creation. The end of time and space is nothing less than this unveiling of glory that shifts the conditions of temporality or transience to eternity and permanence.

When compared to Ratzinger's eschatology I have noted that Moltmann introduces the idea that being with Christ connects that which is divine with nature. Just as the Messiah was described as the true vine (John 15:1) so too must Christians be willing to explore the ways in which Christ is within nature itself. While this imaginative alternative may not be methodologically viable (as this writer would maintain) it does challenge Roman Catholic theologians to consider the broader non-anthropocentric dimensions of Christology. This however, may be a weak challenge insofar as Moltmann's methodology lacks descriptive clarity notwithstanding his theologically creativity. Perhaps what can best be said with respect to his efforts to expand our conception of heaven, as being with Christ by introducing nature, is that he reminds us that both the resurrection of the body and salvation are universal and cosmic in scope.

This emphasis on nature is also noteworthy when compared to Evangelical eschatology, since Erickson shows us that heaven is described as both a state of being and a place. His interpretation focuses primarily on heaven as a state (as does Ratzinger) but this is not necessarily a shared understanding. We found that other Evangelical theologians such as Wayne Grudem emphasize the spatial nature of heaven and appears to meliorate Moltmann's somewhat underdeveloped understanding of said place. Indeed, this comparison showed us that Moltmann's recovery of the Jewish emphasis on the body

and connection between person and nature does have implications when considering the final consummation. If it can be said that the earth as we know it will not be annihilated and that the dead will be raised in the end, then we must further consider the intrinsic value of nature.

However, despite his compelling treatment of cosmic eschatology, methodological questions still persist. Erickson's commitment to the biblical witness reveals Moltmann's comparatively loose and selective treatment of biblical evidence. His broad exploration of sources leads him to introduce and assert ideas in his theology that seem unfounded and disconnected from topics of eschatology altogether. This feature, coupled with the ambiguity of his theological language noted in Part I, raises relevant criticism and puts in question his theological method. If Moltmann's contributions to this area can provide more sustained attention toward the reconciliation and consummation of nature in contemporary Evangelical eschatology, then a clear account of his methodology must be pursued in order to clarify ideas that are otherwise unfounded.

#### PART 4: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

In a study of the development of early Christian eschatological thought, Brian Daley, S.J. concluded, “One thing is clear from the beginning of Christian literature: hope for the future is an inseparable, integral dimension of Christian faith, and the implied condition of possibility for responsible Christian action in the world.”<sup>204</sup> If this is so, then this essay has been an attempt to assess and integrate one contemporary vision with other visions of this common eschatological hope. This has been done in order to promote a united awareness of the “implied condition of possibility” and desire, not only for theoretical understanding, but responsible praxis. Therefore, in closing it is now possible to share concluding remarks regarding the viable aspects of Moltmann’s personal and cosmic eschatology for Evangelical and Roman Catholic eschatology, respectively.

One of the first issues noted upon review of Moltmann’s personal eschatology stems from his early work in TH. There he sought to develop a robust Christian account of history based on Hebrew thought which views reality in terms of promise and fulfillment. This observation, derived from Ernst Bloch’s study of Jewish history and philosophy, finds there to be a “dialectical interplay between God and history” that provides Christian theology with a way to speak of history eschatologically and God historically.<sup>205</sup> This starting point, which assumes a recovery of a concrete history of promise in the Hebrew tradition, would not coincide or find agreement with Ratzinger’s eschatology due to its implied link between hope and political action. Ratzinger’s critical stance toward Moltmann’s doctrine of hope is largely based on the latter’s sympathetic

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<sup>204</sup> *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2003), 217.

<sup>205</sup> Otto, 375.

relationship with Marxist philosophy and liberation theology. This would be a case of misattribution (claiming an idea to be false by association), if not for the fact that Ratzinger's ultimate concern lies in his belief that the Kingdom of God "is not itself a political process."<sup>206</sup> His fear seems to be that Moltmann's eschatology would draw political conclusions that stem from an "all-embracing expectation" found in Jewish and Christian thought.<sup>207</sup> However, what Ratzinger's critique fails to show is that this is indeed the case, and therefore remains inconclusive. Perhaps here attention can be directed at Moltmann's kingdom eschatology, not closely examined in this essay, in light of Ratzinger's critique in order to examine the content related to "this worldly activity."<sup>208</sup>

The dialectical relationship between God and history discussed above also raises issues in relation to Evangelical eschatology and method. One significant link between Moltmann's TH and COG is the way in which he develops his eschatology out of God's promise. Here his dialectical method also incorporates a Christological dialectic of cross and resurrection, which recalls Moltmann's theory of the relationship between God's love and death.<sup>209</sup> Taken together, Moltmann thinks in terms of God's promises rather than through a doctrine of humanity. It should be clear at this point that this position deviates from both Evangelical and Catholic eschatology. While it can be observed that his eschatology draws from both sources at various points in both personal and cosmic

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<sup>206</sup> *Eschatology*, 58.

<sup>207</sup> *Hope and History*, 372.

<sup>208</sup> Here Stephen Williams provides a good starting point from an Evangelical viewpoint by examining the last thirty years of discussion surrounding Moltmann's theology of hope. See "Thirty Years of Hope: A Generation of Writing on Eschatology," *Eschatology in Bible & Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (Madison, WI: Intra-varsity, 1997), 247-252.

<sup>209</sup> See pages 24-25 of this study.

dimensions, his focus on God's promises seems to go beyond "God's self-disclosure in the Bible."<sup>210</sup> The correlations of the two dialectical relationships seem to allow for theological reflection on "God found in the matrix of human interaction with history."<sup>211</sup> With respect to Evangelical method, the primacy of scripture would thus be subsumed by the larger scope of Christian theological tradition. If this is correct, then there is definite discontinuity with Evangelical method with respect to history and scripture. In light of this conclusion a study should be directed at Moltmann's interpretative method and focus particularly on the eschatological statements derived from his understanding of history and revelation.

In addition to these conclusions other contextual matters should be noted. Within personal eschatology it was found that Moltmann views all the dead as with Christ in an interim period of reconciliation. While differing from the traditional idea of purgatory, he is willing to suggest that this time (not necessarily temporal in nature) may involve pain, in the sense that healing is not without some degree of pain. Two points may be observed here. For one, his vision does not include what is traditionally considered immediate judgment. While not completely ignoring passages that speak of judgment and Christ as judge, he finds that the impending judgment and separation of believers and unbelievers at death does not properly account for the reconciling powers of God's love. Secondly, Moltmann finds this to be a universal process of reconciliation (i.e. apokatastasis) inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ. However, at this point Moltmann makes little of human freedom by making sin "more or less inevitable" and salvation too becomes

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<sup>210</sup> With respect to Evangelical method this is detailed by Gilbert, 173-74.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

guaranteed as it is “absorbed into the process of making the world.”<sup>212</sup> Thus, its extent applies not only to all of humanity but to all of creation as well.

Moreover, we have found that Moltmann’s non-anthropocentric approach to personal eschatology offers a much more holistic account that attempts to maintain a connection between persons and nature. Unlike Erickson and Ratzinger, he finds that death does not separate the soul from the body, but reunites with the rest of the creation, which in an intratrinitarian manner is with Christ. Thus, in cosmic eschatology we find that what began on the cross is resolved in “the full restoration of God’s omnipresence, and hence for the regeneration that leads to his complete vindication.”<sup>213</sup> In this event the dead are resurrected not for final judgment but to take on a completed form in the Kingdom of God. This account of the restoration of all things is the fulfillment of God’s promise of a “new heaven and new earth.” Here we find that a heaven is not fully described but appears to refer to the space created for those who are with Christ. Heaven is hardly distinguishable from the Kingdom of God entering into creation at God’s derestriction. Prior to this end-time one may wonder where a heaven is to be found or if it only appears at the end.<sup>214</sup> In this account, is it even necessary if there is in fact no hell to speak of or nothing that cannot be reconciled in the end?

What is most prominent at this point is his recovery of the doctrine of deification. As with the incarnation, the purpose of deification is “the transformation of all of creation

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<sup>212</sup> Farrow, 437.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> When Heaven is discussed it is very much tied up with an emphasis on the transformation of “transitory life” into eternal life. Heaven is revealed on this earth, which thus would mean that it is not revealed until the end of our transitory condition on earth. See Moltmann, “New Earth,” 148-49; *COG*, 308-11.

by the divine energies which create a perichoresis or interpenetration between God and the universe.”<sup>215</sup> In this process his Christian panentheism comes to the fore in the expectation that the cosmos will become part of God. This controversial position would not be openly embraced by either of the said traditions considered in this essay, although one can find panentheists on both sides, but his use of concept of *perichoresis* to explore God’s relationship with creation ought to be considered further. It would be a mistake to dismiss or reject his contributions overall in light of the controversial ideas such as deification, panentheism, process thought, and universal salvation.

Throughout this essay several dissimilarities have been highlighted, but not to support a dismissal of his contributions to personal and cosmic eschatology; rather, the intent has been to clarify and highlight points where his interpretation draws differing conclusions in order to direct attention to matters for further reflection (noted above). Beyond these points is what may now be considered the viable aspects of his personal and cosmic eschatology. More particularly, those facets of his eschatology considered in this study, which are worthy of further consideration in Evangelical and Catholic eschatology, respectively.

For one, he presents to both Catholics and Evangelicals a doctrine of community that is not dissolved in death. Believers who die in fellowship with Christ remain together with the living through the power of God’s promise.<sup>216</sup> And granting that his view of Christ’s resurrection diverges from an Evangelical and Catholic view, his theological method is a resurrection-centered method that affirms that the resurrection is a promise of

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<sup>215</sup> Olson, “Deification in Contemporary Theology” *Theology Today*, 64, 2 (2007), 195.

<sup>216</sup> COG, 447; Jeremy Wynne, “Serving the Coming God: The Insights of Jürgen Moltmann’s eschatology for Contemporary theology of Mission” *Missiology* 35, 4 (2007), 447.

what is to come.<sup>217</sup> He has drawn attention to the *eschaton* in God's promise, as that which provides hope, and unites the past and present in light of the Kingdom to come, the renewal of all things.<sup>218</sup> With this he has developed a cosmic eschatology and pressed for a view of "creation as an open system," working with the immanence of God as Spirit.<sup>219</sup> While there remain details about the working of the Spirit, and the distinctions made between the Holy Spirit, Spirit of life, and the creative immanent Spirit that ought to be clarified, he has forged a path for future reflection on the cosmic dimensions of eschatology and the fate of the earth therein.

Within those cosmic dimensions, and elsewhere, Moltmann has also sought to explore the relationship between the *eschaton* and ecology. As noted in the previous chapter, he solicited dialogue with the scientific community in order to explore issues of time and space and secure connections between human beings and nature, in a way that integrates fresh ideas based on theological concern while not permitting the science to "determine the structure."<sup>220</sup> This is no more apparent than when he asserts that there is no separation between human redemption and the redemption of nature. There is a unity in creation that is maintained by Christ, which points to the ontological foundation of his cosmic Christology, assumed in his reflections on cosmic eschatology.<sup>221</sup> In that

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<sup>217</sup> Gilbert, 177.

<sup>218</sup> H. Paul Santmire, "So That He Might Fill All Things: Comprehending the Cosmic Love of Christ" *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, 3 (2003), 263.

<sup>219</sup> Petr Macek, "The Doctrine of Creation in the Messianic Theology of Jürgen Moltmann" *Communio Viatorum* 49, 2 (2007), 178.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 179; There has also been an expressed desire for further reflection on the relationship between eschatology and ecology within Roman Catholic thought. See Phan, "Roman Catholic Theology," 229.

connection, “people who long for the redemption of the mortal body will join in community with all creatures that groan under the burden of transience and long for the coming glory of God.”<sup>222</sup> Critical consideration notwithstanding, his contributions to reflection on eschatology and ecology are certainly worthy of ongoing discussion. Here it seems desirable to examine not only what this says of the new creation but more importantly the assumed connection and ontological foundation uniting Christ with creation.

Perhaps with Moltmann’s mature reflections on Christian eschatology in *COG* there can be found, in the aforementioned aspects, seeds of hope while acknowledging “most eschatology is necessarily imaginative picturing of the unimaginable.”<sup>223</sup> What is desirable within explorations of differing perspectives on Christian eschatology, in this study and elsewhere, is that one is able to recognize the dissimilarities without failing to recognize “the one eschatological reality.”<sup>224</sup> Moltmann’s Christian eschatology is but one promising and historically significant attempt to explore and recover the imagined possibilities, without claiming to provide concrete content, which can spark the living hope that informs and ignites Christian ethics.

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<sup>221</sup> Santmire, 264; *COG*, 277-79; Warren McWilliams, “Christic Paradigm and Cosmic Christ: Ecological Christology in the Theologies of Sallie McFague and Jürgen Moltmann” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 25, 4 (1998), 348.

<sup>222</sup> Moltmann, “New Earth,” 146.

<sup>223</sup> Bauckham, “Must Christian Eschatology Be Millenarian?,” 277.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

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