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TRAGIC CREATION – HOPE FOR THE FUTURE:
MOLTMANN’S CREATIVE (MIS)READING OF HEGEL’S PHILOSOPHY

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

John M. Bechtold

June 2018

Advisor: Dr. Edward P. Antonio

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ABSTRACT

Christian theology, in its many and varied forms, and to the detriment of both the church and the world, is often built upon a shaky epistemological foundation. In this dissertation, I describe this shaky foundation by the term ‘insular universalism’. The oxymoronic nature of the term is both intentional and telling. A theology which strives for, or unwittingly arrives at, a position which is here being called ‘insular universalism’ achieves neither while rejecting or misunderstanding the complexity of both. When considered theologically, insular universalism could be simplistically described as the idea that “one cultural expression of the religion is exclusive for expressing the fullness of the gospel.”

In order to show the unsure theological footing of ‘insular universalism’, and in order to point to what I believe to be a better way forward, I turn to the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. Although Moltmann’s theology has been influential and therefore carefully dissected and frequently interpreted, there also exists a deeply Hegelian background that has not been carefully examined. Looking at questions of ontology and epistemology, as well as notions of system, the Absolute, and the possibility of beginnings and endings, this dissertation demonstrates a deeply Hegelian line of thought running throughout Moltmann’s theology. Yet, it is not the case that Moltmann is thoroughly and unabashedly

‘Hegelian’, but rather that Moltmann takes particular Hegelian themes, as those noted above, and subtly shifts them, perhaps riffs on them, to further his theological project.

After having described these Hegelian themes, and pointing to the variety of ways in which they are influential on Moltmann’s theological journeys, this dissertation turns to its own practice of constructive theology. Just as Moltmann riffs on Hegel, this constructive practice is a riffing on Moltmann – not thoroughly apologetic, but rooted in the tradition. It is argued that from Moltmann can be developed a theory of ‘tragic creation’, and from this theory Christian theology can balance the quests for both redemption and understanding. In finding this balance, it is argued, ‘insular universalism’ can be overcome with theological practices which are rooted in both epistemic humility and the need to address explicitly the socio-political realities of the world which cry out for redemption.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Cries of a Broken World.....	1
What is Wrong With Theology?	6
Why Does Theology Matter?.....	9
What is Wrong With the World?.....	13
 Chapter One: Why Hegel? Why Moltmann? Why Now?	 21
Why Moltmann?	25
Why Hegel and Why Now?	42
 Chapter Two: A Moltmonstrous Hegel	 45
The Becoming of Geist	53
On Being an I	63
Can Hegel be Saved?	66
The System of Philosophy	72
In Summation	84
 Chapter Three: Dialectic and History	 90
On Being Situated	93
The Hope of Crucifixion	95
Sublation: The Moving Force of History	100
The Crisis and Promise of History.....	105
Hegel on History	110
The God Who Promises	118
 Chapter Four: Trinitarian Creation - Everything Old is New Again	 121
The Tragic Politics of Creation	125
Trinitarian Love	141
Creation ³ : <i>Originalis, Continua, Nova</i>	158
Eschatology in Hegel	164
Eschatology and Systemic (In)Breaking	166
 Chapter Five: A Creative Community of Hope	 182
Tragic Creation	191
Creation for the <i>Imago Dei</i>	202
A Trinitarian Church	210
Identities of Otherness	220
Hope for the Future	230
 Bibliography	 234

INTRODUCTION – THE CRIES OF A BROKEN WORLD

"Doing theology ought to be a way of participating in God's redemptive work. Theology is not only about understanding the world; it is about mending the world."¹ – Miroslav Volf

What does it mean to ‘do theology’? Ought theology to be understood as descriptive, prescriptive, liturgical, or some combination thereof? Even outside of any possible definition, one might also question the function of theology. Is the proper role of theology to bring people into an individual salvific relationship with a Risen Christ? Is the role of theology to structure and offer guidance to the Christian church(es) through which salvation is worked out? Can second-order explorations of Christian thought accurately be described as ‘theology’ outside of an intentional relationship to the church? Each of these are questions that are fairly and importantly asked of the theological endeavor. The term ‘theology’ is both helpful and difficult because it incorporates and allows a wide variety of definitions and interpretations without being fully encapsulated within any of them. Yet, it will here be argued that theology cannot be adequately constrained to the level of discourse.²

¹ Tim Stafford, "The New Theologians: Miroslav Volf: Speaking Truth to the World," *Christianity Today*, February 8, 1999, 36-37.

² Katherine Tanner pointed to the difficulty of practicing ‘academic’ theology as a response to, and ideally in dialogue with, what has sometimes been termed ‘first-order’ theology, which she describes as the place “where affirmations are made and life is actually experienced in Christian terms.” The difficulty lies in trying to bridge the gap between these two disparate practices. According to Tanner, “Every academic theologian is therefore producing his or her account of the way the theology of practice should be understood and arranged, and every such account is in potential competition with a host of others. Indeed... the academic

Even if one accepts the importance of seeking salvation through being 'born-again' or through the liturgies of the Church, any Christian theology which does not seek to address the realities of the present physical world is bound for failure.³ Miroslav Volf offered a helpful description of the several facets which must be balanced when one engages with the theological endeavor. Theology is, at one level, about understanding the world. Yet, a theological understanding of the world is not merely empirical, even if empiricism is an important tool for practicing theology well. The world which theology seeks to understand is a world that is recognized as sacred. Because theology makes this sort of value judgment about the world, its task can never be one of mere observation. Rather, as Volf argued, the proper task of theology is to seek to understand the world in order to join in the very redemption of that world.⁴ The heart of Christian theology is this

theologian's construal is in potential competition with many nonspecialists' understandings of Christian beliefs and values and of how they hang together." Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 73-74. The intent behind this dissertation is to inhabit this difficult space: to offer an academic commentary on both first-order and second-order theological proclamations. Even as academic, this dialogue takes place from the midst of a confessional community with the goal of both examining and helping to shape the praxis that develops within. Yet, because it is academic, there remains a role for critique even of 'first-order' beliefs. In making an argument for the importance of academic theology as rooted in the university system, Delwin Brown argued that theology "is not, and should not be, grounded in a genial openness to all interesting and serious perspectives on life... The fact that all inquiries are contextual and interested does not entail that all contextual and interested inquiries belong." Delwin Brown, "Academic Theology in the University or Why an Ex-Queen's Heir Should Be Made a Subject," in Linell E. Cady and Delwin Brown, eds., *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 135.

³ In trying to define the task of theology, I follow Dwight Hopkins in proclaiming that theology "is a dynamic that is bounded by... [the realities of] the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of religion and the religious dimensions of culture, politics, and economics." Dwight N. Hopkins, "Introduction," in Sheila Davaney and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds., *Changing Conversations: Cultural Analysis and Religious Reflection* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

⁴ This language will, for many, immediately bring to mind Anselm's famous dictum, *fides quaerens intellectum*. Karl Barth described Anselm's methodology in this way, "For Anselm, 'to believe' does not mean simply a striving of the human will towards God but a striving of the human will into God and so a participation (albeit in a manner limited by creatureliness) in God's mode of Being and so a similar participation in God's aseity, in the matchless glory of his very Self." Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of His Theological Scheme* (Eugene, OR:

very (re)enactment of redemption. The theological task cannot merely be one of longing, but must be one of deep struggle.⁵

This part of the theological task, to the detriment of the Christian church, and to the detriment of the world as well, can be easily overlooked, neglected, or summarily rejected. On the other hand, when this redemptive role of theology is acknowledged, the redemptive impulse can just as easily be twisted in such a way that the actions which it instigates privilege self-interest over the redemption of the world writ large. When theology is thus warped, it becomes insular and self-referential. An insular theology cannot allow religious practices which have redemption at their core, for the danger to the community is much too high. Throughout the history of Christianity this theological movement from redemption to safety is repeatedly evident.⁶ Theology, as a practice of both seeking understanding and enacting redemption, holds within itself this very conflict at all times.

Pickwick, 2009), 17. This description of Anselm's methodology is helpful for the theological task that will here be undertaken. To seek understanding of the world is not undertaken for the purpose of apologetics, but rather, as Anselm described, *credo ut intelligam* – "It is my very faith itself that summons me to knowledge." *Ibid.*

⁵ Hopkins described the importance of this struggle by contrasting what he called 'liberal' and 'conservative' approaches to theology. "Both the conservative and liberal approaches leave the status quo, broken humanity, in place – the conservative by placing religious reflection 'above' systemic realities and the liberal by seeking theological implications (oftentimes unintentionally) from the perspective of society's structural status quo." To avoid this pitfall, Hopkins deploys "a posture explicitly and consistently committed to the poor, the marginalized, and other disenfranchised experiences and communities in theology." *Changing Conversations*, 2.

⁶ E.g. even while recognizing that sincere and thoughtful Christians could hold such a position, H. Richard Niebuhr noted, "Half-baked and muddle-headed men abound in the anticultural movement... doubtless hypocrisy flourishes here too." H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 73. Even more critically and more recently, Willie James Jennings has claimed, "Christianity marks the sport where, if noble dream joins hands with God-inspired hope and presses with great impatience against the insularities of life, for example, national, cultural, ethnic, economic, sexual, and racial, seeking the deeper ground upon which to seed a new way of belonging and living together, then we will find together not simply a new ground, not simply a new seed, but a life already prepared and offered to us." Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 11.

To practice theology is to find balance between building up the self (i.e. understanding) and giving of the self (i.e. enacting redemption). The enactment of redemption should always be accompanied by a parallel quest for understanding, as each speaks to and enlivens the other. Because these two elements are so deeply intertwined in theological practice, one can also see that when one element is neglected, the other also falls by the wayside. The balance between these elements is not that of a balance scale in which precisely equal amounts must always be kept on each side to maintain equilibrium. Rather, the balance between these two elements would be better equated with developing a recipe for baking a loaf of bread. In theology, as in baking, when one element is neglected or the ratio of elements reaches a certain level of unacceptability, the whole project fails. However, there is room for great creativity insofar as a skilled baker can produce many varieties of bread, even without being given a specific recipe. Likewise, the skilled practitioner of theology, who certainly does not need to be a classically trained academic, can seek new ways to bring together the quest for understanding with the enactment of redemption.

Through this dissertation I will seek to address what I see to be imbalances in the practice of theology: moments and movements in which the seeking of redemption appears to be less highly valued than the quest for understanding. I will examine several broad manifestations of this imbalance in the lives of Christians and in the life of the church: gender and racial/ethnic violence, Christian imperialism, and theological/ecclesial contribution to a politics of ecological ruin. These three imbalances will be described as separate, but they will also be described as stemming from the same root cause, what I will call ‘insular universalism’.

Although academic in nature, the impetus behind my writing is to encourage a shifting in the ways that the church sees itself and its place in the world. Such shifts will be incremental and slow, but are nevertheless possible with a theological change of focus. I will argue that just such a change of focus has been offered in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. Although Moltmann is not the only or the final answer to the theological imbalances toward which I will point, his work is well-suited to help initiate a shifting focus with relation to these three categories of imbalance. In particular, Moltmann's doctrine of the Social Trinity will be explored as a way to reconsider questions of anthropological and societal identity and difference, his doctrine of eschatology will be explored as a means to help redescribe a *telos* of Christian life and death, and his doctrine of creation will be explored in order to reconsider God's relationship with and role in the world. In order to adequately point to the value that I see in Moltmann's work, however, it will first be necessary to understand how his work is rooted in and moves through Hegel's philosophy. Although Moltmann's theology is often explored without this additional step, it will be demonstrated that Hegel holds an influential role in both the content and form of Moltmann's theology, and, as such, ought not to be ignored in seeking to interpret Moltmann. Finally, after having described the promise of Moltmann's theology in terms of its Hegelian influence, I will conclude by describing a point at which I see Moltmann's fidelity to Hegel's inspiration causing inconsistencies in Moltmann's work, and will propose a way beyond these inconsistencies through a doctrine of 'tragic creation'. Before moving into that constructive work, however, a description of the root of the three theological imbalances to which I have pointed is in order.

What Is Wrong With Theology?

Christian theology, as a wide-ranging conversation of many diverse voices, can be a powerful discipline. Christianity, throughout the world, looks and sounds very differently in a wide variety of contexts.⁷ One could never point to the entirety of the Christian tradition and say, “This one thing is the problem with Christianity.” A primary theological problem that will be explored here is the experience of ‘insular universalism’.⁸ There are many symptoms that arise and demonstrate this problem. A number such symptoms will be addressed here, but first it would be helpful to show what an insular universalism actually looks like in practice. On a broader level, insular universalism could be defined as the rejection of a meaningful world outside of one’s own personal experiences.⁹ It is insular insofar as it non-critically privileges personal experience(s) as the determining

⁷ Even the notion of ‘context’ itself comes as already laden with baggage. “Context is not passive but comes preloaded with its own biases, ready to contest whatever claims it encounters. Contexts, after all, are constructed strategies.” Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 5.

⁸ This terminology sounds oxymoronic: how can that which is insular be also universal? Likewise, in reverse, how can something that is universal be also insular? This oxymoronic nature of the term is both intentional and telling. A theology which strives for, or unwittingly arrives at, a position which is here being called ‘insular universalism’ achieves neither while rejecting or misunderstanding the complexity of both. Though this terminology will be explored in greater depth moving forward, when considered theologically, insular universalism could be simplistically described as the idea that “one cultural expression of the religion is exclusive for expressing the fullness of the gospel.” Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact On Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009), 74.

⁹ Although this movement has tended to go hand-in-hand with a philosophical ‘modernism’, it is rarely intentionally grounded with a strong philosophical position. As this dissertation will soon turn to Hegel as a philosophical guide it is worth noting that he spoke mostly positively about Descartes’ grounding of knowledge in the *cogito*, even contrasting this favorably to Kant’s contention for the separation of knowledge and being. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy Vol. 3*, trans. E.S. Haldane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 221. One might come to a position like ‘insular universalism’ through a critical reading of modernist philosophy. Such a position would not entirely transcend the critiques which will be offered here, but it would be significantly more defensible both philosophically and theologically than a position that remains unmoored. See Elizabeth A. Pritchard, *Religion in Public: Locke’s Political Theology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014) for an example of a theological defense of Lockean liberalism.

characteristic of the external world.¹⁰ The term ‘universalism’ is open to a great deal more confusion. Insular universalism is not truly universalism in any traditional way. It is only universal insofar as it is an attempt to narrowly define the universe from within the insularity. Insular universalism is the attempted universalizing of one’s insular worldview, rather than an acceptance that one’s own worldview comes from viewing the universe from an infinitesimally limited vantage point.¹¹ Problematically, the mindset of ‘insular universalism’ is the attempt to sacralize and absolutize truth for the purpose, or with the result, that one maintains a position of power over others. To critique the wide-ranging problem of insular universalism in Christian theology will necessarily involve a certain

¹⁰ The key point here is the non-criticality of the privileging of personal experience. Many varieties of theology have described the importance of personal experiences, but have done so thoughtfully and critically. Kelly Brown Douglas, for instance, in describing what she calls ‘crossroads theology’ described the importance of bodily experience. “Crossroads theology privileges experience – particularly that of the blues bodies. To reiterate, these are bodies that experience multiple realities of oppression because of their multiple identities. Crossroads theology, therefore, encourages blues women and men to allow their own experiences to shape their consciousness of themselves and the world. Essentially, crossroads theology regards the experience of blues bodies as embodied knowledge.” Kelly Brown Douglas, *Black Bodies and the Black Church: A Blues Slant* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 132. Similarly, Wonhee Anne Joh wrote of “trauma that privileges the individual experience of something ‘outside the range of the ordinary’ breaking into the everyday.” Wonhee Anne Joh, “Postcolonial Loss: Collective Grief in the Ruins of Militarized Terror,” in *Critical Theology Against US Militarism in Asia: Decolonization and Deimperialization*, eds. Nami Kim and Wonhee Anne Joh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 9. The additional element of ‘insular universalism to which these two theologians point is ‘power’. Many theologies – black, womanist, feminist, liberation, mujerista, and post/anticolonial among them – have argued for the privileging of the experience of the powerless. Such examples would generally avoid the trap of ‘insular universalism’ insofar as the personal experiences of the powerful have already forcibly been made manifest in their lives.

¹¹ John Caputo described what it means to be limited by a specific religious vantage point while also desiring to move beyond that point, “We are social and historical beings, concretely situated in one historical, cultural, and linguistic tradition or another, formed and forged by one religious tradition or another. Our religious aspirations have been given one determinate form or another by the traditions to which we belong and by which we have been nourished, by the way the name of God has been given flesh and substance for us... But I want these determinate forms of religious life to be inwardly disturbed by the secret that springs forth from their historical contingency... of the equally religious confession that we do not know who we are or what we love when we love our God.” John D. Caputo, *On Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 34. One might also point to Lyotard’s description of ‘postmodernity’ as “incredulity toward metanarratives” to emphasize the inherently narrational nature of Christian theology as an explanation of necessarily limited worldviews. See, Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

level of generalization; this cannot be helped. Unless such an argument were to be entirely autobiographical, generalization is a necessary tool. Yet, it is important to name the generalization that is happening as such in order to avoid the very sort of ‘insular universalism’ that is being here critiqued.

Of course, defining a religion, or the particular religiosity of an individual, is rarely as simple as merely ticking off the box representing any given belief system.¹² Religion is complex and confusing, and thus rife for dialogue and interpretation.¹³ This is no less true for Christianity and Christian theology, which appear in a wide variety of forms. These divergences, and the varieties of Christian theological proclamation which they engender, are in themselves not at all troubling. Since the beginning of the Christian tradition, even prior to the usage of the word, there has never been an homogenous theology which could

¹² Philosophers and sociologists of religion have widely debated how the term ‘belief’ functions, and how it ought to be defined. The psychologist Justin Barrett offered a helpful description of two different ways that belief might be construed: reflective and non-reflective. Reflective beliefs approximate what we colloquially call *beliefs*. “We hold consciously reflective beliefs and may arrive at them through deliberate reflection. When asked if we believe something in particular, a reflective belief is what we reply... Whether a belief is reflective does not bear on its truth-value or whether it is justified. Non-reflective beliefs, in contrast, operate without our conscious awareness in the background. Non consciously accessible or arising through deliberation, our minds produce non-reflective beliefs automatically all the time... Like reflective beliefs, non-reflective beliefs may or may not be true, empirically verifiable, or rationally justifiable.” Justin Barrett, “Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology” in *The Believing Primate: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Reflections on the Origin of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 77-78. Throughout this dissertation, both categories of religious belief will be discussed. Reference to a ‘belief system’ points toward reflective beliefs. Yet, there will be other examples of non-reflective beliefs that appear to be conditioned upon socio-cultural development (e.g., a study which shows that racist tendencies arise when a subject is primed with religious language). Christian theology operates at both levels. Each ‘believer’ intentionally creates a structure of reflective beliefs, but even these intentionally developed beliefs are influenced by the non-verbalized non-reflective beliefs which have not yet come to the surface.

¹³ E.g., a dozen different ways to approach and understand religion are presented in Hans Schilderman, ed., *The Concept of Religion: Defining and Measuring Contemporary Beliefs and Practices* (Boston: Brill, 2014). Yet more possibilities are described in Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk, eds., *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests* (Boston: Brill, 1999). For the purposes of this project, I tend to follow Molendijk, “On the whole, I take a pragmatic stance on defining religion. I regard definitions as heuristic working tools. The criterion for evaluation ought to be the insight into human religious behavior which a certain view of religion gives us.” *Ibid.*, 435.

rightly and uniquely be called, “Christian.” To the contrary, one of the reasons that the Christian faith has shown such resiliency and lasting power is because of the ways in which it can easily adapt to a variety of cultures and contexts. Christianity was, from the outset, a missionary movement.¹⁴ While this history has, at times accurately and importantly, been criticized as a domineering colonizing force,¹⁵ the earliest Christians were involved in translating their newfound faith into a variety of languages and cultures because they were deeply concerned with trying to understand the world and its relationship to God.¹⁶

Why Does Theology Matter?

Whatever is meant by the term ‘Christian’ need not, and arguably cannot, refer to any one thing. This critique of Christian theological discourse(s) is, thus, not to say that any particular group is ‘wrong’ *in se*. The major problem toward which this dissertation will point is not strictly one of belief or of creed, but of ethics. One’s system of belief¹⁷ is

¹⁴ An easy-reading but thorough description of the missionary impulse within Christianity can be found in Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi and Justo L. Gonzalez, *To All Nations from All Nations: A History of the Christian Missionary Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013).

¹⁵ E.g., on the impact of Christian missionaries in India see Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Postcolonial Reflections* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1993). For a description of how both Christian and Muslim missionaries influenced Nigeria see Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ Cardoza-Orlandi and Gonzalez, 31-50.

¹⁷ Stanley Hauerwas questioned the language of a ‘system’ because he saw it as unnecessarily restricting the developmental nature of ecclesial proclamation. “I became increasingly skeptical about the very idea of ‘systematic’ theology. Indeed, the more I pondered not so much what Barth said about how to do theology, but how he did it, I became convinced that the idea of ‘system,’ at least in the nineteenth-century sense of system, distorted the ad-hoc character of theology as a discipline of the church.” Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), xx. I would contend that Hauerwas has overstated his case against systematic theology, but, nevertheless, my own theological practice is deeply rooted in the ad-hoc character of the disciplines of the church. However, as so-rooted, the need that I see in Christian theology is not a swapping out of problematic beliefs, but a re-description of the narrative by which the church continues to become.

profoundly influential, often outside even of conscious intention, in the way that one acts.¹⁸

Kathryn Tanner has argued,

Beliefs have power over actions and attitudes to the extent that such beliefs are necessary in order for those actions and attitudes to make sense. Beliefs have power over actions since beliefs about what is the case are necessary in order for action to appear reasonable, meaningful, practically possible, and motivated.¹⁹

Tanner claimed that the category of belief holds logical priority over the category of action.²⁰ While Tanner does make a strong argument that this is the case, it is not the purpose here to prove that she is correct. The scientific/philosophic studies of behavior run deep and continue to offer new ideas and new understandings of the relationship between belief and behavior. Tanner was not attempting to upend this tradition, but rather to synthesize at least part of the argumentation therein. In order to follow Tanner's proposal, one does not need to hold that belief is the only causal factor in behavior, nor does one

¹⁸ See Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992). Tanner offered a rigorous analysis of the relationship between belief and action, as well as a compelling proposal for how a change in one's beliefs can be influential for a similar change in action.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16. Tanner's discussion incorporates both reflective and non-reflective belief. Because reflective beliefs are broadly shaped by non-reflective beliefs, each is influential in the determination of one's actions. The distinction between 'first-order' belief and 'second-order' reflection has already been described, but one ought not to confuse this distinction with the distinction between reflection and non-reflective belief. Both reflective and non-reflective belief exist within both 'orders' of thought.

²⁰ Tanner is pointing primarily to the idea of 'first-order' belief as unconsciously informative to action. Yet, again, Hauerwas reminds us of the difficulties of purely distinguishing between first-order belief and second-order reflection. "Indeed, the church across the centuries and through the communion of saints believes more than any theologian could possibly say." Stanley Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (New York: SCM, 2001), 5. One value of second-order theological reflection is that it can better analyze the ways in which beliefs engender actions. So, for my purposes, the goal behind second-order reflection is not only analysis, but the possibility of shifting patterns of belief accordingly.

even need to hold that belief is a causal factor.²¹ Rather, so long as it is accepted that beliefs, at some level, mediate behavior, Tanner's point should be well taken.²²

It would be very easy to make this exercise entirely theoretical – to survey the literature regarding belief and behavior, between the internal and the external insofar as the two are distinguishable, and to make a corresponding theological declaration regarding orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Yet, such a disinterested study would offer very little to the practice of theology, to the church which it supports, or to the world for which the church seeks to enact God's redemption. A disinterested study of the relationship between theological belief and behavior would also fail to account for the fact that theological belief is inherently proclamational. Theological belief is not merely internal, but, at least within the historical Christian traditions, truly becomes realized through its proclamation.²³ The

²¹ "A philosophical perspective on the connection between Christian beliefs and comportment... shows that it is wrong to account for variations in Christian actions and attitudes by bypassing the influence of Christian beliefs. Christian beliefs have the power to direct the attitudes and behaviors that Christians display." Tanner, 16.

²² Since Tanner made this particular argument the neurosciences have shown more and more clearly that intentionality is not always at play in determining behavior. Indeed, some neuroscientists have argued that "action precedes reflection... This is not to say that human consciousness plays no role or that it is not special in its powers to transform, manipulate, and convey information...but that this consciousness is not necessary to achieve the sophisticated, adaptive, and intelligent behavioral guidance demonstrated in the emerging priming literature." John A. Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella, "The Unconscious Mind," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3.1 (2008), 73-79, accessed September 17, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2008.00064.x>.

²³ Barth used the term 'proclamation' very intentionally as a means of describing God's manifestation in the practices of the church. "Proclamation is human speech in and by which God Himself speaks like a king through the mouth of His herald, and which is meant to be heard and accepted as speech in and by which God Himself speaks." Barth was quick to point out, however, that proclamation is not just any speech-act, and is not only verbal, but "is primarily and decisively preaching and the sacraments." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I, I*, Eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 52, 80. I use the term 'proclamation' less technically, but with consideration of the seriousness with which Barth conceived it. Here, proclamation is not limited to sermon and sacrament, but incorporates other intentional practices of the church by which it seeks to make redemption manifest in the world.

speech-act of proclamation gives flesh to that which is proclaimed. Belief can be tentative and fleeting until it is proclaimed.²⁴

If, as Volf says, theology is a two-pronged practice, seeking understanding and enacting redemption, then proclamation is the moment at which these two prongs come together. Proclamation is the act by which understanding is given a voice and redemption a body. With the proclamation of a theological belief, the proclaimer locates herself both historically and ethically. The proclaimer situates herself within a particular broad religious tradition, while also beginning to describe how the proclaimed belief will impact her actions in the world. Because proclamation stands as an act that is simultaneously internal and external, it also serves as an intermediary between belief and behavior. It is in proclamation, even if not exclusively so, that belief asserts a potentially determinative force on behavior, and likewise where behavior can assert a potentially determinative force on belief.

However, since proclamation is neither one nor the other, there is no certainty which direction this movement is going at any particular moment. Whether intentional or not, proclamation does not always perfectly correspond to a singularly definable reflective belief. This is precisely why it is so common to see two people making competing proclamations based on an, at least broadly conceived, shared belief.²⁵ Without seeking to

²⁴ Badiou made an interesting observation regarding the nature of theological proclamation, ““It is not the singularity of the subject that validates what the subject says; it is what he says that founds the singularity of the subject.” Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 53. Proclamation stands as both first-order theological belief and second-order theological interpretation because an unproclaimed theology is neither belief nor critique.

²⁵ E.g., in many Christian denominations there is a major point of divergence on topics related to human sexuality. Regardless of where one comes down on any particular debate, people from all different directions point to ‘the love of God’ as justification for their opinion. Christian blogger Kristen Padilla

understand the ethical outcomes of a particular iteration of theological belief(s), Christian theology can and will be used in problematic ways. “Probably more often than not over the course of Western history, Christians have used beliefs about God and the world to undergird attitudes and actions with a highly problematic political import.”²⁶ In order to develop such an understanding, it is necessary to name certain ways that ‘insular universalism’ has influenced the ways in which Christians might engage with the world.

What Is Wrong With the World?

One might point to a number of different ways in which Christian theology has been useful or inspirational in morally repugnant way. Here, a few overarching examples will be offered in order to describe the importance that I see in Moltmann’s ability to offer a shifting of the narrative from which Christian theology can be conceived.²⁷ The first such

wrote, “Can you know the love of God in the abstract without knowing God relationally? And can you relationally know God without repentance? If the answer is no to this second question, then you cannot know the love of God (God is love) without repentance.” Kristen Padilla, “Homosexuality and the Love of God: A response to Jen Hatmaker and Katelyn Beaty,” accessed July 21, 2017, <https://kristenrpadilla.com/2016/05/04/homosexuality-and-the-love-of-god-a-response-to-jen-hatmaker-and-katelyn-beaty/>. Writing for *Christianity Today*, Katelyn Beaty pointed to this interpretation of what it means to know/experience the love of God, but countered, “The out of the world nature of [God’s] love doesn’t end with the word *but*... this radical love of God in Christ is precisely what compels us to love God.” Katelyn Beaty, “What Jen Hatmaker Gets Right About Christian Love,” in *Christianity Today*, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/april-web-only/lgbt-what-jen-hatmaker-gets-right-about-christian-love.html>. Both writers begin with a concept of ‘the love of God’, but end with very different looking praxis.

²⁶ *Politics of God*, 1.

²⁷ My approach to these issues has been influenced by Mark Noll’s text, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Noll argues persuasively, “The evangelical ethos is activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian. It allows little space for broader or deeper intellectual effort because it is dominated by the urgencies of the moment.” Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 12. It would be a gross oversimplification to deny that deep theological reflection has come from within the evangelical tradition, but nevertheless I believe Noll points to an important trend. The reason that these issues are addressed rather broadly is that what I hope to accomplish is a shifting narrative by which deeper theological conversations can organically occur. Here, the complexity of navigating the ever-changing relationship between theological belief and theological reflection is evident.

example is the personal denigration of persons and peoples based on cultural, racial, gender, or other factors.²⁸ Following closely in line, theological beliefs have throughout history also been misused as rationalizations for imperialist conquest.²⁹ While there is a deep tradition of so-called Just War Theory,³⁰ in which conscientious thinkers have deeply struggled with the role that Christians can or ought to play in acts of violence, the rationalization of conquest runs much deeper socially without any of the intellectual rigor that generally accompanies claims of just warfare.³¹ Third, and, while seemingly the most

²⁸ Here, the phrase, ‘personal denigration’ is used to broadly describe a wide number of interpersonal expressions that might generally be given terms like ‘racist’, ‘sexist’, ‘jingoist’, etc. Each of these, and other, modes of interpersonal approach have layers of background and complexity – far more than can adequately be described here. Yet, they are grouped together in such a general way because each represents a way in which individuals and communities have been historically and currently oppressed and denigrated based on one or more unshared characteristics. For insightful studies on the origin of the idea of race and racism see J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and *The Christian Imagination*. For a theological account of the complexities of race and multi-racialism see Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010). Among the most influential rejections of theological sexism include: Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), and Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1992). A text that has informed my understanding of the inter-linking of first-order and second-order theology through the intentional development of communal narrative, in this case in rejection of Christian nationalism, is Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

²⁹ A helpful discussion of the ways in which religion (with a focus on both Christianity and Islam) is infiltrating historically secular governments, as well as how such infiltration changes the nature of the religious, can be found in J. Ann Tickner, *A Feminist Voyage Through International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), see especially Chapter 10. Rosemary Radford Ruether has offered a helpful discussion of American imperialism as rooted in a theology of election in, Rosemary Radford Ruether, *America, Amerikkka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2014). In connection with *Unleashing the Scripture*, I have also found Michael S. Northcott, “Reading Hauerwas in the Cornbelt: The Demise of the American Dream and the Return of Liturgical Politics,” in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 40, iss. 2 (June, 2012), accessed June 1, 2017, [dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2012.00521.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2012.00521.x), to be helpful in describing how ‘hope theology’ has become enmeshed in a narrative of ‘the American dream’.

³⁰ A recent example can be found in Nigel Biggar, *In Defense of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Augustine is also well-known for his exposition on Just War Theory, particularly his distinction between the justice *of* war and justice *in* war. A description of the elements of Augustine’s theory, together with a contemporary assessment, can be found in John Langan, S.J., “The Elements of St. Augustine’s Just War Theory,” in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1984): 19-38.

³¹ E.g., Ryan LaMothe argued that a Christian embrace of colonialism and imperial expansionism has been more heavily impacted by narratives of American expansion than by deliberate theological reflection. See,

impersonal, possibly the most devastating, Christian theology continues to be abused as a justification for environmental abuse, misuse, and neglect.³²

As these three misuses of theological beliefs are explored in more detail, it will become evident that they are deeply intertwined, and that one abuse necessarily correlates with the other abuses as well. Each of these abuses have survived and thrived throughout the two millennia of Christianity's existence. While Christians are certainly not the only group to participate in these destructive practices, nor the only group to sanctify them with religious language, the church is yet deeply culpable for their existence. The intention behind pointing to these theological abuses is not simply to castigate an entire faith for all real and imagined improprieties in its history. This is not about reproach, but about the hope for something better. Christian theologies cannot possibly rid the world of these evils, but when looking at the present realities which they engender, the tacit approval of silence cannot be accepted. Only by naming the ways in which theology has been used to contribute to the problems described can there be hope that theology can also be a tool toward overcoming them in redemptive ways.

While each of these problems will continue to be addressed in greater detail, a brief discussion of each should help to locate them within the historical movements of

Ryan LaMothe, "What Hope Is There: The Enthrallment of Empire Stories," in *Pastoral Psychology*, vol. 56, iss. 5 (May, 2008): 481-495. LaMothe tied the narrative of expansionism specifically to a "distortion of hope," with explicit reference to Moltmann's understanding of hope.

³² A fascinating study of the ways in which consumerism and the economics of colonialism have led to a theological disregard of ecological matters can be found in Grace Ji-Sun Kim, "Colonialism, *Han* & Eco-Theology," in *Scriptura*, vol. 111 (2012): 376-384. A thorough description of the importance of ecological theology from a biblical basis is Fred Van Dyke et al., *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). Another text that has been influential in teaching me to view this issue through an eschatological lens is Laura Ruth Yordy, *Green Witness: Ecology, Ethics, and the Kingdom of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

Christianity and human history. Beginning with the idea of personal denigration, whether based on culture, gender, nationality, or other factors, this issue has been a contributing factor to many of history's greatest evils. Two ways in which the assertion of personal supremacy is especially obvious are seen in the areas of gender³³ and race,³⁴ both of which are, from the outset, deeply complicated terms.³⁵ The church is rife with examples of Christians who utilize a particular interpretation of Christian Scriptures – almost

³³ The scriptures of the Hebrew Bible often demonstrate, at best, a disregard for women. Women were completely ignored in the family chronologies and census reportings, were considered unclean due to childbirth or menstruation, and lived under a very different set of rules and laws than the men in society (Num 30, Deut 22, Prov 5, et al.). This same pattern continues into the New Testament when women were commanded to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18) and to be silent in church (1 Cor 14:34, 1 Tim 2:11-15). These passages, among others which apparently privilege the male over the female, are themselves culturally conditioned and complex, yet, to the present, many congregations and denominations reject the giftedness of women to serve in certain or all leadership roles on their basis. The most obvious example of this practice is the Roman Catholic Church which, to this day, will not 'allow' women to serve as priests. Likewise, the Southern Baptist Convention, states unequivocally that women are disallowed from ordained ministry. "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." Southern Baptist Convention, *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.

³⁴ A study conducted by researchers from the University of Southern California has argued that "the intergroup dynamics established by religious identifications... appeared to drive religious racism." See Deborah L. Hall, David C. Matz, and Wendy Wood, "Why Don't We Practice What We Preach? A Meta-Analytic Review of Religious Racism," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14, No. 1 (February 2010): 135. A different group of researchers conducted a similar study in which they sought to test whether being 'primed' with Christian concepts demonstrably caused racially prejudicial reactions among Christian subjects. The researchers concluded, "Results indicate that [being primed with] Christian religious concepts increase subtle and overt prejudice toward a historically disadvantaged racial group. However, priming Christian concepts did not appear to cause a shift in reported underlying emotion, such as fear or disgust." See Megan K. Johnson, Wade C. Rowatt, and Jordan LaBouff, "Priming Christian Religious Concepts Increases Racial Prejudice," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 1, no. 2 (April 2010): 123.

³⁵ Regarding the complexities of gender, "Our bodies are too complex to provide clear-cut answers about sexual difference. The more we look for a simple physical basis for 'sex,' the more it becomes clear that 'sex' is not a purely physical category. What bodily signals and functions we define as male or female come already entangled in our ideas about gender." Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 4. There are questions of the extent to which either race or gender are biological or constructed realities. Without taking a stand on either case, both 'race' and 'gender' will be used here pragmatically, as both are frequently utilized categories of differentiation/description.

universally while denying that ‘interpretation’ is taking place– in order to solidify their status in a particular social order.³⁶

A second major problem that has been deeply rooted in Christian theology is the justification for national or religious conquest. Even in pre-Christian times, one can look to the stories of the Hebrew Bible and point to a wide variety of tales which encourage and celebrate conquest. Those people are hailed as heroes who have led “God’s people” to military victory in foreign lands.³⁷ Moving beyond the times of the Hebrew Bible, military conquest continued to be a major theme in Christian history. Such conquest is evidenced by the Crusades, the Inquisitions, and arguably even as recently as the 2003 U.S. led invasion of Iraq.³⁸ This thirst for conquest is a direct result of the previously discussed problem of denigrating persons based upon actual or perceived differences. When Christians have, both intentionally and otherwise, come to believe that they possess an inherent moral superiority,³⁹ and when the power of that superiority is transferred from

³⁶ See, e.g., David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). This book, particularly the seventh chapter, “The Self-Interpreting Bible,” details the history of biblical justifications for slavery as well as a description of arguments made against the idea of biblical interpretation in reading.

³⁷ There are numerous such stories that ought to be horrifying to contemporary hearers and readers. Among children brought up in Sunday School, the story of “Joshua and the Battle of Jericho” is quite well-known both because of the compelling nature of the story and, perhaps even more, because the story is frequently recounted in a peppy jingle. The story which children are taught is fairly simple. God commanded Joshua to march Israelite troops to the walled city of Jericho. After a pattern of marching around the city and blowing their horns, the walls of the city “came a’tumblin’ down.” As the story comes to completion, “Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys...” (Josh 6:21). Similar stories occur throughout the Hebrew Bible. E.g. see Deut 20.

³⁸ A recent biography of George W. Bush argues that Bush believed “he was the agent of God’s will, and [was] acting with divine guidance.” Jean Edward Smith, *Bush* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 227. Bush himself is quoted as saying, “If war is forced upon us [Americans] we will fight with the full force and might of the United States military, and we will prevail. We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know – we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history.” *Ibid.*, 342.

merely religious/moral to majority personal characteristics – masculinity, whiteness, etc. – the violence that it engenders can be multiplied exponentially.⁴⁰ This multiplication of violence is particularly evident when religion and nationalism are conflated.⁴¹

Thus far, two important ethical issues have been discussed as they relate to Christian theology and discourse. While there are countless other problems that could be explored, there is one issue in particular that is of such a magnitude of importance, that it is literally life and death for a great number of people: creation care in the face of global climate change.⁴² The threat of global climate change is well-known, and there have been many scholarly scientific studies which demonstrate the data and project possible

³⁹ Max Weber described this as a *Gesinnungsethik* which is a deeply religious ethics of conviction. Contrasted with an ethics of responsibility, in which behavioral decisions are based primarily on the presumption of consequences, Weber describes *Gesinnungsethik* as, “The Christian acts rightly and leaves the outcome to God.” Max Weber, “Value Judgments in Social Science,” *Selections in Translation*, Ed. W.G. Runciman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 82.

⁴⁰ Foucault described the relationship between power and ‘knowledge’ in a way that would be helpful from within a religious community that might claim particularities of belief as equivalent terms to Foucault’s ‘knowledge’. The questions that Foucault would demand in such circumstances include, “What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify... Which speaking, discoursing subjects – which subjects of experience and knowledge – do you then want to diminish... which theoretical-political *avant garde* do you want to enthrone in order to isolate it from all the discontinuous forms of knowledge that circulate about it?” Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 85.

⁴¹ “We should be attuned to the distinctively religious stakes of certain political conflicts, informed by distinctively religious understandings of right order that are expressed in claims for the substantive regulation of public life in accordance with religious principles; and we should also be sensitive to the distinctiveness of religion as a rich matrix... that can– in certain contexts– contribute to political conflict and violence even when the stakes of the conflict are not distinctively religious.” Rogers Brubaker, “Religious Dimensions of Political Conflict and Violence,” *Sociological Theory* 33, No. 1 (March 2015), 13. Easy examples would be ‘pastoral’ calls for the assassination of foreign leaders from Pat Robertson and Robert Jeffress. See, Laurie Goodstein, “Robertson Suggests U.S. Kill Venezuela’s Leader,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2005, and Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “‘God Has Given Trump Authority to Take Out Kim Jong Un’ Evangelical Adviser Says,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2017.

⁴² This discussion should extend beyond the purely ecological to the recognition that “The poor will suffer the bulk of the damages from climate change.” Robert Mendelsohn, Ariel Dinar, Larry Williams, “The Distributional Impact of Climate Change on Rich and Poor Countries,” *Environment and Development Economics* 11, Issue 2 (April 2006), 173, accessed August 17, 2016, Cambridge University Press Journals Complete.

consequences.⁴³ That there are distinctly religious influences to this discussion has also been well-demonstrated.⁴⁴ The historian Lynn White Jr. has pointed to the development of Christian theology as the overwhelming root cause of the current ecological crisis. He argued,

Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen... [Humanity] shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature... [Christianity] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.⁴⁵

As with systems which wholesale discount groups of people and which celebrate violent jingoistic conquest, this system of belief may not always or entirely have distinctly theological causes. Nevertheless, theology is frequently used to sanctify both the undergirding system of belief and the negligence which is so often its result. As such, White was again correct to say, "More science and more technology are not going to get us out

⁴³ The United States Environmental Protection Agency has an easy primer to describe the realities of global climate change. The EPA says, "Climate change is happening. Our Earth is warming. Earth's average temperature has risen by 1.5°F over the past century, and is projected to rise another 0.5 to 8.6°F over the next hundred years... [which can] translate to large and potentially dangerous shifts in climate and weather...Humans are largely responsible for recent climate change." The news is not all dire, however, because "we can reduce the risks we will face from climate change." Environmental Protection Agency, "Climate Change: Basic Information," last modified August 9, 2016, accessed August 17, 2016, <https://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/basics/>.

⁴⁴ University of Cincinnati political scientist Matthew B. Arbuckle and Georgetown University public policy scholar David M. Konisky have recently shown that Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, "tend to be less concerned about global warming compared with those not affiliating with a religious tradition." Moreover, while these results are perhaps not altogether surprising, in trying to tease out the relationship between religious practice and climate change denial, the researchers found that, "For many, [a higher level of] religiosity tends to move people even further away from stronger environmental attitudes." Matthew B. Arbuckle and David M. Konisky, "The Role of Religion in Environmental Attitudes," *Social Science Quarterly* 96, issue 5 (November 2015), accessed 8/17/16, Wiley Online Library.

⁴⁵ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, No. 3767 (March 1967), 1205. White continued, "Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians. Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around out little globe. Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim."

of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.”⁴⁶ Looking back to St. Francis of Assisi, White saw that theology needs to re-find a sense of the virtue of humility both individually and corporately.⁴⁷

Each of these three areas are serious problems in the world. They are not, by any means, the only problems facing the world and its inhabitants, but they are overwhelmingly prevalent and dangerous. Returning to the beginning of this introduction, if the church is unable to live into the second half of Volf’s definition of theology, the enactment of redemption, then the church has ceased having any reason to exist. Indeed, it is much worse yet when the church comports itself within the world, and when Christians comport themselves toward their neighbors, in ways which are completely contrary to the redemption that they proclaim. Nevertheless, this is precisely a reality that is evident in the world. The failures of the church are many and varied, and yet, despite all of that, the church still proclaims, and still earnestly believes in, redemption. While these are certainly ethical issues, they are also deeply theological issues. As such, in order for these problems to be overcome, at least within a Christian context, the underlying theology from which they arise must be explored, must be countered, and, itself, must be redeemed.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ “Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious.” *Ibid.*, 1207.

CHAPTER 1: WHY MOLTMANN? WHY HEGEL? WHY NOW?

“If I were to attempt to sum up the outline of my theology in a few key phrases, I would have at the least to say that I am attempting to reflect on a theology which has: a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, [and] a political responsibility. In and under that it is certainly a theology in pain and joy at God himself, a theology of constant wonder.”⁴⁸ – Jürgen Moltmann

There are many theologians, not to mention thinkers from within and without many other disciplines, that offer creative and powerful possibilities for moving Christian theology forward. No single thinker holds the key to perfect theological profundity, so it is essential that the church actively and openly engage with a variety of thinkers. By engaging with a multitude of voices, the church sets itself up to learn and grow. Christian theology can only be meaningful when it seeks to speak to the pressing issues in cultures of change.

Christian theology cannot pretend that the issues which were faced by the New Testament churches, themselves existing in many and varied contexts,⁴⁹ are a perfect encapsulation of the issues which are still important in today’s world. Many issues of immense contemporary importance – nuclear proliferation, global climate change, and digital warfare as a few examples – would have been nonsensical to the ears of a person living in the first century. Likewise, many issues which seem to be of great importance to certain New Testament era churches would appear to be irrelevant to most contemporary

⁴⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, John Bowden, trans. (London: SCM Press, 1991), 182.

⁴⁹ One might cheekily ask, what has Ephesus to do with Antioch?

Christians. Yet, unless Christians feel comfortable saying that large portions of their Scriptures are irrelevant to their lives, even such culturally conditioned passages must be considered.

Very few Christians would be willing to jettison large chunks of the biblical text, at least explicitly so, for fear that such an action would negate the value, perhaps even the ‘truth’, of those parts of the text which they would want to maintain.⁵⁰ How can one claim one biblical prescription to be authoritative when dozens of others are not?⁵¹ From whence would such authority come? Hermeneutically this is a deeply complicated problem. Unless one is a thorough biblical inerrantist,⁵² it should be at the surface of theological dialogue to say that the Bible is complex, multivocal, and culturally and contextually rooted in a world which no longer exists as such.⁵³ Yet, it is nearly universally the case that the Bible, as it exists in its current forms, is considered theologically informative and, with a wide

⁵⁰ A recent attempt to defend biblical literalism in terms of the ‘truth’ of scripture can be seen in Douglas K. Blount, “What Does It Mean to Say that the Bible Is True?” in *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013), 47-62. Blount argues, in a very simplified form, that:

(1’) The Bible is God’s Word.

(2”) God is wholly truthful.

(3”) Therefore, the Bible is wholly truthful.

Although I would question the premise, the method, and the conclusion of Blount’s assessment, he is careful to define ‘truth’ in terms of a modified correspondence theory, and to recognize that this assessment would not be accepted by any person who does not *a priori* accept the ‘truthfulness’ of the Bible.

⁵¹ There is a fear that “the defining ‘Word of God’ in the Bible will collapse, leaving believers unsure about who they are.” John Shelby Spong, *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible’s Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 124.

⁵² If, as Derrida might say, there is such a thing.

⁵³ Christian Smith argued, “Different readings of scripture indeed *are* possible because the texts themselves are multivocal, polysemic, and multivalent in character.” Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicalism is not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 50. Smith’s description in this text demonstrates the spectrum across which the term ‘evangelical’ might be descriptive and cautions that one not too easily categorize the entire spectrum as single-minded.

variety of nuanced understandings, authoritative. As such, it is an important part of the equation when one hopes to offer alternatives to theological systems which are potentially or actually destructive and dangerous. While a profound study of biblical hermeneutics is well outside the bounds of this dissertation, a very brief discussion of this cornerstone of theological development is warranted.

Theology is at the heart a communal practice. Particularly given the rootedness of Christian theology in a specific compilation of texts, theology is necessarily an act that encompasses and requires multiple acts of translation, although never perfectly so. Any theological speech-act necessitates linguistic translation(s) as well as cultural and contextual translations. Yet, all such acts of translation are themselves conditioned by cultural-linguistic factors.⁵⁴ The comprehensive nature of this cultural-linguistic conditioning is precisely the reason why any meaningful theology must learn from a multitude of voices.⁵⁵ Theology can never be only, or even primarily, about translation because taking culturally conditioned ideas and moving them to a different culturally conditioned context is never a one-to-one proposition. W.V.O. Quine famously wrote of the indeterminacy of translation in his seminal work, *Word and Object*. Referring to the

⁵⁴ The phrase ‘cultural-linguistic’ originated with George Lindbeck. As an alternative approach to theology, Lindbeck claimed, “Religions are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world... [and organize] all of life, including both behavior and beliefs, in relation to this.” George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1984), 32-33.

⁵⁵ Virgilio Elizondo celebrated the locality of interpretation as that which made theological universality possible. “We are more and more convinced that all theological reflection is socially and historically conditioned. Thus we do not consider our thought to be any less authentic than that of any other theological tradition. It is just that we are very clearly aware of the point of departure of our own reflection. And we feel that this type of conditioned theological reflection is not only more honest but even more universal.” Virgilio Elizondo, “Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology,” *Theological Studies*, vol. 70, issue 2 (May, 2009): 62.

difficulties of moving between linguistic worlds, Quine wrote, “Studies of the semantics of reference consequently turn out to make sense only when directed upon substantially our language, from within.”⁵⁶ The same is true for the development of theological belief structures that move from one cultural-linguistic context to another. One can fully inhabit one such cultural-linguistic tradition, but remain an external observer to many others. Theology, thus, is not as simple as translating words and ideas from the Apostle Paul into the languages and cultures of the 21st century. Such an act of translation is important, but it is always an imperfect practice. Lindbeck noted, “As modern culture moves ever farther away from its religious roots, these translations become more strained, complex, and obscure to the uninitiated.”⁵⁷

Thus, the first step toward the necessary renewal of theological discourse is an openness to listen and to learn. Theology is not a universal truth which stands apart from the practice of contextualized speech-acts. Theology is a wide-encompassing discipline which must continue to learn and to grow in order to best inhabit specific contextual realities in the world. Theology cannot thrive in a context in which only one voice is speaking, particularly when that one voice is the voice of the self.⁵⁸ When theologians lose the ability to listen, when theology exists inside of a self-enclosed vacuum, it simultaneously loses the ability to respond to the very real problems of the world. A theology of internal monologue tends merely to reify a mindset by which ‘I’ exist as more

⁵⁶ Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1964), ix.

⁵⁷ Lindbeck, 130.

⁵⁸ “[Theology] is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities.” Lindbeck, 33.

righteous than the ‘other’ and thereby have nothing to learn. A theology which makes possible, supports, and justifies systems of personal rejection, violence, and apathy is a direct result of this sort of mindset. In contrast, what has just been described is an understanding of theology as community narrative. Within this sort of theology, it is understood that individuals, and individuality, are formed by participation in a narratively-shaped community. Only by understanding and naming the localized aspects of this narrative can a localized theology move beyond itself in connection with others. In the following section, I will begin to argue that the theology of Jürgen Moltmann can serve as a structure around which such localized narratives can be framed.

Why Moltmann?

In describing Why Moltmann’s work is potentially exemplary for undergirding an intentionally localized theological narrative it is first important to note that, by almost any standard, Moltmann is a member of the historical majority theological class. Without beleaguering the point, Jürgen Moltmann is a white European man just like many of the so-called “Greats” of Christian theology of the last millennium. This, *in se*, neither particularly qualifies nor disqualifies him as a theological exemplar. However, despite the dedicated time that will be spent digging deeply into Moltmann’s theology it will also be shown that he has many culturally conditioned blind spots. Even if one accepts that Moltmann has given something particularly and profoundly important to ongoing theological dialogue, his contribution is far from the perfection or completion of the theological enterprise. Even as exemplary, Moltmann’s work must be read critically in light of the many varied theological dialogues taking place outside the realm of his cultural-

linguistic context. While he might have much to teach, he also has much to learn. The following analysis of Moltmann's theology should be read in this context: Moltmann's voice is important, but is but one of many voices which can give life to the chorus of Christian theology.

Even if one begins with this understanding, the question remains, why ought Moltmann to receive this sort of focus in the midst of so many under-represented theological voices? Moltmann's work has already been the subject of a great deal of analysis. Even so, I contend that there are many reasons why his work warrants further attention. A few of these reasons, in particular, will be explored in greater detail here.

First, Moltmann has been publishing for over 50 years, and so has a great deal of public work available to explore. This sort of longevity is impressive, albeit not entirely unique. Since the publication of his first major work, *Theology of Hope*, in 1964, with the first English translation in 1967, Moltmann has published over 25 academic books, several books intended for a broader ecclesial audience, and many collaborative books, book chapters, and journal articles. The breadth of Moltmann's writing is impressive, and he is widely admired in the broad academic theological community. One of the major strengths that Moltmann exhibits is the ability to speak into a wide variety of theological contexts. Moltmann's work is not only theologically wide-ranging, but geographically so as well. In the last decade, dissertations have been written exploring Moltmann's theology in relation

to the church in Korea,⁵⁹ Japan,⁶⁰ Cameroon,⁶¹ and South Africa,⁶² among many other locales. Outside of graduate education, Moltmann has also been a frequent interlocutor for a wide variety of established academics.

Karl Barth well-summarized the reason that there is such heavy interest in Moltmann's thought when he called *Theology of Hope*, "Both a stimulating and an irritating book."⁶³ Barth had very specific reasons for the irritation that he felt when reading *Theology of Hope*, and any particular criticisms that he leveled were directed at this one work, and did not account for the vast majority of Moltmann's work which was yet to come. While Barth's criticisms of Moltmann were specifically regarding what Barth saw as Moltmann's inability to continue Barth's own work,⁶⁴ the general feeling that he described was not at all unique. Given the breadth and importance of Moltmann's scholarship, it would be difficult for theologians to trace their way through recent theological history without at least addressing the ways in which Moltmann served as a turning point for, at least Western Euro-American, Christian theology.

⁵⁹ Young Jin Jung, "Defining a Reformed Sacramentality: Assessing John Calvin's Legacy of Eucharistic Presence Compared to the Works of Huldrych Zwingli, Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, and the Korean Church," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2016.

⁶⁰ Naoki Inoue, "Toward a Japanese Contextual Pneumatology: A Critical Dialogue with Japanese Pantheistic Spirituality and Jürgen Moltmann's Panentheistic Pneumatology," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013.

⁶¹ Benoni-Wang Jennet Otop, "A Response to Evil and Suffering: A Cameroonian Reflection on Jürgen Moltmann's Understanding of Suffering," PhD diss., University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2014.

⁶² Marius van Wyk, "Die 'Laaste Oordeel' Volgens Die Eskatologie Van Jürgen Moltmann n' Kritiese Evalueer," PhD diss., University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2013.

⁶³ Karl Barth, *Letters 1961-1968* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 174.

⁶⁴ "The young author makes an energetic attempt to deal with the eschatological aspect of the gospel better than the old man of Basel did..." , *ibid.*

Even as early as 1972, less than a decade into Moltmann's public theological prominence, the importance of Moltmann's thought as a turning point was already being recognized. A.D. Galloway, then Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Glasgow, for example, saw that Moltmann, alongside similar theological contributions from Wolfhart Pannenberg, had "given European theology a new turn and opened new doors."⁶⁵ To see Moltmann's theology as a turning point is not to discount others like Pannenberg, or like Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell, who were operating within similar circles and doing related work. Nor should this focus on Moltmann demonstrate a disregard for other Christian theologies which were being created in a wide variety of non-Eurocentric contexts.⁶⁶ Those important theologies notwithstanding, Moltmann stood at, and contributed to the creation of, a theological turning point. During the period during and immediately prior to Moltmann's early career, Galloway jokingly described the situation of continental theology as one in which "the Bultmannians talked only to Bultmannians, and the Barthians only to God. Their only point of common ground was the conviction that the whole of nineteenth century theology from Hegel onwards was an elaborate waste of time and energy."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ A.D. Galloway, "The New Hegelians," *Religious Studies* 8, no. 4 (December 1972), 367, accessed 7/12/16, JSTOR.

⁶⁶ E.g., see Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), which includes a section on "Global expressions of black theology" including both historical and constructive essays from South Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and Jamaica which reference the timeframe of Moltmann's career.. See also Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), for an overview of Asian theologies that were coming to prevalence during the early years of Moltmann's career, or Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1965), for a Japanese text that directly influenced Moltmann's own work. One could also point to any number of theologians working from Latin America during this timeframe. Such a list would include, Juan Luis Segundo, Julio de Santa Ana, Hugo Assmann, Leonardo Boff, and Jose Miguez Bonino among many others.

This was the European theological context in which Moltmann emerged when he began his academic career in the late 1950s.⁶⁸ While Moltmann's first published volume, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*,⁶⁹ was less ambitious than the work which was soon to follow, it offers an interesting vantage point into the early development of Moltmann's thought. This initial look at Bonhoeffer, when read as an introduction to Moltmann's developing work, demonstrates Moltmann standing at a crossroads. Moltmann entered a theological conversation in which human history was equally discounted on at least two sides, and thus questions of theological ethics were hotly debated.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Galloway, 367.

⁶⁸ A full accounting of the ebbs and flows of European theology throughout the first half of the twentieth century could fill volumes. One such volume that demonstrates both clarity and thoroughness is Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & The World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992). Although I do not always agree with their characterizations of certain theological trends, by focusing on the 20th century as a 'transitional age', the authors trace theological movement as tension, not merely as disembodied thought-problems.

⁶⁹ Jürgen Moltmann and Jürgen Weissbach, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, trans. Reginald H. Fuller and Ilse Fuller (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967). Moltmann's study was originally published alone as *Herrschaft Christi und Soziale Wirklichkeit Nach Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959).

⁷⁰ For the purposes of this project, I have chosen to focus on one particular point of tension in the mid-20th century as an origin story for Moltmann's thought, although one could also easily bring Brunner's natural theology or Tillich's correlation, among others, into this conversation. The Barth-Bultmann debates are of particular value here because they set up the development of Moltmann's philosophy of history in terms of Barth's distancing of God and Bultmann's focus on the temporality of history. As a practice of narrative theology, both of these trends will become essential to the development of Moltmann's thought. It is noteworthy that Barth really came to prominence after the First World War (and, with the writing of the Barmen declaration, played a major role in the theological approach to dealing with the Second World War), while Bultmann came to his famous de-mythologizing project around the time of the Second World War. In each case, the global unrest seen in the early 20th century demonstrated a crisis of the Enlightenment quest for peace through knowledge (see, e.g., Leibniz claim that "One must hold as certain that the more a mind desires to know order, reason, the beauty of things which God has produced, and the more he is moved to imitate this order in the things which God has left to his direction, the happier he will be." Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Political Writings*, ed. Patrick Riley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 84.). Barth's desire to speak of God as wholly other, and Bultmann's engagement with existentialism, both demonstrate a rejection of the Enlightenment quest to describe history in terms of perfecting progress. Tim Chester directly connected Moltmann's theological origins to this point at which the peaceful promises of the newly secularized Enlightenment eschatology broke apart in the violence of the 20th century. "[Moltmann] looks at the way biblical and extrabiblical apocalyptic visions were secularised in the Enlightenment. But

Coming from the lineage of Karl Barth, history was seen as only invested with meaning insofar as it was sanctified by a focus on God. “The verdict that all have sinned certainly implies a verdict on that which is human history apart from the will and word and work of God... [human history] is itself the product of the perverted and sinful thinking of man.”⁷¹ Although Barth’s view is highly nuanced, it would be a fair generalization to say that Barth’s insistence that human history only reveals the flaws of humanity, makes humankind into an object without subjectivity. True subjectivity, it would seem, is only found in the sanctified space of God. Moving in a different direction, Rudolf Bultmann, seemed to come to an understanding of human history that was categorically different from that of Barth. In speaking of his own relation to history Bultmann said,

Obviously the criticisms which many historians deliver, favorable or unfavorable, are given from a standpoint beyond history. As against this I have especially aimed to avoid everything beyond history and to find a position for myself *within* history... for the essential of history is in reality nothing super-historical, but is event in time.⁷²

Bultmann was adamant that any sense of value, any judgments made on those things which had happened in the material world, were wholly outside of any actual history. Since a historian, really any person, exists concretely within a concrete world, there is no legitimate possibility of stepping outside of that world in order to understand it from a greater or

postmodernity now views the Enlightenment project with suspicion because of its role in Third world poverty, environmental destruction, two world wars and the various holocausts of the twentieth century.” Tim Chester, *Mission and the Coming of God: Eschatology, the Trinity and Mission in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 200.

⁷¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV, 1*, Eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 505.

⁷² Rudolf Bultmann, *Interpreting Faith for the Modern Era* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 94.

different point of view. Therefore, the best that can be hoped for is to situate oneself within history, to look backward and perhaps anticipate forward, but only to exist within any given moment in time and space. As such, the historian stands in history as purely subject without the hope of any objectivity.⁷³

In the cases of both Barth and Bultmann, themselves dialogical partners, the debate here was as much or more a question of ontology as it was a question of history or historicity.⁷⁴ The Barth/Bultmann dialogue brought up many theological questions regarding not only biblical interpretation, although this was a primary concern for each of them, but also of what it means for a person to exist within a world which is conceived as divine creation. What does it mean to exist within a creation which is, at least in appearances if not in actuality, other to the individual? What is the relationship between a Creator God and that which and those whom God has created? These and related questions lay at the foundation of the Barth/Bultmann dialogue, and it was into these questions that Moltmann stepped as he entered into the public theological dialogue of the mid-20th century. Moltmann was neither Barthian nor Bultmannian, neither on one side of this debate nor the other. Rather, Moltmann's *via media* embraced aspects from both of these onto-historical schools of thought.

⁷³ See Canon John Macquarrie, "Bultmann's Understanding of God," *The Expository Times*, Vol. 79, Issue 12 (September 1968): 356-360.

⁷⁴ Although, the question of history as a piece of the question of eschatology was of great importance. For a more complete description of the category of history within Western religious thought see Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Historicism: The Once and Future Challenge for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006). Here, Davaney called Barth's neoorthodoxy, "The most significant development that occurred in European theology," because of its repudiation of "the nonhistoricist side" of nineteenth century thought. Davaney also wrote of the importance of the category of history, particularly as historicism, on Biblical Studies and secular philosophies as developing from the 18th century forward.

In many ways, the theological creativity that Moltmann has demonstrated throughout his career is grounded in an onto-historical methodology which takes seriously Bultmann's urging that one must recognize the inherent subjectivity of one's vantage points and subsequent judgments,⁷⁵ but that also takes seriously Barth's claim that even this inherent subjectivity takes place within a world that is sanctified as God's creation and that relies on God for its continued being.⁷⁶ Within this methodology, the individual exists as both subject and object, and encounters the other as both subject and object: subjectively experiencing the world as creation, but existing objectively and contingently as divine creation. Moltmann made this move as part of a renewal of interest in eschatology as a primary focus for Christian theology.⁷⁷ This eschatological interest was not a novelty or a rediscovery, for eschatology was an important point of discussion for Barth, especially in his earlier work, and for Bultmann.⁷⁸ Yet, Moltmann's theology could not accept a purely demythologized concept of eschatology, and so he argued that eschatology must function

⁷⁵ A concise description of Bultmann's point-of-view was offered by Joseph Runzo, "Bultmann holds that each person, living within history, lives within the world-view(s) of his or her age. Thus as the historian investigates the historical biblical documents, his perception of them is delimited by the conceptual structure of his world-view." Joseph Runzo, "Relativism and Absolutism in Bultmann's Demythologizing Hermeneutic," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 32, issue 5 (October 1979): 402.

⁷⁶ Jüngel described Barth's understanding of this relationship, "The being of God is the hermeneutical problem of theology. More exactly: the fact that the being of God proceeds is precisely the hermeneutical problem. For only because the being of God proceeds is there an encounter between God and man." Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: The Being of God is in Becoming*, trans. Horton Harris (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), xx-xxi.

⁷⁷ Alongside Moltmann, theologians like Wolfhart Pannenberg and Johann Baptist Metz, together with biblical scholars like Ernst Käsemann and much earlier Johannes Weiss, are often credited with helping to renew interest in eschatology as a fundamental theological discipline. See, e.g., PB Decock, "The Eclipse and Rediscovery of Eschatology," in *Neotestamentica*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1988): 5-16.

⁷⁸ For a good overview of the competing eschatologies of Barth and Bultmann see, Christopher Asprey, "Eschatological Existence in Barth and Bultmann," in *Eschatological Presence in Karl Barth's Göttingen Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29-55.

as more than simply kerygma. Eschatology is primary for the development of Christian theology because it is there that Christology and ethics come together in a meaningful way. Moltmann said unhesitatingly, “Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God.”⁷⁹ One should be careful here not to immediately equate Moltmann’s use of the word ‘reality’ with the word ‘literality’. Moltmann is doubtlessly not a biblical literalist, but there is a legitimate opportunity for debate as to whether and potentially how Moltmann’s eschatological theology, with its focus on the reality of the resurrection, should or can be viewed literally.

Moltmann rejected the feeling that resurrection, either of Jesus or of the eschatological dead, was something that should be an embarrassment to Christian theology. Yet, he also argued that reality is a distinctly different category than historicity. According to Moltmann, “The historical question as to the resurrection of Jesus also recoils upon the historical enquirer and calls in question the basic experience of history which is the ground of his historical enquiry.”⁸⁰ Questions as to ‘reality’ and to ‘historicity’ are not simply questions about verifiability. To the contrary, “The fact that human existence in itself has a hermeneutic structure proves to be the abiding core that motivates the history of man’s expressions of his life and expositions of his self.”⁸¹ Although Moltmann explicitly disagreed with Feuerbach’s notion that theology is anthropology, it is nevertheless the case

⁷⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York, SCM Press, 1967), 165.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

that given Moltmann's methodology, theology cannot adequately operate as entirely separate from anthropology.⁸²

It is here, at the intersection of seeking God and seeking to understand how to seek God, that Moltmann transformed the Euro-American theological landscape of the 20th century. At this moment, too, even without a direct reference as such, one can see just how profoundly influential Hegel's philosophy was on the young Moltmann. In words that sound as though they could have very easily come from the mouth of Hegel himself, Moltmann said, "From the depths of his creative unfathomableness man must ever again seek and find himself, ever again form and determine himself, and it is this that constitutes that common core of similarity which makes historical understanding possible and also necessary."⁸³ In this process of seeking and finding, of forming and determining, theology moves well beyond the realm of the hypothetical or of the purely abstract. Theology cannot consider only the divine or it will inevitably fall into a hole of circular interiority. Theology simply cannot consider God without simultaneously considering the position from which such consideration can occur. Theology is not anthropology, but theology should not exist without anthropology. The importance of Moltmann's theology, then, is not merely in the

⁸² Feuerbach is of particular interest here because of the prominence that Barth gave to his thought. Rather than outright rejecting Feuerbach as a confused outsider, Barth used Feuerbach's work to critique what he saw to be the problems with 19th century liberal theology. Moltmann took up a direct and critical examination of Feuerbach's work and determined, "Feuerbach's reduction is not an enrichment of this world at the expense of the next; it is an impoverishment of this world through the loss of the world to come." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 14. Moltmann chose not to follow Barth in castigating 19th century theology through Feuerbach, but nevertheless made clear why the recovery of eschatology was theologically important.

⁸³ *Theology of Hope*, 176-177.

speculative theological formulations which he proposes, but in his recognition of where those formulations come from.

To the question of, “Why Moltmann?” the simple answer would be that his theology remains profoundly important and potentially transformative. Indeed, because of the great attention that his thought has garnered, Moltmann stands as exceptionally qualified to continue transforming the landscape of Christian theology, and, as such, his theology is well-equipped to speak to the ethical issues which have already been discussed. His work is particularly well-suited to address the three ethical issues that were previously addressed in the introduction to this work. The strengths of Moltmann’s work, which also tend to be the moments at which he has been the most creative and transformative of the theological landscape, can speak directly to the issues of the varieties of personal supremacy, of programmatic and unapologetic violence, and of human-driven ecological abuse. These themes will be explored further through a quick overview of Moltmann’s understandings of eschatology, the Social Trinity, and the doctrine of creation.

Eschatology

Beginning with the common problem in which one claims moral and perhaps ontological supremacy over another for reasons which might include race and/or gender, among many others, Moltmann’s eschatological focus can offer an important anthropological corrective. One of Moltmann’s later books, created primarily for a popular audience rather than the academic audience to which he has often written, is called, *In the*

End – The Beginning.⁸⁴ While this book does not offer much by way of novelty to those who are already familiar with Moltmann’s previous academic work, the title itself offers a glimpse into the theological function that he sees in maintaining eschatology as a central focus of Christian theology. Eschatology, for Moltmann, is not merely the result of a career of theological meandering. Eschatology is not, in any meaningful way, the end of Christian theology any more than it represents the end of personal or corporate history. For Moltmann, eschatology is that theological movement from which all future theological movements originate. Eschatology is not substantially speculation about the future, but rather a historical and anthropological description of why things are as they are, and how they can be made otherwise. In Moltmann’s own words, “If the last is not the end but the new beginning, we have no need to stare fascinated at the end of life.”⁸⁵ A thorough examination of Moltmann’s theology will reveal that by beginning with eschatology, by seeking to describe the possibility of newness and of life in the midst of death, theology must be oriented by an anthropology which celebrates this possibility equally for all people. For Moltmann, given the forward-looking-backward dynamic of eschatology, any discussion of eschatology must be grounded in a discussion of creation, for ultimately eschatology is nothing more than *creatio nova*,⁸⁶ a new creation which should be seen as a

⁸⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004). It is interesting to note the similarity of this title to Hegel’s description of Absolute Knowing, “The movement is the circle that returns into itself, the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end.” G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 488.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

⁸⁶ “*Creatio originalis* becomes *creatio nova*, a cosmic *perichoresis* of divine and cosmic attributes, in which God dwells in the world and the world dwells in God.” Graham Buxton, “Moltmann on Creation,” in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 64.

continuing movement of creation “in the beginning.” Moltmann positively cited Hans Rosenzweig’s characterization of Christians as “eternal beginners” for this very reason.⁸⁷ Christians are eternally beginning anew because they refuse to accept the darkness of the world as the eternal *status quo*. Moltmann’s eschatological orientation will, therefore, be mined in order to demonstrate a theological anthropology and a philosophy of history which can be utilized to reject the theological justification for claims of individual or corporate superiority over and against the ‘other’.⁸⁸ This anthropology will be rooted in a discussion of the inherent relatedness of God, as described by Moltmann in terms of social trinitarianism.

Social Trinitarianism

Moltmann is also well-equipped to offer an alternative vision which can refuse to sanctify the violence of political messianism while continuing to reject inter-personal oppression. In addition to offering a theological model which has rejuvenated eschatology as centrally important, Moltmann is also well-known for the ways in which he has addressed the classical theological doctrine of the Trinity. As a primary expositor of a loosely defined movement which has come to be known as Social Trinitarianism,⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *In The End*, xi.

⁸⁸ Even though Moltmann only infrequently uses language of ‘the other’ it has been argued that he “expresses the confrontation with the face of the victim in a way reminiscent of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.” Kornel Zathureczky, *The Messianic Disruption of Trinitarian Theology* (Landham: Lexington Books, 2009), 15.

⁸⁹ Although social trinitarianism is not a movement or unified whole, others have added greatly to the dialogue as well. E.g., “The life of God is eternal because it is personal, that is to say, it is realized as an expression of free communion, as love. Life and love are identified in the person... outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness, and becomes... a ‘thing’ without absolute ‘identity’ and ‘name,’ without a face.” John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London:

Moltmann's Trinitarian theology will here be explored as a theological rejection of Christian participation in political messianism and the sanctification of political violence. Moltmann's understanding of the Trinity, as with his eschatology, finds grounding in a particular anthropological conception of the relationship between God and God's creation within history.⁹⁰ Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, which he, perhaps confusingly within traditional theological categories, contrasts with "monotheism," is grounded in human history, and thus is inherently anthropological. That trinitarian theology ought to function as an ethical rejection of political messianism is made clear when Moltmann explicitly contrasted a Trinitarian conception of God with one of monotheistic Monarchianism.⁹¹

The notion of a divine monarchy in heaven and on earth...generally provides the justification for earthly domination – religious, moral, patriarchal or political domination – and makes it a hierarchy, a 'holy rule'. The idea of an almighty ruler of the universe everywhere requires abject servitude, because it points to complete dependency in all spheres of life.⁹²

Darton, 2004), 49. See also Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 1997), and Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1996) for further examples. Ibrahim S. Bitrus also used a social trinitarianism to explore themes of postcoloniality and community engagement through a thoughtful sociological study of Christian dialogue in Nigeria. Ibrahim S. Bitrus, *Community and Trinity in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Stanley E. Grenz has helpfully used a social trinitarianism as a basis for a discussion of interpersonal relationships in Stanley E. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁹⁰ Catherine Lacugna has also rooted trinitarian theology in a similar way. "The doctrine of the Trinity is the summary statement of faith in the God of Jesus Christ. Even though God 'dwells in light inaccessible,' Christ is the visible icon of the invisible God, making tangible within human history and within human personality the ineffable mystery of God." Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 21.

⁹¹ For a quick history of Monarchianism in the early church see John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 474-476.

⁹² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), 191-192.

Moltmann pointed directly to the ways in which monarchical conceptions of God have been used to legitimate monarchical political structures of violence throughout history.⁹³ Thus, Moltmann's Social Trinitarianism will not be explored as an intellectual curiosity, but as an intentionally political statement regarding the ways in which theology can be used to develop a Christian community which refuses to sanctify political violence under the guise of political messianism. If the monarchical monotheistic God can be used to justify the violence of a sovereign against perceived or actual subjects, then the Trinitarian God can likewise be used as a tool to reject this very violence.

The Trinitarian rejection of political violence will take several different but related paths. First, the relation of the three persons of the Godhead will be described as one of *perichoresis*. Though the term is not original to Moltmann, this particular perichoretic conception is one of Moltmann's most important contributions to Trinitarian theology. With this term, Moltmann has argued that the internal life of God, so far as one can separate this from the external life of God, is one of unending fellowship and of mutual manifestations. Beginning with this understanding of God's perichoretic nature, Moltmann then went on to argue that this internal relationality is also expressly made manifest in God's external relationship with creation.

⁹³ Without rejecting the political thrust of Moltmann's claim, David Willhite has argued that it is overly simplistic to consider Monarchianism, with whatever descriptors might be added to the term, as a easily definable totality. Rather, there should be seen a "spectrum of 'monarchianisms'... With this way of thinking, we can also see the orthodox teaching about God's oneness as lying along this spectrum." David E. Willhite, *The Gospel According to Heretics: Discovering Orthodoxy Through Early Christological Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 96-97.

The Trinitarian God is not only inherently relational within Godself, but also substantially relational with the world that God has created. This external relationality is demonstrated in a vulnerable divine pathos.⁹⁴

The history of the divine pathos is embedded in this history of men...it is his interest in his creation and his people, by which God transfers his being into the history of his relationship and his covenant with man. God takes man so seriously that he suffers under the actions of man and can be injured by them.⁹⁵

The pathos of a Trinitarian God is the sign of a living relationship of love between the trinitarian unity which draws in the world external to God. This opening of the divine trinitarian Self to the world, including the acceptance of the risk for pain and death, is, for Moltmann, a model for true human community. This model for a perichoretic community of love, with Moltmann's Trinitarian theology at its heart, will be used to counter the political narratives of violence that are so prevalent in the Western world and which are so often accepted and justified by Christian theology. In order to do so, however, Moltmann's own work must first be grounded in a doctrine of creation through which the trinitarian relationality of God is made manifest beyond God's inter-trinitarian life.

Creation and Liberation

The doctrine of creation stands, for Moltmann, as the foundation upon which a political theology can be built. The doctrine of creation roots eschatology and trinitarianism

⁹⁴ Moltmann drew heavily from Heschel's study of the concept of 'divine pathos' in the prophets. See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001).

⁹⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 270-271.

in a world in need of redemption. It unites God with the world, and also the world with itself.

The cry for liberty therefore unites humanity and nature in a single hope. They will either be destroyed by their division and enmity or will survive as partners in a new community... The cry for freedom is not only the cry of exploited, oppressed, alienated, divided, and frightened humanity. It is also the cry of the creation which man is destroying.⁹⁶

Thus, a theology which seeks after liberation⁹⁷ is the point at which doctrines of creation, eschatology, and a social Trinitarian God come together. The groans of creation cannot be separated from the cries of the exploited, alienated, and oppressed. Because the destruction of the planet will first and hardest hit those who are already otherwise exploited, alienated, and oppressed, ecological issues must be recognized as deeply connected to interpersonal political realities as well.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1979), 98.

⁹⁷ This term is intentionally left ambiguous as to its relation to the movement(s) known as Liberation Theology. Moltmann was an early and vocal advocate for varieties of liberation theology. He spoke of his relation to the relatively early years of Liberation Theology, "It also became clear to me between 1975 and 1980 that I personally could not authentically frame a 'theology in context' and a 'theology in movement' (liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology), for I am not living in the Third World, am not oppressed, and am not a woman. In those years I tried as best I could to let the voices of silenced men and women be heard in the world too – the world in which I myself live." *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, vii. Yet, later in life he recounted being among a group excoriated by James Cone for participating in a liberationist conference that was filled nearly entirely with white theologians. For a recounting of this story see, Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 229-230.

⁹⁸ The World Health Organization projects that rising global temperatures, among other factors, will lead to a wide variety of diseases that will disproportionately impact those living in poverty. See, World Health Organization, *The Global Burden of Disease, 2004 Update* (Geneva, WHO Press, 2008). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has also argued at length about the relationship between climate change and poverty. One such study looks specifically at the potential for lost livelihood among the already impoverished. L., M. Olsson, et al., "Livelihoods and poverty," *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 793-832.

Returning to Miroslav Volf's definition of theology from the introduction,⁹⁹ creation, eschatology, and trinitarian thought are each points at which the quest for understanding the world meets the need to mend the world in redemptive ways. These are also points at which Moltmann's work demonstrates great creativity and theological importance. As such, it is these areas which will be specifically explored as possible responses to the ongoing and growing brokenness of creation. However, it will also be demonstrated that these themes did not arrive to Moltmann fully formed, but demonstrate a deep engagement with a particularly Hegelian philosophy. In order to best understand Moltmann, one must also seek to understand the Hegelian background from which much of his thought has been influenced.

Why Hegel and Why Now?

To the question, Why Moltmann?, the brief answer was that Moltmann's work is important, innovative, and potentially helpful. Even if one were to accept this answer, the "Why Moltmann?" question could still continue to be asked. Moltmann's work is widely viewed as important in part because it has received so much scholarly attention. Many books, articles, theses, and dissertations have been dedicated to explorations, critiques, and explanations of his work. Yet, despite the great attention that Moltmann's theology has received to date, there remain holes in the secondary Moltmannian scholarship that need

⁹⁹ It is, of course, no accident that Volf's definition of theology was selected to provide structure. Moltmann served as Volf's *Doktorvater* at the University of Tübingen, so the two thinkers have a long-standing connection.

to be filled. One such hole that, to the present, remains mostly undisturbed is a thorough explanation of the philosophical undergirdings of Moltmann's theology.

By way of example, the strongest primer to Moltmann's theology, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*,¹⁰⁰ is structured such that the author explores important movements of Moltmann's theology, e.g. divine suffering, theodicy, political theology, etc., without any extended discussion of the philosophical background which led Moltmann to develop his thoughts on these various subjects. Here, in two chapters about Moltmann's Trinitarian theology, an area in which Moltmann is greatly indebted to Hegel, Hegel only warrants one passing reference.¹⁰¹ While this is a primer, and thus one perhaps ought not to expect too much background exploration, the same general trend is apparent in academic Moltmann scholarship.¹⁰² One might point to a wide array of influences, intentionally

¹⁰⁰ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd., 2006).

¹⁰¹ This reference is emblematic of the way that Moltmann scholarship often glosses over Moltmann's philosophical influences. "The Trinity here undoubtedly has a Hegelian dialectical structure...though this does not mean that the content is entirely Hegelian." Ibid., 154.

¹⁰² While searching the entirety of the University of Denver library system, including online journal and dissertation databases, a simple search for the names Hegel and Moltmann together provided 133 search results. Of these 133 results, only one demonstrated a primary interest in exploring the philosophical background of Moltmann's thought, and that not exclusively so. See, Nicholas Adams, "Eschatology Sacred and Profane: The Effects of Philosophy on Theology in Pannenberg, Rahner and Moltmann," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, issue 3 (November 2000), accessed June 14, 2016, EBSCOHost. Similar results were encountered when using search terms of "Moltmann + philosophy" and the German "Moltmann + *philosophie*." While this is not an exhaustive list of search terms which might lead to studies of Moltmann's philosophical heritage, other such searches yielded similar results. In Bauckham's primer to Moltmann's theology, he included a bibliography of secondary literature which studied Moltmann's work in detail. While not exhaustive, this bibliography includes over 150 entries in German, English, and French. Yet, within this bibliography, not a single entry uses any variation of the word 'philosophy'. While the line between theologian and philosopher can be rather fine, at least for those coming from the Christian tradition, there are likewise scant references to any particular philosophical influences. One book listed in this bibliography explored the relationship of Moltmann's theology to the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Marko Matić, *Jürgen Moltmanns Theologie in Auseinandersetzung mit Ernst Bloch* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1983). While this relationship is undoubtedly important, this particular text has received very little traction in the greater body of secondary Moltmann literature, and scarcely mentions Hegel's influence on either Bloch or Moltmann. There are only two entries in this bibliography that primarily cite the relationship between Moltmann and Hegel. The first is a very brief examination of Moltmann in an out-of-print French book dedicated to the

philosophical and otherwise, which undergird and influence Moltmann's work in a variety of ways. Even so, I will argue that Hegel's influence, particularly on Moltmann's development of doctrines of creation, eschatology, and the Social Trinity, is of significant importance. The relationship between Hegel and Moltmann is complicated. Moltmann has never classified himself as an Hegelian, and it would be short-sighted to do so exclusively. Moltmann's work demonstrates a great philosophical complexity that stems from a lifetime of copious reading and deep contemplation. Philosophical influence is never clean and never simple.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, even if Moltmann is not himself 'an Hegelian', and even if there is a broad philosophical lineage from which Moltmann's theology has drawn, it will be demonstrated here that his theology demonstrates profound Hegelian influence. Thus, to the question, "Why Hegel?" the answer would be that Hegel's fingerprints are evident in precisely those areas in which Moltmann's theology can most clearly speak to the brokenness of the world. And, of course, this also points to an answer to the question of, "Why Now?" The brokenness of the world is evident, and that brokenness is profound and debilitating. If Moltmann's theology can be an effective voice in helping to mend the world in these points of brokenness, then it is imperative that a continued deep examination of Moltmann's theology be undertaken.

influence that Hegel has had on contemporary theology. D. Müller, "Résumé des débats," in *Hegel et la théologie contemporaine: L'absolu dans l'histoire?*, ed. Louis Rumpf (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1977), 219-225. The second, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis, explored an Hegelian influence on Moltmann in greater depth, but remains rather obscure as it is only available at four libraries connected to WorldCat. Anne Primavesi, *The Cross and the Rose: The Interaction of Lutheran Paradox and Hegelian Dialectic Exemplified in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Ph.D. thesis, Heythrop College, University of London, 1987).

¹⁰³ Canon John Macquarrie argued that philosophical influence ought to be understood in terms of lineage. "I would like to repeat that the philosophical background of the theologies of hope is not to be found in any single philosopher, whether Bloch or Hegel, but in what may be called the Hegel-Feuerbach-Marxist line." Canon John Macquarrie, "Theologies of Hope: A Critical Examination," *The Expository Times* 82 (January 1971), 100.

CHAPTER 2: A MOLTMONSTROUS HEGEL

“Thus, as far as factual information is concerned, we find that what in former ages engaged the attention of men of mature mind, has been reduced to the level of facts, exercises, and even games for children; and, in the child’s progress through school, we shall recognize the history of the cultural development of the world traced, as it were, in a silhouette.”¹⁰⁴ - Hegel

Before it is possible to move on to a conversation of what exactly theology looks like in the work and thought of Jürgen Moltmann, it will first be necessary to examine his Hegelian heritage. Hegel is, by no means, the only philosophical influence that Moltmann’s work incorporates, but he is among the most frequently cited and among the most important. Even, perhaps especially, in Moltmann’s earliest publications, the fingerprints of Hegel are found in plentitude. Moltmann very frequently and dutifully cites direct quotes from Hegel.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, even when Hegel is not being specifically cited, the careful reader can see a profound influence of Hegelian philosophy throughout Moltmann’s corpus. Moltmann’s usage of Hegel, as Macquarrie reminded us earlier, comes through an established intellectual history.¹⁰⁶ For this reason, the purpose of this chapter is not to try

¹⁰⁴ *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Using *Theology of Hope* as an example, Hegel is directly referenced on 34 different pages. Moltmann’s bibliography in this text is vast, but for the sake of comparison, other influential thinkers are cited as follows: Sören Kierkegaard is cited on 6 pages, Hans Georg Gadamer is cited on 6 pages, Johann Gottlieb Fichte is cited on 6 pages, Martin Heidegger is cited on 8 pages, Friedrich Nietzsche is cited on 9 pages, and Immanuel Kant is cited on 20 pages. Two things in particular bear noting here- this list is not even remotely exhaustive, and Moltmann does not always cite these thinkers, Hegel included, in entirely or even partially positive ways.

¹⁰⁶ For example Karl Marx stands as a recognized interpreter and utilizer of Hegelian philosophy. It can be no surprise, then, that Moltmann, standing chronologically at the end of this particular intellectual lineage, will at times come back to Hegel through both the intellectual and empirical history of Marx and of Marxism.

to prove, if such a thing were even possible, that Hegel holds the highest place of philosophical esteem in Moltmann's mind. Rather, to say that Hegel is "among the most important philosophical influences," is the beginning of an interpretation of Moltmann as an interpreter of Hegel and as a thinker in his own right.

In this interpretation, Hegel stands at a place of profound import. Moltmann's thought should not, however, be made so simplistic as to say that it is thoroughly, solely, and unapologetically Hegelian. Moltmann is adamant that theology, his own theological works certainly included, should always speak into a particular spatio-temporal context.¹⁰⁷ Moltmann has consistently oriented his theology by pointing to particular ethical and political issues. This orientation disallowed Moltmann, at least ideally, from speaking from the standpoint of a de-contextualized insular theology.¹⁰⁸ Regarding a contextualizing of theology Moltmann wrote, "The biblical, Christian and church traditions were indeed primarily written and put together by dominant males... Now we can read these traditions 'from above', but we can also read them – contrary to the way in which they were intended

Moltmann is well aware of this intellectual progression, and at times has named it as such. There are other times, however, in which Moltmann, even if he was aware, did not point to the progression of thinkers, Marxist or otherwise, through which his references and his thoughts have come. Likewise, there are numerous times in which Moltmann will point toward a thinker who has been clearly influenced by Hegel, without definitively making the connection between them.

¹⁰⁷ Here, Hegel's influence is evident. As Habermas described Hegel's system, "A philosophy which knows itself to be the result of the same formative process that it comprehends in terms of the interrelationship of nature and history cannot set itself outside the element of time. Spirit devours time, but time for its part can render judgment on an impotent spirit." Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), 170.

¹⁰⁸ An interesting example of this self-contextualizing of theological speech is evident in Moltmann's relationship with his wife, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, who was, herself, an influential theologian. Together they wrote a short book, structured as a dialogue, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann, *God-His and Hers* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

– from below.”¹⁰⁹ The ‘from above’ reading which Moltmann here critiqued would be a reading of scripture that takes male dominance for granted because of an uncritical reading of biblical texts which have been written from the standpoint of male dominance. By proclaiming the need to read the biblical text ‘from below’,¹¹⁰ Moltmann recognized his own situatedness, and his own inclination to experience Christian texts and traditions in ways that are culturally prescribed.¹¹¹ Throughout Moltmann’s career, he has looked for and often, though not exclusively, worked “from below,” as here described.¹¹²

This ‘from below’ intentionality which Moltmann described necessitates that his readers pay careful attention to the context in which he was writing – and thereby, too, to those particular ethical issues with which he was grappling in any given text – as well as to the context of the reader. Thus, rather than taking the Moltmannian corpus as a monolithic whole and proclaiming its profound and enduring Hegelian nature, this chapter

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Johnson has similarly recognized the need to locate the theological task in this way, particularly because of male-privileging social structures. In order to impact the social structures which can be oppressive to human flourishing, she used a social-Trinitarian framework to speak of God’s “intrinsic relatedness to the world, alliance with human flourishing, [and] liberating care for the poor.” *She Who Is*, 21. For a more in-depth discussion of “from below” methodology see Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Christology’s Impact on the Doctrine of God,” *Heythrop Journal* 26 (1985): 143-163.

¹¹¹ An excellent study of the concept of ‘situatedness’ can be found in David Simpson, *Situatedness, or Why We Keep Saying Where We’re Coming From* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Simpson described that ‘situatedness’ ironically conveys a broad array of meanings, rather than itself being entirely set. “Situatedness, then, is not naming anything precisely but sheltering a whole range of other terms that are themselves equally approximate.” *Ibid.*, 40. For this study, the concept of ‘situatedness’ will be rooted in an Hegelian ontology of becoming which makes room for the negation of what ‘situatedness’ simultaneously is and is not.

¹¹² Moltmann’s usage of the term ‘from below’ is not unique. It has even been argued that ‘from below’ was the standard theological method prior to Barth. “In essence, Barth was calling for a revolution in theological method, a theology ‘from above’ to replace the old, human-centered theology ‘from below.’” Grenz and Olson, 67. While Grenz and Olson do not reference Moltmann directly in this conversation, they argue that his contemporary Wolfhart Pannenberg began with such a methodology before realizing that “such an approach is incomplete.” *Ibid.*, 195. For Moltmann, the ‘from below’ is an approach to scripture, but not the totality of an approach to theology.

will track an Hegelian line which is frequently and importantly evident in Moltmann's writing. This Hegelian line is evident in the larger structure and flow of Moltmann's publishing history, in particular theological areas with which Moltmann seems consistently concerned, as well as in the actual arguments made by Moltmann on these and other topics.

Using Hegel as a Tool

Before it is possible to begin tracing this line, Hegel must first be dealt with on his own terms. As with Moltmann, and perhaps even to a greater degree, Hegel's thought is anything but monolithic. There are continuing themes and trends which repeatedly reappear in Hegel's written work, but the complexity of his argumentation and the difficulties of his language have allowed an incredibly wide array of competing interpretations to be argued as essentially Hegelian. The literature which directly attempts to interpret and explain Hegel is vast. While there is a place for continued textual exploration and novel interpretation of Hegel's writings, that is not the goal of this chapter. At some level, Hegel must be dealt with on his own terms, but, here, Hegel must also be approached through a Moltmannian lens. Thus, a view of Hegel will be presented which will help to deeply examine Moltmann's theology.¹¹³

¹¹³ As such, the examination of Hegel's work will proceed thematically, rather than systematically. By approaching Hegel thematically, following the thematic reading of Moltmann that has already been outlined, much of his work will be explicitly left in the background. My reading of Hegel, particularly through my reading of Moltmann reading Hegel, has been informed by the larger reality of Hegel's system, but will proceed with particular focus on the interlocking issues of history, *Geist*, and sublation, as well as the development of subjectivity and eschatology/the 'end of history'. These will be read in parallel with Moltmann's creation, Trinity, and eschatology. These Hegelian themes will be examined primarily through discrete sections of *The Phenomenology* and *The Science*, but will also incorporate a discussion of the notion of tragedy as seen in *Lectures on Fine Art*. This is following Moltmann's citations of Hegel which rarely stray beyond these specific texts.

For Moltmann, Hegel exists in the background as an important influence, but at face value primarily as a tool. And, as with any tool, Hegel's work can be wielded in a variety of ways, at times unexpected, that may or may not align with the intention of its creator. While the personal intentions of a philosopher are infinitely more difficult to define than the intended use of a physical tool, the moment that a philosophy is used as an intellectual tool it is immediately open for uses which might run contrary to authorial intent.

Gilles Deleuze well described just how freely philosophy as a tool might be used when he described his relationship with other philosophers as one of forceful copulation,

Or (it comes to the same thing) an immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions.¹¹⁴

Particularly given the systemic nature of Hegel's work, Moltmann has of necessity utilized the shifts, slips, dislocations, and hidden emissions that Deleuze named. Moltmann was very clearly not interested in being a mere commentator, but rather has shown himself to be a utilizer. Yet, as Deleuze saw in his own work, in utilizing the writings of Hegel, Moltmann remains bound to a certain textuality. It would be in bad faith, although not unheard of, to simply use Hegel as a puppet with no regard to what it is that Hegel offered. The offspring produced must be his, even if monstrous.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, "Letter to a Harsh Critic," *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6.

¹¹⁵ On my reading, Moltmann accepts being bound to Hegel's text and, while utilizing Hegel, seeks to interpret Hegel on Hegel's own terms, albeit non-systematically. I would describe Hegel's relation to Moltmann as one of broadly direct influence: major Hegelian thematic elements are evident in both the structure and content of Moltmann's work, but Moltmann rarely demonstrates an explicitly detailed reading of any major passages of Hegel's text. The titular description of "Moltmann's Creative (Mis)Reading of

To meaningfully utilize Hegel as more than a puppet requires both careful reading and also deep interpretation of his work. The Hegel presented in this chapter is therefore intentionally not pure, if one could perfectly describe a pure Hegel anyway, but rather a tool to be wielded. This tool is a Moltmannian Hegel just as much as it is an Hegelian Hegel. In what turns out to be an easily recognizable Hegelian way, an interpretation of Hegel seems to be at its best when one refuses to read Hegel as static and purely historical.

Every philosophy has been and still is necessary. Thus none have passed away, but all are affirmatively contained as elements in a whole... The most recent philosophy [is] the result of all preceding, and hence no philosophy has ever been refuted. What has been refuted is... merely the fact that this [philosophy] should be considered final and absolute in character.¹¹⁶

Hegel thus opened his own philosophy to deep interpretation from those who follow when he argued that, in exploring history, of which he is now an integral part,

Whatever is true exists eternally in and for itself – not yesterday or tomorrow, but entirely in the present, ‘now’, in the sense of an absolute present... it exists absolutely now. This in fact means that the present world and the present form and self-consciousness of the spirit contain within them all the stages which appear to have occurred earlier in history.¹¹⁷

However one regards Hegel’s particular relationship with history, on his own word it can be considered that even if the content of his philosophy was the Absolute,¹¹⁸ the method

Hegel” is not intended to demonstrate that Moltmann is a poor interpreter of Hegel, but rather that he is a non-systematic reader of Hegel, a practice that Hegel would certainly reject as meaningless. Nevertheless, I will argue that Moltmann is not entirely disinterested in a deep reading of Hegel, but that he recognizes a fragility of Hegel’s system by which he can accept much of Hegel’s insight apart from the requirement for systematicity.

¹¹⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy Vol. 1*, trans. E.S. Haldane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 37.

¹¹⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 150.

¹¹⁸ Or Reason, or *Geist*, or Truth, or any number of terms that Hegel used throughout his writing.

with which he derived his thought, or the form in which he expressed it, was contingent on the happenstances of history, geography, and culture. Hegel's conclusions, and the system which he created to draw those conclusions, are of great importance. However, those conclusions, and their underlying methodology, must be read 'from below' with as much vigor as they are read 'from above'. This 'from below' methodology will be the strategy for a 'monstrous' reading of Hegel – true to his words, but unapologetically interpreted.¹¹⁹

Moltmann's utilization of Hegel, as here described, should not be understood simply as an attempt to theologize Hegel, or to interpret Hegel's philosophy from within a religious discourse. Rather, Moltmann's approach to Hegel is more akin to the fanciful flights of a jazz artist. Moltmann (in the vein of Dizzy Gillespie) had to first understand the theme that is running through a work. Only when that theme is understood can one meaningfully improvise beyond the theme. An improvisation often pushes boundaries beyond what the original creator ever envisioned, but does so in such a way that demonstrates respect for the original. Moltmann's "(Mis)reading" of Hegel demonstrates this rootedness in and respect for Hegel, but rejects that Hegel is the final word even on Hegelian themes. Moltmann both uplifts and rejects, riffs on and shows appreciation for, Hegel.

One fundamental issue upon which Moltmann simply breaks with Hegel, which is of particular importance here, is on the finality of religion. Hegel was repeatedly clear that,

¹¹⁹ Following Quine, Donald Davidson has written about the 'indeterminacy' of interpretation. "The aim is not the absurd one of making disagreement and error disappear... A theory for interpreting the utterances of a single speaker... would have many equally eligible rivals." Donald Davidson, "Belief and the Basis of Meaning," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation: Philosophical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 153. One should be careful, however, not to understand by Davidson's words that even if there can be multiple eligible rivals, that all interpretations are *de facto* equally valid.

though in his mind Christianity represented the culmination of religion, even this consummate religion must be sublated by philosophy.¹²⁰ As will be described in more detail later, Hegelian sublation represents both an uplifting and a negation. Philosophy's sublation of religion is, on the one hand, a purification, but it is such a purification as describes something like an overcoming.¹²¹ Yet, Moltmann's project, in ways beyond Hegel's project, is inherently religious. Thus, even at the most fundamental level, Moltmann has intentionally aligned himself as contrary to Hegel's finalized system. In the next section will be explored one of Hegel's most important terms, *Geist*. This term is not only important within Hegel's philosophical system, but also serves as a demonstration of why Moltmann's relationship with Hegel is so complex. *Geist* has strong resonances with the classical language of Christian theology, and so seems like an easy intersection. But, given the complexities of Hegel's thought, even comparing Hegelian terminology with that of classical Christian theology must be done carefully, and much more so when Hegel becomes more than a mere point of comparison.

¹²⁰ "The Spirit of the revealed religion has not yet surmounted its consciousness as such, or what is the same, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its consciousness... The *content* of this picture-thinking is absolute Spirit; and all that now remains to be done is to supersede this mere form... or rather, since this belongs to consciousness as such, its truth must already have yielded itself in the shape of consciousness." *Phenomenology*, 479.

¹²¹ Even so, Charles Taylor argued that, even as sublated, religion continued to hold an important place in Hegel's thought. "The union with God which is philosophy thus requires the union with God in heart and feeling which religion provides; and this not just as a temporally prior stage which is destined to be left behind, but in a continuing way, since the union in thought can only continue if the union in life persists." Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 486.

The Becoming of *Geist*

This section will utilize Hegel's language of *Geist* as a starting point to explore the development of particularly religious belief and the way that such belief(s) impact the development of individual and communal behaviors. *Geist*, it will be argued, is not the ethereal, strangely metaphysical, disembodiment by which Hegel is often caricatured.¹²² Rather, as Hegel described, "Spirit is what it is only in transcending what it is immediately, stepping back from it. In other words, we are to consider the movement in Spirit... Being is the form of immediacy, but Being should be posited in its truth."¹²³ *Geist* is that middle ground upon which conscious subject is brought together with object. *Geist* is language, story, shared intersubjectivity. Within the context of a religious community, *Geist* is communal praxis: the historically rooted words, stories, and rituals upon which a community is based.¹²⁴ However, this *Geist* is not merely a passive language game, but rather an actively developing, self-regenerating form of life. On the individual level, one's surroundings are never given, but processed. An individual only comes to experiences through a conceptual framework which is necessarily linguistically grounded.¹²⁵ So, too,

¹²² "It is important to debunk the familiar caricature that depicts Kant as the 'critical philosopher' and Hegel as the 'philosopher of system' whose philosophical theology allegedly lapses into pre-critical metaphysics." Robert R. Williams, *Hegel on the Proofs and Personhood of God: Studies in Hegel's Logic and Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 59.

¹²³ G.W.F. Hegel and Leo Rauch, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-06) with Commentary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 85.

¹²⁴ "The distinction between theory and *praxis* becomes irrelevant, since theory itself, by liberating the spirit, destroys the foundations of outworn institutions as effectively as any *praxis*." Robert Gascoigne, *Religion, Rationality, and Community: Sacred and Secular in the Thought of Hegel and his Critics* (Hingham: Kluwer Academic, 2012), 79.

¹²⁵ See Jere O'Neill Surber, ed., *Hegel and Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) for a series of excellent discussions about the importance of language for Hegel and for German Idealism more generally. In particular, Surber argued in the introduction to this text that, "For Hegel, language is

Geist, as the mediator of a communal form of life, is linguistically grounded, and actively construed.¹²⁶

Geist is complex and multi-layered. *Geist* is always becoming, always developing, always already incomplete.¹²⁷ Yet, *Geist* should not be misunderstood as a pure transcendence.¹²⁸ Even in his idealism, Hegel explicitly rejected the notion that philosophy could be entirely transcendent.¹²⁹ Just as Hegel's philosophy of *Geist* should not be confused as entirely transcendent,¹³⁰ even if transcendental,¹³¹ one ought also to be careful

associated, most fundamentally, with the self-determining processes of reason (*Vernunft*), but that, when reduced to the merely formal structures of logical judgment, becomes an inert and empty shell incapable of expressing the power of reason to produce and articulate the broader and more complexly mediated unities involved in genuine thinking." *Hegel and Language*, 12. Hegel's conception of language is obviously far more complex than a single footnote as it is wide-ranging across his written work. Because Hegel did not explicitly offer a systematic discussion of language, within the variety of references to language Hegel is not always entirely consistent.

¹²⁶ "It is thinking, when externalized through language, that permits the passage from the realm of subjectivity to that of "Objective Spirit" and its "higher realms" of law and the state and, ultimately, to "Absolute Spirit" itself." *Ibid*, 12.

¹²⁷ "*Geist* is that consciousness which is an indivisible part of the human social world at any point in time, changing as humans interact with each other to develop new kinds of understanding. Ultimately, the development of *Geist* and human consciousness are indivisible; *Geist* just is human consciousness as it develops in the course of social interactions." Anthony King, *The Structure of Social Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 103.

¹²⁸ Žižek is adamant that Hegel cannot be entirely, or, at least for Žižek- at all, de-materialized. "The crucial mistake to be avoided is therefore to grasp the Hegelian Spirit as a kind of meta-Subject, a Mind, much larger than an individual human mind, aware of itself: once we do this, Hegel has to appear as a ridiculous spiritualist obscurantist." Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic*, ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 60. See also a nearly identical quotation in Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2012), 406.

¹²⁹ "Hegel regards himself as a defender of the powers of cognition, not by reducing the objects of knowledge to a set of subjective (or intersubjective) states, but by arguing that our conceptions can be adequate to comprehend the world itself." Kenneth R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 140.

¹³⁰ Geoffrey Holsclaw describes *Geist* as, "'Not non-natural' human existence... [which] is immanent to natural processes but self-transcends them through its own normative self-relation." Geoffrey Holsclaw, *Transcending Subjects: Augustine, Hegel, and Theology* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 23.

¹³¹ Whether and to what extent Hegel's work demonstrates a transcendental method, or even an attempt at the same, is debated within Hegel scholarship. Charles Taylor influentially argued for a transcendental

not to impose certain Christian conceptions of the Holy Spirit onto the term.¹³² While Hegel was undoubtedly influenced by his early theological training, and general Christian heritage, *Geist* ought not to be too easily deified. Indeed, while Hegel wrote at great length about subjective spirit, *Geist* itself cannot be easily subjectified or personified. *Geist* is a hermeneutical experiential process cyclically compounding upon itself. “*Geist* is simply the underlying unifying principle of consciousness, and, at the same time, the underlying rational will ‘behind’ all practical reason and action.”¹³³ *Geist* is not purely singular, nor can *Geist* be individualized in persons. At the same time, *Geist* is not formless.¹³⁴

The spiritual alone is the actual. It is essence, or that which has being *in itself*; it is that which *relates itself to itself* and is *determinate*, it is *other-being* and *being-for-self*, and in this determinateness, or in its self-externality, abides within itself; in other words, it is *in and for itself*.¹³⁵

reading of Hegel in Charles Taylor, “The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*,” in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 157-187. On the other side of this debate, Stephen Houlgate argued forcefully against Taylor’s interpretation. See, Stephen Houlgate, “Is Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit an Essay in Transcendental Argument?” in *The Transcendental Turn*, eds. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173-194.

¹³² E.g., Eric Dale, although carefully, did just this in describing that “Hegelian *Geist* is a *religious* or *theological* category” However, Dale noted that any such theological usage, at least for Hegel, “Encompasses in philosophical or adequately conceptual form the Holy Spirit which the church confesses.” Eric Michael Dale, *Hegel, The End of History, and the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 190. As a religious term *Geist* is not equivalent to the Christian Holy Spirit, but philosophically describes the concept which theology so names.

¹³³ R.C. Solomon, “Hegel’s Concept of ‘*Geist*’,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 6 (1970), 660

¹³⁴ “Thus *Geist* must have a vehicle in finite spirit. This is the only kind of vehicle it can have. Moreover, there cannot be only one such. For *Geist* cannot be confined to the particular place and time of any one finite spirit. It has to compensate for its necessary localization, as it were, by living through many finite spirits.” Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, 90.

¹³⁵ *Phenomenology*, 14.

Tellingly, in the *Philosophy of Mind (Geist): Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the concept of *Geist* was described in three different ways: subjective, objective, and universal.¹³⁶ Each of these broad headings corresponds to a discussion of *Geist* in its various manifestations. It is never solely subjective, nor solely objective. Rather, “The notion which is aware of itself in its objectivity as a subjectivity identical with itself [is] for that reason universal.”¹³⁷

Here, the discussion of *Geist* in-and-for-itself overlaps with questions of knowledge. As Hegel conceptualized *Geist*, being in-and-for-itself meant a knowing of itself. Hegel began to re-describe something of an anthropology of the subject. Hegel wanted to do away with Kant’s bifurcation of the subject into a transcendental ego and an empirical ego.¹³⁸ What Hegel offered in exchange is a subject of becoming, “The moment of the ‘I’ which is for itself pure negativity.”¹³⁹ This ‘I’, when understood as subject, is known through the process of simply becoming. Hegel rejected, or at least nuanced, much of Kant’s transcendental idealism in favor of an idealism which is, in many ways, less ‘ideal’ than that of Kant.¹⁴⁰ “Of the absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result,

¹³⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind (Geist): Part Three of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹³⁸ E.g. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), A108. Here, Kant spoke of the transcendental unity of apperception, “The original and necessary consciousness of the identity of the self is thus at the same time a consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances according to concepts... For the mind could never think its identity in the manifoldness of its representations... if it did not have before its eyes the identity of its act.”

¹³⁹ *Phenomenology*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ “Hegel’s rejection of an unknown thing-in-itself leads to a fundamental difference between his idealism and Kant’s. For Hegel, reason grasps the essence of things, their very reality... another way to put this is to

that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself.”¹⁴¹

Using Hegelian terminology, the ‘I’ is in the process of movement from merely being in-itself to being in-and-for-itself. Of course, it is not merely the subjective ‘I’ that exists in transformation. Nothing exists except as part of this transformative process. “The ‘I’, or becoming in general, this mediation, on account of its simple nature, is just immediacy in the process of becoming, and is the immediate itself.”¹⁴² This movement is necessary for Hegel in order to avoid an empty unicity of the Absolute.¹⁴³ Hegel contrasted his thought to that of his contemporaries who saw no self-differentiation in the Absolute. One such example is Hegel’s famous critique of Schelling whose philosophy Hegel described as the “night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black.”¹⁴⁴ Although he was, by no means, parroting Aristotle, Hegel saw himself as following a similar philosophical trajectory. It is with reference to Aristotle that Hegel claimed, “Reason is purposive activity... purpose is what is immediate and at rest, the unmoved which is also self-moving, and as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is being-for-self

say that reason is not merely a subjective phenomenon, a characteristic activity of minds; reason, for Hegel, is also objective.” Philip J. Kain, *Hegel and the Other: A Study of the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2005), 73.

¹⁴¹ *Phenomenology*, 11.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ “For Hegel the Absolute is not simply the without-relation or the without-movement; rather it is absolute relation and movement, a complete relation unto itself.” Giorgio Agamben, “Excursus 7 (after the final day)” in *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, ed. Dennis King Keenan (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 383.

¹⁴⁴ *Phenomenology*, 9.

or pure negativity.”¹⁴⁵ Hegel was concerned to describe a negative movement of positivity, the creation of subjectivity by a process of self-alienation in which the self is seen not as subject but as object. Only when the self becomes object, can it return to itself in order to then become subject. This hits at the heart of the Hegelian dialectic, for it is only through the denial of subjectivity, the purely negative, through which subjectivity comes to be - the negative which is also a positive. The concept of *Geist* has here been described for two primary reasons, to demonstrate Hegel’s understanding of the movement of history, and to begin to describe how this relates to the development of a subjective ‘I’. Looking forward, in order to connect these ideas with the practice of theology we will now turn to a discussion of how Hegelian *Geist* can help to define ‘belief’ with relation to ‘knowledge’, and whether either can be described as ‘absolute’.

Truth and Belief

In order to define ‘belief’, one must first conceive of the possibility within an individual consciousness, for even communal beliefs, as with the ‘team spirit’ example below, necessarily occur at an individual level. Hegel helps to do so by describing that the individual movement of becoming can be seen as a microcosm of the becoming of *Geist* itself. *Geist* does not stand apart from individuals, but neither is it solely defined by them. In the same way that ‘team spirit’, say, for the Denver Broncos, refuses to be limited to the distinct actions of individual sports fans, the same can be said of *Geist*. *Geist* is transcendent(al) to the individual subjectivities of its participants, and so must be spoken

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

of with reference to its particular manifestations.¹⁴⁶ *Geist* can be described as absolute not because it is metaphysically transcendent but because it is itself the process of becoming.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Hegel's claim that "The Absolute alone is true, or the truth is absolute,"¹⁴⁸ cannot be reified into a concept of 'Absolute Truth',¹⁴⁹ a distinction which will become very important when exploring the ways in which Moltmann's theology can be used to address pressing ethical concerns. Hegel rejected pure objectivity in favor of a concept of becoming-object. Knowledge is always knowledge of a subject becoming object to itself. This allows for Hegel's claim, "Truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed

¹⁴⁶ One might think here of the philosophical debate regarding individualism and collectivism, or, in the political realm, liberalism and communitarianism. Elizabeth Frazer gave a good overview of the commonalities held by those who have been grouped together under the heading of 'collectivism'. "First, an ontological or metaphysical thesis: that it is not the case that all there is in the world is individuals... Second, an ethical thesis... the locus of value is not only the individual as such, but also (or perhaps rather) the social individual... Third, a methodological thesis: the way to do ethics and to derive political principles is not to try to deduce and apply universally valid fundamental principles, but to interpret and refine values that are immanent in the ways of life of really living groups." Elizabeth Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21. The most influential liberal political philosophy in recent times can be found in John Rawls, who summarized his philosophy in terms of justice, "Justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many." John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

¹⁴⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre rejected the term 'communitarian' for his own thought, but has nevertheless been categorized as such. He offered a helpful example of the kind of middle-ground that Hegel was here identifying. "The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. The possession of a historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide." Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 205. For MacIntyre, as for Hegel, the question is not merely one of politics but equally one of identity. The politico-ethical role of the individual is of great importance, but only insofar as that individual comes as already identified within broader social structures. The role of *Geist* is in determining the boundaries by which social structures and individuals define each other and themselves. Individual subjects are in the movement of becoming (in-and-for-themselves) while also manifesting the becoming of *Geist*.

¹⁴⁸ *Phenomenology*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ In common parlance, 'absolute truth' is often conceived as disembodied, as standing outside of any particular conceptual framework- untainted by empiricism. Within conservative theological circles this notion has been given much attention. E.g. in defense of Christian missionary activity Francis Schaeffer wrote, "If we are *not* functioning in the area that this is absolute truth, such evangelism is cruel beyond measure." Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1985), 143.

ready-made.”¹⁵⁰ Truth is formed, not delivered. Truth which is absolute, in distinction to ‘Absolute Truth’,¹⁵¹ then, is found in the embodiment of a philosophical system of becoming. This is Hegel’s ‘science’.

Kenneth Westphal has argued that Hegel’s epistemology is best described as “epistemological realism.” “Hegel’s brand of idealism is a kind of ontological *holism* according to which all parts of the world are fundamentally interrelated, where these interrelations are fundamentally conceptual relations.”¹⁵² These conceptual relations take place within, and in their dialectical unification help to compose *Geist*. This fundamental interrelatedness does not deny the individual, capturing it up in the great flood of multiplicity, but rather celebrates the individual as the locus of the absolute.¹⁵³

Consciousness, on its part, likewise makes its appearance as an actuality, but also as divided within itself, and in its work and enjoyment this dividedness displays itself as breaking up into a relation to the world of actuality or a being which is *for itself*, and into a being that is *in itself*.¹⁵⁴

Belief, according to this Hegelian model, is formulated by reason, and is in no way opposed to reason. Knowledge holds no higher rank than belief, for Hegel, because knowledge itself is never sedentary. Knowledge is not merely a rationalistic result, but a

¹⁵⁰ *Phenomenology*, 22.

¹⁵¹ It bears noting that a discussion of the possibility or reality of ‘absolute truth’ looks very different in the analytical philosophical tradition than in other areas. E.g., working in Jena a generation after Hegel, Gottlob Frege argued vehemently for absolute truth particularly in relation to mathematics. For an excellent overview see Ulrich Pardey, *Frege on Absolute and Relative Truth* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

¹⁵² *Hegel’s Epistemological Realism*, 142.

¹⁵³ Absolute spirit “is present as the individual subject thinking logical thoughts... Absolute spirit is, after all, the unification of subjective and objective spirit [which] individual subjects have to perform.” Markus Gabriel, “The Dialectic of the Absolute,” in *The Dimensions of Hegel’s Dialectic*, ed. Nectarios G. Limnatis (New York: Continuum, 2010), 86.

¹⁵⁴ *Phenomenology*, 133.

rational practice. “Reason...approaches things in the belief that it truly apprehends them as sensuous things... but what it actually does... [is] transforms thought into the form of being, or being into the form of thought.”¹⁵⁵ The task of reason is not for an individual consciousness to achieve ontological certainty, but to make sense of consciousness itself. “Belief...starts from the *individual consciousness*... but without attaining to the presence of its essential being.”¹⁵⁶ Here, Hegel demonstrated that believing cannot be a self-sustaining practice until the believer conceptually turns inward in order to understand the very concept of ‘belief’ itself. Beliefs are shown to be of secondary importance, not to knowledge, but to belief.¹⁵⁷

Belief is not inferior to knowledge any more than a proposition is inferior to its own negation. The negation of a proposition is always a determinate negation which is internal to the proposition itself. Hegelian negation is less of a, ‘No!’ than a ‘Yes, but...’ Determinate negation does not cancel a proposition, it sublates it.¹⁵⁸ Hegel was quite clear that sublation involves (at least) two elements: suspension and preservation. Even while a

¹⁵⁵ *Phenomenology*, 147.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁵⁷ “Hegel nowhere doubts that we must, in effect, rely on our finite competences: it’s only that, given that thinking is itself historied, every finite assertion or belief will be superseded by the force of evolving experience – ‘sublated,’ as Hegel affirms.” Joseph Margolis, “The Greening of Hegel’s Dialectical Logic,” in *The Dimensions of Hegel’s Dialectic*, 206.

¹⁵⁸ Jon Stewart has offered an interesting description of sublation in terms of belief, rather than of Being/being, by considering that every belief is part of a larger structure. “Whenever a particular network of beliefs gets called into question, there is always some experience, belief, datum that stands in contradiction to it... If this experience of belief is persistent, the network of beliefs itself may come into such difficulties that it must be given up as implausible in favor of a new explanation. In this sense, the old network is ‘negated,’ but in the negation something is left over... and it is this belief which forms the basis of the new belief system. This belief can thus be seen as a *determinate* negation.” Jon Stewart, *The Unity of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit: A Systematic Interpretation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 43.

proposition is being abolished, it is simultaneously being preserved in the novelty that is created. Dialectic is not the process of creating a new identity, but of recognizing the identity of identity and difference.¹⁵⁹ Belief, then, functions as the initial proposition. Belief may well be rationally incomplete, but it is nevertheless preserved by knowledge. As knowledge is here recognized as the identity of belief and its determinate negation, knowledge likewise already self-contains its own determinate negation. *Geist* is ever forward moving because *Geist* is always self-contemplative.

This fact – that I look at the thing as a mere sign, yet at its essence as I, as meaning, as reflection in itself – this itself is [my] *object*. Only then is it merely immediate inwardness; it must also enter into existence (*Daseyn*), become an object, so that on the contrary this inwardness is made external – a return to *being* (*Seyn*).¹⁶⁰

Already prior to the publication of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel had in mind a particularly embodied understanding of *Geist*. Hegel argued in 1805-1806 that *Geist* itself was a linguistic practice.

This is *language*, as the name-giving power. The power of imagination provides only the empty form; [it is] the designative power positing the form as internal. Language, on the other hand, posits the internal as *being* (*seyendes*). This, then, is the true *being* of spirit as that of spirit as such....At the same time it immediately negates itself – fading, yet perceived... [Language] gives it a name and expresses this as the being of the object.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ “As categories of essence neither identity nor difference can be thought apart from each other but only through and by means of each other. Hegel shows that the attempt to isolate difference from identity fails.” Robert R. Williams, “Double Transition Dialectic, and Recognition,” in *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel’s Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics*, ed. Philip T. Grier (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 46.

¹⁶⁰ *Hegel and the Human Spirit*, 89.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

One might well argue, following Hegel's logic, that belief, too, ought to be approached primarily through linguistic categories. Like language, and like *Geist*, belief is developed, not determined.¹⁶² But, moreover, belief is not only developed by the individual, but is constitutive of the individual. This is the 'name-giving power' expressed above. So, if an individual is constituted by the language of belief then what does it mean to be an 'I' that is so-constituted?

On Being an I

To speak of the development of a self, of an 'I', in Hegel's work is to begin with the heart of the matter. Immediately after the Introduction to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel's first section is given the title, "Consciousness." It is informative of Hegel's project as a whole that he thus begins this first major work by describing the 'this' from which cognition originates. "The knowledge of knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but *immediate* or *receptive*."¹⁶³ Hegel called this receptive knowledge "sense-certainty," and saw that, at first glance, it might seem that this sense-certainty is the most pure form of knowledge insofar as it is immediately presented to the 'I' before the 'I' has "omitted anything from the object."¹⁶⁴ Yet, upon deeper

¹⁶² When contemplating the concept of a particularly 'Christian belief', one might, without full fidelity to Hegel, take this Hegelian outline and transcribe the concept of church onto that of *Geist*. Ecclesiology, along this path, must take seriously the catholicity of the Christian faith, without thereby imposing an unbending definition of 'orthodoxy' against which all beliefs (and all believers) are judged. At a base level, beliefs are formed through the movements of *Geist* before they ever become matters of conscious reflection. Christian beliefs, likewise, immanently transcend theological reflection through sacramental practice. Cyclically, Christian beliefs are both determined by and determinate of Christian praxis. Through shared language, in the re-telling of (hi)story, and by common ritual, believing, as communal praxis, is formed.

¹⁶³ *Phenomenology*, 58.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

introspection it turns out that not only is sense-certainty not the most pure form of knowledge, but rather is “the most abstract and poorest *truth*.”¹⁶⁵ Sense-certainty is the poorest truth, in Hegel’s eyes, for the very reason that it appears as the most pure, because it stands as unmediated by an ‘I’.¹⁶⁶ “Here neither I nor the thing has the significance of a complex process of mediation; the ‘I’ does not have the significance of a manifold imagining or thinking; nor does the ‘thing’ signify something that has a host of qualities.”¹⁶⁷ Sense-certainty merely describes a momentary encounter of two objects, here called ‘I’ and ‘thing’. Yet, in this momentary encounter, neither object allows itself to be constituted by the other, and thus neither demonstrate the full complexity of existence.¹⁶⁸ Rather than stop at the moment of initial encounter, the ‘I’ becomes further constituted when it is mediated through the encounter with a ‘thing’ or an ‘other’.

When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the ‘I’.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ “Hegel does not use the term ‘sense-certainty’ to denote the variety of sense experience; instead, this expression is intended to designate the most undifferentiated form of existence given in sense.” Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 269. Interestingly, here Stewart argues that Kierkegaard is actually positive (perhaps even derivative) of Hegel’s interpretation of sense-certainty.

¹⁶⁷ *Phenomenology*, 58.

¹⁶⁸ Westphal even questions whether sense-certainty can be said to be a state of consciousness. “Sense Certainty concedes the untenability of its position. In thinking a consciousness which strictly adheres to its criterion of immediacy it shows how fully indeterminate and empty that consciousness must be, if it can legitimately be called consciousness at all.” Merold Westphal, *History & Truth in Hegel’s Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 72.

¹⁶⁹ *Phenomenology*, 59.

In order to make sense of an 'I' which is always mediated beyond the process of self-certainty, one must experience a specific spatio-temporal moment.¹⁷⁰ Thus, Hegel described the 'I', at least with reference to sense-certainty, not as substantial but as "a pure [act of] intuiting."¹⁷¹

Since, then, this certainty will no longer come forth to *us* when we direct its attention to a Now that is night, or to an 'I' to whom it is night, we will approach *it* and let ourselves point to the Now that is asserted. We must let ourselves *point to it*; for the truth of this immediate relation is the truth of *this* 'I' which confines itself to one 'Now' or one 'Here'.¹⁷²

In a move that will become very important in the shift from Hegel to Moltmann, the 'I' is constituted by the Here and Now, just as the Here and Now are each constituted by the I which points in their direction. This ought not to be understood too simplistically, as, for example, saying that an individual has no capacity to consider before or after the Now, as to do so would be to pause the process by which an 'I' is constituted by the Now. Rather, Hegel's argument is not strictly ontological, but, as Westphal described, empirical realism.

Were we to examine this truth [of the immediate relation of the I] *afterwards*, or stand *at a distance* from it, it would lose its significance entirely; for that would do away with the immediacy which is essential to it. [In order to move beyond solipsism] we must therefore enter the same point of time or space, point them out to ourselves, i.e. make ourselves into the same singular 'I' which is the one who knows with certainty.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ For I, myself, the author of these words, there exists a specific Here and a specific Now. Here, would, at this moment, be a computer sitting on a desk at the public library, and the Now is a specific date and time. Simply by turning my body around, the Here of my 'I' ceases to be a computer, and turns out to be a shelf full of magazines. Likewise, my Now, even in the time it has taken to compose two sentences, is no longer the Now which constituted my 'I' but a few moments ago.

¹⁷¹ *Phenomenology*, 63.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Occurring at the beginning of Hegel's earliest major work, this brief description of sense-certainty, which continues into Section B of the *Phenomenology*, is at least a beginning of a description of Hegelian ontology.¹⁷⁴ Yet, in moving towards a discussion of Moltmann's theological anthropology, it would be helpful to first ask whether Hegel's thought should even be utilized despite the racially-charged baggage evident in his own cultural-conditioning.

Can Hegel be Saved?

Standing at the present in a particular Here and Now, looking backward, one can very easily recognize many specifics about the Here and Now within which Hegel was working. In this case, with a defined ethical impetus for writing, Hegel's Here and Now could easily become, at best, an embarrassment or, at worst, an impediment. Particularly given that race and racial issues are areas which Christian theology has often done a very

¹⁷⁴ While it is well beyond the intentions of this dissertation, there is a wide-ranging and long-standing debate among philosophers and Hegel scholars as to what exactly constitutes a mature Hegelian system, or at least where Hegel is seen at his strongest point. This debate is often centered specifically on the question of how the *Phenomenology* ought to be considered among Hegel's work. The question, simply put, is whether the *Phenomenology* ought to be considered, in its entirety, the work of a mature Hegel, or whether his later work demonstrates a disregard for, or a sublation of, the *Phenomenology*. Parallel to this discussion is the question of whether the *Phenomenology* should be considered in whole, or whether its seemingly disjointed construction and, generously, confusing layout, demonstrate a clear Hegelian priority for the first half of the work over the second. Just as there are those for whom the *Phenomenology* is, at best, secondary to the *Science of Logic* (Robert B. Pippin, e.g., calls the *Science*, "Hegel's most important work." Robert B. Pippin, "You Can't Get There From Here," in Frederick Beiser, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55.) On the other hand, as Hans Friedrich Fulda has described, there are those who would choose to put almost entire focus on the *Phenomenology* at the expense of the *Science*. See, Hans Friedrich Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965), 1-13. As evidenced by direct citation, it seems as though Moltmann, no doubt influenced by Ernst Bloch, tends toward the latter camp. Tellingly, Moltmann's first two published references to Hegel both explicitly reference, "early Hegel." See *Theology of Hope*, 27 and 48-49. Even so, Moltmann does not exclusively look toward the *Phenomenology*, but also demonstrates a deep interest in Hegel's less exhaustive theological writings and his philosophies of history and religion.

poor job of addressing/understanding,¹⁷⁵ given the ways that Hegel addressed racial issues it might be problematic to hope that he can serve as a backbone for a meaningful theological dialogue. To the absolute extreme, Karl Popper rejected the entirety of Hegel's philosophy as simultaneously inane, deceptive, and dangerous.

Especially the philosophers of history, of politics, and of education are still to a very large extent under [Hegel's] sway. In politics, this is shown most drastically by the fact that the Marxist extreme left wing, as well as the conservative centre, and the fascist extreme right, all base their political philosophies on Hegel.¹⁷⁶

Popper believed that Hegel's influence, at least in philosophical circles, was waning, but hoped to hasten Hegel's demise philosophically and politically. He pointed to the political use of Hegel to instigate both class warfare and race warfare as reasons why it was necessary to overcome Hegel once-and-for-all. However, even a cursory reading of Popper's polemic demonstrates an argument that is heavier on passion than on profundity.¹⁷⁷ Walter Kaufmann has done a masterful job of refuting Popper's particular take on Hegel, while offering a more nuanced reading of Hegel's writing and the political uses to which it continues to be put.¹⁷⁸ Although by no means exclusively so, Kauffman

¹⁷⁵ Michael Emerson and Christian Smith have argued that, even while evangelical Christianity has the potential to offer some important contributions to the solution of racial division in the United States, "If white evangelicals continue to travel the same road they have traveled thus far, the future does indeed look bleak." Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 171. This book offers a detailed history of racial thought and practice in evangelicalism alongside sociological and economic analysis of the continued reality of racial division. It is important reading for those interested in the complexities of race and racial relations in American Christianity.

¹⁷⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 245.

¹⁷⁷ One such example is Popper's claim that Hegel "is supreme only in his outstanding lack of originality... I do not even think that he was talented." *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁷⁸ Walter Kauffman, "The Hegel Myth and Its Method," in *From Shakespeare to Existentialism: An Original Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 95-129.

characterized Popper's attack on Hegel, among many similar arguments, by saying, "[Hegel] is but little known to most of [his critics]; very few indeed have read as many as two of the four books that Hegel published. Hegel is known largely through secondary sources and a few incriminating slogans and generalizations."¹⁷⁹

Kauffman was also quick to say that "Hegel certainly has grievous faults."¹⁸⁰ Yet, in determining and pointing to such faults, Kauffman insisted that all bits of text needed to be read in context rather than plucked out to prove a predetermined point. That such a contextual reading of Hegel is necessary can be demonstrated by his proclamations regarding the Jewish faith and people.¹⁸¹ Kauffman saw that "Hegel's earliest essays, which he himself did not publish, show that he started out with violent prejudices against the Jews."¹⁸² Yet, "When Hegel became a man of influence, he insisted that the Jews should be granted equal rights."¹⁸³ Even so, Hegel's complicity in propagating and normalizing attitudes of racism and prejudice cannot be overlooked. As Joseph McCarney saw, "Hegel's aspersions on the Non-European peoples of his own time... are many and various... They range from coarse defamation of a straightforward kind to more studiedly offensive remarks."¹⁸⁴ Examples of such studiedly offensive remarks are easy enough to

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸¹ For an interesting discussion of the complexity of Hegel's approach to Judaism primarily within religious, rather than socio-cultural, terms, see Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). By tracing Hegel's developing understanding of Judaism through a discussion of sublimity, Yovel links Hegel's philosophy of religion with history, politics, and aesthetics.

¹⁸² "The Hegel Myth and Its Method," 103.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

find.¹⁸⁵ While Hegel's use of such language should not be ignored or overlooked, they are not endemic to his system. Patricia Purtschert has argued that, while Hegel's anthropology need not be saved, neither can Hegel be ignored. She described that, at least in part, the tools to 'save' Hegel are already available in his own work. "Hegel introduced a subject that is in formation rather than static and that is constitutively dependent on the recognition of others."¹⁸⁶

In order to theologically utilize Hegel, it is important to recognize that his anthropology can be rejected without making a parallel claim against the larger philosophical system that he was trying to create. Indeed, if Hegel's system can be used to develop a theological anthropology to explicitly reject the racism of Hegel's own, this would be all the better. If such a task is to be undertaken, it will be best to follow Moltmann's example and begin with the end. For, understanding the *telos* of the individual

¹⁸⁴ Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 142

¹⁸⁵ E.g. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel claimed, "Slavery has awakened more humanity among the negroes." G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 183. He argued that the practice of buying and selling human beings gave monetary value to lives that would have otherwise simply been extinguished. Likewise, in speaking of the African continent and its peoples, Hegel claimed that "History is in fact out of the question. Life there consists of a succession of contingent happenings and surprises. No aim or state exists whose development could be followed; and there is no subjectivity, but merely a series of subjects who destroy one another." *Ibid.*, 176. These lectures, as with all of Hegel's 'published lectures' should be treated with an extra bit of caution. As Hegel himself neither wrote nor published these lectures in their final form, the actual wording contained therein should be approached cautiously. There is scholarly consensus, however, that the published ideas can credibly be attributed to Hegel, even if the particulars of the language are open to varying levels of debate. For further reading on the implicit racism in Hegel's work see Sander L. Gilman, "The Figure of the Black in the Thought of Hegel and Nietzsche," *The German Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 2 (March, 1980): 141-158, or Ronald Kuykendall, "Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in *The Philosophy of History*," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (June, 1993): 571-581.

¹⁸⁶ Patricia Purtschert, "On the Limit of Spirit: Hegel's Racism Revisited," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 36, no 9, accessed February 12, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0191453710379029>: 1040.

will help to describe its inherent relatedness to the other and what it means to exist within a community of others.

Moving Toward Telos

One of the most important, and therefore one of the most contested, elements to the Hegelian philosophical system is the concept of *telos*.¹⁸⁷ *Phenomenology of Spirit* contains a small subsection dedicated explicitly to teleology. Here, Hegel described teleology in terms of an organic being. Such an organism comports itself within the world as one moving toward a goal. This goal, while seemingly external, is ultimately nothing more nor less than the organism itself.¹⁸⁸ “Yet the organism, as it has been characterized above, is, in fact, the real End itself, for since it preserves *itself* in the relation to an other, it is just that kind of natural existence in which Nature reflects itself...”¹⁸⁹ This teleological organism ought not to be seen simply as self-identical, however. Rather, Hegel described that any understanding of teleology would be incomplete without a significant differentiating movement. The *telos* toward which Hegel’s philosophy points is therefore neither pure unity, nor pure difference, but the identity of identity and difference. In relation

¹⁸⁷ E.g. see Willem DeVries, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 44 where DeVries describes *Geist* as the *telos* of the natural world. For a rejection of the possibility of teleological completion in Hegel see Margolis, 209, where he argued that “the *telos* of ‘absolute knowing’ is no *telos* at all but an infinitely inaccessible target that can neither be violated nor realized.”

¹⁸⁸ “[Hegel’s teleology] neither originates in some outer-worldly understanding or transcendent finality, nor in a thing in itself that never shows itself as itself to a subject – on the contrary, the originality of the origin must end in the object itself.” Andrew Haas, *Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 211. Here, Haas argued that metaphysics falls short when it conceives of *logos*, or, in Hegel’s terminology, the Notion, as individual and definitive. Rather, Hegelian teleology “must improvise a *logos* gone multiple.” *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁸⁹ *Phenomenology*, 156.

to Hegel's 'I', the individual, and likewise individuals in community and the empirical world more generally, are not static beings but dynamic agents of becoming.¹⁹⁰ Just as there can be no 'I' prior to the mediation of an other, so too, there can be no 'I' without an internal mediation between movements of difference. Hegel described this internal struggle in terms of,

Two moments of cause and effect, of active and passive moments, which were the result of a necessary separating-out, [which are] brought together into a unity... Because [the 'I'] has returned into itself, the last, or the result, is just as much the *first* which initiated the movement, and is to itself the realized *End*.¹⁹¹

The 'I' is an instantiation of what Hegel calls 'Notion' (*Begriff*), just as another self-identified 'I' must be. Notion, for Hegel, is the term given to the ultimate epistemological *telos*, to the actual identity of identity and difference writ large. The identity of identity and difference is the *telos* for the entirety of Hegel's philosophy. Yet, as the *telos*, it is also the beginning from which Hegel's philosophy originates.¹⁹² The

¹⁹⁰ Hegel's movement toward a language of becoming has been met with some skepticism. In Dale M. Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim: A Critical Reflection* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 47, he argued that, "Hegel's notion of becoming flounders... Being cannot provide the necessarily indeterminate initial identity. Nothing cannot serve as an indeterminate moment of pure contradiction needed to engender the immediacy of mediation which becoming is meant to be." Were 'being' and 'nothing' considered only from the point-of-view of sense-certainty, this argument would be strong. However, given the understanding that philosophy always takes place from a determinative 'Here' and 'Now', one needs not to be able to define either 'being' or 'nothing' as already unmediated.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* One of the difficulties that Hegel's readers face is in distinguishing if and how the development of an individual 'I' relates to larger-scale realities in the world. At one level, Hegel takes the individual very seriously. At another level, however, Hegel's interpreters must understand that no individual exists in a vacuum. As such, any Hegelian understanding of *telos* must ultimately be understood in terms that transcend any and all individuals. While one could point to an individual 'I', at least self-referentially, and speak of something like a personal *telos*, an internalized identity of identity and difference, one cannot then stop without seeking to describe how this teleological movement becomes part of the much larger movement of *Geist*.

¹⁹² Moving into a discussion of Hegel's system, one of the difficulties is the lack of a clear beginning. Chong-Fuk Lau realized that, "Although Hegel placed so much emphasis on the systematicity of philosophy, his system has no room for an absolute first principle." Chong-Fuk Lau, "A Deflationary Approach to Hegel's

identity of identity and difference is the goal of Hegel's philosophy as viewed from the beginning looking forward. The development of *Geist*, and therefore the development of thought, of human history, and of the individual self-consciousness, is a dialectical process. Every part of Hegel's thought stems from the interplay of identity and difference and the movement toward their mutual identity. This mutual interplay, this development of subjectivity, is not an isolated happening, but rather must be understood in terms of a larger systemic description of the identity of identity and difference.

The System of Philosophy

In Hegel's earliest published original essay, *The Difference Between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy*¹⁹³ known colloquially as the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel had already begun the process of developing his scientific philosophy. The purpose of the *Differenzschrift* seems to be an explication of the early stages of Hegel's own dialectical philosophy just as much as it is actually a comparison of the philosophies of Fichte and Schelling.¹⁹⁴ Throughout this text, Hegel, both in his own right and in citing the work of Fichte and Schelling, used a number of different terms to describe each element of the identity of identity and difference. Among them, Hegel pointed to these contradictory

Metaphysics," in *Hegel and Metaphysics: On Logic and Ontology in the System*, ed. Allegra de Laurentiis (Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 34.

¹⁹³ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference Between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy*, trans. Jere Paul Surber (Reseda, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1978).

¹⁹⁴ In a deeply critical comment, Wayne Martin argued that the *Differenzschrift* did not merely serve as an introduction to what might be considered Hegel's mature thought, but that even in maturity, "Hegel simply [reiterated] his youthful criticism as if it were the last word." Wayne M. Martin, "In Defense of Bad Infinity: A Fichtean Response to Hegel's *Differenzschrift*," *Hegel Bulletin* 28, no. 1-2 (2007), 168.

moments as “I and nature, pure and empirical self-consciousness, knowing (Erkennen) and Being, self-positing and op-positing, [and] finitude and infinity.”¹⁹⁵ Each of these descriptors are viable ways in which the philosophical task might encounter identity and difference. While the cultural contingencies which determine the empirical descriptions can differ, Hegelian philosophy is both processive and oppositional. In order to fulfill this requirement to be both oppositional and processive, a true philosophy, according to Hegel, must take the form of a system.¹⁹⁶ Without a system, one could point to identity, and one could point to difference, but one could never make the most important step of describing the identity of identity and difference.¹⁹⁷ The *Differenzschrift* might be seen as a preamble to such a system. It did not actually begin constructing the system as such, but set forth the intellectual materials with which the system could be erected.

Moving forward, Hegel hardly made it into the preface to the *Phenomenology* before he began to describe the importance of a system of philosophy. “The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of truth as such.”¹⁹⁸ For Hegel, philosophy’s ultimate goal was more than an appreciation of knowledge, it was true

¹⁹⁵ *Differenzschrift.*, 89.

¹⁹⁶ Hegel’s insistence on a system of philosophy heavily relies on a similar insistence made by Kant. For Kant, “In accordance with reason’s legislative prescriptions, our diverse modes of knowledge must not be permitted to be a mere rhapsody, but must for a *system*. Only so can they further the essential ends of reason. By a system I understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea.” *Critique of Pure Reason*, A832/B860.

¹⁹⁷ That it is the becoming of the identity of identity and difference which even makes systematicity possible has been argued in Kevin Thompson, “Fragmentation, Contamination, Systematicity: The Threats of Representation and the Immanence of Thought,” in *Hegel and Language*, 37. “Systematicity thus becomes possible, on this reading, because the language it must employ, wrought through though it is with representation, is nonetheless an expression of the very activity in which subjectivity and objectivity are joined.”

¹⁹⁸ *Phenomenology*, 3.

knowing, and “only the systematic exposition of philosophy itself provides it.”¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, Hegel differentiated between system and systematicity, and he believed that both are essential to the production of viable philosophy.²⁰⁰ This double system(atic) movement parallels Hegel’s revolutionary claim that in the Absolute, form and content are inseparable. This inseparability is the identity of identity and difference. System is the content of true philosophy, and this content always appears in the form of systematicity. The form is the content, and vice versa.²⁰¹ Of course, it is not merely in the *Phenomenology* that Hegel explicated the importance of system(aticity). The title of the *Science* is itself telling, and in this text he also went on to say, “Logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought.”²⁰² This systematicity, however, is not imposed as whole, but is shown to be the development of the movement of *Geist*. *Geist*’s movement is seen to take place in dialectical form.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Kevin Thompson describes this distinction as “the intrinsic circularity of the system of philosophical sciences.” Kevin Thompson, “Systematicity and Experience: Hegel and the Function of the History of Philosophy,” in *Hegel’s History of Philosophy: New Interpretations*, ed. David A. Duquette (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 168. What has here been termed ‘systematicity’ Thompson described as the need “to provide its own justification of itself from within itself,” while what has here been termed ‘system’ Thompson described as the need “to demonstrate that it accords with actuality.” *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ For a detailed account of form and content in Hegel see J.K. Burmeister, “Hegel’s Living Logic,” in *Research in Phenomenology* 43 (March 2013): 243-264, accessed November 21, 2016, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost. In short, Burmeister argues that logic “just *is* both its own form and its own content.” *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁰² *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1969), 50.

Dialectic

Just as, in the content of Hegel's system, the form is the content and vice-versa, the same is true in the form of Hegel's system. The form of the system is the content of the system, and the content of the system is the form of the system. In shorthand, one could call this interpenetrative content/form, "dialectic."²⁰³ The system, through dialectic, was intended to achieve the Notion, the Absolute. Yet, in striving toward this goal Hegel argued that the universal could not be entirely separated from the individual.²⁰⁴

The individual is constituted as an individual through participation in the becoming-universal.²⁰⁵ The internal is always mediated by the external. Outside of the universal there is no individual, but likewise, outside of the individual there is no universal.²⁰⁶ Hegel problematized conceptualities of both subject and object by arguing that the universal individual is simultaneously both subject and object.

The object's own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be of the object*, is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the Accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Notion which takes its determinations back into itself. In this movement, the passive Subject itself perishes.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ For an overview of dialectic in Hegel see Michael Forster, "Hegel's Dialectical Method," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 130-170. For a more in-depth discussion of dialectic see Michael Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

²⁰⁴ As Kaufmann described, "It is not enough to consider propositions, or even the content of consciousness; it is worthwhile to ask in every instance what kind of spirit would entertain such propositions... Every outlook, in other words, is to be studied not merely as an academic possibility but as an existential reality." Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 115.

²⁰⁵ "[Hegel] holds that selfhood and autonomous ego-identity are necessarily social, that an individual acquires a sense of himself or herself as individual only in social relations." Andrew Buchwalter, *Dialectics, Politics, and the Contemporary Value of Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 132.

²⁰⁶ "Consonant with his general account of self-formation, the consciousness denoted by the idea of universal subjectivity is forged only through processes of external embodiment... [Yet,] embodiment is not the source of subjectivity itself. Instead, a universal notion of subjectivity can be definitively forged only in the reflective reappropriation and rearticulation of what is experienced externally." *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁰⁷ *Phenomenology*, 37.

It is fundamental to Hegel's thought to remember that there is always a mediation occurring between a subject and an object, or between identity and difference. It is a far too easy caricature of Hegel to see his idealism as entirely ideal, rather than recognizing the inherent physicality by which the ideal is mediated.²⁰⁸ This understanding rejects criticisms of Hegel such that would claim, "The tendency of idealist thought- especially as represented in its greatest representative, Hegel- [is] to swallow up the concrete, the particular, the individual and the contingent within the necessary self-development of the notion."²⁰⁹

The goal of the individual self is to move toward its own negation, toward its own *telos* within the Absolute.

Consciousness, however, is explicitly the *Notion* of itself. Hence it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself... Thus, consciousness suffers this violence at its own hands: it spoils its own limited satisfaction.²¹⁰

This reference to the internalized violence of consciousness is fascinating for several reasons.²¹¹ First, by thinking of the development of consciousness, and therefore, too, the development of history, as a violent production, one can immediately see that dialectical movement is something very different than the 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' which is so

²⁰⁸ Klaus Brinkmann argued persuasively that one can read both a metaphysical and a non-metaphysical Hegel, but that the "real metaphysical Hegel is that of the Lectures and the oral presentation in the lecture room." Klaus Brinkmann, *Idealism Without Limits: Hegel and the Problem of Objectivity* (New York: Springer, 2011), 249. See also, Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality*," in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 102-129, for an overview of various ways in which commentators have understood Hegel's idealism.

²⁰⁹ Galloway, 368.

²¹⁰ *Phenomenology*, 51.

²¹¹ "This is not an unbridled violence. What Hegel unleashes here is not the violence of nature, it is the energy, or the violence of the Understanding." Georges Bataille and Jonathan Strauss, "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice," *Yale French Studies*, no. 78 (Summer 1990), 16, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2930112>.

often imposed on Hegel.²¹² Dialectic, that process by which identity and difference move toward a teleological identity, or by which the Notion becomes known in-and-for-itself, is more than mere opposition. Dialectic is an existential violence through which death and resurrection exist in unison.²¹³

Yet, on the other hand, to speak of dialectic as an existential violence would seem to raise questions regarding any philosophy which sees in itself a completed system in which the Absolute has come to be known.²¹⁴ This points to several related criticisms that are often leveled at Hegel's claims of systematicity. Ernst Troeltsch, for example, was a vocal opponent of what he saw to be Hegel's philosophical overstepping.

To be sure, the attempt to identify this concept of a goal with a generative, causal law has to be abandoned; so too with the attempt to compute absolute realization from an empirical series of qualitative gradations and from what is alleged to be a historically demonstrable exhausting of its inner principle... One cannot, however, recombine these two into a unified organic development... This notion, popular even today due to the influence of Hegel, is not practicable in this form. The speculative concept of evolution remains an intuition and a presentiment. Science can establish causal relationships only from case to case.²¹⁵

²¹² For a brief history and debunking of this model see Gustav Mueller, "The Hegel Legend of 'Synthesis-Antithesis-Thesis'," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 No. 3 (June 1958): 411-414, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2708045>. Mueller describes this model as "an inept reading."

²¹³ "Henceforth [the Hegelian person] is no longer, like a stone, an immutable given, he bears within him *Negativity*; and the force, the violence of negativity cast him into the incessant movement of history, which changes him and which alone realizes the totality of the concrete real through time." *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹⁴ E.g., Thomas Lewis has argued that, even with Hegel's focus on System, his philosophy is "much more open to further development than has often been thought." Thomas A. Lewis, "Finite Representation, Spontaneous Thought, and Open-Ended Consummation," in *Hegel and the Infinite*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 200.

²¹⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*, David Reid, trans. (Louisville, John Knox, 1971), 102.

Hegel would have rejected this critique as a failure to understand the complexity of what has here been termed ‘existential violence’ and its ontological power of negation.

Žižek answered, from an Hegelian perspective, why this contention is off-base.

[Hegel’s] wager is not to adopt toward the present the ‘point of view of finality,’ viewing it as if it were already past, but, precisely, to reintroduce the openness of the future into the past, to grasp that-which-was in its process of becoming, to see the contingent process which generated existing necessity.²¹⁶

While there exists a deep complexity regarding how Hegel viewed his own place in history, particularly in the history of philosophy or more specifically in the history of the Notion, an argument can be made that any such complexities are not inherently destructive to Hegel’s system.²¹⁷ Rather, they will here be described as ‘ruptures’ or ‘excess’, which do not inherently break the system.

Systemic Ruptures

If one were to accept Pippin’s contention regarding the necessary instability of the Notion(s), then it might appear that Hegel had walked himself into a philosophical impasse—having created a system that is unable to adequately demonstrate a process of becoming, while simultaneously proposing a new understanding of epistemology whereby truth, to a degree, becomes contingent upon, or at least mediated by, the experiences of a becoming-

²¹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 78.

²¹⁷ Indeed, Pippin has argued that such openness is a strength to the system. He described this openness as, “An absolute comprehension of the nature of the incompleteness of thought’s determination of itself, of the necessity for reflectively determined Notions, and yet the instability and ultimate inadequacy of those Notions.” Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 257.

individual. One might call this a rupture of Hegel's system.²¹⁸ A rupture, here, should not be understood to be something destructive, as, say, the rupture of a vehicle's tire. Rather, a rupture should be understood as the in-breaking of something productive.²¹⁹ This rupture is an Hegelian project through and through.²²⁰ The rupture dis-rupts the movement of the system. The rupture is evidence of a philosophical overflow, of the system's own developmental nature, of its becoming. If this is the case, then one needs to recognize the rupture as what it is, an in-breaking of something new, as possibility for a new direction.²²¹

Before exploring further what such a rupture might mean for Hegelian philosophy, there are still other examples which can be offered. One such example which explicitly

²¹⁸ This idea is by no means novel. Joseph Flay has argued that even Hegel himself was aware of the rupturing of his system. "System, in order to be system, must involve closure; but because of the nature of beginnings, system must also involve rupture. A judicious view of the texts shows that Hegel is not willing to give up either thesis... rupture and closure must co-exist." Joseph C. Flay, "Rupture, Closure, and Dialectic," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Reappraisal*, ed. Gary K. Browning (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997), 149. Likewise, Žižek has pointed to Hegel's notion of subjectivity, something to which Flay also points, in terms of a rupture. "The subject's spontaneity emerges as a disturbing *cut* into substantial reality, since the unity the transcendental synthesis imposes onto the natural manifold is precisely 'synthetic' (in the standard rather than Kantian sense, i.e., artificial, 'unnatural')." *Less than Nothing*, 106.

²¹⁹ Hegel even pointed to something like the idea of a rupture. "Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself; but in each of them the philosophical Idea is in a particular determinacy or element. Every single circle also breaks through the restriction of its element as well, precisely because it is inwardly [the] totality, and it grounds a further sphere." G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with Zusätze*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §15.

²²⁰ E.g., Robyn Marasco wrote of "that voice in Hegel that speaks not of certain beginnings or achieved endings, but of an overflow of passion at any given moment." Robyn Marasco, *The Highway of Despair: Critical Theory After Hegel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 21.

²²¹ Derrida pointed to this possibility in a discussion of Hegel's semiology. "We must question at the point and in the form where signification no longer signifies, and where meaning no longer means to say anything – not that they would be absurd in the sense of their system and within it, that is within metaphysics, but because the question will have taken us beyond the closure of this system." Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 80. Several others have also posited language as a place of distinct rupture in Hegel's thought. See, e.g., Catherine Kellogg, "The Three Hegels: Kojève, Hyppolite, and Derrida on Hegel's Philosophy of Language," in *Hegel and Language*, 199-218.

relates to the possibility of a dialectical unity of subject/object can be found in the famous passage of the *Phenomenology* in which Hegel described the master-slave dialectic. This is a difficult passage to interpret because it offers so many possibilities within its own text.²²² The passage begins as a discussion of self-consciousness, leading one to assume that the passage is going to be only about the subjective development of the individual. Yet, just as with the previous discussion, the individual, the subject, means nothing unless it is in relationship to an other, an object. “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.”²²³ In words that sound as though they could have come directly from the mouth of Levinas,²²⁴ Hegel went on to say, “Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*.”²²⁵ The difficulty of interpretation lies in the fact that the reader is unsure whether Hegel was speaking about a distinctly inter-personal experience, or whether this self-consciousness that has come out of itself ought to be regarded as the inner-development of an individual. Surely, given Hegel’s attempt to subvert the traditional

²²² Two primary directions that interpretation has taken are reading the dialectic in historically-conditioned terms of inter-personal subjectivity or alternatively reading the dialectic in terms of internalized subjectivity. For the former interpretation see Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Readings of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1969) or Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). For the latter interpretation see John McDowell, “The Apperceptive I and the Empirical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of ‘Lordship and Bondage’ in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*,” in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. Katerina Deligiorgi (New York: Routledge, 2014), 33-48 or for a nuanced both/and reading see George Armstrong Kelly, “Notes on Hegel’s ‘Lordship and Bondage’,” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Jon Stewart (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 171-191.

²²³ *Phenomenology*, 111.

²²⁴ E.g., “The Other faces me and puts me in question and obliges me.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1991), 207.

²²⁵ *Phenomenology*, 111.

discourse of subject-object, he, to a degree, had both in mind. Yet, it would seem that a ‘both’ reading would differ significantly from an ‘either/or’ reading. It may even be that a ‘both’ reading would be a cheap dialectical trick, which ultimately could not stand up to the nuances of Hegel’s system. As such, it will be argued that reading the master-slave dialectic as the internal process of an individual serves as a rupture of this too-easy understanding of Hegel.

Read as a story about the self-discovery of an individual, the master-slave dialectic would look something like this: “Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else.”²²⁶ Here, self-consciousness is absolute consciousness insofar as the self does not recognize its own limitations. It is only when self-consciousness recognizes its limitations, when it can recognize its own division, that absolute consciousness becomes consciousness of the Absolute.²²⁷ As newly divided, self-consciousness appears to itself as other. This is a complicated dance, for “each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth.”²²⁸ As the two sides of the divided self face each other, they begin a “life-and-death” struggle for truth, for certainty of being for-themselves.²²⁹

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

²²⁷ According to Kojève, self-consciousness requires “*transcendence* of self with respect to self as *given*.” Kojève, 39.

²²⁸ *Phenomenology*, 114.

²²⁹ “The goal is for the otherness to be *aufgehoben* – cancelled as the simple otherness it at first appears to be, although preserved at a higher level, as a ‘moment’ in a more comprehensive conception...we shall no longer need to be troubled by the spectre of a gulf between subject and object.” McDowell, 33.

Only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the *immediate form* in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure *being-for-itself*.²³⁰

However, paradoxically, the conclusion of this life-and-death struggle brings about neither death, nor perfect life. Rather, the conclusion of this struggle, interior to the individual, merely reifies the chasm between the self being-in-itself and the self being-for-itself. Thus, one and the same self exists simultaneously in a state of both lordship (master) and bondage (slave) to itself.²³¹

Within Hegel's work there is no easy resolution to this dialectical set-up. Simply put, there can be no equality between master and slave, even if/after a role reversal is made possible by the slave's self-valuation. Self-consciousness will always be self-evident as both lordship and bondage. Both the master and the slave possess self-knowledge, made possible by knowledge of the other, but they simultaneously lack knowledge of the other as self. The overcoming of the master-slave dialectic could only be the unified individual being in-and-for-itself, possessing a singular knowledge of the Absolute. When this process is read as the interior life of the individual, this struggle with the other is the attempt to understand the self as simultaneously subject and object to oneself.²³²

²³⁰ *Phenomenology*, 187.

²³¹ "What [the self-consciousness] has learned is that it is no good attempting a unilateral annihilation of the other; the other must preserve its independence. The object must present itself as negative of its own accord, rather than being marked with the character of the negative by something other than itself." McDowell, 43.

²³² "The faculties of the ego must contend in order to act, since a single comprehensive faculty, in however many egos, would render them either totally static or totally destructive (which amounts to the same thing)." Kelly, 179.

A reading of lordship and bondage which is entirely interiorized cannot account for the deep complexity of Hegel's writing. It must quickly become clear that the divided individual, the subject-object that is in an eternal struggle for recognition of its own identity, never continues the struggle autonomously.²³³ If Hegel's system is indeed built upon a conception of progress, and if history is the becoming of the Absolute (Spirit), then the individual's internal strife transcends the interiority of the individual. The interior strife is contained within a narrative of Absolute striving. It is unthinkable in exclusion from the strife of other individuals, past and present, also subject-objects trying to find a way to be in-and-for-themselves.²³⁴ If the strife of the individual is ultimately productive, it must be productive of the Absolute. Here, Hegel's reaction against Kant²³⁵ raises the question of whether either the Master or the Slave can ever truly be sublated within self-consciousness.

The Hegel of the master-slave dialectic does not, indeed cannot, offer a guaranteed outcome in the battle of master and slave. What is offered is not the possibility to become a sovereign master, nor a unified master-slave. Rather, Hegel described a process of eternal tension in which master becomes slave, slave becomes master, and back again. While this is a process of development, it does not necessarily represent a process of growth.²³⁶ That

²³³ "Correspondingly, the pattern unfolds in social life. The mutual awareness of two persons, their reciprocal need for recognition, their struggle to obtain it, and the final subjection of the one to the other... seen this time from the angle of society but still rooted in the problem of the developing consciousness." *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Per Kojève, "If man is nothing but his becoming, if his human existence in space is his existence in time or as time, if the revealed human reality is nothing but universal history, that history must be the history of the interaction between Mastery and Slavery: the historical 'dialectic' is the 'dialectic' of Master and Slave." Kojève, 9.

²³⁵ In Richard Kroner's rendition of the Kant against which Hegel was writing, "Because he ought to master himself, man is not really free but divided against himself, half-free and half-slave. At best, he is his own slave, enslaved by his master, reason." Richard Kroner, "Introduction," in G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 11.

is, as the master and the slave struggle, as roles are continuously reversed, as roles are possibly too nebulous to even be named or categorized, both master and slave inform the subjectivity of the individual. And, of course, the developing subjectivity likewise continues to more clearly and astutely look at itself as an object. Yet, if this argument is correct, and if the master-slave dialectic has no discernible *telos*, it again represents a rupture in Hegel's system. This rupture dis-rupts the march of progress, the guaranteed outcome - a certain teleological reading of the world.²³⁷ Here, with the rupture of the system, Hegel argued against himself the possibility that the importance of life/history/philosophy takes place in unsurpassable conflict rather than in conflictive progress.²³⁸

In Summation

After offering a more general interpretation of Hegel's philosophical system, the second half of this chapter has also looked at two particular Hegelian movements. It has been argued that both of these movements are purely Hegelian, yet, each of them represent at least a potential rupture in Hegel's philosophical system. A rupture does not appear in the system as a break, but rather as an overflow. Hegel's own ideas were, at times, in excess

²³⁶ "There is no good reason why two identical egos, locked in combat, should not struggle to a static stalemate. To say that Hegel's resolution is good dialectics answers nothing." Kelly, 181.

²³⁷ Through looking at the work of Franz Fanon, a similar argument has been made in Vinay Gidwani, "The Subaltern Moment in Hegel's Dialectic," *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 40 (November, 2008): 2578-2587, accessed July 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a40271>. Gidwani described a 'deformed' Hegel who could not properly be understood as the great philosopher of synthesis.

²³⁸ Put in other terms, "Negation continues to be excessive even to itself." Andrew Hass, *Hegel and the Art of Negation: Negativity, Creativity, and Contemporary Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2014), 140.

of the system in which he believed them to fit. When Hegel spoke of a consciousness which goes beyond itself he illustrated a potential shortcoming of his own system if it were to only operate with a linear view of progress. Likewise, Hegel's master-slave dialectic also calls into question the meaning of progress. As a counter-point to Hegel's philosophy of history, the master-slave dialectic points to a possible understanding of progress that centers on conflict *in se*, rather than on resolution through conflict. As alternative, this calls into question the necessity which Hegel believed to be inherent to his philosophical system. Hegel's work offers forth the possibility to take seriously the system without becoming enslaved to it. This renewed understanding of Hegel's work, simultaneous with a renewed understanding of Hegel's importance, is not a critique from outside, but, in the purest dialectical way, a reading-against from within – a reading 'from below'.

In the current chapter it has been argued that Hegel is among the most important of Moltmann's philosophical interlocutors. Moving forward, it will be shown that Moltmann's interest in eschatology, social trinitarianism, and the doctrine of creation are often deliberately in dialogue with these and other specifically Hegelian themes. Yet, it will also be described that while Moltmann owes a philosophical debt to Hegel, it has never been Moltmann's intention to be an "Hegelian theologian." In Moltmann's work, he has never, for instance, demonstrated the sort of interest that Hans Küng has described of his book, *The Incarnation of God*, "[This book is] not only a presentation of Hegel's statements about Jesus Christ all neatly strung together, but a many-levelled '*initiation*' into Hegel's life and thought with particular reference to his religious world, and thence into his

theology and Christology.”²³⁹ Moltmann has never addressed Hegel in this systematic way. However, Küng also described why Hegel is of such an important formative influence on Moltmann and many theologians of his generation. Küng wrote of “that section of the history of theology which Hegel’s thought embodies and which has determined the whole future of the subject.”²⁴⁰

While some might dispute the claim that Hegel ‘has determined the whole future of theology’, Küng is right to understand the power that Hegelian thought has and continues to hold over much of, at least, Western theology.²⁴¹ Yet, because Moltmann’s intention was not to offer a systematic reading of Hegel, there is also much of Hegel that he leaves unaddressed. For example, while it will be important to understanding how Moltmann utilizes Hegel, Moltmann has shown little inclination to take on directly the task that Kant described as, “[lending] aid in making this path (i.e. Kant’s critical philosophy) into a high-road.”²⁴² Moltmann’s project has not been a continuation of Kantian critical philosophy in the same way that Hegel’s clearly was: Moltmann’s project is not to describe ‘the Absolute’, but to understand ‘revelation’ of the Absolute, contrary to Hegel understood as a subjective God.²⁴³ Just as for Hegel, in Moltmann’s conception all knowledge is

²³⁹ Hans Küng, *The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel’s Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*, trans. J.R. Stephenson (New York: Crossroad, 1970), ix.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Küng explicitly argued for the importance of Hegel to, “Kierkegaard and F.C. Baur, Karl Barth and Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner and Jürgen Moltmann, a good many Frenchmen and particular American and German God-is-dead theologians.” *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴² *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 856.

²⁴³ E.g., in a post-lecture Q&A conversation with Nicholas Lash, Moltmann described his movement away from Barth’s rejection of ‘natural theology’ toward an understanding of the interrelatedness of ‘natural’ and ‘revealed’ theology. “Did we need nature to understand God? We need God to understand nature, so it’s not

participatory knowledge. Yet, Moltmann has been influenced enough by Barth to believe that knowledge is not a subjective working out of the in-and-for-itself, but that there is an additional element of imposition of the seemingly subjective. This imposition is revelation. Although Hegel describes Christianity, the pinnacle of religion, as “Revealed Religion,” Moltmann’s understanding of revelation goes beyond this apparent revealing. Revelation is, itself, a subjective movement in history.²⁴⁴ This movement is the in-breaking of the future into the present. For Hegel, to the contrary, the revelation of religion is not an in-breaking but an out-working. For Hegel, revelation is found in the discovery of that which is ultimately obvious.²⁴⁵ As Merold Westphal has described,

Hegel is not in the least bashful about using the traditional language of Christianity as a revealed religion, just as he uses traditional language about creation, trinity, incarnation, and so forth. In each case he seeks to give a persuasive redefinition in terms of his own system of thought.²⁴⁶

Because Moltmann’s project is not an explication of Hegel, and because he comes to the table with differing theological commitments, Moltmann has never explicitly taken

a revelation of God; but if I believe in God then I have a positive standpoint over against nature and this is different because nature is too much jeopardized with human destruction that we need God to defend nature over against human beings whose knowledge is power.” Jürgen Moltmann, “From Physics to Theology: A Personal Story,” (public lecture given to Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge, February 14, 2012), accessed 1/7/16, <http://www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/Multimedia.php?adfke>

²⁴⁴ “When he states that the Christian revelation is essentially an eschatological one, he means that the Christian faith is grounded in the occurrence of a definite historic event, the raising of Jesus, and lives from the promise of the future of that event, namely, the future realization of the righteousness of God, of a life as a result of resurrection from the dead, and of the kingdom of God in a new heaven and a new earth, a *nova creatio ex nihilo*.” Martin R. Tripole, “Ecclesiological Developments in Moltmann’s Theology of Hope,” *Theological Studies* 34, no. 2 (February 1973): 22.

²⁴⁵ “*In dieser Religion ist deswegen das göttliche Wesen geoffenbart. Sein Offenbarsein besteht offenbar darin, daß gewußt wird, was es ist.*” G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2003), 532. By describing *Offenbarsein* with its cognate, *offenbar*, Hegel is describing that religion’s revelation is not extraordinary but ordinary; it is apparent.

²⁴⁶ Merold Westphal, *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence: On God and the Soul* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004), 85.

the time to describe fundamental Hegelian concepts like ‘reason’ (*Vernunft*), ‘Being’ (*Sein/Dasein*), ‘understanding’ (*Verstand*), ‘concept’ (*Begriff*), Spirit, (*Geist*), or a ‘thing-in-itself’ (*Ding-an-sich*). When these concepts are addressed by Moltmann, they are not done so as intentionally faithful to Hegel’s thought. These concepts will, here, be explored insofar as they help to understand Moltmann’s approach to Hegel, but neither Moltmann, nor therefore this dissertation, will make a judgment on Hegel’s description of these important terms. The question, here, is not whether Hegel was ‘right’ (insofar as such a description can even be used with respect to an Hegelian sort of speculative philosophy²⁴⁷), but of what value Hegel’s philosophy held for Moltmann’s theological development. Thus, a great many pieces of Hegel’s wide-ranging system of thought will be left unaddressed. A direct explication of Hegel could not avoid deep inquiry into questions of self-consciousness and particularly the Unhappy Consciousness, Reason (in many forms), self-alienation (both in Hegel’s own vernacular and as taken on by Marx), culture and art, judgment, law, and logic (variously understood). Here, however, these concepts play a secondary role of importance in Moltmann’s theological development, so will not receive the treatment that they might otherwise deserve.

This chapter does not reproduce Hegel or his system in their fullness and nuance. While such work is important, countless others have already attempted this feat. Rather, here is presented Hegel as monstrous. This is the beginning of a Moltmannian interpretation of Hegel. This is the presentation of a particular Hegel who continues to be influential in the theological thought of Moltmann and his intellectual lineage. By better

²⁴⁷ “Nor *is* there such a thing as the false, any more than there *is* something evil...” *Phenomenology*, 22.

understanding this version of Hegel, and the influence that he holds, a better understanding of Moltmann's theology can come to the fore. It is to that task which we will now turn.

CHAPTER 3: DIALECTIC AND HISTORY

“Things we lose have a way of coming back to us in the end... if not always in the way we expect.”²⁴⁸ – Luna Lovegood

Moltmann’s academic journey has never been defined, as was Hegel’s, by a quest for a system, or for a ‘scientific’ description and understanding of theology. Rather, Moltmann has repeatedly demonstrated that his primary academic and theological impetus is a responsiveness to very real problems in the world.

[Theology] cannot be exhausted in general and abstract definitions of the relationship between church and state or dogmatic faith and political action. Concrete attention must be paid to religious problems of politics and to laws, compulsions and the vicious circles which for economic and social reasons constrict, oppress or make impossible the life of man and living humanity.²⁴⁹

This sort of theological praxis is not merely academic, nor merely ecclesial – if such a distinction can even be made from other societal strata, but intensely and painfully political.²⁵⁰ Moltmann’s theology, then, “Calls especially for dialogue with socialist, democratic, humanistic and anti-racist movements,” and, “Reflects the new situation of

²⁴⁸ Evanna Lynch, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Bluray, directed by David Yates (Burbank, CA: WarnerBrothers, 2007).

²⁴⁹ *Crucified God*, 317.

²⁵⁰ “The question, for Moltmann, is not politics or no politics, but rather, politics based on the cross and the expectation of the kingdom, or politics based on tribalism and self-interest.” Scott R. Paeth, *Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the Work of Jürgen Moltmann* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 54. Theology cannot be anything but political, for Moltmann, so the theologian needs to carefully contend with the way in which theology shapes and is shaped by politics.

God in the inhuman situations of men, in order to break down the hierarchical relationships which deprive them of self-determination, and to help to develop their humanity.”²⁵¹

While not having arisen from the traditional Latin American context of Liberation Theology- insofar as this can be described as a unified movement,²⁵² it is clear that Moltmann’s theological sympathies with Liberation Theology run deep. It is also little surprise that many Liberation thinkers point to Moltmann’s work as important and influential.²⁵³ Without ethical and political dimensions theology would be nothing more than a shouting into the wind. This is why Moltmann’s theology was developed to ask,

Not only what sense it makes to talk of God, but also what is the function of such talk and what effect it has. Even here, none of the so-called substance of faith is lost; rather, faith gains substance in its political incarnations and overcomes its un-Christian abstraction, which keeps it far from the present situation.²⁵⁴

Even in books with a very particular theological focus, the ethical and political dimensions to theological praxis were never far from the surface.²⁵⁵ With reference to

²⁵¹ *Crucified God*, 318.

²⁵² To gain an understanding of the wide-ranging theologies that identify with the term ‘Liberation’ see *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). This volume includes voices that describe liberation theology in terms of feminist theology, black theology, Roman Catholicism, and globalism, as well as from geographical contexts including Latin America, Asia, and the global West.

²⁵³ E.g., significant positive references to Moltmann’s thought can be found in Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988) and Jon Sobrino, S.J., *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985) among others.

²⁵⁴ *Crucified God*, 318.

²⁵⁵ For an excellent overview of Moltmann’s approach to political theology see Julijana Mladenovska-Tešija, “Crucified as a Necessity: The Relevance of Moltmann’s Theology for Evangelical Believers and their Social Commitment,” *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* vol. 8, no. 1 (2014), 7-24.

Christology Moltmann has said, “The leap into the messianic future presupposes the downfall into the misery of the historical present.”²⁵⁶ In the same work Moltmann said,

Injustice and suffering acquire a meaning only to the degree in which we refuse to accept them. Faith and hope for the righteousness and justice of God are the spur to keep us from surrendering to them, and to make us fight injustice and suffering wherever and however we can.²⁵⁷

In looking at the doctrine of the Trinity specifically, Moltmann again made similar claims.

The person who acts has God behind him and the world in front of him, so to speak. For him, the world is the domain to which he is sent, the domain where the gospel is to be proclaimed, where we are to love our neighbour and liberate the oppressed. The future is the domain of open potentialities. He thinks in the movement of God to the world and is himself part of this movement.²⁵⁸

While perhaps lacking the same political depth as previously quoted passages, it is here nevertheless clear that Moltmann’s theological agenda is consistently one in which belief, faith, and ecclesial shibboleth should be seen as precursors to, or the actual beginnings of, political and ethical engagement with a world in need of redemption.²⁵⁹

This politico-ethical orientation is important for one who hopes to perform as an interlocutor of Moltmann. It holds heuristic importance in the quest for understanding, but to an equal degree it is important insofar as it demonstrates something fundamental to Moltmann’s methodology. Theology, for Moltmann, should be dialogical rather than

²⁵⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 22.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁵⁸ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 7.

²⁵⁹ It is redemption, after all, toward which theology strives. “The community’s public witness is rooted in its missionary consciousness and its recognition of God’s redemption as meaningful for the world.” Paeth, 165.

dogmatic.²⁶⁰ Theology is not a practice of deciding and telling but of contemplation and discussion. Theology's primary concern is not creedal assent but moral embodiment.²⁶¹ It is the making real of that for which creation groans – the enlivening of teleological hope for wholeness. As embodied, a key feature of theological description must be a consideration of the limitations (and strengths) of one's own point-of-view as being situated particularly within space and time.

On Being Situated

When seeking to interpret Moltmann, one is faced with a theological non-system which nevertheless seeks to be systematic in breadth and depth.²⁶² As a 'non-system', there is no usurpation of authority taking place in subsequent volumes. Nor do subsequent volumes, necessarily, build upon an established foundation of prior work to bring about deeper levels of meaning or understanding. To the contrary, to understand Moltmann's methodology is to understand a key theological focus and a key interpretive tool.

²⁶⁰ Alen Kristić has performed a fascinating thought-experiment regarding the question of, "What would constitute the concrete and contextual implementation of the fundamental program of *The Crucified God...* for religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Within this experiment he argued, "Only humaneness, concrete and tied to a specific time and place, and defined through the dialogical process, can be the principle of the constitution and activity of religious institutions." Alen Kristić, "The Development of Democratic Political Culture," in *Theology – Descent into the Vicious Circles of Death: On the Fortieth Anniversary of Jürgen Moltmann's The Crucified God*, ed. Zoran Grozdanov (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 78, 81.

²⁶¹ The theme of embodiment is particularly strong in Moltmann's theology of creation. See Cecilia E. Deane-Drummond, *Ecology in Jürgen Moltmann's Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 224-226.

²⁶² Moltmann was intentional about avoiding the creation of a system while still maintaining a strong systematic background to his thought. "Systems save some readers... from thinking critically for themselves... For systems do not present themselves for discussion. For that reason, I have resisted the temptation to develop a theological system." *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, xi.

Moltmann's theology is grounded by an epistemic humility of situatedness.²⁶³ Just as Hegel pointed to an empirical and demonstrable spatio-temporal location as the place of philosophical thought, Moltmann limits any claims to his own profundity by pointing to the limited vantage point from which he could work.

The writer recognizes the conditions and limitations of his own position, and the relativity of his own 'whole' as part of a whole that is much greater. He cannot therefore aim to say what is valid for everyone, at all times, and in all places. But he will set himself, with his own time and his own place, within the greater community of theology. For him this means a critical dissolution of naïve, self-centred thinking.²⁶⁴

It would be well to examine if and to what extent Moltmann has been able to maintain this sort of dispassionate particularity while trying to make the sorts of universalizing claims from which Christian theology – at least an intentionally confessional sort of Christian theology – could scarcely be loosed. Whether Moltmann's work demonstrates a complete fidelity to this ideal, or whether Moltmann himself could have even seen all of the ways in which his own situatedness was reflected in the written word, the very fact that he was so explicit about using particularity as a cornerstone of theological development is telling.²⁶⁵

Moltmann's understanding of his own situatedness, his insistence on beginning the

²⁶³ Joy Ann McDougall described this sort of epistemic humility as a cornerstone of Moltmann's theology so long as the world is in the process of becoming redeemed. "Theological claims about the messianic nature of God's being are always fragmentary and subject to ongoing revision. As long as humankind finds itself under way toward the consummation of the Kingdom... our theological constructs must generate this kind of epistemic openness." Joy Ann McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159.

²⁶⁴ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, xii.

²⁶⁵ The push for this sort of foundational epistemic humility is not unique to Moltmann. In recent years, the John Templeton Foundation has given millions of dollars to the study of epistemic humility, including from a theological perspective. A capstone publication of these studies gives an excellent introduction to the possibility, possible importance, development, and history of epistemic humility. See, Ian M. Church and Peter L. Samuelson, *Intellectual Humility: An Introduction to the Philosophy and Science* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

theological endeavor from a particular standpoint of epistemic humility, is essential because it serves both as method and theological medium. And, to truly understand what it is that Moltmann has to say and why his theology is both unique and important, it will be helpful to understand just how and to what extent his theology has been influenced by his reading of Hegel. If Hegel were removed from the equation, Moltmann's theology would look much different, and almost certainly would lack the sense of embodiment which gives it an ethical thrust. This sense of embodiment will become clear as Moltmann's theology is explored in greater detail moving forward.²⁶⁶ Moltmann's theology will here be considered thematically, beginning where Moltmann chronologically began his career, with the twin themes of 'hope' and 'crucifixion'. Yet, in each instance, one should consider the situatedness from which these discussions arose, and the situatedness in which they continue to return.

The Hope of Crucifixion

In trying to bring together Moltmann's own theological work with a sense of the importance of Hegel's influence thereon, one logical starting point would be a trinitarian doctrine of God. Moltmann is often considered to be among the most important trinitarian thinkers of the 20th century.²⁶⁷ Yet, Moltmann did not begin with a notion of Trinity, but

²⁶⁶ Ashmita Khasnabish credited Moltmann's view of history for specifically claiming a sense of embodiment, "The importance of Moltmann's theological interpretation of time is that it demonstrates both the historical situatedness of the experience of time and the inadequacy of the concept of history to fully determine the meaning of the experience of time." Ashmita Khasnabish, *Humanitarian Identity and the Political Sublime: Intervention of a Postcolonial Feminist* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009), 126.

²⁶⁷ E.g., he has been called, "Perhaps still the most important Protestant theologian alive," Amos Yong, "Foreword" in Joas Adiprasetya, *An Imaginative Glimpse: The Trinity and Multiple Religious Participations* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), ix, as well as, "A springboard for the major rethinking of the understanding

rather with a notion of ‘hope’. So, following Moltmann, it is to hope which we will first turn. Moltmann’s first major work, *Theology of Hope*, serves to orient his readers to the eschatological nature of his theological ruminations. *Theology of Hope* thus serves as an important interpretive tool for everything that follows.²⁶⁸ It is hope in the face of despair which enlivens the ethico-political nature of theology. Without hope, and more particularly without a thoughtful explication of the structures and promises of hope, theology would remain a quaint ecclesial practice rather than the force for change that Moltmann has envisioned. This sort of theology is not a movement from the church outward, but from the world inward to the church. The work of Moltmann’s theology is not that of conversion or explicit evangelism, but of reforming the church in such a way that it can actually participate in God’s redemptive activity rather than causing more reason for it.²⁶⁹ As such, Moltmann’s theology is often internally critical, and he celebrates “the criticism of the church and theology which we have been fortunate enough to experience, and which is justified on sociological, psychological and ideological grounds.”²⁷⁰ Hope is not pure naïveté, and so can only grow from the fertile soil of genuine despair. Hope does not mask

of the Trinity that has been such a marked feature of Western theology since the 1970s.” Peter McEnhill and George Newlands, *Fifty Key Christian Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 162. Of course, there are other who find Moltmann’s trinitarian contributions to be more problematic. See e.g., Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” in *New Blackfriars*, vol. 81 (November 2000): 432-445, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org.10.1111/j.1741-2005.2000.tb06456.x>.

²⁶⁸ Indeed, to a point Moltmann’s entire theological project could be understood as a theology of hope. E.g., see Ryan A. Neal, *Theology as Hope: On the Ground and Implications of Jürgen Moltmann’s Doctrine of Hope* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), xix.

²⁶⁹ Moltmann has even been criticized as one who “emphasizes social and political action to the detriment of an individual’s need for salvation.” Sunday Bobai Agang, *The Impact of Ethnic, Political, and Religious Violence on Northern Nigeria, and a Theological Reflection on its Healing* (Carlisle, CBA: Langham Monographs, 2011), 64.

²⁷⁰ *Crucified God*, 2.

reality, but celebrates possibility by standing in rejection of that from which despair has arisen.

Working from the position of hope, Moltmann's second major work, *Crucified God*, sought to Christologically ground 'hope' in the painful realities of the world. This movement from hope to crucifixion, from eschatology backward to death,²⁷¹ itself evidences Hegel at work.²⁷² In the Introduction to this volume, Moltmann wrote, "As I intend to show, the theology of the cross is none other than the reverse side of the Christian theology of hope."²⁷³ It would be easy to conceptualize *Theology of Hope* as one side of a coin and *The Crucified God* as another side of the same coin. If this were the case, then the two different aspects of this theological coin would serve to balance each other. Depending on the particular theological 'coin toss', the result would be a focus on either hope or crucifixion. While each theological aspect could critique the other as its opposite, the two could never exist simultaneously as complementary theological foci. Moltmann's intent cannot be fully understood using this sort of physical analogy. Rather, to say that a theology of crucifixion is the reverse side of a theology of hope is to jump head-on into Hegelian dialectical thought. With Hegel, and therefore with Moltmann, this sort of dual exploration

²⁷¹ Anna Madsen noted that Moltmann demonstrated a fear "that a pietistic interpretation of God's act on the cross, one which concentrates primarily upon the salvific benefits of Christ's crucifixion" would lead to an abandonment of the eschatological element of Eucharistic practice." Anna M. Madsen, *The Theology of the Cross in Historical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007), 206.

²⁷² E.g., in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, "The crucifixion of Christ is a negation of every idolatrous religious claims (just as the death of God deconstructs every theology)." Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 239.

²⁷³ *Crucified God*, 5.

is never a zero-sum game, as with the coin flip.²⁷⁴ Rather, nothing is truly only what it is, but is also simultaneously the determinate-negation of that which it is.

All that is necessary to achieve scientific progress... is the recognition of the logical principle that the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness...and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results.²⁷⁵

Thus, to say that *The Crucified God* is the reverse side of *Theology of Hope* is to already put these two works, or at least the themes which they represent, into a dialectical relationship. To read *The Crucified God*, or to contemplate the intentionally pathetic God which it describes, is to begin the process of refining the process begun in *Theology of Hope*. To maintain a dedicated focus on the crucifixion is not to reject or negate Moltmann's early hope, but rather serves as a purification of the concept of hope.²⁷⁶ Again, one can see at least a general Hegelian influence taking place here. While there are those who have interpreted Hegel as a pure idealist, Moltmann's reading of Hegel has rejected any such interpretation. Undoubtedly Moltmann looks back to Hegel through both Marx and Bloch, and so has inherited a rich history of pulling out the materialist aspects of Hegel's philosophy.²⁷⁷ Daniel Rossi-Keen described Moltmann's theology as "Post-

²⁷⁴ One might point to the differences between Platonic dialectic and Hegelian dialectic to help to understand where the coin flip analogy falls short. E.g., "Hegelian dialectic deepens alterity into position and opposition into contradiction. This is why dialectics is not merely the symphony of being, being in its measure and in its harmony; dialectics is the creative movement of the symphony, its absolute genesis." Haas, 87.

²⁷⁵ *Science of Logic*, 54.

²⁷⁶ Ryan Neal argued against the understanding that *The Crucified God* should be read as a 'continuation' of *A Theology of Hope*, yet also saw the ways in which the two can stand in dialectical relation. See, Ryan Neal, "Minority Report: Reconsidering Jürgen Moltmann's Turn to a Theology of the Cross," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 2012): 26-43.

²⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of Bloch's influence on Moltmann see *Jürgen Moltmanns Theologie in Auseinandersetzung mit Ernst Bloch* and Christian T. Collins Winn and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, "'Before

metaphysical” for this very reason.²⁷⁸ A theology of hope is not an intellectual practice of wishing and dreaming, but an embodied practice of naming the need(s) for redemption and then acting in specific ways such that redemption can be made manifest. In order to meaningfully hope, which is to say, to meaningfully embody hope, one must first dwell in brokenness. For the Christian, there is no brokenness greater than the crucified God, for there is evidence of the brokenness of humanity – the very brokenness of creation itself. Moltmann made the biblical admonition to “take up your cross”²⁷⁹ an important point of orientation for *The Crucified God*. For Moltmann, this admonition demonstrates a material practice that also transcends the merely material. “It is right to extend the understanding of the following of Christ and to give concrete meaning to our taking up the cross, for this does not take place only in the inner life of faith, any more than concrete martyrdom is exhausted in the mystical *conformitas crucis*.”²⁸⁰ Moltmann’s theology, particularly as evidenced by his *theologia crucis*, can only make theological claims in light of material reality.²⁸¹ This will again be demonstrated through a discussion of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation, in which any conception of an ‘internal’ life of God is always tied to the

Bloch There Was Blumhardt’: a Thesis on the Origins of the Theology of Hope,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 62, no. 1 (February, 2009): 26-39.

²⁷⁸ See Daniel E. Rossi-Keen, “Jürgen Moltmann, Karl Marx and God: An Unlikely Trinity,” *Toronto Journal of Theology*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2007): 47-60.

²⁷⁹ Matt 16:24, Mark 8:35.

²⁸⁰ *The Crucified God*, 63.

²⁸¹ “[Moltmann constructs] accounts of the world as fundamentally open precisely because God’s salvific engagement with it is not yet complete.” Christopher Baker, Thomas A. James, and John Reader, *A Philosophy of Christian Materialism: Entangled Fidelities and the Public Good* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18.

materiality of creation.²⁸² If the life of God is so tied to materiality, and if the theological task is one of seeking and enacting redemption, then one must understand the mechanism by which redemption can materially be described. For Moltmann, the Hegelian concept of ‘sublation’ serves this role.

Sublation: The Moving Force of History

This transition from theology of hope to theology of the cross exemplifies an overarching structural reality of Moltmann’s theology. While the theology of the cross is the ‘reverse side’ of the theology of hope, these two are not opposites. Rather, they stand in a dialectical relationship of sublation (*aufhebung*). Hegel used the term ‘sublation’ often and repeatedly in his written work.²⁸³ Yet, notably, there are four primary instances in which he offered something of a detailed explanation of the concept of sublation.²⁸⁴ The first, found in the *Phenomenology*, demonstrates at least an initial complexity in the term. “[*Aufhebung*] exhibits its true twofold meaning which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a negating and a preserving.”²⁸⁵ Hegel’s second explicit description of sublation takes

²⁸² Though Moltmann has tapped into a materialist Hegelianism in theological construction, the ramifications of this materialism are at times left to be assumed rather than made explicit. His wife, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell, consistently made even stronger arguments for a more purely materialist theology. E.g. see Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell, *I am My Body*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995).

²⁸³ An interesting discussion about *aufhebung* can be found in Haas, op. cit., in which he describes the ‘art’ of sublation in Hegel’s work, the discounting of Hegel’s notion of *aufhebung* by Derrida, and newer interpretations by Žižek, Agamben, Malabou, et al.

²⁸⁴ These four instances are described in some detail in Ralph Palm, *Hegel’s Concept of Sublation: A Critical Interpretation* (PhD Diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2009). Although as yet unpublished, this dissertation is well worth reading.

²⁸⁵ *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 68. *Aufhebung* was here translated as “supersession.” However, in keeping with the general trends of contemporary Hegel scholarship, I prefer to maintain consistency by translating *Aufhebung* as “sublation” throughout Hegel’s work.

place in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Here, Hegel maintained a focus on the two-pronged understanding of sublation, and then went on to say,

This ambiguity in linguistic usage, through which the same word has a negative and a positive meaning, cannot be regarded as an accident nor yet as a reason to reproach language as if it were a source of confusion. We ought rather to recognize here the speculative spirit of our language, which transcends the ‘either-or’ of mere understanding.²⁸⁶

Moving beyond the oddity of having a single word with two potentially opposing meanings, Hegel then began to point to the possibility that, in a philosophically important way, both opposing meanings should, or perhaps must, be utilized simultaneously. This became even more explicit in the two longer discussions of sublation in the *Science of Logic*. “Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated.”²⁸⁷

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel argued that sublation is “one of the most important concepts in philosophy,”²⁸⁸ so it should be no surprise that Moltmann has taken up the theme. Moltmann’s movement from *Theology of Hope* to *The Crucified God* is best understood as a movement of sublation. While the Christian tradition has often celebrated the crucifixion in ways which might seem very strange from the outside, and, indeed, even from the inside,²⁸⁹ the frankness with which Moltmann addressed the concept-

²⁸⁶ *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I*, 154. This particular remark comes from the *Zusätze*, which are editorial additions to Hegel’s text based on student lecture notes. The words, therefore, may not be directly from the mouth of Hegel. Nevertheless, I follow the editors of this edition, as well as other Hegel scholars such as J.N. Findlay in believing that these excurses are helpful interpretive tools.

²⁸⁷ *Science of Logic*, 107.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁸⁹ E.g., Mel Gibson’s 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, was marketed specifically to pastors and Christian congregations. Many saw this film to be irredeemably violent and grotesque, rather than spiritual and pious. Film critic David Edelstein wrote, “This is a two-hour-and-six-minute snuff movie – The Jesus Chainsaw

unqualifyingly embracing theopaschism,²⁹⁰ makes a theology of the cross much less amenable to a theology of hope. *The Crucified God* was intended to move beyond a theology whose content was the hope of creation, to a theology which looked first not at the relationship of creation to God, but of God to Godself.

In *The Crucified God* Moltmann dedicated a great deal of time in seeking to understand Jesus' cry of dereliction, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"²⁹¹ For Moltmann, this moment exists as a pinnacle for Christian theology. "Every theology which claims to be Christian must come to terms with Jesus' cry on the cross."²⁹² The cry of dereliction is not merely poetic, nor a creative throwback to Hebrew scriptures, but a moment of genuine existential angst²⁹³ – a glimpse into actual God-forsakenness and demonstration of "enmity between God and God."²⁹⁴ Using this moment as an example, Moltmann had no qualms speaking about genuine God-forsakenness in the world.²⁹⁵ While it would be easier to understand this 'spiritually'- whatever one might actually mean by

Massacre – that thinks it's an act of faith." David Edelstein, "Jesus H. Christ: Mel Gibson's Bloody Mess," *Slate*, February 24, 2004, accessed July 21, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/movies/2004/02/jesus_h_christ.html.

²⁹⁰ Although, it is also the case that "He takes great pains to distinguish his theopaschitism from patipassianism since the latter carries the stigma of heretical overtones." Daniel Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal of Divine Impassibility: Warranted?," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 61, no. 4 (November, 2008): 403.

²⁹¹ Matt 27:46, Mark 15:34.

²⁹² *The Crucified God*, 153.

²⁹³ Moltmann prioritizes Mark's recounting of the cry of dereliction, and he "faults the Gospels of Luke and John for softening the harshness of Mark's witness." Cameron Coombe, "Reading Scripture with Moltmann: The Cry of Dereliction and the Trinity," *Colloquium*, vol. 48, no. 2 (November, 2016): 133

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁹⁵ Moltmann's theology demands that one "cries out with the godforsaken." *Ibid.*, 227.

that- or as a feeling rather than an empirical reality, to do so would be to reject the bodily importance that Moltmann saw in this cry. In order to understand why the cry of dereliction holds such an important place within *The Crucified God*, one should seek to interpret it as an example of Moltmann's sublative methodology. The cry of dereliction stands between birth (hope) and crucifixion – a moment of utter despair.²⁹⁶ This despair is both the negation and the preservation of the hope of resurrection.

The cry of dereliction, and in this case the entirety of *The Crucified God*, overcomes the immediacy of *Theology of Hope*, but at the same time preserves the hope for newness and possibility in the face of despair. *The Crucified God*, at its heart, spoke to an “overcoming of the crucified hope.”²⁹⁷ That is to say, the very nature of Christian hope always already contains within itself the negation of crucifixion, which is itself always already open to the sublation of hope. This is not merely a repetitive cycle of A-B-A-B-A-B, but rather what Deleuze, interpreting Nietzsche, has called, “Repetition in the eternal return,” or, “Conceiving the same on the basis of the different.”²⁹⁸

Just as *The Crucified God* served to purify the concept of hope by tying it to the reality of death – to both negate a too-easy conception of hope while preserving and uplifting the possibility of hope in the face of despair – one might also see that his next

²⁹⁶ And this despair, of course, is embodied. “Jesus suffered his own particular suffering in human flesh... [which] prevents us from speaking of a generic or theoretical or universal suffering experienced by Jesus Christ.” Michael Jenkins and Stephen Breck Reid, “God’s Forsakenness: The Cry of Dereliction as an Utterance Within the Trinity,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, vol. 19, no. 1 (June 1997): 41.

²⁹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Presence of God’s Future: The Risen Christ,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89, no. 4 (Fall 2007), 582.

²⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton, tr. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 41.

major work, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* stands as a sublation of *The Crucified God*.²⁹⁹ Again, this sublation is not a rejection of the previous, but a way of bringing the essential points into a sharper, more practical focus. Moltmann described the intention behind *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* as, “To carry on theology in an ecumenical context.”³⁰⁰ As a practice of two-fold sublation, this text further purifies a theology of hope by sublating the individualism that often corresponds with considering one’s own mortality through the crucifixion of Christ, and maintains and uplifts the hope of resurrection as a practice which should be intentionally rooted in the life of the church.³⁰¹ This intentionality of community serves as a purification of hope by bringing an additional connection between theology and the empirical world. Theology in community is inherently embodied and is therefore the very sort of political theology which Moltmann has striven to practice.

²⁹⁹ Of course, there were a number of smaller books that Moltmann wrote in the years between these first three major texts. This outline of Moltmann’s thought is not intended to reject or entirely bypass those smaller works, for there is interesting theology to be found within their pages. Yet, Moltmann himself recognized that those works were ‘minor’ compared to this early ‘major’ trilogy. See, Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), xiii.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xix.

³⁰¹ Sölle helpfully reminded that even this focus on the church, or on the whole of creation, cannot be separated from the actual lives of individuals. “The gospel has to do with freedom for all, or more precisely – since the reality of oppression remains in the picture – its essence is the *liberation* of all.” Dorothee Sölle, *Political Theology*, trans. John Shelley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 67. What is here being critiqued is not the idea of individual salvation or individual relationship with the resurrected Christ, but the failure to connect the working out of one’s own salvation with the need for the redemption of all, including the liberation from oppression of countless other individuals.

The Crisis and Promise of History

While it is easy to point to the general trajectory of Moltmann's thought and to see that it is not accidentally dialectical,³⁰² and particularly Hegelian at that, the thoughtful reader of Moltmann can also see Hegel's philosophy at work throughout the content of Moltmann's work as well in its structure.³⁰³ Perhaps the easiest example, and one of the most important given the processive nature of Moltmann's thought, can be seen in Moltmann's understanding of history.³⁰⁴ In some ways, it would be easy to overlook 'history' since it is not a classical theological category.³⁰⁵ Yet, because of the intense focus

³⁰² Richard Gibb described that the "dialectical interpretation of the cross and resurrection of Christ, which provides the hope of the eschatological transformation of the world, is the most significant controlling theological idea in Moltmann's early work and shapes his understanding of political theology." Richard Gibb, *Grace and Global Justice: The Socio-Political Mission of the Church in an Age of Globalization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 67.

³⁰³ "At the heart of Moltmann's view of God lies this Hegelian dialectic... Ontologically, dialectic affirms the reality of the other, of what is different from oneself... the hallmark of a dialectical cosmogony is openness to the other." Henry Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995), 113-114.

³⁰⁴ Arne Rasmussen saw a dramatic shift in the way that Moltmann conceived of dialectic in history from an early belief in the progressive movement of history to an eschatological concern about the possibility of the continued existence of creation. See Arne Rasmussen, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 91-92, 298-305, et al. Ironically, Richard Bauckham has also noted that Moltmann has been criticized as sanctioning "the typical European theologian's detachment from concrete political movements and objectives," while also being criticized as "reducing eschatology to human political achievements." Bauckham, 24.

³⁰⁵ Which, of course, does not mean that it has been entirely neglected. Hans Urs von Balthasar, e.g., wrote a theology of history that incorporates a number of Hegelian structures and ideas while simultaneously demonstrating a distaste for Hegel. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). Reinhold Niebuhr produced perhaps the most well-known theology of history of the past century in works including: Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), and Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2 vols. (New York Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941, 1943). One would also do well to consult those like Katie Geneva Cannon who point to "the White academic community's flourishing publishing monopoly," and in its face seek to "focus carefully on the varying social theoretical perspectives developed by Black scholars." Katie Geneva Cannon, "Racism and Economics," *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader*, eds. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 3. See also Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1981) for an example of a re-envisioning of a theological-historical methodology from the point-of-view of the oppressed.

that Moltmann put on the classical theological categories of ‘Trinity’ and ‘Eschatology’, history becomes an essential element toward crafting a description of both the internal life of God in relation to Godself and the external life of God in relationship with creation. The very notion of history is tied distinctively to the relationship between God and God’s people.³⁰⁶ “Beneath the star of the promise of God it becomes possible to experience reality as ‘history’. The stage for what can be experienced, remembered and expected as ‘history’ is set and filled, revealed and fashioned, by promise.”³⁰⁷ In *Theology of Hope* the concept of history is deeply tied to God’s promises.³⁰⁸ History, as such, is imbued with meaning by promise.³⁰⁹ Moltmann saw that it was divine promise which gave motion to history.³¹⁰

If events are thus experienced within the horizon of remembered and expected promises, then they are experienced as truly ‘historic’ events. They do not have only the accidental, individual and relative character which we normally ascribed to historic events...historic events within the

³⁰⁶ Even the inter-personal relationships among creation are likewise dependent. “Without access to God, creation... can only repeat disaster in its own relationships.” J. Matthew Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other: The Trinitarian Ethic of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 7.

³⁰⁷ *Theology of Hope*, 106.

³⁰⁸ Given how deeply indebted Moltmann is to the work of Ernst Bloch in many ways, this stands out as an important moment of disagreement. For Bloch, “[For] the Lord’s own people...almost none of the promises were kept. Instead there came the Assyrians, Medes and Persians, the Babylonian captivity, Antiochus Epiphanes and the Romans, the destruction of the Temple, the razing of Jerusalem, and then, finally, the dispersion among the nations.” Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2009), 20. In ways which differed from Moltmann, Bloch conceived of God as “a God who is not yet what he is: who is only in the future of his promise-to-be.” *Ibid.*, 81. Moltmann would not disagree about the socio-political description that Bloch gave of the repeated conquerings of Israel. However, although Moltmann’s understanding of God is much more developmental than the stereotypical Hellenistic unchanging God, his description of God does not hinge on the seeming political failures of God to preserve and protect Israel.

³⁰⁹ An excellent overview of the ways in which the concept of promise has influence Moltmann’s theology can be found in Christopher Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann’s Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

³¹⁰ There is also a necessary specificity to the notion of promise. God’s promises, for Moltmann, are not only eschatological, but also political. “The words of a promise, unlike the words of a prediction or a forecast, are never dispensable in regard to the reality that they announce.” *Ibid.*, 40.

horizon of promise and hope bear the mask of something that is still outstanding, not yet finalized, not yet realized.³¹¹

Hegel's influence can be felt very strongly here. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* Hegel argued that 'history' as such is constituted by those specific moments and movements which have brought about the continued purification of *Geist*.³¹² Problematically, Hegel used this understanding of history to reject the very possibility of 'history' as such among peoples from across the entire African continent.³¹³ So, in recognizing the ways in which this can go badly, one must be careful in describing precisely what kind of movement sufficiently constitutes 'history' as such. Moltmann positively and repeatedly cited Hegel in his discussions about history. In particular, Moltmann looked to Hegel to describe how and why history is a participative process of movement more than a passive study of objective past events.³¹⁴ There are two concepts to which Moltmann often returned in describing history as a theological concept: crisis and promise. The importance of crisis for the movement and understanding of history goes back at least as far as Augustine,³¹⁵ according to Moltmann, but has taken on an even more important

³¹¹ *Theology of Hope*, 107.

³¹² "We can say that world history is the record of the spirit's efforts to attain knowledge of what it is in itself." *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 54.

³¹³ "History is in fact out of the question. Life there consists of a succession of contingent happenings and surprises. No aim or state exists whose development could be followed; and there is no subjectivity, but merely a series of subjects who destroy one another." *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 183.

³¹⁴ Indeed, for Moltmann, history cannot be solely about the past, but is equally an eschatological practice of the future. "Through this event of the past – which is nevertheless not a past event – the present is thrown open for the future." Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 17.

³¹⁵ See R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (New York: Cambridge, 1988), 1-22, for a discussion of the ways in which Augustine conceived of the interpretation of crises as the moving force behind history.

meaning since the time of the French revolution. It is in times of crisis that “new possibilities that were hitherto unknown and unsuspected begin to dawn on the horizon.”³¹⁶

‘Crisis’ is only the first half of Moltmann’s philosophy of history. The second half, ‘Promise’, is decidedly theological, and so grounds history within a particular conception of, and relationship with, God. A Christian philosophy of history begins with the acknowledgement of political crises, and moves forward toward their resolution based upon the promises of God for a future in which God will be all-in-all, in which justice reigns throughout the land, in which the defining characteristic of history is love, not fear.³¹⁷ Thus, a Christian philosophy of history seeks to enact a better future in the present because of the divine promises of the past.³¹⁸ “The peculiarity of Christian theology can be

³¹⁶ *Theology of Hope*, 232. Even though, or perhaps because, Moltmann was utilizing Hegel in the formulation of a philosophy of history, he did not spend a great deal of time discussing what exactly a crisis is or how the term ought to be defined. One might find that such a discussion could look similar to the argument between Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou regarding the nature of ‘event’. Both Deleuze and Badiou would, to differing extents, understand their primary philosophical projects as somehow contra-Hegel, but the fact remains that both philosophers fell into a philosophical timeline that has been influenced, perhaps even determined to a certain extent, by Hegel. It would thus make sense that one of their primary arguments would have significantly Hegelian undertones that would parallel an interpretive question from theology which is likewise influenced by Hegel. In this argument, Badiou argued that for Deleuze, “Everything is event,” (Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 11), whereas he believed, “Events are rare.” (*Ibid.*, 76.) If the concept of ‘crisis’ and actual physical crises are the description and mechanisms for the determination of history, then the differences between taking the path of Badiou would look very different from the path of Deleuze – at least from Badiou’s reckoning. The moment that everything is crisis the concept of ‘crisis’ loses all credibility and meaning. Yet, if on the other hand, one accepts Badiou’s description of an event as “neither structural, nor axiomatic, nor legal. No available generality can account for it,” (*Saint Paul*, 14) then the theological/philosophical concept of history would seem to be incapable of accurately describing the happenings of the world in a meaningful way. If, as Badiou suggests, an ‘event’ is so rare that perhaps resurrection is the only truly Christian ‘event’, then the notion that ‘events’ are the building blocks of a philosophy of history would be a non-starter.

³¹⁷ Hegel can serve as a natural lead-in to this sort of developing Christian philosophy of history insofar as “[his] first original philosophy might be called a ‘Pantheism of Love’.” Kroner, 11.

³¹⁸ Pannenberg made a similar claim, “Within a reality characterized by the constantly creative work of God, history arises because God makes promises and fulfills these promises. History is event so suspended in tension between promise and fulfillment that through the promise it is irreversibly pointed toward the goal

defined as follows: Christian theology speaks of God historically and of history eschatologically.”³¹⁹ Theology begins by looking backward.

It speaks of the ‘God of the exodus’... and of the ‘God who raised Jesus from the dead’... and unites with faith in God the memory of historical events. The hermeneutical starting point of Christian theology is therefore the concrete history witnessed to in both the Old and New Testaments.³²⁰

Though, as Moltmann notes, a theology of history should be particularly interested in the Hebrew Bible as the starting point of the story of God’s relationship with creation. The New Testament serves as a continuing example of God’s promise(s), but the stories of the New Testament, looked at through an historical lens, should be viewed as continuations of the promises God made to Israel, rather than through the distinctively Hellenistic lens evident in the cultures surrounding the early church. History, viewed eschatologically, is found “not [in] the Greek *logos*, but the *promise* which has stamped the language, the hope and the experience of Israel. It was not in the *logos* of the epiphany of the eternal present, but in the hope-giving word of promise that Israel found God’s truth.”³²¹ By recognizing the priority of the early promises of God to Israel, Moltmann was acting to reject a theology which sees eschatology as “concerned merely with the final, closing events of history.”³²²

of future fulfillment.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History,” in *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 1, trans. George H. Kelm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 18

³¹⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 203.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ *Theology of Hope*, 40-41.

³²² *Ibid.*, 40. In particular, one might see in this a rejection of Barth’s claim that, “Because of the qualitative distinction between God and man, the history of religion, Church History, is *weak* –utterly *weak*. Since religion is human, utterly human history it is flesh, even though it be draped in the flowing garments of the ‘History of Salvation’. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 276.

In rooting the concept of history in the twofold dynamic of crisis and promise, and then by further rooting the concept of promise to the Hebrew narrative of the relationship between God and Israel, Moltmann has illustrated what he sees to be the movement of history.³²³ Moltmann rejects any study which would evidence “the positivist, materialist reduction of history to the level of past facts and times that have gone.”³²⁴ The narrative of an historical journey transcends this sort of reductionism because it shows history to be a dynamic process which connects the past, present, and future into a redemptive movement through the promises and presence of God.³²⁵

Hegel on History

Moltmann demonstrated rather explicitly that there is a distinctive dialectical nature to his thought, and that this dialectical nature owes a great deal to Hegel. Yet, Moltmann’s work was never intended to be a direct continuation of Hegel, nor purely Hegelian in form and content. So, while the influence of Hegel is important to recognize, one ought also to see the points at which Moltmann departs from Hegel. In this instance, the insistence that the primary moving forces of theological history are crisis and promise adds an element of

³²³ A similar movement can be seen in the way that Gustavo Gutierrez conceived of history. He described the Bible as a book of promise that “orients all history toward the future and thus puts revelation in an eschatological perspective.” Gustavo Gutierrez, “Hermeneutical Principle,” in *Essential Writings*, ed. James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 85.

³²⁴ *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 240.

³²⁵ Bultmann made a similar claim regarding the inbreaking of the future into the present, “To live in faith is to live an eschatological existence, to live beyond the world.” Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 80.

contrast from Hegel, particularly in Hegel's intentionally theological writings. In discussing Hegel's view of theological history, David Nirenberg stated,

The targets of dialectical teleology are moveable, and it makes a great deal of difference where one places them. If in a genealogy it is the point of origin that is the crucial choice... the choice that matters for dialectical teleology are what contraries to recognize as significant and where to locate their overcoming.³²⁶

While we will be moving more directly into a discussion of Moltmann's teleological eschatology in the next chapter, for present purposes, it is the description of 'genealogy' that is important here.³²⁷ If Nirenberg is correct, and the point of origin is foundational to the movement of a historical genealogy, then it is noteworthy that Moltmann chose to begin his genealogy of Christianity at a different point than Hegel.

In Hegel's early theological writing, he claimed that the beginning of the history of Christianity, was Abraham, "The true progenitor of the Jews."³²⁸ With Abraham, Hegel said, "The history of this people begins, i.e. his spirit is the unity, the soul, regulating the entire fate of his posterity."³²⁹ Notice here that Hegel explicitly tied the idea of Abraham as the beginning of the Jewish people with the 'fate' of their *telos*. Hegel implied, in a way that would be picked up explicitly by Moltmann, that to understand the beginning of (in this case) a community is to already begin to have a strong idea toward what *telos* such a

³²⁶ David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 202.

³²⁷ Because Moltmann rejects a purely linear description of theological history, the genealogy cannot be separated from the dialectical teleology in this case. Even so, the notion of genealogy to which Nirenberg pointed is something much more simplistic than that developed by Foucault beginning in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1995).

³²⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, 182.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

community is moving. Both Hegel and Moltmann would agree with Nirenberg that the particular ‘contraries’ which are encountered or chosen also seek to shape teleological movement. Hegel and Moltmann nevertheless approached teleological history differently.³³⁰ Hegel famously said, “The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk,”³³¹ a poetic turn-of-phrase which is generally taken to mean that philosophical wisdom is most clearly accessible from ‘the end’, or ‘an end’, looking backward. Hegel, standing at dusk, pointed to Abraham as the beginning of Jewish history because he naturally saw the trajectory that this particular history had taken. Moltmann, on the other hand, although likewise situated at dusk, repeatedly affirmed that history should be considered primarily as a forward-looking enterprise. “The real category of history is no longer the past and the transient, but the future.”³³² As such, Moltmann upended the typically linear timeline of history in such a way that the focus is not merely on the process, but on an openness toward future possibilities.³³³ History is not merely the study of how we got to where we are, but simultaneously the quest to get where we want to be. A helpful

³³⁰ One might see in Hegel’s genealogical method a glimpse of that which would later be developed by Nietzsche. It is the power of humanity by which history is defined, rather than, for Moltmann, the love of God which defines life. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1989).

³³¹ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 23.

³³² *Crucified God*, 260. Moltmann thought highly of Barth’s contention, which he also credits Paul Althaus as having developed independently, that eschatology is both fully future and fully present simultaneously. (See, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, 327-328.) Yet, he also questioned whether Barth’s eschatology was ultimately a “de-historicizing of the biblical remembrance of Christ’s death and resurrection.” *Science and Wisdom*, 100-101.

³³³ “The goal-directed time of creation is consummated in the *cyclical* movements in which the eternal God is glorified in the new creation. The aeonic eternity of the new creation is full of mobility and vitality. If this were not so it would be impossible to speak of eternal ‘life’. *Ibid.*, 109-110.

way in which Hegel described this quest is in terms of the movement through ‘being’ and ‘nothing’ (as sublation) to ‘becoming’ what we already are.

Being-Nothing-Becoming

Because Moltmann’s future-oriented history is rooted deeply in Hegel’s dialectical description of Being-Nothing-Becoming, it will be helpful to first describe this process within Hegelian language. Hegel described ‘Being’ as such, “In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself...It has no diversity within itself, nor any with a reference outwards...There is *nothing* to be intuited in it... Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*.”³³⁴ Hegel made it very clear, here, that the first and second movements of dialectic, Being and Nothing, are actually much more closely related than they are complete opposites. The second movement of dialectic is not ‘antithesis’. The second movement is, in some form, an overcoming, but it is not a simple reversal.

Hegel described this second movement, ‘Nothing’, in this way, “Nothing, pure nothing...is simply equality with itself, complex emptiness, absence of all determination and content—undifferentiatedness in itself.”³³⁵ At face value, this brief description of ‘Nothing’ sounds very similar to the previous description of ‘Being’.³³⁶ Hegel continued:

³³⁴ *Science of Logic*, 82.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Houlgate described, “Hegel’s opening analysis of being and nothing is quite simple: pure being is so indeterminate that it is nothing at all, and nothing is so purely and immediately negative that it is being.” Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 269.

In so far as intuiting or thinking can be mentioned here, it counts as a distinction whether something or *nothing* is intuited or thought. To intuit or think nothing has, therefore, a meaning; both are distinguished and thus *nothing is* in our intuiting or thinking. Nothing is, therefore, the same determination, or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether the same as, pure *being*.³³⁷

Of course, it should be no surprise that when Hegel said that ‘nothing’ is “altogether the same as” ‘being’, this does not mean that there is no distinction or differentiation between the terms. According to Hegel, “It is equally true that they are not undistinguished from each other, that, on the contrary, they are not the same, that they are absolutely distinct, and yet that they are unseparated and inseparable.”³³⁸ The key to understanding this variation on the dialectic is to see that there is no synthesis of ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’. The dialectical movement does not seek synthesis, and, indeed, could never achieve synthesis anyway. The fact that the first two dialectical movements ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ are distinct yet inseparable,³³⁹ is evidence that the Hegelian system should not be considered a purely positive and progressive forward-marching movement. Even in those times when Hegel speaks of the progression of history in such a way, it is only from the present, looking backward, that such a claim could be made.³⁴⁰ Speaking of ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’, Hegel said, “Their truth is, therefore, this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one in the

³³⁷ *Science of Logic*, 82.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

³³⁹ “[In Hegel’s view] it is trivially true: pure being is utterly indeterminate and vacuous and as such is completely indistinguishable from sheer and utter nothingness. This is not to say that we are wrong to talk of pure being in the first place. There is being... insofar as it is pure being, however, it is so utterly indeterminate that logically it vanishes into nothing.” *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 264.

³⁴⁰ Think again of the flight of the Owl of Minerva.

other: *becoming*, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself.”³⁴¹

The first movement of dialectic is not merely overcome by its direct opposite, but is transformed by a difference which was always already present even in the initial movement itself. A thesis is not transformed by means of its antithesis, but by an internal and pre-existent ‘nothing’. This ‘nothing’ is not a particular ‘nothing’, which relates directly to a specific ‘something’. Rather, “Nothing is to be taken in its indeterminate simplicity.”³⁴² The ‘nothing’ which transforms ‘being’ is not open to the question, “Which nothing?” It is not the nothing of a particular something. ‘Nothing’, that is, is not merely the opposite of any particular form of ‘being’. According to Hegel,

We are concerned first of all not with the form of opposition (with the form, that is, also of relation) but with the abstract, immediate negation: nothing, purely on its own account, negation devoid of any relations—what could also be expressed if one so wished merely by (the word) ‘not’.³⁴³

A particular ‘nothing’ which is the inversion of a particular ‘something’ is not what Hegel is after here. Yet, he also sees that both ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ are but moments of ‘Becoming’ insofar as their present and continuous movement is to vanish into one another.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ *Science of Logic*, 82.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ Of course, not all are convinced that Hegel is successful in describing this dialectical movement. E.g., “Becoming depends on the distinction of its moments; since pure being and nothing are indistinguishable, it follows that there is as yet no becoming. Thus, rather than destroying itself, the becoming we have imagined earlier is unjustified. Moreover, even if we grant that becoming is self-contradictory, and destroys itself for this reason it is not at all clear how Hegel obtains a ‘stable result,’ namely, ‘*determinate being [Dasein]*,’ in which being and nothing are ‘preserved as distinct moments.” Mehmet Tabak, *The Doctrine of Being in Hegel’s Science of Logic: A Critical Commentary* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 45.

‘Becoming’, then, as the third dialectical movement is not merely the unity of ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’, and certainly not if these are abstracted from themselves. Much less is ‘Becoming’ a synthesis of the two. To the contrary, ‘Becoming’ is “the determinate unity in which there is both being and nothing.”³⁴⁵ Both exist “in this unity, but only as vanishing, sublated moments.”³⁴⁶ Insofar as both are vanishing sublated moments, both ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ are themselves unities of being and nothing.³⁴⁷ “The one is being as immediate and as relation to nothing, and the other is nothing as immediate and as relation to being.”³⁴⁸ Both ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ differ in focus, and in direction, but, “both are the same, *becoming*, and although they differ so in direction, they interpenetrate and paralyse each other.”³⁴⁹ Both ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ are part and parcel of ‘Becoming’. Yet, it is also true that the relationship between ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ is not one of reciprocity. It is not only that ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’ as external movements come together in a process of ‘Becoming’. “The one does not sublimate the other externally—but each sublates itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself.”³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ *Science of Logic*, 103.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁴⁷ “As much as being manifests itself as ‘always already’ taking the place of nothing, nothing continuously evades, escapes, and opposes being, differing from it in what can only be called an absolute way.” Brady Bowman, “Self-Determination and Ideality in Hegel’s Logic of Being,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 228.

³⁴⁸ *Science of Logic*, 105.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

Not surprisingly, given the complexity of Hegel's thought and of Hegel's writing, the concept of 'dialectic' is never just one thing.³⁵¹ Moltmann's theology of history has been demonstrably influenced by this particular variation on dialectic. 'Becoming' the third movement of this dialectic, is not a completed state. Becoming is an active verb even as it is used as a noun: the description of an idea or a subject in flux. The process of becoming, this internal self-sublation of 'Being' and 'Nothing' is not mere transitoriness, but in some sense settles into a stable unity of change.³⁵² Although he was not directly referring to Hegel, and would be uncomfortable with the analogy, this idea is very similar to Deleuze's concept of "chaosmos."³⁵³ The value of using a term like 'chaosmos' in this manner, would be to demonstrate that change itself, becoming in motion, is not a particular event, but the status quo by which history moves.

This discussion of being-nothing-becoming describes in Hegelian terms the reality of change – the rejection of staticity. Returning to Moltmann's language, with the caveat that this reality of change be understood in empirical terms, we can reconsider Moltmann's

³⁵¹ An interesting study of the various uses to which Hegel directed his dialectic, as well as philosophical backgrounds from which his understanding of dialectic arose can be found in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Of particular interest is the first study, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," in which Gadamer argued that Hegel frequently mischaracterized Plato but nevertheless opened up a number of interesting learning opportunities within Plato's work.

³⁵² Christopher Yeomans described that a helpful explanatory concept is to think, here, particularly of Hegel's notion of 'essence' (*Wesen*), and thereby to think beyond "spatiotemporal continuity." Rather, "Hegel's usage of 'essence' involves the notion of a unity remaining the same through change – but a unity of 'semblances,' not of properties." Christopher Yeomans, "Identity as a Process of Self-Determination in Hegel's Logic," in *Identity and Difference*, 63.

³⁵³ See *Difference and Repetition*, 299. Deleuze credits this term to James Joyce, and describes it as "the internal identity of the world and chaos," a term strikingly similar to the idea of 'the identity of identity and difference'. In the coming chapter discussing the doctrine of creation, this idea of chaosmos will again be used to describe a creation which is proclaimed to be "good," but which already contains within itself the possibility for the negation of that goodness.

discussion of ‘crisis and promise’ with a particular focus on God, the source of the promise, as a force of historical movement.

The God Who Promises

Moltmann’s philosophy of history demonstrates a keen understanding of the being-nothing-becoming dialectical triad. However, by attempting to shift the historical orientation from rearward to forward, and by describing the movement of history in terms of crisis and promise, Moltmann demonstrated an openness to the future that is at least less explicit in Hegel, or perhaps missing entirely.³⁵⁴ By claiming that Christian history began with Abraham, Hegel demonstrated that his understanding of Christian history is based upon a certain promise – that Abraham would be made into a great nation.

Moltmann, on the other hand, by recognizing the beginning of Christian history well prior to the time of Abraham, demonstrated that it is not God’s promise to Abraham by which Judeo-Christian history is defined, but rather the God who promises.³⁵⁵ Hegel’s concern is the becoming-person, while Moltmann’s is the becoming-people. God’s promises pre-date Abraham, and so the knowledge of God’s character as One who promises is likewise established before that time. This recognition of the promising God

³⁵⁴ Moltmann’s openness of the future has been described thus, “[It is a] rejection of the tragic closedness of history and [an embrace of] his eschatology of hope that provokes transformation of the present via its material promises of God’s future.” Millicent C. Feske, “Christ and Suffering in Moltmann’s Thought,” *The Asbury Theological Journal*, Vol. 55, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 92.

³⁵⁵ Meine Veldman saw this move even in Moltmann’s earliest work. He described that Moltmann found “a covenantal theology not grounded in a continuity of history and experience, but in the triune God of history and experience.” Meine Veldman, “Secrets of Moltmann’s Tacit Tradition: Via Covenant Theology to Promise Theology,” *Journal of Reformed Theology*, vol. 4, issue 3 (2010): 210, accessed August 14, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156973110X542187>.

who offers hope in the face of crisis opens up history beyond the confines of an individual's comprehension. In the face of crisis, any given individual might not have hope for immediate satisfaction. One cannot simply wait for negation, or the negation of negation, but rather must move forward in hopeful anticipation of the future which has been promised. A theology of hope is not naïve, nor does it merely sit and wait for a postponed fulfilment of desires. Rather, a theology of hope is described by a history which proclaims righteousness and justice for all of creation, based upon the promises of God, and then seeks to enliven the sparks of righteousness and justice throughout the world. History does not, from the end, proclaim that all people will bodily see the kingdom of God. Rather, history, as a history of the future, sees from the present that "every past was once present, and existed in its own projects for the future. Every present has come into being out of the fulfilled and thwarted dawning and dying hopes for the future cherished by those who are gone."³⁵⁶ History, as present-future³⁵⁷ remains open to the possibilities of the yet-to-come.

Moltmann waffled on whether the teleological future upon which the past of history comes to be known should be spoken of as guaranteed or genuinely open.³⁵⁸ Yet, those points when he has written about the openness of the future seem to be a better fit for a world in need of redemption.³⁵⁹ If theology is a practice of the enactment of redemption,

³⁵⁶ *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 240.

³⁵⁷ A seeming contradiction which Moltmann explains through the use of the term 'interlaced time'. See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 124-139.

³⁵⁸ More generously, Moltmann's theology "was founded on an account of history as radically contingent and open... The openness of history was not absolute, however, as reliable glimpses of the 'future of God' were seen in a 'proleptic' way through the historical events deemed revelatory of what would come to be." Baker, James, and Reader, 189.

as Moltmann frequently describes, then his frequent comments about the openness of the future ought to be taken seriously.³⁶⁰ For a political theology which has at its heart the desire to see real change, both internally and externally, the history of the past and present is still being written by the openness of the future. The future, one can imagine, is guaranteed by hope, but only insofar as hope is enacted and enfolded.

Where hope does not find its way to the source of new, unknown possibilities, there the trifling, ironical play with the existing possibilities ends in boredom, or in outbreaks of absurdity... [Hope] does not take things as they happen to stand or to lie, but as progressing, moving things with possibilities of change.³⁶¹

With an introduction to the structure of Moltmann's work and some of his Hegelian influence, it is now possible to move forward with a deeper exploration of one of Moltmann's key areas of focus: creation. If the world is to be saved, in any and every possible sense of the word, for Moltmann, 'creation' is where this discussion must turn.

³⁵⁹ Margaret Adam saw the potential closing of the future as Moltmann's departure from Bloch. "[There is a hope that Moltmann] appreciatively adopts from Bloch, although at other times, Moltmann's confidence about the resurrection of the world in God's new creation seems to close off the future." Margaret B. Adam, *Our Only Hope: More Than We Can Ask or Imagine* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 31.

³⁶⁰ Yet, from a purely interpretational standpoint, neither can one ignore the many ways that Moltmann speaks against the possibility of an open future. Richard Bauckham also described this as a move away from Bloch. "For Bloch, hope negates the negative and transcends it by making every 'not' into a 'not yet.' But Moltmann responds that such hope can surmount only such relative negatives as have within them the possibility of becoming a 'not yet.'" *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 44.

³⁶¹ *Theology of Hope*, 24-25.

CHAPTER 4: TRINITARIAN CREATION – EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

“Most people now are looking for a better place, which means that a lot of them will end up in a worse one... There is no better place than this, not in this world. And it is by the place we’ve got, and our love for it, and our keeping of it, that this world is joined with heaven.”³⁶² – Hannah Coulter

Now having an understanding of the ways in which Hegel’s philosophy of history, and Hegel’s dialectical philosophy more generally, have impacted Moltmann’s theology of hope, we are led to a deeper exploration of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation. For a theology of hope which is looking forward while finding rooting in the divine promises of the past, the continuous interplay of past-present-future, like the Hegelian interplay of being-nothing-becoming, two of the most impactful philosophical notions are ‘beginning’ and ‘ending’. In distinctively theological terms, the same level of complication is evident in discussions of ‘creation’ and ‘eschatology’. The evident difficulty lies in the fact that a dialectic of becoming – an apparently processive if not also progressive movement – seems to be always erupting from within a pre-established fluidity of self/notion/proposition. The ‘Philosophy 101’ recounting of Hegel’s dialectic(s) in terms of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is profoundly misleading for this very reason.³⁶³ Dialectic never begins with a single

³⁶² Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2004), 83.

³⁶³ Laurence Wood placed much of the blame for the ubiquity of this triad at the feet of Marx. “His insight that history is composed of conflicting economic forces is surely one of the practical applications of Hegel’s dialectic, although Marx’s rigid three step process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis was greatly overdone. Hegel did not apply the dialectic in a rigid three-step manner. He used the dialectic method primarily as a theodicy of history.” Laurence W. Wood, *God and History: The Dialectical Tension of Faith and History in*

standalone thesis, but rather arises from within an already complicated situation which was itself dialectically composed.

Moltmann, with political and theological motives that differ from the phenomenological/epistemological motives demonstrated by Hegel, demonstrates less of a problem with the question of a beginning. Theologically, although not anthropologically or geologically, Moltmann is content to posit something like a traditional Christian notion of divine creation as ‘the beginning’. By making such a concession Moltmann in no way does away with the very valid question of existence, whether divine or secular, prior to this assumed ‘beginning’. Yet, Moltmann, effectively for his purposes, rejected that such a question was relevant to his particular task.³⁶⁴ Hegel, to the contrary, could make no such rejection insofar as his general project was explicitly a response to the transcendental philosophy of Kant.³⁶⁵ As such, Hegel was in no position to arbitrarily block off a potentially foundational movement of history. Hegel’s insistence on the science of a system, in notable contrast to Moltmann’s general uncomfotability with system, could not allow an unsupported ‘beginning’. Yet, because of the dialectical nature of Hegel’s thought, neither was he able to directly define any sort of ‘beginning’, whether of time, of

Modern Thought (Lexington: Emeth, 2005), 109. Although beyond the bounds of this project, Wood’s argument regarding ‘theodicy of history’ is an enlightening take on Hegel.

³⁶⁴ Roger Olson described this as a radical historicizing of the life of God through which “historical events become determinative of God’s eternal being.” Roger Olson, “Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 36, iss. 2 (May, 1983): 217.

³⁶⁵ See e.g., Sally Sedgwick, *Hegel’s Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Sedgwick’s goal with this text was to dispel what she calls the ‘traditional view’ that Hegel was not a particularly thoughtful reader of Kant. Sedgwick makes a compelling case throughout that not only was Hegel a careful reader of Kant, but that even non-referentially Hegel’s philosophy was often an intentional reaction or response to the recognized importance of Kant’s Copernican Revolution.

a person, or even of philosophy itself.³⁶⁶ He recognized both the importance and difficulty of seeking a ‘beginning’. “To want the nature of cognition clarified *prior* to the science is to demand that it be considered *outside* the science; *outside* the science this cannot be accomplished, at least not in a scientific manner and such a manner is alone here in place.”³⁶⁷

As discussed previously, Hegel viewed philosophy as a practice that always took place within a given situatedness. Paul Ashton rightly recognized, “There is no doubt that Hegel is rejecting a kind of meta-philosophical perspective, that there exists some space outside of, or for that matter within, philosophy from which to clarify what philosophy is.”³⁶⁸ It is not, however, the case that epistemology is thus entirely outside the bounds of the philosophical endeavor. A great deal of Hegel’s thought went into exactly this project, but he made it clear that one cannot hope to examine the movement of knowledge – in this particular case, although the same argument could be made ontologically or historically as well – from outside the process from which knowledge comes to be. Insofar as Hegel’s struggle with ‘beginning’ can be dealt with directly, it has been described well elsewhere.³⁶⁹ For the purposes here, the more important question is not whether one could

³⁶⁶ As Andrew Hass noted, “Hegel also knew perfectly well that one cannot grasp the principle of beginning in pure immediacy alone. What would this look like, pure beginning? How could we isolate it, mark it out? Beginning, like any principle, is also always mediated.” Hass, 48.

³⁶⁷ *Science of Logic*, 68. Hass characterized Hegel’s quest for a beginning as a “paradoxical journey... We can begin with beginning, which is immediacy itself, but only once we have travelled the journey through the mediation of consciousness to knowing. Once there, however, we must then return to a presuppositionless immediacy, as if we had never travelled in the first place.” Hass, 48.

³⁶⁸ Paul Ashton, “The Beginning Before the Beginning: Hegel and the Activation of History,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 3, nos. 2-3, (2007): 330.

³⁶⁹ E.g., see *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 170-190.

offer a purified description of Hegel's 'beginning', but rather how Moltmann has interpreted and utilized Hegel's work to speak about a beginning.

In theological terms the concept of 'beginning' is almost always tied explicitly to a doctrine of creation. This is as true for Moltmann as it is for others. Yet, it will soon become clear that Moltmann's doctrine of creation is intentionally and explicitly not only tied to the idea of a beginning but likewise to the idea of an ending. This unusual tendency in describing creation is closely tied to the idea of hope. One might see here a chicken/egg question as to whether there exists, in either direction, a causal connection between creation and hope. Whether or not one sees a sort of ontological primacy one way or the other, both are part of a self-informative cycle.³⁷⁰ Both history and hope are moved by promise, and, at least for Moltmann, it seems that promise is tied in a very important way to creation. Indeed, because 'creation' is seen in both the beginning and the end, it holds an important role in mediating between the past and the future by transforming the present into the promised future of hope.³⁷¹ In this movement of becoming, Moltmann has learned a great deal from Hegel. Ashton described the transformative capacity inherent to Hegel's world:

For Hegel the world will change to fully embrace the reality of freedom not because we can think how to change the world... but because the event of speculative thinking expresses the changeability of the world itself... It follows that the world must have already changed in order for its changeability to be embraced by speculative philosophy, and that

³⁷⁰ In discussing Ricoeur's influence on Moltmann's theology of hope Rebecca Huskey well-described this cycle, "The promise of the coming Christ points us away from the promise itself, orienting us towards the future and giving us a sense of history, a sense of something new which is to come." Rebecca Kathleen Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope: Expecting the Good* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 38.

³⁷¹ Creation, as beginning, demonstrates a (teleological) end. "It is Moltmann's contention that the hope-sentences of promise *anticipate*, *initiate*, and *present* the future, that in so doing they *contradict* the present." Morse, 41.

philosophy as post-revolutionary can be understood as a *recollection* of this embracing.³⁷²

The mediating role held by Moltmann's doctrine of creation is evident throughout his political theology. That the term 'creation' encompasses more than 'the beginning' of history is tied to Hegel's understanding of the becoming of *Geist*. This processive understanding of becoming demonstrates an important caveat to the doctrine of creation. Namely, creation 'in the beginning' should not be understood as complete, but as already enmeshed in the dialectical process of becoming. The narratives of creation found in Genesis should not, therefore, be read in terms of primordial perfection, as a goal to which we hope to return. Rather, I will argue, creation is best described in terms of 'tragedy', an existence in which brokenness is inherent, and for which redemption beckons.³⁷³

The Tragic Politics of Creation

To speak of creation, particularly when 'creation' refers not only to beginnings, is necessarily to speak about the order of the world – the way things are, and ideally is also to speak about the way things ought to be. Learning from Hegel, Moltmann's doctrine of creation is built upon the notion that "[theology] as post-revolutionary can be understood as a recollection" of the embrace of the changeability of the world.³⁷⁴ Although one might

³⁷² Ashton, 343.

³⁷³ Moltmann does not offer any extended commentary on the nature of tragedy, but described the reality of death as "a sign of tragedy in creation." *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 170. John W. Cooper traced this notion of the tragic in Moltmann to "Berdyayev's idea of the 'tragedy in God,' including his appropriation of Böhme's 'dark nature in God' and Schelling's idea that world history is a painful theogonic (God-generating) process." John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers from Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 244.

³⁷⁴ Ashton, 343.

look at a work like *God in Creation* and see that one of Moltmann's primary ethical concerns is ecological, the politics of creation run much broader than simple environmental concern.³⁷⁵ In order to understand why the doctrine of creation is itself a politico-ethical mandate, Moltmann's doctrine of creation will here be explored through the lens of tragedy.³⁷⁶

Moltmann's doctrine of creation is rooted much more deeply than a re-telling or interpretation of the creation stories of Genesis. Rather, Moltmann's understanding of creation is interwoven with real-world political issues.³⁷⁷ The continued degradation of creation is one of these political real-world issues, but Moltmann saw that it is but one part of a much larger tapestry of brokenness. Moltmann made this clear when he said,

The natural environment of human beings cannot be understood apart from the social environment. The processes which intervene destructively in the natural environment originate in the economic and the social processes. So

³⁷⁵ Yet, even these other political concerns cannot be removed from the ecological. "Primarily, the ecological concept of space may be seen as the intersection of social and moral space where creation is enabled to flourish by the Spirit and thus become what God desires for it." Timothy Harvie, *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope: Eschatological Possibilities for Moral Action* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 164.

³⁷⁶ An excellent overview of classical literary, philosophical, and historical notions of tragedy as related to the practice of Christian theology can be found in Rowan Williams, *The Tragic Imagination: The Literary Agenda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially 4-29. Hegel's discussion of tragedy through *Hamlet* will here be explored to help make sense of a theological worldview of tragedy. However, even prior to that usage, which is a conditional reading of only one text, I appreciate this definition/description of tragedy from Williams, "Tragic representation confronts the imagination with pictures of utterly unpredictable dissolutions of social solidarity and humanity stability; it uncovers not so much the unknown as the *fact* of our not-knowing... its task is to persuade us that as some significant level we have *never* really known it; that there is no finished narration but only the continuing exposure of ourselves to ever new perspectives on the danger concealed in where and who we think we are." *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷⁷ Williams is again helpful to describe the relationship between a theology of tragedy and the need for political engagement. "This constantly changing and expanding representation of danger seeks to move us towards truthful and just action in the city; it does not offer any consolation about the past, but by the plain act of liturgical showing-forth, tells us that disaster can be shown in a way that changes the world we inhabit." *Ibid.*

if the destruction of nature is to be halted, the economic and social conditions of human society must be changed.³⁷⁸

Any meaningful doctrine of creation must account for the present reality of these economic and social processes just as carefully as it considers the origins of the universe. It is from within this intertwining of promise, hope, and brokenness that Moltmann's doctrine of creation originated.

Moltmann's theology is decidedly political because he understood from early on that we live in a tragic world.³⁷⁹ As the classical questions of theodicy remind, we live in a world of natural disasters, a world in which children die, a world of hunger, violence, and sorrow.³⁸⁰ Far too often in the history of the Christian church, theologians, both professional and lay, have been all too ready to set aside the tragic reality of the present in favor of a focus on the otherworldly blessedness of the afterlife.³⁸¹ The church has read "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"³⁸² to mean, 'Do not be

³⁷⁸ *God in Creation*, 23-24. Perhaps not surprisingly, this sort of language has earned Moltmann critics, like Randall Otto, who has claimed, "The invocation of the concept of biblical eschatology seems...to be simply a popular pictorial device heuristically reinterpreted in the light of Marxist philosophy for the purposes of worldwide revolutionary activity." Randall Otto, *The God of Hope: The Trinitarian Vision of Jürgen Moltmann* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 102.

³⁷⁹ Johanne Kristensen offered a brief overview of the ways in which Moltmann conceived of the world in terms of tragedy. See, Johanne Stubbe Teglbjaerg Kristensen, *Body and Hope: A Constructive Interpretation of Recent Eschatology by Means of the Phenomenology of the Body* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 61-63.

³⁸⁰ Although outside of a specific doctrine of creation, Nicholas Lash also saw the reality of tragedy as an important starting point for theology, "I shall suggest not only that time is running out, but that the background against which we take our human and Christian decisions is ineluctably tragic: there are no grounds for optimism, nor is it the Church's business to pretend otherwise." Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 220.

³⁸¹ Moltmann decried this sort of escapism in some detail in Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 52-54. Here, Moltmann speaks directly of "a vague Gnostic religiosity," of "American pop-apocalyptic" in the form of the once-popular *Left Behind* phenomenon, as well as non-Christian forms of religious escapism.

³⁸² Matthew 5:3.

concerned about your present situation, because the worse things are for you now, the better they will be in the eternal future'. The church has sung songs with lyrics such as, "Let us then be true and faithful, trusting, serving every day; just one glimpse of Him in glory, will the toils of life repay."³⁸³ When hearing such lyrics, one should be immediately struck by how clearly discounted is the present.³⁸⁴ Living well, being true and faithful, is a toil in need of repayment. Such Christian beliefs and practices have served to negate the importance of the here-and-now, of life as we actually know it.³⁸⁵ Just as hope must be understood through crucifixion, so too must eschatology be viewed through the brokenness of creation.³⁸⁶ As part of a dialectical movement, negation must always be embraced.

To better understand how one might theologically speak about creation as tragic, rather than seeing the stories of Genesis as proof of a primordial perfection, a brief interlude

³⁸³ Eliza E. Hewitt, "When We All Get To Heaven," in *Worship in Song Hymnal* (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing, 1972), 252.

³⁸⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer made similar arguments by pointing to the tendency that some Christians have toward 'escaping' internally from the difficulties of life in community, or, as he described it, "Escapism in the guise of piety." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "137: To Eberhard Bethge," *Letters and Paper From Prison*, Ed. John W. deGruchy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 367.

³⁸⁵ Here, we again encounter the convergence of 'popular' theology with academic theology. While it is easy to speak against theological escapism from outside, it has become tightly wound into the fabric of many sermons, hymns, and stories. Mary Rose O'Reilley, then enrolled in a graduate program in Spiritual Formation (a hybridizing of academic and ecclesial if ever there was one), spoke to her feelings on the creep of theological escapism into her studies. "The readings seem to be composed from a circumscribed set of words like those on the lists issued to writers of children's books, words reprocessed over and over through each writer's theological Cuisinart... After so many years of feminist theology, I see few attempts in religious circles to unify the physical and the spiritual. How I want to cry out against this relentless negation of life – negation once by commandment and caveat, negation now by silence, erasure." Mary Rose O'Reilley, *The Barn at the End of the World: The Apprenticeship of a Quaker, Buddhist Shepherd* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2000), 283. It is precisely because of this 'negation by silence' that academic theology, as that of Moltmann, is needed to speak life into the church.

³⁸⁶ Lash also spoke out against eschatological escapism in terms of 'hope', "Christian hope remains a form of the tragic vision in the measure that it refuses to foreclose the question of the future by postulating, in the imagination, some resolution to past and present tragedy, that in fact, has not been resolved." Nicholas Lash, *Theology on the Way to Emmaus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1986), 214.

from Hegel is in order.³⁸⁷ An area of Hegel's thought which has not yet been explored here is that of aesthetics.³⁸⁸ In the *Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel's treatment of *Hamlet* can be used as an entryway into what it might mean to speak of a tragic creation.³⁸⁹ *Hamlet* is of particular interest because it will help to elucidate the literary aspect of the term 'tragedy' while also serving as a point of distinction against which the word can be further nuanced.

Looked at from the outside, Hamlet's death seems to be brought about accidentally ... but death lay from the beginning in the back of Hamlet's mind. The sands of time do not content him. In his melancholy and weakness, his worry, his disgust at all the affairs of life, we sense from the start... he is a lost man, almost consumed already by inner disgust before death comes to him from outside.³⁹⁰

Hegel, interpreted theologically, seemed to understand original sin existentially, as a primordial discontent.³⁹¹ Death is not the accident of one man's actions, but a simple reality of the world. This would be in-line with the first Genesis story of creation which describes the conflict between ordered life and cosmically disordered chaos. Creation, in this first story, is less about the giving of life than it is about creating an ordered cosmos in

³⁸⁷ For an example of how Hegel's philosophy can be used to speak theologically about the inherent brokenness of creation see, John M. Bechtold, "On Becoming What We Are: A Hegelian Interpretation of Eucharistic Embodiment," in *This is my Body: Philosophical Reflections on Embodiment in a Wesleyan Spirit*, eds. John Thomas Brittingham and Christina M. Smerick (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 97-112.

³⁸⁸ This particular take on aesthetics falls within the difficult area of lecture notes that were not intentionally published by Hegel. As such, this discussion needs to be treated even more carefully than a direct reference to the Phenomenology might, but can yet serve as an interesting discussion-starter.

³⁸⁹ *Hamlet* is also of interest because it has been given philosophical attention in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2005); Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 2007); and Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987); among many others.

³⁹⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art vol. 2*, T.M. Knox, tr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1231-1232.

³⁹¹ Williams argued that, for Hegel, one could not speak of a "fully tragic worldview," but that, nevertheless, "This is not in any simple sense a stage in the history of culture that is somehow left behind... Nor is it, even for an individual, a moment in an intellectual biography. It is a habit or skill of self-recognition which has to be integrated into mature inter-dependence." *Tragic Imagination*, 74.

which life can exist.³⁹² Life, here, is not antithetical to death, but to chaos. Creation is an act of structuring, of working in and against chaos, not in order that chaos will be overcome, but that chaos will be kept at bay. Here, life is the intruder; an intruder who, at best, hopes to carve out a small place for its own existence.³⁹³ It is this understanding of the world as creation that Hegel seems to see in the story of the Danish prince. The ‘sands of time’ lie beside and under a vast ocean. The sandbank is in constant danger of being acted upon by an external force. It is always in peril of being transformed, overcome, or destroyed. The sands of time lie solely at the mercy of the vast multiplicity of the unknown. Life could, at any moment and without reason, simply be swept away. Yet, it would be too blasé to simply say that the fleetingness of life is what makes for a tragic world. Following the first story of creation found in Genesis, generally speaking, a death might well be sad, but death itself is hardly tragic.³⁹⁴

Tragedy, for Hegel, can only exist in the interplay of death and life, in the paradoxical conflict that is simultaneously living and dying. The world is tragic not because either life or death could become a victor, but precisely because no victory can be

³⁹² E.g., see Herman Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton*, trans. K. William Whitney Jr. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006). Gunkel described a strong biblical connection between the language of chaos in Genesis 1 and the new-life eschatological language of Revelation within the broader context of ‘creation myths’.

³⁹³ In a fascinating inter-disciplinary study, Heidi Ann Russell brought together biblical accounts of chaos with ‘chaos-theory’ and quantum sciences. She argued, “Words like ‘randomness’ and ‘chaos’ often have negative connotations in our everyday usage. In chaos theory, however, we see that the complexity that leads to life only exists on the edge of chaos.” Heidi Ann Russell, *Quantum Shift: Theological and Pastoral Implications of Contemporary Developments in Science* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 79.

³⁹⁴ For a reading of Hamlet, particularly regarding the nature of death, through an Hegelian lens see, Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010). Hamlet is referenced throughout, but see especially pgs. 55-84.

achieved.³⁹⁵ One might rightly point out that, barring a conception of subjective immortality, death appears to be the negation of life. Yet, if Hegel is correct, if death has lurked from the beginning, then one must also cede that life itself is the negation of death. Tragedy exists in the necessary embrace of both life and death.³⁹⁶ Unlike the tragic heroes of the Greeks, Hegel argued that ‘modern’ tragedy is found in a subject’s constantly becoming object to itself. Should the subject choose a single-minded embrace only of life, the subject would cease to be a subject, and would simply be-in-itself. Unlike with the Greeks, tragedy is not found in the fear of an external fate, but in the true subject’s inability to be single-minded. A tragic world is not merely a world in which fate’s coin has always already been flipped, but a world in which one must simultaneously embrace both possible outcomes of the flip. Heads – tails, life – death, all are embraced.³⁹⁷ Hegel reminds us that even before death, Hamlet had already become consumed by inner disgust. Hamlet’s death was not brought about accidentally. Hamlet’s death had been developing throughout his

³⁹⁵ Terry Pinkard described Hegel’s understanding of tragedy in these terms, “We must be, he says, ‘amphibians’ who now live in two worlds: a world of contingency that does not seem to bend in an arc towards justice and a world of absolute commitments and a kind of pledge to the equal worth of all... The result is that now consciousness wanders about in this contradiction, and, driven from one side to the other, cannot find satisfaction for itself in either the one or the other.” Terry Pinkard, “Tragedy with and without Religion: Hegelian Thoughts,” in *Tragedy and the Idea of Modernity*, eds. Joshua Billings and Miriam Leonard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 156.

³⁹⁶ Death was not only a topic for Hegel in his lectures, but also in his published work. The *Phenomenology*, e.g., contains numerous discussions that demonstrate a developing understanding of death. To read more about how Hegel described death at various levels of a developing consciousness see, Brent Adkins, *Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), particularly 74-124. Also see, John Burbidge, “Man, God, and Death in Hegel’s Phenomenology,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 42, no. 2 (December, 1981): 183-196.

³⁹⁷ Such an embrace does not demonstrate a lack of conflict. Embracing life and death means that neither can be approached without fear and trembling. Williams described the extant pain even in this dual-sided embrace, “A Hegelian understanding of the tragic does not have to be a delivery from anguish; as we have seen grief may still be present in the awareness of reconciliation.” *Tragic Imagination*, 75. Theologically, this is the irony of Moltmann’s *theologia crucis*: the crucifixion of God is celebrated as *in se* a negation of death and embrace of life.

life. Hamlet had to die, but the reality is that Hamlet had been dying all along. Hamlet's story is tragic because it takes place in the borderlands between life and death, in the place in which both death and life are to be valued and embraced.

This initial description of the concept of tragedy has been intended to serve two primary purposes. First, Hegel's notion of the mutual embrace of death and life is essential to understanding Moltmann's focus on a theology of the cross. Second, by initially rooting Moltmann's doctrine of creation within a theological understanding of tragedy, thereby rooting it to his early theology of the cross, it will be possible, moving forward, to describe the ongoing existence of the tragic in terms of the history of God; that is, to argue that the life of God can never be removed from the realities of suffering in the world.

Constructing a Doctrine of Creation from Within

This is the sort of 'tragic creation' which is described in the work of Moltmann: Tragedy does not mean that the world is 'bad', but that there exists a complexity of brokenness which has lurked from the beginning. This complexity of brokenness ties the Creator God to the history of the world. To properly describe how Moltmann's doctrine of creation can be understood as tragic, at least partially or initially as distinct from Hegel, there are two primary guiding principles that can be seen in Moltmann's methodology. The first guiding principle is epistemological. As Hegel began his system of philosophy with the notion of phenomenology, likewise Moltmann contended that all "knowledge of nature as God's creation is participating knowledge."³⁹⁸ Such a claim is obviously theological as

³⁹⁸ *God In Creation*, 2.

much as it is ‘purely’ epistemological, for it demonstrates that the primary focus is not something that is transcendental in the way of Hegel’s ‘Notion’, rather something that is universal by grace, not by nature.³⁹⁹ By this Moltmann meant that nothing that exists can be known apart from its interrelationships, its surroundings, and its connections with all else.⁴⁰⁰ This is again a reminder of the situatedness from which theology arises and in which theology is grounded. But, it is also just as much a movement toward understanding the correlation between human suffering and divine suffering, or, as Moltmann described, “Outward (divine) acts correspond to inward suffering, and outward suffering corresponds to inward acts.”⁴⁰¹

A second guiding principle for Moltmann’s doctrine of creation is that “The sabbath is the true hallmark of every biblical doctrine of creation,”⁴⁰² and all creation is moving toward an eschatological sabbath rest. This principle offers at least two concepts that are important to Moltmann. First, the notion of sabbath itself holds a primary place in Moltmann’s thought.⁴⁰³ Eschatology, the looking forward to the continuance of God’s creative activity, is not best described geographically by saintly mansions and streets of

³⁹⁹ Veli-Matti Karkkainen described the importance of this ‘universal by grace’, “Honoring the nature of created reality as a divine gift helps theology avoid the kind of technocratic, possessive knowledge of God so prevalent in modern and contemporary cultures, which can only lead to exploitation. Participation does not possess; it gratefully participates.” Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Creation and Humanity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015), 12.

⁴⁰⁰ Or, as Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel put it, “Life begins as life together.” *I Am My Body*, 43.

⁴⁰¹ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 230.

⁴⁰² *God in Creation*, 6.

⁴⁰³ Robert Sherman has argued that, in Moltmann’s theology, sabbath is “the key unlocking the true meaning of the doctrine of creation.” Robert Sherman, “Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest,” *Interpretation*, vol. 59, no. 1 (January, 2005): 47.

gold. Rather, the focus on sabbath ties eschatology again to creation. Whatever it is that eschatology has to offer the theological task must be distinctively of the empirical world.⁴⁰⁴ Sabbath only makes sense in the context of the physicality of creation because the concept itself resists the possibility of being understood non-contextually. Sabbath is ‘the hallmark’ of a biblical description of creation, but as such remains merely one part of a larger cycle. Moltmann did not describe either the concept of sabbath or the practice of Sabbath keeping as the pinnacle of creation, nor, more importantly as the goal of creation. Rather, in the original text, Moltmann called it the “*Kennzeichen des Verständnisses*,”⁴⁰⁵ or a ‘feature of the understanding’. Creation cannot be defined by Sabbath, but neither can it be understood apart from Sabbath.

In order to understand how Sabbath helps to describe creation, it is necessary to first understand that, for Moltmann, it is not a person or place which is hallowed, but a time. “One might say that the sanctification of any creature or space would be particular, whereas the sanctification of the sabbath benefits all created things... that is to say, it is universal.”⁴⁰⁶ The hallowing of a time – the making universal of what might otherwise seem to be a particular blessing of Israel – is a foreshadowing of Paul’s claim that “there is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or

⁴⁰⁴ Eschatology itself is not an entirely empirical practice, yet, it must be a practice **rooted in** the empirical world in order to remain ethically and politically potent. This goes back to the roots of Moltmann’s theological journey. “Moltmann’s theology of hope originated in part from this established observation that the world in turmoil as it is cannot be deemed ‘very good’... Moltmann’s commitment to hope therefore led him to re-envision all of theology past and present in the light of eschatology – but eschatology understood as referring not to last things, but to future things.” Julie Clawson, “Imagination, Hope, and Reconciliation in Ricoeur and Moltmann,” *Anglican Theological Review*, vol. 95, no. 2 (Spring, 2013): 295-296.

⁴⁰⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1987), 8.

⁴⁰⁶ *God in Creation*, 283.

female.”⁴⁰⁷ Because this original Sabbath day calls from the past for repetition into the present, this act of sanctification stretches across all of physicality.⁴⁰⁸ “If what is sanctified is a time and not a special domain, a mountain or a place, the result is a curious view of the world’ for the world is then viewed predominantly in terms of time, in events and sequences of events, in generations and histories, not in spaces and regions.”⁴⁰⁹ That sabbath serves as the hallmark to understanding creation demonstrates again Moltmann’s reliance on something like Hegel’s description of dialectic in terms of being-nothing-becoming. Being, even the very being of creation, is best described in terms of movement, not of static unicity. It is not the particularities of the physical world which are sanctified, but the possibilities of becoming that always already exist in the tangible. Creation, both as that which ‘is’ and as a descriptor of an ongoing relationship between God and all that is not-God, is sanctified in its movement toward what could be, not as it exists in any given present.

The doctrine of creation, with sabbath as the hallmark for its understanding, thus needs not to be crafted with the nostalgia for a non-existent primordial perfection.⁴¹⁰ This is particularly important for those, like Moltmann, who would reject any kind of biblical

⁴⁰⁷ Galatians 3:28.

⁴⁰⁸ Ton van Prooijen traced the relationship between creation and the sanctification of time throughout Moltmann’s corpus. See, Ton van Prooijen, *Limping but Blessed: Jürgen Moltmann’s Search for a Liberating Anthropology* (New York: Rodopi B.V., 2004), 276-285.

⁴⁰⁹ *God in Creation*, 283-284.

⁴¹⁰ There are those who would disagree with Moltmann on this point. E.g., Howard Wallace faulted Moltmann for not grounding his Sabbath understanding in “the proclamation of the sovereignty of God,” and, as such, claimed, “I do not think Moltmann fully grasps the motif of rest.” Howard N. Wallace, “Rest for the Earth?,” in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 58.

literalism, particularly with reference to the creation stories of Genesis. So long as one ascribes no literality to the earliest stories of Genesis it becomes all but impossible to conceptualize the historical plausibility of something like ‘The Fall’ in which the potentiality for sin is for the first time made manifest by a singular creature thereby spreading brokenness across all of the physical world.⁴¹¹ If time itself, or at least the movement of something that is experienced in temporal terms by a thinking creature, is that which is explicitly hallowed in creation, then the doctrine of creation itself becomes an ethical imperative. Moreover, through the sanctifying of time, God demonstrates an entrance into the temporal history of creation. This temporal history, moving forward, will be described in terms of God’s creative self-withdrawal, or *zimsum*.

Mortality, *Zimsum*, and the Distance of God

To describe God’s entrance into the temporal history of creation, it will first be necessary to describe God as distinct from that temporality. Likewise, if the Creator God is the giver of life, one must look to the reality of death in terms of God’s absence, and to consider what it means to embrace both life and death through the cross of Christ. The Jewish philosopher Hans Jonas, a Jewish student of the then soon-to-be Nazi Heidegger,⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Although Moltmann has not published an explicit rejection of a theology of ‘The Fall’, numerous commentators have noted Moltmann’s tendency away from rooting creation, eschatology, or even hamartiology in such a concept. E.g., John David Jaeger described, “Rather than envisioning a perfect creation and then questioning why things went so wrong, he viewed creation as an ongoing event being molded out of chaos. This process involved openness to nothingness and risk of flaws and evil developing in creation.” John David Jaeger, “Jürgen Moltmann and the Problem of Evil,” *The Asbury Theological Journal*, vol. 53, no. 2 (Fall, 1998): 8.

⁴¹² For an exploration of Jonas’s philosophy with direct reference to Moltmann see, Eberhard Jüngel, “Gottes ursprüngliches Anfangen als schöpferische Selbstbegrenzung: ein Beitrag zum Gespräch mit Hans Jonas über den ‘Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz’,” *Gottes Zukunft – Zukunft der Welt: Festschrift für Jürgen Moltmann zum 60.*, ed. Hermann Deuser (Munich: Kaiser, 1986), 265-275. In his later work Moltmann also began to

understood what it might mean to live in a space in which both life and death are to be embraced, and to live in a space in which both life and death are valued, each by the embrace of the other. Jonas set up this in-between space in his book, *Mortality and Morality*.⁴¹³ While Jonas himself did not offer any sort of meaningful discussion of tragedy- literarily, philosophically, or otherwise- an interesting aspect of his philosophy is that his thought is grounded in an understanding of the world as creation. Jonas was forthright about his desire to practice a humanistic secular philosophy, but in the process of doing so he often returned to the language and ideas of his Jewish heritage.⁴¹⁴

The creation story which Jonas told is influenced by the biblical accounts of creation from Genesis. Jonas' story is also heavily influenced by the Jewish mystic Isaac Luria and his conception of creation through *zimsum*.⁴¹⁵ In Jonas's account, *zimsum* refers to a primordial moment of divine self-contraction.⁴¹⁶ Simply put, *zimsum* is meant to

reference the work of Jonas. See, e.g., Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 277, for Moltmann crediting Jonas with being the first to bring together an understanding of *zimsum* with evolutionary thought; *The Living God*, 45, where Moltmann cites Jonas to discuss love as the motivation for God's self-restriction; or *Ethics of Hope*, 240, where Moltmann cites Jonas unfavorably as having developed an ethics of fear rather than an ethics of hope.

⁴¹³ Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for Good After Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1996). If one is familiar with Jonas' own biography, the paradox of this dual embrace is evident. Jonas' mother was one of the many victims of the Shoah. Her murder by the Nazis serves as a demonstration of precisely why mortality can, at times, be a terrible burden. Indeed, her death was tragic, not because it was the result of a cruel trick of fate, but rather because it was a demonstration of an imbalance, of the valuation of death over that of life.

⁴¹⁴ For a deeper discussion see, Ron Margolin, "Hans Jonas and Secular Religiosity," in *The Legacy of Hans Jonas: Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life*, eds. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Christian Wiese (Boston: Brill Academic, 2008), 231-258.

⁴¹⁵ Luria's conception of *zimsum* was popularized in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 260-265.

⁴¹⁶ Luria was explicit that *zimsum* "does not mean the concentration of God *at* a point, but his retreat *away* from a point," a distinction upon which Jonas did not focus. Scholem, 260.

describe how a God which is ‘all-in-all’ can create anything at all which is not-God, an Other. Within the general Judeo-Christian understandings of creation, it is necessary that creation itself be an other in order to avoid some form of pantheism. According to *zimsum* this occurs when the all-in-all God constricts God’s own presence, withdraws into Godself, and allows a space in which creation can occur.

Zimsum is a means by which to speak of genuine relationship between creation and divine without conflating the two. According to this story, God and not-God can only be in genuine relationship so long as there is a clear line of demarcation, so long as each is seen to be an independent subject capable of encountering another independent subject face-to-face. This conception of *zimsum* serves the theological purpose of describing the existence of genuine free will among the created (at the very least among that portion of the created which can be addressed as ‘thou’).

While Hegel has no reference to anything like *zimsum*, his influence on Jonas, like a great many other thinkers, is evident.⁴¹⁷ For the purposes of this chapter, the claim that the world is a world of tragedy, moving beyond Hegel, is a claim based upon an understanding of creation through *zimsum*. When the act of creation is conceived as a movement of differentiation, it can be that the world is ‘good’ in-line with the first Genesis narrative, while simultaneously being part of a tragic creation.⁴¹⁸ Like Jonas, Moltmann

⁴¹⁷ Christian Wiese pointed specifically to “Hegel’s dialectic concept of the self-alienation of the primordial mind,” as an influence on Jonas’ philosophy. Christian Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 124.

⁴¹⁸ Terence Fretheim rejected the notion that the continued existence of chaos was antithetical to God’s proclamation of a ‘good creation’. “I claim that to designate this reality as ‘evil’ is not supported by the text; yet, in some sense ‘chaos’ persists. A key to considering this issue is the divine command to ‘subdue the earth’. If this command has the sense of bringing order out of continuing disorder, as seems likely, then some dimensions of the realities of [Gen] 1:2 do continue. For some disorder to persist beyond God’s originating

gives the concept of *zimsum* a place of central importance within his theology of creation.⁴¹⁹ “Before God issues creatively out of himself, he acts inwardly on himself, resolving *for himself*, committing *himself*, determining *himself*.”⁴²⁰ To speak in such a decidedly odd metaphysical way, even perhaps by the standards of confessional theology, can lead to a great many complications.⁴²¹ It was, nevertheless, necessary for Moltmann as a way to accept the traditional concept of *creatio ex nihilo* while simultaneously opening space to speak about genuine human volition and at least the potential for an openness of the future.⁴²² This openness of the future relates directly to the ‘genuine human volition’ that Moltmann’s doctrine of *zimsum* makes possible. However, it is not only due to human

creative activity is necessary for the proper development of the creation; such elements of disorder are ‘good.’” Terrence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 44.

⁴¹⁹ A detailed, but decidedly negative, discussion about Moltmann’s reliance on *zimsum* can be found in, Ron Highfield, “Divine Self-Limitation in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann: A Critical Appraisal,” *Christian Scholar’s Review*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 49-71.

⁴²⁰ *God in Creation*, 86.

⁴²¹ One potential pitfall that Moltmann sought to avoid was an argument about the literality of *zimsum* as a physical process. Although Moltmann has used temporal language here, he also made clear that he was not trying to open a discussion about something like the doctrine of decrees. Rather, Moltmann attempted to begin a discussion about creation that was “excelled by the trinitarian justification and interpretation of this ‘practical definition’ of God: *Deus est caritas*.” *God in Creation*, 86. The practicality of this definition lies in the rejection of divine physicality. To make an argument about God’s self-constriction does not need to imply a physicality that would otherwise not be necessary in theological dialogue. Whatever it is that is meant by the term *zimsum*, it must be understood in terms of God’s love rather than in terms of a bodily existence.

⁴²² Jacob Emden argued that *zimsum* was the “only serious attempt ever made” to give a theological accounting for *creatio ex nihilo*. This is undoubtedly an overgeneralization, even in 1870 when it was written, but does demonstrate the import which is, at times, given to this idea. Jacob Emden, *Mittpachot Sefarim* (Lemberg, 1870), 82. Referenced in Scholem, 260-261. On the openness of the future, Lash argued, “The dark facticity of particular deeds and particular tragedy may not be obliterated for the sake of the coherence of the narrative. Not the least insidious of the forms of idealism by which Christian religious discourse is threatened is that which, springing from the conviction that there *is* a sense which it all makes, seeks prematurely to give to that sense unified narrative expression.” Nicholas Lash, “Ideology, Metaphor and Analogy,” in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D.M. MacKinnon*, eds. Brian Hebblethwaire and Stewart Sutherland (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 75.

volition, but also to the becoming of God in relationship by which the future appears to be open. “Every stage in the creation process contains within itself the tension between the light flooding back into God and the light that breaks forth from God.”⁴²³ The act(s) of creation, or, more accurately to Moltmann’s contention, the passion of creation, is a determinate characteristic of what makes God who and what God is. God does not choose to create any more than God chooses to love. “For he cannot deny himself... in loving the world he is entirely free because he is entirely himself.”⁴²⁴ Even the self-emptying love of *zimusum* is best understood in terms of identity, not of choice. ‘In the beginning’ God did not choose to initiate a kenotic movement by which space could be opened up for the creation of that which is not-God.⁴²⁵ Rather, by virtue of God’s loving nature, kenosis is an essential characteristic of how God relates to creation. A kenotic relationship is not accidental, nor even the result of a deliberate choice made by God, but is ontologically necessary for a relational God.

To describe creation through *zimusum* is to make a relational claim that begins with the ‘practical’ definition, “*Deus est caritas.*” For Moltmann, *zimusum* was necessary in order to make possible speech about a world of both life and death, and about a God who seeks to be in relationship with that world. The relationality of God, however, is not merely external, but equally internal. One cannot meaningfully understand Moltmann’s doctrine

⁴²³ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 110.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁴²⁵ Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson have argued against Moltmann’s understanding of *zimusum* because they believe that such an understanding “calls into question the deity of God” by introducing temporal history into the nature of God. *20th Century Theology*, 186. Yet, they fail to recognize that Moltmann’s intention in developing *zimusum* language was precisely the opposite, to begin with God as wholly other in order to make relationality possible.

of creation apart from the inherent relationality of God, but, in order to more fully understand what it means for Moltmann to speak of the relationality of God, we must also explore God's inter-trinitarian relationality.⁴²⁶

Trinitarian Love

Moltmann first explored the concept of the Trinity explicitly in detail in his exploration of the crucifixion of Jesus. Moltmann's seminal work, *The Crucified God* was premised on the need to speak about God in Trinitarian terms.⁴²⁷ Looking at the crucifixion, Moltmann described that both God the Father and God the Son suffered. It was not just Jesus 'The Son' that was crucified, but God-self. The act of crucifixion, and the accompanying suffering of God, demonstrated an interior relationality in God. While this was not yet a fully Trinitarian discussion, ignoring, as so often happens, the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are shown to be intertwined in suffering. God the Father suffered the death of God the Son, while God the Son suffered his own dying. Both dying and death were suffered by God in the crucifixion of Christ.⁴²⁸

This cannot, monotheistically, make any sense outside of a doctrine like that of the Trinity.⁴²⁹ In order for there to be two mutually exclusive forms of suffering in the same

⁴²⁶ "Our starting point here is that all relationships which are analogous to God reflect... trinitarian perichoresis." *God in Creation*, 17.

⁴²⁷ Or, at least in terms of 'Father' and 'Son' with the Spirit receiving less direct attention. McDougall noted that "specific criticisms of *The Crucified God*... provoked Moltmann's return to pneumatology." McDougall, 61.

⁴²⁸ *Crucified God*, 241-249.

⁴²⁹ "To understand what happened between Jesus and his God and Father on the cross, it is necessary to speak in trinitarian terms." *Crucified God*, 243.

event there must also be at least two persons participating in that event.⁴³⁰ However, Moltmann was quick to point out that these two distinct persons are not altogether separate. The crucifixion of Jesus “contains community between Jesus and his Father in separation, and separation in community.”⁴³¹ This community between Father and Son is what allows the possibility of a doctrine of the Trinity, distinguished from mere polytheism. “In the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness, and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender.”⁴³² The crucifixion is, then, “The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity.”⁴³³ “If the cross of Jesus is understood as a divine event, i.e. as an event between Jesus and his God and Father, it is necessary to speak in trinitarian terms of the Son and the Father and the Spirit.”⁴³⁴ This is notably not yet a fully enfolded trinitarian doctrine, at best evidencing a binitarian logic. Nevertheless, discussion of crucifixion is the point at which Moltmann first began to speak about the ‘community’ of God.⁴³⁵ Yet, for Moltmann, it is not therefore also the starting point of trinitarian thought. Rather, even crucifixion must be viewed as part of a larger theology of history.

⁴³⁰ That there were two mutually exclusive forms of suffering Moltmann described, “We cannot therefore say here in patipassian terms that the Father also suffered and died. The suffering and dying of the Son, forsaken by the Father, is a different kind of suffering from the suffering of the Father in the death of the Son.” *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴³⁵ On the cruciform beginnings of Moltmann’s trinitarian theology, Sölle criticized Moltmann for an implicit patricide in his theology of the cross. “[Moltmann] is fascinated by the brutality of God... also here the Trinity is so constituted that the first person ‘destroys’ the second.” Dorothee Sölle, “Gott und das Leiden”, in Dorothee Sölle, *Diskussion über Jürgen Moltmanns Buch ‘Der gekreuzigte Gott’*, ed. Michael Welker (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1979), 115. Quoted in Harvie, 106. There does seem to be a fascination, in *Crucified God*, with brutality, although this brutality is not merely the brutality of the Father, but a broader

The starting point for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must be the salvation history attested in the Bible: the history of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. I further conclude that the method of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must correspond to the method of the Old Testament knowledge of God: there we always have 'Yahweh is God' and 'Yahweh has become king'. The starting point is the historical and particular revelation of Yahweh which is experienced in a concrete way.⁴³⁶

The revelation of the triune God through the incarnation of Jesus Christ is more than merely insight into the Divine nature. Indeed, the incarnation of Jesus is both a sign, and an invitation, of the openness of the triune God to creation.⁴³⁷ Moltmann's belief that the trinitarian history of God and creation is a continually developing process is made manifest by the continued presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the means by which creation can look forward to the future. "[The Holy Spirit] arises from the event of the resurrection of Christ and is an earnest and pledge of his future, of the future of universal resurrection and of life."⁴³⁸ The Spirit gives eschatological openness and direction for creation's continued existence. Despite the relative lack of reference to the Spirit in Moltmann's explorations of the crucifixion, even there the Spirit is both present and active in opening up creation to God and God to creation in the trinitarian history.⁴³⁹

brutality of existence. Yet, when looking at Moltmann's Hegelian heritage, the idea of the Son being 'destroyed' by the Father appears far less brutal when understood in terms of sublation rather than of interpersonal violence.

⁴³⁶ *History and the Triune God*, 82.

⁴³⁷ Joy Ann McDougall described this openness, "Although Moltmann does not quite go so far as to state explicitly that the Trinity is presently incomplete in its being, he does describe it metaphorically as open for the gathering of restored creation into its midst." McDougall, 66.

⁴³⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 211.

⁴³⁹ McDougall saw that Moltmann's trinitarian pneumatology only began to fully develop with *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Here, the trinitarian openness of God became ever more evident. "To the degree that the trinitarian history of God awaits eschatological completion through the glorifying and unifying of

“[The Spirit] is the unconditioned and therefore boundless love which proceeds from the grief of the Father and the dying of the Son and reaches forsaken men in order to create in them the possibility and the force of new life.”⁴⁴⁰ The trinitarian history of God encompasses both the past and the present, and is constantly moving into God’s eschatological future.

Because Moltmann views the Trinity in terms of a direct connection to an affective world, much can be learned about God’s relationship with that world by seeking to describe God’s self-relatedness. One of the most noteworthy elements of Moltmann’s Trinitarian theology is the social nature of his doctrine of the Trinity. If, for Moltmann, the three persons of the Trinity are all constituted by their relationships with each other, it is that very relationship that is fundamental to God’s nature. God’s nature is, in this sense, ultimately relational within Godself.⁴⁴¹ However, God’s nature is not only relational within the Godhead, but this relationality also extends outwards from the triune God and is seen in God’s participation with all of creation.⁴⁴² Moltmann defined his social doctrine of the Trinity by saying,

creation through the Spirit, so, too, we can say that the trinitarian Godhead itself awaits eschatological unification.” *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 245. Or, as Bauckham described, “It is as Trinity that God not only affects but is affected by the world.” Bauckham, 155.

⁴⁴¹ But, to even speak of “God’s nature” is to presuppose relationality, because, for Moltmann, God can only be known in relationship. “Moltmann thus seeks to develop a concept of God that arises out of how he is *quoad nos* as opposed to how God is *in se*. Moltmann’s conception of God is one construed on the basis of ‘dynamic relationality’.” Henry Jansen, 106.

⁴⁴² Margaret Adam even interpreted the extent of this trinitarian relationality as eclipsing, in Moltmann’s theology, the hope found in the resurrection of Christ. “Moltmannian hope further downplays hope in Christ by narrating human participation in divine trinitarian perichoretic relations as the highest good instead of participation in Christ’s triumph over death and sin.” Adam, 127. She is not wrong to see how important

The triune God is a single communion or fellowship which is formed by the three divine persons themselves. The unity of the triune God is no longer seen in the homogeneous divine subject nor in the identical divine subject, but in the eternal *perichoresis* of Father, Son and Spirit.⁴⁴³

The idea of a Social Trinity, including the description of the Trinitarian activity as *perichoresis* is not unique, nor original, to Moltmann.⁴⁴⁴ Indeed, Moltmann even traces this idea back to the Johannine tradition. “The divine persons exist not only in relationships to one another but also, as the Johannine formulations show, *in one another*: the Son *in* the Father, the Father *in* the Son, the Holy Spirit *in* the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son *in* the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴⁵ Each of the persons of the Trinity participates in an intimate indwelling and complete interpenetration of the other persons, and it is this indwelling and interpenetration that is characterized as *perichoresis*. Moltmann’s entire understanding of the Social Trinity is built upon this understanding of the divine *perichoresis*.⁴⁴⁶ The unity of the Trinitarian persons is not a secondary unity, for, following Moltmann’s use of

‘trinitarian perichoretic relations’ can be, but she also fails to see how *Crucified God* served to set the stage by which it was even possible to speak of ‘trinitarian perichoretic relations’.

⁴⁴³ Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, xii. Here, Pannenberg criticized Moltmann for failing to conceive of the Trinity in terms which would allow true unity. “In the immanent Trinity, then, we are not to distinguish as Moltmann does between a constitutional level and a relational level, between on the one side the constitution of the Trinity from the Father, the non-originated origin of deity, by the generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit, and on the other side the perichoretic mutuality of the personal relations in the life of the Trinity. How could we protect the unity...if the monarchy of the Father were not accepted as the source of deity?” Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 325.

⁴⁴⁴ E.g., an excellent study of an early and influential use of the idea of *perichoresis* can be found in, Charles C. Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood: God, Christ, and Salvation in John of Damascus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015). Twombly described that this concept was not original even to John of Damascus, but that his interpretation was deeply influential especially for Barth and Moltmann.

⁴⁴⁵ *History and the Triune God*, 86.

⁴⁴⁶ Harvie argued that Moltmann perceived “the use of perichoresis as being the only plausible means available to contemporary theology to preserve not only the unity, but also the uniqueness of the persons within the Godhead.” Harvie, 115.

Rahner's Rule – The economic Trinity is identical to the immanent Trinity and vice versa.⁴⁴⁷ This unity is both internal and natural to God.

The perichoretic nature of the Trinitarian persons is also descriptive of the way in which God interacts with creation. For Moltmann, a Social Trinity must also be an Open Trinity.⁴⁴⁸ The social nature of the triune God, three persons perichoretically indwelling and interpenetrating one another, is not only social internally, but also equally social externally. The divine perichoretic dance of mutual interpenetration is equivalent to the relationship which the triune God desires to have with creation as a whole.

The perichoretic unity of the triune God is...an open, inviting unity that unites with itself. It is not confined to God in order to define him exclusively as the one over against the many, but is inclusively open for all creation, whose misery consists in isolation from the living God and whose salvation is thus to be found in being graciously taken up into the community of God.⁴⁴⁹

The perichoretic dance summons the other, that is creation, to participate fully in that dance of mutual interpenetration. It is through the Spirit that God is opened up to the world

⁴⁴⁷ Moltmann describes two parts to 'Rahner's Rule', "1. The Trinity is the nature of God and the nature of God is the Trinity. 2. The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity." *Crucified God*, 240. Rob Lister said critically of Moltmann's use of Rahner's rule, "[Moltmann wound up] making the identity of God necessarily dependent upon certain events in the redemptive economy, in this case particularly the event of the cross." Rob Lister, *God is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 244. I would contend that Lister is correct in this claim, but that, within Moltmann's theological project, this is both intentional and important, not inherently problematic.

⁴⁴⁸ Stanley Grenz credits this, at least in part, to artistic influence as much as a sense of systematicity. "Drawing inspiration from the famous fifteenth-century Rublev icon upon which Moltmann repeatedly gazed as he composed his theological treatises, he asserts that, rather than being limited to the divine life, the relationality among the three trinitarian persons seeks the inclusion of creation. Hence to say that God is an 'open Trinity' is to contend that God's relationality invites creaturely participation." Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress 2004), 82.

⁴⁴⁹ Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 87.

and the hopeful future—i.e. the Kingdom—is opened up for humanity.⁴⁵⁰ The openness that has been shown to humanity, indeed all of creation, is the openness to participate in fellowship with God, and even in God. The life and history of the triune God are indelibly connected to the salvation-history of creation. Indeed, the trinitarian history is salvation-history, for salvation is found in the eschatological unity between creation and the triune God.⁴⁵¹

Both the sociality and openness of Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity are by virtue of his concept of divine love. Love is the unifying characteristic of the Social Trinity; it is each Trinitarian person’s love for each other that is the basis of the perichoretical indwelling.⁴⁵² Likewise, it is this same love expressed outward that is the sign of the triune God’s openness to creation. Moltmann argued against a monarchical understanding of the Trinity that is built upon a hierarchy of rules and rulers, because no monarchical understanding of God could allow the possibility of God’s open devotion to creation.⁴⁵³ This understanding of divine love in the Trinity needs further explication, particularly as it

⁴⁵⁰ Timothy Bradshaw termed this a “mutually conditioning relationship between the Triune God and creation,” and saw that, “[it] is the role of the Spirit as the agent of creation.” Timothy Bradshaw, “Moltmann’s Ecclesiology in Evangelical Perspective,” in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology*, 130.

⁴⁵¹ Sarah Morice-Brubaker has questioned whether Moltmann is right to reject any strong distinction between the idea of the Economic Trinity with the idea of the Immanent Trinity. She noted correctly, “Moltmann is emphatic that the trinitarian history must indeed have a historical structure, with something akin to distinguishable subjects, actions, and moments. Otherwise, it would precisely *not* cohere with the history of salvation.” Sarah Morice-Brubaker, *The Place of the Spirit: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Location* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 80.

⁴⁵² Harvie noted that, even as early as *The Crucified God*, “Love, not suffering is constitutive for God’s being” within Moltmann’s theology. Harvie, 107.

⁴⁵³ Linn Tonstad has shown that Moltmann was not entirely successful in his attempt to overcome monarchical relationships in his trinitarian language. “Although Moltmann is right to highlight elements of paternal receptivity in this logic, ultimately, this is a return to the Father of all that was his already, and put playfully, the Son still sits only *beside*, not *on*, the throne.” Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 155.

concerns the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the triune God. Moltmann was clear that the Holy Spirit is and must be a Trinitarian person.⁴⁵⁴ However, Moltmann believed that the Spirit's personhood must be understood differently than the personhood of the Father and of the Son.⁴⁵⁵ Ultimately, Moltmann gave no explicit definition of how the personhood of the Spirit ought to be understood, but rather was forced to understand the personhood of the Spirit analogically.⁴⁵⁶

Through the many different metaphors that Moltmann has used to describe the personhood of the Spirit through the actions of the Spirit he came to a basic definition of this personhood, although this definition is still more descriptive than definitive. "The personhood of God the Holy Spirit is the loving, self-communicating, out-fanning and out-pouring presence of the eternal divine life of the triune God."⁴⁵⁷ It is easiest to speak of the personhood of the Spirit through the Spirit's function of invigorating creativity and life both within the Godhead and externally for the world. This creativity and vitality is the source of community and love which are the aspects of life that make it truly alive. "The

⁴⁵⁴ Laurence Wood well described why this is an important question for Moltmann. "The Holy Spirit is not an extension of the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is not just a point of union between God the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not just the Father and Son working together and relating together as a 'we.' Rather, the Holy Spirit is also just as distinctive in his personal specificity as the Father and the Son." Laurence W. Wood, *Theology as History and Hermeneutics: A Post-Critical Conversation with Contemporary Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth, 2005), 203.

⁴⁵⁵ That even the language of trinitarian 'personhood' is imperfect will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

⁴⁵⁶ While it may be that this analogical description is the best way to approach an understanding of the Holy Spirit theologically, Laurence Wood seems to have overstated Moltmann's relatively limited pneumatology when he said, "This personal specificity of the Holy Spirit had not received adequate theological recognition in modern and contemporary theology – until Moltmann brought it into center stage." *Theology as History and Hermeneutics*, 203.

⁴⁵⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1999), 289.

Spirit who is glorified ‘together with’ the Father and the Son is also the wellspring of the energy which draws people to one another, so that they come together, rejoice in one another and praise the God who is himself a God in community.”⁴⁵⁸

The Trinity in Hegel

That an interpretation of Moltmann’s theology requires a careful grappling with Hegel’s influence has already been argued. This is true in the general structuring of Moltmann’s thought, as well as in particular theological doctrines and propositions. This indebtedness to Hegel is especially evident in Moltmann’s trinitarian theology and therefore also in the doctrine of creation.⁴⁵⁹ Although Moltmann is less explicit about the Hegelian connection to his doctrine of the Trinity, there is a lot of Hegelian material from which Moltmann has drawn. To a greater extent than with most other theological topics, Hegel actually showed a strong interest in trinitarian doctrine.⁴⁶⁰

Even a casual reader of Hegel should understand the truth of Walter Kaufmann’s claim that Hegel demonstrated a “very decided preference for triadic arrangements.”⁴⁶¹ Given Hegel’s early theological training, it would be no surprise that he thus also had an affinity for a decidedly Christian discussion of the Trinity. Citing Hegel’s influence, it has

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁴⁵⁹ Dale Schlitt gave a good overview of Hegel’s influence on trinitarian theology generally, and on Moltmann more specifically. See, Dale M. Schlitt, *German Idealism’s Trinitarian Legacy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016), 308-311.

⁴⁶⁰ As it relates to Hegel’s system of philosophy, “Hegel’s dialectical and speculative reconceptualization of Trinity was his post-Kantian response to the problem of the one and the many or of the relationship between identity and difference... Hegel’s definition of difference or otherness as negation allowed him to integrate particularity, as the other of universality, into the overall movement of reason itself.” *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁶¹ *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, 154.

been argued, “The doctrine of the Trinity is not only ‘the fundamental characteristic of the Christian religion’, but it is also the ‘axis on which the History of the World turns’ and ‘the goal and the starting point of history’.”⁴⁶² Christian notions of the Trinity thus appear to have been very informative to Hegel.⁴⁶³ While it may be that his near-obsession with the number three led him back to the doctrine of the Trinity, one might argue to the contrary that it was Hegel’s early exposure to a Christian trinitarianism that gave him a framework by which to structure his later thought.⁴⁶⁴ This is almost certainly a chicken/egg scenario without an obviously correct answer. Nevertheless, it is evident that trinitarian notions held a particular place of importance in even Hegel’s most intentionally non-religious work. It remains yet more evident in Hegel’s explicitly religious writings that the Trinity can serve as an exemplar for much of Hegel’s understanding of identity, personhood, and history.⁴⁶⁵

As Moltmann later would, Hegel rooted trinitarian thought in a discussion of the relationship evident between Father and Son in the crucifixion.⁴⁶⁶ In words that sound

⁴⁶² Paolo Diego Bubbio, “Hegel, the Trinity, and the I,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (October 2014), 130.

⁴⁶³ Paolo Diego Bubbio made a compelling argument that Hegel’s interest in the Trinity can be described through the philosophical notion of the development of the ‘I’. “The ‘I’ is triadic because, to really be an ‘I,’ it is constitutively required to be self-identity, self-differentiation, and self-return. By the same token, God has to be thought of as trinitarian because God is the utterly concrete selfhood.” Paolo Diego Bubbio, *God and the Self in Hegel: Beyond Subjectivism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 124.

⁴⁶⁴ Regardless of where one might determine these origins, Bubbio is correct that, “Defining Hegel’s interest in Christianity and the Trinity exclusively in terms of an allegory is reductive... the correspondence of the three parts of the *Encyclopedia* to the structure of the Trinity suggests that the relevance of this notion in the context of Hegel’s system extends beyond its role as an allegory.” *Ibid*, 105.

⁴⁶⁵ For a strong overview of Hegel’s trinitarian formulations see, *Hegel’s Trinitarian Claim*. Here, Schlitt laid out both the implicit and explicit trinitarian claims made by Hegel but argued that Hegel’s philosophical undergirding could not adequately structure his trinitarian claims.

⁴⁶⁶ This is but one of many ways that Hegel approached trinitarian thought, but serves as a good lead-in to describe how Moltmann has been influenced by Hegelian trinitarianism. Schlitt described that, to study Trinity in Hegel, “It seemed strategically wise and indeed necessary not only to treat Hegel’s reading of

strikingly similar to Moltmann's understanding of *perichoresis*, Hegel said, "Love [consists] in giving up one's personality, all that is one's own, etc. [It is] a self-conscious activity, the supreme surrender [of oneself] in the other, even in this most extrinsic other-being of death... The monstrous unification of these absolute extremes is love itself."⁴⁶⁷ This is the Hegelian context in which *The Crucified God* should be understood. Whatever one's conceptions about God, so long as love remains a descriptive attribute of God, then it must be that God's relationality, both internally and externally, is one of a kenotic giving-up, of self-sacrifice.

Sam Powell has helpfully described that Hegel's trinitarian discussions can be generally placed into two separate categories: the ontological Trinity of eternity and the Trinity of history.⁴⁶⁸ These categorizations tend toward the same distinction described by the terms 'economic' and 'immanent', but also provide a helpful nuance with regard to Hegel, and therefore, too, with regard to Moltmann.⁴⁶⁹ To describe the so-called 'Immanent Trinity' as the Trinity of history describes not only that the Christian God is understood as a God of presence, but also the extent to which God is present. God's presence is not only

Trinity more indirectly in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and directly in his *Encyclopedia* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, but also to consider seriously his *Science of Logic*." *Ibid.*, x.

⁴⁶⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of History Volume 3*, 125.

⁴⁶⁸ Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶⁹ Moltmann also called for a reconsideration of the language of 'economic' and 'immanent', although without explicitly rejecting either in his own work. "Moltmann's final preference therefore is for a more flexible and nuanced trinitarian framework... He proposes that we think in terms of the 'monarchical,' 'historical,' and 'eucharistic' concepts of the Trinity, all of which presuppose a 'primordial Trinity,' and which are fulfilled in 'trinitarian doxology.'" Thomas R. Thompson, "Interpretatio in bonem partem: Jürgen Moltmann on the Immanent Trinity, in *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack and Kimlyn J. Bender (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 176.

found in the person of Jesus, nor in the presence of the Holy Spirit, however conceived, but is found in the fullness of the Godhead within history. God's presence is not imposed from without, but is formed in the process of history.⁴⁷⁰ "God does not attain actuality until the Trinity has unfolded in history...through its incorporation of finitude."⁴⁷¹ In much stronger terms than one would typically understand from the word 'immanent', to speak of a Trinity of history demands recognition that any notion of God as existing prior to the act of creation is to speak of God as existing incompletely.⁴⁷² Moltmann's insistence on speaking of creation in terms of *zimsun* is directly related to Hegel's contention that actuality arrives only in and with the movements of history. For Hegel, this is no less true for the being of God than it is when speaking in terms of the phenomenological history of the world or of epistemology. "[God is properly conceived] only as having within himself the differentiated infinite universalities, [as having] within himself determinateness, i.e., limit, i.e., [as having] difference within himself, and [having it] as difference."⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ Poul Guttesen termed this "theoenpanism," in contrast to the "panentheism" that Moltmann himself used. "The broad sweep of God's history with his creation is shaped by kenotic retraction and expansion... from a contradiction in God and creation which made their perichoretic communion possible to the fulfillment of that communion when this double contradiction is overcome." Poul F. Guttesen, *Leaning Into the Future: The Kingdom of God in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann and the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 74.

⁴⁷¹ Powell, 128.

⁴⁷² Although, in keeping with the typical language of Christian orthodoxy, Moltmann does not speak of God as 'incomplete', but prefers the kenotic language of 'self-withdrawing' in order to place incompleteness at the level of choice rather than nature. See Jürgen Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John C. Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001).

⁴⁷³ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 1*, 205.

Hegel described the ontological Trinity of eternity as both “outside of time”⁴⁷⁴ and “not yet burdened by other-being.”⁴⁷⁵ As a philosophical notion, such a God can be understood as the content of religion. Yet, as content, such a God is philosophically meaningless without being thought by a thinking consciousness.⁴⁷⁶ “The universal object, the essence of the object, is only for thinking, and since in religion God is the object, he is such essentially for thinking.”⁴⁷⁷ Outside of a human consciousness by which such a God can be thought, God remains merely speculative.⁴⁷⁸ Such a speculative God would not be triune, for “only the dead understanding is identical with itself.”⁴⁷⁹ A fully internalized God “is object *essentially*,”⁴⁸⁰ or being-in-itself. It is only in God’s manifestation within history that God ceases to be mere object and can properly be described as being-in-and-for-itself.

Even though Hegel dedicated a significant number of pages to exploring what it means for God to be object, it is in what Powell calls the ‘Trinity of history’ that Moltmann most strongly picked up Hegel’s discussion. As God is made manifest in history, God can

⁴⁷⁴ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 3, 188.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁷⁶ Regardless of whether God exists as Trinity *in se*, as Bubbio described, Hegel’s contention is that the trinitarian God is constituted by consciousness. “Hegel’s notion of the Trinity is usually considered a *Vorstellung*: a picture-thinking, or a memory-like image, which is perceived as external by the consciousness... However, after Hegel’s *philosophical* analysis of the Trinity has been considered, even briefly, the Trinity clearly becomes, in Hegel’s view, *anything but* external to consciousness.” *God and the Self in Hegel*, 122.

⁴⁷⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy Religion*, Vol 3, 189.

⁴⁷⁸ Daniel Berthold-Bond described, “Any idea of a transhistorical revelation would be to remove God into a mythological ‘Beyond,’ a realm in which He literally would cease to be ‘actual’ or ‘real.’” Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel’s Grand Synthesis: A Study of Being, Thought, and History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 120.

⁴⁷⁹ *Lectures on the Philosophy Religion*, Vol 3, 193.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

be said to live, for Hegel, in a new and different way than was possible when God was essentially object. As God tied Godself to history, through the act of *zimisum* for Moltmann, even the internal life of God is altered.

‘God is love’ is an expression very much to the point: here God is present to sensation; as ‘love’ he is a person, and the relationship is such that the consciousness of the One is to be had only in the consciousness of the other. God is conscious of himself, as Goethe says, only in the other, in absolute externalization.⁴⁸¹

The phrase ‘God is love’ is neither original nor unique to Hegel, yet, a nuanced understanding of this phrase, as used by Hegel, is a key to unlocking the depths of Moltmann’s understanding of the acts of creation by a triune God. “When we say, ‘God is love’, we are saying something very great and true. But it would be senseless to grasp this saying in a simple-minded way as a simple definition, without analyzing what love is.”⁴⁸²

The Brokenness of Love

Moltmann picked up on Hegel’s definition of love by arguing that love is not defined by unity alone, or perhaps at all, but rather by diremption and brokenness.⁴⁸³ This diremption is inherent to the Trinity, and is therefore also passed on in God’s acts of creation. Moltmann speaks of a “dichotomy in God”⁴⁸⁴ which is experienced as “the pathos

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴⁸³ Fred Sanders pointed to this Hegelian influence as primary to Moltmann, “Hegel’s influence on modern trinitarianism has been so pervasive as to be nearly inescapable... In Moltmann’s hands, the doctrine of the Trinity becomes a theology of the redemptive suffering of God in human history... This account of salvation has the Hegelian family likeness; it is another version of redemption by diremption.” Fred Sanders, “The Trinity,” in *Mapping Modern Theology*, eds., Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 25-26.

⁴⁸⁴ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 30.

and the initial self-humiliation through which the Almighty goes out of himself and becomes involved with the limited world.”⁴⁸⁵ Moltmann’s argument for a dichotomy ‘in God’ is evident insofar as God suffers with God’s people, and therefore must also come to confront Godself as the Creator of a world in which such suffering exists.⁴⁸⁶ This ‘dichotomy’ is not strictly along trinitarian lines, although it is evident in the cry of dereliction which both Moltmann and Hegel give a place of great prominence.⁴⁸⁷ “[Death is] the moment of spirit~ in which it grasps itself inwardly... submerging itself within itself.”⁴⁸⁸ This internal motion precedes the external by which God’s own becoming is made manifest within the history of creation. “Love seeks a counterpart who freely responds and independently gives love for love. Love humiliates itself for the sake of the freedom of its counterpart.”⁴⁸⁹ Love is the most profound reason “for the ‘rift’ which runs through the divine life and activity.”⁴⁹⁰

This rift is at the heart of Moltmann’s theology, but is easy to pass over in favor of a description of God’s love in terms of unity rather than brokenness. To do so is

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ A localized and fascinating account of the promise of Moltmann’s general approach to theodicy for Cameroonian Christians can be found in the thesis of Benoni-Wang Otob.

⁴⁸⁷ One might also look to Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel to see the need for a corrective to the male-dominated theology of the cross. Such an account “must be embedded in a Christology and an account of Jesus in which it is not just Jesus’ work – in parallel to the man’s life-work – that makes up salvation history, as is the case with so many traditional outlines from Paul to the present, but his whole life... In the feminist understanding so too is the network of relationships, the effect of people [important].” Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, “Is There a Feminist Theology of the Cross?,” in *God – His and Hers*, 86.

⁴⁸⁸ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Vol. 3*, 126.

⁴⁸⁹ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 30.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

understandable, but would represent a failure to understand the depth of Hegel's influence on Moltmann's conception of the God who is love. Even within a very good study of Moltmann's theology, Joy Ann McDougall made just such a move by claiming that Moltmann's early writings "contain a distinct concept of divine love that will provide us with a foil to the author's social trinitarian concept of love in his later works."⁴⁹¹ To see social trinitarianism as a corrective to a diremptive love, both within and without God, is to understand both God and creation as entirely closed to external influence. Such a claim simply cannot co-exist with Moltmann's insistence on the pathos of God as exhibited in creation.

Although Moltmann at times struggles to fully incorporate the idea of openness into his theology, particularly with reference to eschatology,⁴⁹² that God is pathetically dependent on God's creation is often described clearly. Even in Moltmann's recent work, the inter-trinitarian love of God is described in terms of deep brokenness that cannot be wiped away by the perichoretic dance of togetherness. "In the trinitarian history of God, divine self-giving to the point of death and resurrection from death become comprehensible as the reality of divine love."⁴⁹³ Likewise for Hegel, "Love is a framework for absolute contradiction."⁴⁹⁴ Slavoj Žižek wrote, in a compelling argument for a strong reading of

⁴⁹¹ McDougall, 29.

⁴⁹² E.g., Bonzo questions of Moltmann, "Doesn't it skew the very nature of love as vulnerability and risk to insist that, already from before the beginning, the glory of the feast of redemption is a sure thing? It is one thing, in faith, to live in the certainty of the resurrection and the triumph of love. It is another thing to translate that certainty into a theoretic conceptualization which seems to eclipse the risk and drama of human time and history, embracing it and transforming it finally into the fail-safe eternity of God's drama." Bonzo, 119.

⁴⁹³ *The Living God*, 145.

⁴⁹⁴ Gregory Phipps, "The Dialectic of Love and the Motif of Fruit in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," *Textual Practice* 31, No. 1 (Jan 2017), 103.

erotic love in Hegel, “The tragic [is] at the very heart of Christianity as the religion of love.”⁴⁹⁵ This tragedy of love plays out in the world as the tragedy of creation, as the inherent brokenness by which love is made manifest in the world.⁴⁹⁶

This excursus into trinitarian theology and its connection to both creation in the beginning and God’s continuing acts of creation in the world connects the creation of the past with the *telos* of what creation could be. This *telos* in Moltmann’s theology is defined as ‘the Kingdom of God’. Moltmann said, “*Gratia non perfecit, sed praeparat naturam ad gloriam aeternam; gratia non est perfectio naturae, sed praeparatio messianica mundi ad regnum Dei.*”⁴⁹⁷ The core of Moltmann’s trinitarian thinking about creation is that God is in the world, and the presence of the world is in God. “The God who is transcendent...and the God who is immanent... are one and the same God.”⁴⁹⁸ Moltmann’s understanding of creation cannot be properly understood outside of the realization that both creation and the triune God are inextricably interrelated. This divine interrelatedness is not uniquely inherent to humanity, but includes the totality of creation because of God’s faithful trinitarian openness.⁴⁹⁹ “All relationships... reflect the primal, reciprocal indwelling and

⁴⁹⁵ *Less Than Nothing*, 81.

⁴⁹⁶ As Ted Peters described this tragedy of love “What we have experience within history is brokenness within the divine life proper, a brokenness freely entered into by a God who enters into the stream of our temporal existence.” Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 110.

⁴⁹⁷ *God in Creation*, 8. “Grace does not perfect, but prepares nature for eternal glory; grace is not the perfection of nature, but is the messianic preparation of creation for the Kingdom of God.”

⁴⁹⁸ *God in Creation*, 15

⁴⁹⁹ Morice-Brubaker attempted to read into Moltmann a “trinitarian theology of place,” by which this openness could be understood. However, she misunderstood the nature of Hegel’s influence on Moltmann. She claimed, “Moltmann remains committed to a dialectical structure, even when his aim is to give this structure a trinitarian grounding.” Morice-Brubaker, 70. To better understand the importance of God’s

mutual interpenetration of the trinitarian perichoresis... There is no such thing as a solitary life.”⁵⁰⁰ In the next chapter this argument will be taken even further to argue that this ‘reflection’ is two-sided: The trinitarian perichoresis also ‘reflects’ those relationships which are external to God. There can be no life that is not a life in relationship to both the rest of creation and to the triune God.

Creation³: *Originalis, Continua, Nova*

Because Moltmann cannot envision life apart from the continued relatedness to the triune God he also understands that a truly Christian understanding of creation needs to focus on the entirety of the Christian Scriptures, not simply on Genesis 1-2. He claimed that when creation is thus understood there are three distinct modes of creation which can be encountered: *creatio originalis*, *creatio continua*, and *creatio nova*.⁵⁰¹ *Creatio originalis* is the act described in Genesis 1-2 whereby the earth was formed and filled. Moltmann is not a biblical literalist and thus holds no notion that Genesis actually describes the scientific details of God’s initial creation.⁵⁰² Genesis describes an understanding of

trinitarian openness for Moltmann, however, it should be seen that the dialectical structure of God-talk, developed with Hegel’s insight, is its own grounding, and Moltmann’s particular take on trinitarian theology arises from this grounding, rather than vice-versa.

⁵⁰⁰ *God in Creation*, 17

⁵⁰¹ Original creation, continuing creation, and new creation, *Ibid.*, 55. An excellent discussion of this tripartite doctrine of creation, rooted in the sort of political reality that Moltmann believed to be the proper locale for theological reflection, can be found in Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, *Preservation and Protest: Theological Foundations for an Eco-Eschatological Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

⁵⁰² Margaret Adam described what she saw to be a “selective literalism,” in Moltmann’s work. “Moltmann adopts (without claiming) a literalist translation of many passages of the Old Testament that use anthropomorphic descriptions of God’s feelings and actions in time and in responsive relationship with God’s people.” Adam, 84. This description of Moltmann’s biblical approach deserves careful consideration, because it points to a tendency that is evident in Moltmann’s work. Even so, I would argue that ‘selective literalism’

creatio originalis without making scientific or physiological claims about that which exists. Moltmann's own creation narrative explicitly includes *zimsun*, although, again, not necessarily literally so.⁵⁰³ Such an interpretation brings in a narrative that is not explicitly described in the biblical text. Nevertheless, Moltmann pointed to Genesis as part of the overarching narrative by which God has become known by creation, and, as part of this larger narrative it holds a place of theological import. Thus, initial creation points beyond itself to the future promises of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The continuing act of creation points beyond itself to, and finds fulfillment in, the salvific life of Jesus. Ultimately, the new creation, which begins with the resurrection of Christ, points toward its fulfillment, the Kingdom of God.

Holding this understanding of the three primary modes of creation, all of which are interrelated in the life of the created order, it is important to understand how each mode of creation is conceived. Moltmann described the first mode of creation, "To say that God 'created' the world indicates God's self-distinction from that world, and emphasizes that

is not 'literalism' strictly speaking, but an informed and intentional approach to the varieties of scripture, and that anthropomorphizing God, whatever other problems this might cause, is not exclusively the result of 'selective literalism'.

⁵⁰³ Moltmann's language is not always entirely clear in distinguishing between creation as a noun and creation as a verb, leading to some confusion about when, if ever, Moltmann's doctrine of creation ought to be understood literally and physically. E.g., W. David Hall claimed, "Moltmann seems to correlate the theological idea of God's continued creative activity with natural evolutionary processes. Curiously, he begins by stating that evolution, strictly speaking, 'has nothing to do with 'creation' itself'... Not only does Moltmann treat creation as if it encompassed the theory of the evolution of the species, but he speaks of *creatio ex nihilo* as if it were an account of the origins of the cosmos, existence in general." W. David Hall, "Does *Creation* Equal *Nature*?: Confronting the Christian Confusion about Ecology and Cosmology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 73, no. 3 (September, 2005): 800-801. Hall is correct to critique the uncaredful way that Moltmann addresses this distinction, but given Moltmann's explicit rejections of young-earth creationist language and strict biblical literalism, it would be nevertheless fair to read Moltmann's descriptions of creation as though they always included the phrase, "But not necessarily literally/physically."

God desires it.”⁵⁰⁴ The problem with this concept of self-distinction is the paradox of the traditional Christian doctrines that God is, or at least was at one time, ‘all-in-all’ and yet that original creation occurred *ex nihilo*.⁵⁰⁵ Moltmann believed that to say God created *ex nihilo* is an apt paraphrase of the biblical story of creation. In order for creation to occur *ex nihilo* would necessitate that the act of creation occurred *extra Deum*. The only way that this is possible, for Moltmann, is that in God’s own self-limitation, God withdrew God’s presence into Godself and opened space in which to create. “There is in fact one possible way of conceiving an *extra Deum*. But it is only the assumption of a self-limitation by God himself preceding his creation which can be reconciled with God’s divinity without contradiction.”⁵⁰⁶ This space is literally a “God-forsaken space.”⁵⁰⁷ In this way the God who would otherwise be ‘all-in-all’ has chosen the self-humiliating act of making space for an other. “The *nihil* for his *creatio ex nihilo* only comes into being because- and in as far as- the omnipotent and omnipresent God withdraws his presence and restricts his power.”⁵⁰⁸ Having opened up space for the possibility of creating this other, God then goes

⁵⁰⁴ *God in Creation*, 72.

⁵⁰⁵ Tom Oord frequently critiques Moltmann’s reliance on *creatio ex nihilo* and what he sees to be the odd requirement for a doctrine of *zmsum* in order to maintain an interior logic to the doctrine of creation. See, e.g. Thomas J. Oord, *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 164. For a similar objection see also Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵⁰⁶ *God in Creation*, 86.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 87.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*. One could question Moltmann whether *nihil* actually has being. The question ought to be asked: If *nihil* has being can creation truly be *creatio ex nihilo*? Also, is it even possible for *nihil* to be? Moltmann understands this *nihil* to be, quite literally, hell, which is to say absolute death. While it would seem that absolute death, by definition, cannot be said to have existence, this argument cannot be sustained within the confines of this paper. It is important, however, to understand that God’s withdrawal opens up what Moltmann calls a ‘mystical primordial space’ in which to create. This space, whether semantically said to

about the actual work of ‘creation’ which is the filling of this openness. For Moltmann, God’s inversion of Godself was an act of self-humiliation, a self-humiliation that would later be demonstrated again in the incarnation and yet again in the crucifixion.⁵⁰⁹ This divine self-humiliation makes way for the possibility of an other in creation. Were it not for the divine self-humiliation God would continue to be all-in-all and creation could not occur.

Creation does not occur simply by God’s calling it forth into existence. “In a more profound sense [God] ‘creates’ by letting-be, by making room, and by withdrawing himself.”⁵¹⁰ This initial act of creation, though, is only the beginning of God’s work of creation. There is also an aspect of continuing creation. Moltmann believes that God is still, even today, in the process of creating and that this can be seen most clearly in the process of evolution. He argued that recognizing the validity of the scientific theory of evolution in no way negates God’s power. Rather, evolution describes the way in which God’s hand continues to form and shape existence in the present.⁵¹¹ The process of

have existence allows room for something that is non-God to actually come into existence. For a longer discussion of the role of *nihil* in Moltmann’s kenotic creation, see Graham Buxton 57-59.

⁵⁰⁹ Such a strong focus on self-limitation and self-humiliation is not without criticism. Wonhee Anne Joh noted that “many feminists are critical of Moltmann precisely at this juncture. Surrendering is not beneficial nor does it make sense for those who have been oppressed and dominated.” Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 83. Without disregarding the validity of these concerns, Joh also argued that there is a radicality of presence made manifest in Moltmann’s kenotic language which might help to mediate the effect that this language can have on vulnerable persons and communities.

⁵¹⁰ *God in Creation*, 88.

⁵¹¹ The data are clear that evolution happens constantly on both micro- and macro- levels. Yet, because of the pervasiveness of biblical literalism, and a consequent lack of interpretive humility, there is a substantial population of Christians who are willing to disregard said data. One of the reasons that Moltmann remains an important theological figure is that he has intentionally placed himself within that part of the Christian tradition which internally struggles with how faith should influence living in the world. “I can understand the annoyed reaction of exactly thinking scientists toward pseudo-scientific ‘creationism’, and you will

continuing creation, like the process of original creation, is a Trinitarian action. This continuing creation, which is exemplified through, although not encompassed by, the process of evolution is God's action to continually overcome death in the world.⁵¹² Creation in the beginning occurred out of the *nihil* of absolute death, and in the same way continuing creation fights against the death and decay that are found in the present creation.

There is yet one more form of creation that needs to be dealt with. This is seen in the fact that creation is an open system which has its foundation, its balance, and its goal not in itself but in its future. This final movement of creation, *creatio nova*, will primarily be dealt with in the next section in terms of eschatology. In brief, though, as the third form of creation Moltmann understands this new creation in terms of the sabbath.

The completion of activity is rest, and the completion of doing is simple existence. Creation is God's work, but the sabbath is God's present existence. His works express God's will, but the sabbath manifests his Being. In his works God goes out of himself; in the sabbath of creation he comes to himself.⁵¹³

understand the critical reactions of theologians who take up cudgels against the new naturalistic atheism. Ideologies spring up as a result of the reduction of complex forms of life... [which] distort the view of truth and serve irrelevant interests." Jürgen Moltmann, "Is the World Unfinished? On Interactions Between Science and Theology in the Concepts of Nature, Time and the Future," *Theology* 114, no. 6 (Sept. 2011), 404. Accessed March 1, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0040571X11418439>.

⁵¹² T. David Beck questioned the ways in which Moltmann has equated evolution with the notion of *creatio continua*. "Moltmann claims that it is possible to see in the preservation and evolution of species, symbols for the future of creation in its completion and perfection. On the other hand, the adaptation of species typically takes place in order to preserve a species from extinction by protecting it from predators or by developing new killing skills for itself. This would hardly be a foreshadowing of the new creation. For this reason, it is best to resist linking evolutionary processes with the ongoing movement of God in creation" T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All Things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007), 112.

⁵¹³ *God in Creation*, 280.

Due to the social nature of God's trinitarian being, God's sabbath is expanded beyond God's own practice into the life of the world *extra Deum*.⁵¹⁴ "In the resting, and hence direct, unmediated presence of God, all created beings find their dwelling."⁵¹⁵ Sabbath, however, is not merely about peace. Because the sabbath manifests the being of God in the world, it also holds a strong ethical imperative to transform the world in redemptive ways.⁵¹⁶ "Men and women never find the peace of sabbath in God's presence unless they find liberation from dependency and repression, inhumanity and godlessness. So exodus and sabbath are indivisible."⁵¹⁷

The eschatological sabbath of new creation is, then, God's return back into Godself.⁵¹⁸ This return does not in any way negate the potency of God's 'other', but is the ultimate union of the other with God. By opening up Godself, and by making God's own sabbath rest an invitation to relationship, God has demonstrated that the peace of sabbath rest is not a passive enjoyment but a loving embrace. In the eschatological sabbath all of creation will be participants in the trinitarian *perichoresis*.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ And, as *extra Deum*, this sabbath practice is impactful for the relationship between God and creation. "Moltmann believes that a vision for our future includes reconciliation between God, humankind and nature in the peace of the sabbath The blessing of the sabbath is one which is in time." Deane-Drummond, 152.

⁵¹⁵ *God in Creation*, 282.

⁵¹⁶ Paul Fiddes criticized Moltmann on this point, however, because he sees in Moltmann's work that the redemption of sabbath is primarily one of rest, rather than of action. "It is apparently not in the works of his creatures that God comes to union and communion, but in their resting in him in workless contemplation." Paul Fiddes, "Review of *God in Creation*," *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1 (April, 1987): 263.

⁵¹⁷ *God in Creation*, 287.

⁵¹⁸ Importantly, it is the negation of God's kenotic withdrawal - an influx of God's presence where it had previously been withdrawn. Bryan Lee described this as "an eschatological panentheistic vision of God's Sabbath, where God makes the creation God's home, fulfilling it with God's perichoretic love." Bryan Jeongguk Lee, *Celebrating God's Cosmic Perichoresis: The Eschatological Panentheism of Jürgen Moltmann as a Resource for an Ecological Christian Worship* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 23.

Eschatology in Hegel

As with *creatio originalis*, and the subsequent history of *creatio continua* through which it continues, Moltmann's description of *creatio nova* – more broadly conceived as eschatology, has been formed from a kernel of deep Hegelian insight. Hegel's eschatology is a topic fraught with philosophical tension.⁵²⁰ There are those who have viewed Hegel as a force to be overcome, and this feeling has often been based, at least in part, on the eschatological 'completion' of Hegel's philosophy. Deleuze, for example, waged "an anti-Hegel campaign [which] has always been fought under the banner of empiricism."⁵²¹ Deleuze saw Hegel's eschatological proclamations as built entirely upon an historical lie. "Hegel betrays and distorts the immediate in order to ground his dialectic in that incomprehension, and to introduce mediation in a movement is no more than that of his own thought and its generalities."⁵²² As such, for Deleuze and others who participate in what Jere Surber has termed, "Obsessive anti-Hegelianism,"⁵²³ the possibility of Hegelian history is internalized and non-empirical.⁵²⁴ Much more so, then, to even contemplate the

⁵¹⁹ Ryan A. Neal described the universalist tendency in Moltmann's work on this point. "God's indwelling is accorded universal significance where his omnipresence is unmediated." *Theology as Hope*, 213.

⁵²⁰ Jean-Yves Lacoste well-described the nature of Hegel's eschatological difficulty. "Morality in Kant is an infinite work that, if it is to lead to the good, must break through the limits of the time that leads us to death. And yet the eschatological action that Hegel speaks of demands no such rupture: it is taking place right here and now, or can in any case take place in the world. We are thus led to ask what particular structure could house the time that (if Hegel is right) remains the unaltered horizon of our being within completed history, and thus to ask what problems will result from this." Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. Mark Raftery-Skeban (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 50.

⁵²¹ Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 148.

⁵²² *Difference and Repetition*, 10.

⁵²³ Jere O'Neill Surber, "On Giving Hegel His Due: The 'End of History' and the Hegelian Roots of Postmodern Thought," *Philosophy Today* 51, no. 3 (Fall, 2007), 330.

end of such a history would seem to be the height of philosophical hubris. Yet, Hegel's eschatology, while steeped in the sort of hubris that is generally required to make any sort of eschatological proclamations, is much more limited than is often assumed.

Surber helpfully reminded that Hegel's notion of philosophical completion is not unique, but is directly in-line with Kant's similar claim that, with a little help from his friends, it might be possible within two decades "to secure for human reason complete satisfaction in regard to that which it has all along so eagerly occupied itself."⁵²⁵ Moreover, on a philosophical level, Surber argued, Hegel was clear that discussions revolving around the possibility of 'completion', over-generally and improperly called "the end of history,"⁵²⁶ need to be considered only in relation to the *Science of Logic*, not to the entirety of Hegel's philosophical project. In the Hegel literature it is fairly common to see Alexandre Kojève standing in as a primary interpreter of Hegel's eschatology. Yet, that Kojève's interpretation of 'the end of history' is something different than Hegel's is also well argued.⁵²⁷ The intricacies of Hegel's philosophical eschatology continue to be thoroughly debated at length.⁵²⁸ For present purposes, the key point to which Moltmann

⁵²⁴ E.g., although Ricoeur did not outright reject Hegel, and saw the importance of Hegelian thought, he demonstrated an uneasy relationship with Hegel's teleologically-driven philosophy. "If life is not originally meaningful, understanding is forever impossible; but, in order for this understanding to be fixed, is it not necessary to carry back to life itself the logic of immanent development that Hegel called the *concept*? Do we not then surreptitiously provide ourselves with all the resources of a philosophy of the *spirit* just when we are formulating a philosophy of life?" Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 5.

⁵²⁵ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A856/B884.

⁵²⁶ "Intepreters see an end of history in Hegel for two different reasons: because they think it *has* to be there, or because they *need* to see one." Hegel, *The End of History, and the Future*, 14.

⁵²⁷ A series of strong arguments to this point are made in Jon Stewart, ed., *Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996). See also, *Hegel's Grand Synthesis*.

took hold is that any projection of completion is focused entirely on the internal – for Hegel this is ‘logic’ or ‘the Notion’, for Moltmann one might call this ‘spiritual’ or ‘transcendent’. Yet, even if Hegel could rightly point to his logic as a completed system, a dis-embodied logic remains always already incomplete. The *Science of Logic* requires the externalization of its internal movement. “Systematically, it must be followed by a Philosophy of Nature (“pure thought” in its externalization) and a Philosophy of Spirit (the “embodiment” of “pure thought” within the concrete medium of human psychological, cultural, and historical existence).”⁵²⁹ Likewise for Moltmann, there is a reason to practice a speculative eschatology, the consideration of the Kingdom of God in all fullness – the completion of God’s creative *telos*. This speculative enterprise cannot theologically stand alone, however, but must be brought to the world in which God seeks to be made known.

Eschatology and Systemic (In)Breaking

In order to productively bring together speculative eschatology with political theology, Moltmann had to overcome “a strongly entrenched ambiguity and ambivalence in Hegel’s philosophy... [in] describing the End, or ‘completion’ of history.”⁵³⁰ Even if one accepts that Hegel explicitly did believe in the possibility of the logical end to history (of the concept), there remains little explicit discussion of if/how empirical history itself

⁵²⁸ E.g., for an interesting discussion which explores Hegel’s thought through the interplay of Fukuyama and Marx see, Dun Zhang, “‘The End of History’ and the Fate of the Philosophy of History,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, vol. 5, no. 4 (December, 2010):631-651, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.iliff.idm.oclc.org/stable/40981123>.

⁵²⁹ *On Giving Hegel His Due*, 332.

⁵³⁰ Daniel Berthold-Bond, “Hegel’s Eschatological Vision: Does History Have a Future?” *History and Theory* 27, no. 1 (Feb., 1988), 14.

might come to an end.⁵³¹ A Moltmannian theology is faced with the same conundrum. Moltmann has repeatedly pointed to a particular theological *telos* as the end toward which history approaches into the present. This *telos* is anything but static, but as future breaks into every present and re-shapes that present in terms of the future toward which it hopes. “In effective hope man does not flee from the unbearable pressure of the present into a consoling, better future, but draws the other, human future into his present, and lives already by it.”⁵³² Thus, while holding a dialectical understanding of the transformative transience of the present, Moltmann understood that this movement was not merely evolutionary, but was characterized by the inbreaking of genuine novelty. Here, Moltmann broke from Hegel, for within Hegel’s system there can explicitly be no place for an inbreaking from without. So long as the system of logic is or can be brought to a close, further novelty could only be an appearance.⁵³³ The finality of logic does not preclude further development of *Geist* in its immanence, but finally sets the definition of the *telos* toward which *Geist* reaches. Julian Young described that, in Hegel’s thought, “One must

⁵³¹ Although she approaches the question differently, asking about ‘the future of Hegel’ rather than ‘the history of Hegel’, Catherine Malabou offered a fascinating insight into how one might conceive of the openness of Hegel’s system. She described ‘interruptions’ that are evident in “the self-formation of time itself.” She continued, “To begin with the idea of such interruptions invites a discourse not content to argue either for the unity of the logical or the chronological genesis, but rather trying to locate their common origin within the speculative moment. Such a discourse... is beholden to the very thing it is trying to describe: that speculative suppleness which is neither passion nor passivity, but plasticity,” which is to say, not concrete but connected. Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During (New York: Routledge, 2005), 20.

⁵³² Jürgen Moltmann, *Man*, John Sturdy, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 116.

⁵³³ John Burbidge argued, to the contrary, that genuine novelty is an essential characteristic to maintaining the systematicity of Hegel’s system. Thinking in terms of ‘event’, before moving on to historical and scientific examples, all of which remove Hegel from the merely internal, Burbidge argued, “To decipher what is significant about that event, we dare not ignore the novelty that the action achieves. It is unique both in terms of the specific setting in which it takes place *and* in terms of its decisive initiative. What makes the action significant for history, therefore, is its unique particularity.” John W. Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 10.

think of oneself as swimming in an inexorable, ‘dialectical’ current in which something like perfect ‘rationality’ and unity is slowly coming into being.”⁵³⁴ The unity of a perfect ‘rationality’ would seem to be the end of the dialectical process through which it came to be. Even while celebrating this sort of progressive dialecticism as a driving force of history, Moltmann has not wholesale accepted that there is a direct connection between dialectical becoming and the novelty of *creatio nova*.⁵³⁵

On this point Moltmann well understands that this represents a break from Hegel. Even if one rejects, as described previously, that Hegel claimed a definitive ‘end of history’, there is an unmistakable element of completion to Hegel’s thought. Hegel believed, at least, that philosophy makes sense from the Absolute looking backward. What might once have appeared as chaos, in looking backward can be shown to be structured and meaningful development. Moltmann’s break, here, appears to be subtle. Moltmann agreed that the end (understood as *telos* rather than in chronological terms) sheds light on the negativities of the present, but then took it one step further to say that even the negativities of the present are formed by the teleological end. Moltmann retained something of Hegel’s processual thinking, but rejected that this process was unidirectional. For Moltmann, the end flows into the present just as the present flows into the end. “This

⁵³⁴ Julian P. Young, “On Compelling Chance to Dance in Star-Rounds: Nietzsche, History, and Hegel,” in *Nietzsche Studies*, no. 6 (Autumn 1993): 69, accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20717588>.

⁵³⁵ Lisa Sideris made an interesting observation about the inconsistencies in Moltmann’s approach to the idea of *creatio nova* as it relates to the physicality of dialectical becoming. Looking at biological evolution, “[Moltmann’s] uncertainty about how, if at all, natural selection affects evolution is apparent in his claim that God’s indwelling spirit ‘drives out’ struggle and strife. Natural selection becomes superfluous in this account.” Lisa H. Sideris, *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 102.

future of God among men and the whole creation becomes present in the mode in which the future gains power over the present in promise and experienced hope and decides what will become of the given actuality.”⁵³⁶

The Owl of Minerva may spread her wings at night, but she is not temporally bound to remain there. For Moltmann, this is the Christian hope. “[Hope] does not remain in the suspension of indecisiveness... it recognizes the beginning in the end.”⁵³⁷ Despite this subtle shift away from Hegel’s completion, Moltmann still sees Hegel’s thought at play. Referring to Ernst Bloch’s ‘Marxist Humanism’ (also described by Moltmann as ‘Esoteric Marxism’),⁵³⁸ Moltmann described the possibility of hope even within Hegel’s seemingly closed system,

[The dialectical process allows for] real possibility and hope...It grasps the negative in the counter move of being... In this dialectical process, nothingness itself – ‘the enormous power of the negative’ (Hegel) – is ontologized into ‘not-yet.’ Only as not-yet-being can it be informed with future new being. In not-yet-being, active hope can attain to something productive.⁵³⁹

Even so, this remains the point of Moltmann’s shift, for he recognizes that neither Hegel nor Bloch can allow for something like a revelatory inbreaking of God’s promised future.

This power is not identical with the power of present reality or of the future’s open possibility. It is believed and hoped in at that precise point where people come face to face with the negative. The gravity of the

⁵³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 40.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵³⁸ Moltmann compared his theology of hope to Bloch’s philosophy of hope, “We clarified our differences once in this way: In *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch speaks of transcending, but without transcendence; in *Theology of Hope I* speak of transcending with transcendence.” G. McLeod Bryan, ed. *Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship: Jürgen Moltmann and Others* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 10.

⁵³⁹ *The Experiment Hope*, 34.

negative and the deadliness of death need not be made harmless in order to activate the world-transforming power of Christian hope.⁵⁴⁰

Moltmann's eschatology, demonstrating both an Hegelian influence and a subtle shift away from Hegel, demonstrates the 'strongly entrenched ambiguity' cited previously. Such ambiguity is evident even as early as *Theology of Hope* where Moltmann declared, "The theologian is not concerned merely to supply a different *interpretation* of the world, of history and of human nature, but to *transform* them in expectation of a divine transformation."⁵⁴¹ One sees ambiguity in the political concern for transformation as expectation, not as a primary concern in its own right. For this reason, Moltmann's works which are intended to be distinctive practices of theological ethics have been criticized for "a high level of abstraction" which "offer few concrete suggestions" regarding how theology can be informative to the larger world.⁵⁴² Put more bluntly, "There is not any correspondence between the statements of eschatology and the present reality."⁵⁴³ Yet, Moltmann was adamant,

In the medium of hope our theological concepts become not judgments which nail reality down to what it is, but anticipations which show reality its prospects and its future possibilities... They do not limp after reality and gaze on it with the night eyes of Minerva's owl, but they illuminate reality by displaying its future.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁴¹ *Theology of Hope*, 85.

⁵⁴² David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998), 42-43.

⁵⁴³ Siu-Kwong Tang, "God's History in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1994), 287.

⁵⁴⁴ *Theology of Hope*, 35-36.

This is the ambiguity in Moltmann's eschatology: Eschatological concepts show the world what it could be, or perhaps will be, but they point only towards God's final consummation of such possibilities, with no requirement that they themselves affect such consummation.⁵⁴⁵

To move forward with Moltmann's conception of history, two interlocking concepts must be first explored: future and history. One reason for the, at least, seeming ambiguity in Moltmann's eschatology is that he distinguishes between two distinct conceptualities of future. The first, *futurum*, which he described as linear time "develops out of the past and present, inasmuch as these hold within themselves the potentiality of becoming and are 'pregnant with future'. Only that can become which is already implicit or dormant in being, and is heralded in the trends and latencies of the historical process."⁵⁴⁶ This conception of history, as a linear movement into the future, is consistent with the Hegelian notion that in the dialectical process sublation occurs reflexively from within that which is being sublated.⁵⁴⁷ Sublation is not an inbreaking from without, but a development from within.⁵⁴⁸ Moltmann described of *futurum*, "If future is her eternal process of

⁵⁴⁵ Sarah Morice-Brubaker sees a parallel ambiguity in Moltmann's eschatology. "It seems clear that Moltmann has deliberately included hedges against his conclusion: the 'overspill' that points to God's futurity, the eschatological horizon for revelation, the insistence that God gives history its end. These hedges do, I think, mitigate against the conclusion that God is exhaustively subject to the historical horizon in every sense. And yet, there are hedges against the hedges...It does seem as though God needs the nihil and negativities of history in order for God's self-revelation – which, again, is not something other than God's very identity – to occur." Moris-Brubaker, 75.

⁵⁴⁶ *Coming of God*, 25. Joseph Bracken described *futurum* as "simply the prolongation of the past and present into the future; what happened in the past and what is happening at present will presumably determine what will happen in the future." Joseph A. Bracken, "Intersubjectivity and the Coming of God," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 83, no. 3 (July, 2003): 385.

⁵⁴⁷ "Sublation is (strictly speaking) not an *external determination* of one moment operating on another, but an *internal determination* from within a given moment operating on itself." Palm, 56.

becoming, past is her eternal process of dying... In the process of the ever-recurring 'die and become', the times are equal."⁵⁴⁹ Such a conception of history, for Moltmann, cannot be eschatologically complete, for, so long as future is tied to the past, there can be no possibility of novelty.⁵⁵⁰

The second conceptuality of the future, *adventus*, makes philosophically possible the inbreaking of novelty into the extant, law-like regularities of the world. One of the primary ways by which Moltmann differentiates *futurum* and *adventus* is in terms of directionality. "*Futurum*, or its equivalents, is used for what *will be*; *adventus*, or its cognates, for that which *is coming*."⁵⁵¹ *Adventus*, then, describes a novelty which *is coming*, not strictly a *telos* toward which history is moving. This shift of directionality thereby discounts the possibility of understanding time as decidedly linear. Yet, rather than entirely do away with the apparent linearity of time, Moltmann describes *adventus* in terms of two different concepts of the future: the phenomenal and the transcendental. The phenomenal level, simply, is linear time. We experience time in a linear fashion, as past, present, and future. "But on the transcendental level we then presuppose the future as the

⁵⁴⁸ "Thinking conducts itself essentially so as to raise itself above the natural, sensible, and argumentative consciousness into its own unadulterated element; and it gives itself initially a self-distancing *negative relationship* to this beginning." *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §12.

⁵⁴⁹ *Coming of God*, 25. G.R.G. Mure described Hegel's understanding of history in much the same way, "Certainly time is 'vanishingness,' and all that is finite must perish. But the idea of time reaching back and forward endlessly from the present is a mere *Vorstellung* in which reflective thought at once finds contradiction... time without change to measure has no meaning." G.R.G. Mure, "Hegel: How, and How Far, is Philosophy Possible?", in *Beyond Epistemology: New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. F.G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 23.

⁵⁵⁰ "Because what is future is already latent in the tendencies of process, these tendencies cannot, either, bring anything astonishingly new. In this concept of time, the future enjoys no primacy, there is no category *novum*, and really no 'principle of hope' either." *Coming of God*, 25.

⁵⁵¹ *God in Creation*, 132-133.

necessary condition if time is to be a possibility at all. The future as God's power in time must then be understood as the source of time."⁵⁵² Moltmann shows a decided preference for conceiving of the future in terms of *adventus* because it represents the possibility of *novum*, something entirely new breaking into the world. Of *novum*, Moltmann described,

It is not simply the old in new form. It is also a new creation. This is why *barah* is used – the word employed exclusively for the divine creation. *Creatio ex vetere* – creation out of the old – stands in analogy to *creatio ex nihilo* – creation out of nothing; for it is *creatio nova*, a new creation.⁵⁵³

Here, I agree with Bracken's criticism that,

What appears to be missing from Moltmann's presentation is a deeper philosophical understanding of the relationship between time and eternity whereby God can 'come' to human beings out of the future and offer them hope for something new and different in their lives.⁵⁵⁴

Eschatological ambiguity becomes more evident when the linearity of time is shown to, at best, be momentary, and, at worst, an illusion made possible by the future which is to come. When Moltmann ties the future as *adventus* to the idea of *creatio originalis*, but does so without the complex understanding of the inherent negativity (i.e. God's *zimsum*) of that creation, *creatio nova* turns out to be different in kind from the *creatio originalis* to which it is supposed to equate. Indeed, even the notion of God's movement is distinctly opposite in Moltmann's own descriptions. In the *zimsum* of *creatio originalis*, God withdraws internally, an act of self-negation. In the *novum* of *creatio nova*, God enters, or perhaps re-

⁵⁵² *Coming of God*, 26.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28. Moltmann frequently pointed to the Hebrew *barah* to describe the importance of *creatio nova* being understood in terms of *creatio ex nihilo*. See, e.g., Jürgen Moltmann, "Die Kategorie *Novum* in der christlichen Theologie," in *Ernst Bloch zu Ehren*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 243-263.

⁵⁵⁴ Bracken, 382.

enters, the space of God-forsakenness, a negation of the negation seen in *creatio originalis*. While such a philosophical move might make dialectical sense, Moltmann explicitly breaks from a notion of a Hegelian dialectic on just this point. He said unequivocally, “God’s being is in his coming, not in his becoming.”⁵⁵⁵ Yet, he also described God in terms that sound very much like ‘becoming’, “God’s future is not that he will be as he was and is, but that he is on the move... The coming of God means the coming of a being that no longer dies.”⁵⁵⁶ This again looks very much like the negation of a negation, or dialectical becoming.⁵⁵⁷

By transforming the language of ‘becoming’ to ‘coming’ Moltmann changes the directionality of divine movement, but also loses the Hegelian grounding upon which much of his philosophy of history has been built. This reversed eschatology, of the future making possible the present, does not correspond to God’s self-restriction in *creatio originalis* if the *novum* of *creatio nova* is going to be imposed onto the world without the possibility of rejection. The pathetic God of *creatio originalis* would simply choose an ahistorical life of apathy, contrary to the earlier description of how God’s intertrinitarian love serves as a model for God’s inherent relationality with that which has been created. By describing creation through *zimsum* Moltmann made clear that God’s coexistence within the world was one of *perichoresis*: a mutuality of indwelling that stands opposed to forceful

⁵⁵⁵ *Coming of God*, 23.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Negation of negation’ is a phrase which Moltmann turns to with some frequency. See *Theology of Hope*, 171 and 211; *Coming of God*, 38; and *God in Creation*, 92.

‘relationality’.⁵⁵⁸ When God’s (re)entry into created history appears to be forceful penetration rather than the mutual embrace of love, then eschatology immediately breaks from the doctrine of creation. Human history becomes illusory, merely the phenomenal level of a grander transcendental reality, and thus creation is entirely separated from the possibility of having any participatory relation to God’s eschatological *novum*.⁵⁵⁹ Bauckham understood that this is because creation “has no immanent possibility of transcending its own tendency towards nothingness.”⁵⁶⁰ As Moltmann describes this impossibility, “It is impossible to anticipate the end of history under the conditions of history... It is impossible under the conditions of estrangement and as one who himself is estranged to anticipate the home of true humanity...”⁵⁶¹ Yet, he likewise argued that eschatological hope should provide “not existential interpretation, but revolutionary realization of freedom within present situation.”⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ “The concept of perichoresis asserts that two or more entities can occupy the same ‘space’ at the same time without domination, subordination, or displacement. In perichoresis, God relates to creation gently from inside, not harshly and externally... The doctrine of perichoresis assures us that God can indwell creation without destroying, dominating, or displacing it.” Highfield, 61.

⁵⁵⁹ Bracken astutely pointed this out, “[God] is the transcendent source of the possibilities whereby something new and different can come into existence. But what Moltmann seems to overlook here is that the creature, for example, a human being in a given moment of consciousness, must say yet to this possibility thus given to it by God. Nothing new will happen unless the creature cooperates with God in bringing something new into existence. Accordingly, not only God but all creatures capable of responding to divine grace are the creative source (*Quelle*) of time in the first place.” Bracken, 385.

⁵⁶⁰ Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987), 42.

⁵⁶¹ Jürgen Moltmann, “Theology as Eschatology,” in *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology*, ed. F. Herzog (New York: Herder and Herden, 1979), 48. The move from ‘history’ to ‘estrangement’ is intended to direct the reader specifically to Marx, although Hegel certainly still lies in the background. For background on both see, Louis Dupré, “Hegel’s Concept of Alienation and Marx’s Re-Interpretation of It,” *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 7 (1972): 217-236.

⁵⁶² *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, 95.

The bifurcation of future as *adventus* into phenomenal and transcendental also thereby bifurcates Moltmann's eschatological project. As political theology, Moltmann has often claimed the importance of revolutionary protest against the 'phenomenal' status quo, yet, he also seems to be arguing that irrespective of these actions of phenomenal protestation the transcendental reality of God's eschatological perfecting action will come to the world. Thus, even if one can argue for the value of Moltmann's political theology apart from eschatology, which I believe one can, that these politics no longer derive from eschatology runs contrary to Moltmann's stated intentions. Even within this ambiguity, Moltmann still points toward Hegel even while playing loosely with the terms. "It is not permissible for faith to develop society's future in an evolutionary way. It must develop it dialectically and in representation for those who have become, and are going to become, the victims of previous and present evolution."⁵⁶³

At this point, where Moltmann's eschatological future stands at odds with Hegel's dialectic of history, the ethical possibilities which he envisions are much weaker than in the bulk of his political theology which is only implicitly eschatological. So long as Moltmann separates in practice *creatio nova* from dialectical history,⁵⁶⁴ "It is not that a progressive development issues in the kingdom of God's glory. Rather the kingdom is

⁵⁶³ *Future of Creation*, 57. Either mis-understanding or demonstrating an ambivalence toward both the dialectical and the evolutionary process, Moltmann continued, "The future for which the Christian faith hopes does not begin 'at the top', with the spearheads of evolution and in the advanced societies but – as we can see from the crucified Jesus – 'below', among those who are without a future and without hope, the victims of world history."

⁵⁶⁴ This distinction is important because it is a way by which "Moltmann was able to differentiate his project from [an eschatological orientation which could easily revert to a false trust in optimistic progress] by highlighting Christ's role throughout." Daniel Castelo, "Reclaiming the Future," in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology*, 205.

anticipated within this world from which evil, suffering and death have not yet disappeared.”⁵⁶⁵ As anticipation, this in-breaking of the new is ahistorical. No longer can Moltmann speak of the future which is always already potential in the development of the present, for whatever the future actually is, it remains external to the world of the present.⁵⁶⁶

This move for Moltmann is entirely understandable insofar as he has remained intentionally bound to a confessional Christian community that has historically demonstrated a great deal of unease any time the ultimate omnipotence of God is questioned. In this way, Moltmann remains decidedly reformed.⁵⁶⁷ Moltmann’s reading list holds so much breadth that it is often easy to gloss over this heritage and its continuing influence. His doctoral dissertation, published as *Prädestination und Perseveranz: Geschichte und Bedeutung der reformierten Lehre “de perseverantia sanctorum,”* shows this heritage clearly. Very few public intellectuals would want their earliest work to be definitive of the movements of a long career. Certainly this is true for Moltmann, as this

⁵⁶⁵ Bauckham, 197. Moltmann explicitly contrasted his eschatology of *adventus* with what he saw to be two problematic trends in eschatological theology: the transposition of eschatology into time – particularly evidenced by the ‘salvation-history’ theology of Oscar Cullmann, and the transposition of eschatology into eternity – evidenced particularly by Barth’s *nunc aeternum* and in Bultmann’s kerygmatic existentialism. See *Coming of God* 18.

⁵⁶⁶ Sideris continued her critique of Moltmann along these same lines. “He has neither broken the spell of a Cartesian worldview nor offered in its place a viable alternative that draws from modern biological concepts and theories. Processes of evolution such as competition, predation, and extinction are virtually non-existent in this account, aside from some vague references to suffering and struggle, which are themselves assumed to be only temporary conditions that will ultimately be banished.” Sideris, 102.

⁵⁶⁷ Of course, what it means to be ‘reformed’ is not entirely clear. John W. Cooper argued that, “Although [Moltmann] began as a Reformed theologian, he sides with Christian panentheism on virtually every issue over which it differs from Augustinian-Reformed theology.” The distinction between Augustinian-Reformed and ‘Christian panentheist’ seems contrived, for the two are not mutually exclusive. Yet, it is certainly the case that Moltmann’s theology is too broad and creative to be pinned down as exclusively Lutheran, Calvinist, Augustinian, or defined by any other major heritage of the reformation.

work has never been translated into English. Yet, a scholar's early work can give a sense of the place from which their thought has originated.

For Moltmann, that the transcendence of God – and therefore the accompanying eschatology from without – serves a pivotal place, even while still proclaiming the importance of God's immanence, is clear.

*Die perseveranz des Glaubens ist ganz und gar angewiesen auf die transzendente Treue Gottes, die als transzendenten Ursprung aller Ereignisse auch geschichtliche Kontinuität der Ereignisse untereinander schafft auf ein bestimmtes telos hin, denn es ist Gottes Treue, die den geschichtlichen Zusammengang von Verheissung und Erfüllung, von Vorsatz und Vollendung schafft.*⁵⁶⁸

That God's faithfulness is here described primarily by the term 'transcendent' is interesting given the later focus that Moltmann would put on the idea of promise. If faithfulness is, indeed, transcendent, then one might rightly ask what ramifications such promise could have for the physical world. At least at this early point in his career, Moltmann seems to have argued that the root of faith in God's promises is the transcendent omnipotence of God, rather than God's demonstrable faithfulness in empirical Christian history.⁵⁶⁹

An added layer of difficulty is seen in the fact that this sort of faith in the transcendence of God cannot easily be incorporated in a theology which takes seriously the

⁵⁶⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Prädestination und Perseveranz: Geschichte und Bedeutung der reformierten Lehre "de perseverantia sanctorum"* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1961), 182. The perseverance of faith is entirely dependent on the transcendent faithfulness of God, which, as the transcendental origin of all history, also creates the historical continuity of the events among a particular telos, for it is God's faithfulness to the historical interrelatedness of promise and fulfillment, of intent and perfection. Even this early Moltmann had already made the connection of *adventus* as 'the transcendental origin of all history'

⁵⁶⁹ Yet, through his more mature theology, Moltmann has been critiqued for failing to maintain an adequate conception of God's transcendence. E.g., "Inevitably, [Moltmann's] view of divine transcendence is less than adequate. In overemphasizing divine immanence, Moltmann fails to maintain a creative balance between divine transcendence and immanence." Chan Ho Park, *Transcendence and Spatiality of the Triune Creator* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 108.

social nature of God's trinitarian be(com)ing. Moreover, placing faith intentionally in the transcendence of God, rather than in the history of God's relationship with creation and/or with God's people specifically, seems at odds with the strong emphasis that Moltmann has given to the pathos of God's self-limitation in the act of creation. If faith is found in God's transcendence, why ought theology to use ideas like *zimsum* to try to describe God's loving refusal to dominate that which has been created? The difficulty in thinking through Moltmann's advent eschatology, particularly insofar as he relates it directly to the doctrine of creation more generally, is that there exists an apparent ambiguity in the space between where Moltmann's doctrine of creation seems to be leading and where he feels constrained by the orthodoxies of historical Christian theology.⁵⁷⁰ Yet, insofar as eschatology represents something like 'the end of history',⁵⁷¹ by allowing that an eschaton of ultimate redemption, as foretold by faith in the promises of a transcendent God, is guaranteed, Moltmann allows a complete break with the progression of theological history which strives to enact redemption in the world.⁵⁷² There simply can be no eschatological stakes

⁵⁷⁰ Kurt Anders Richardson helpfully described Moltmann within the trajectory of Christian theologians, "Moltmann has been, from the beginning of his career, what for our purposes here is a 'modern orthodox' theologian." Continuing in footnote, Richardson defined 'modern orthodoxy', "Modern orthodoxy seeks to avoid all reductionism of doctrine and to restate classic accounts of the epistemology of revelation." Kurt Anders Richardson, "Moltmann's Communitarian Trinity," in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology*, 18. Although an over-simplified description, this seems to be a fair categorization of Moltmann's traditional rootedness.

⁵⁷¹ Moltmann was careful to distance his own thought from what he described as "modern post-historic philosophers [who are] secular heirs to the theology of salvation-history." Of these philosophers he claimed, "[They] expect too much of their 'end of history'. It is illogical to assume that the institutions, organizations, and bureaucracies which historical people create are not themselves historical." *Coming of God*, 224, 226. Yet, because Moltmann conceives of time as created, he also claimed, "The eschatological moment itself must be thought of, beyond the end and consummation of history, as the consummation of creation-in-the-beginning and therefore as the exit from time into eternity." *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵⁷² Michael Burdett, referring specifically to *Theology of Hope*, asked this question of Moltmann, "The looming question here, then, is how Christ's future is also our future. Or, better, does our striving and creativity in history have any lasting value in Christ's future?" Michael S. Burdett, *Eschatology and the*

so long as universal redemption is guaranteed.⁵⁷³ Yet, even while struggling to describe God's inbreaking into history as something entirely novel, Moltmann has also laid claim to an eschatological openness. "The trinitarian history of the kingdom of God is an eschatologically open history *now*."⁵⁷⁴

Moltmann is a careful enough thinker that he must be fully aware of the difficulties that are here encountered. He has tried to equally hold both that, "God's future acts stand in complete discontinuity to previous history,"⁵⁷⁵ and that, "This world is no 'waiting room for the kingdom of God', Though this world is not yet the kingdom of God itself, it is the battleground and the construction site for the kingdom."⁵⁷⁶ In both cases, Moltmann argued, "God will remain faithful to his creative resolve even if the world he has created founders on its own wickedness. God's will for life is greater than his will for judgment."⁵⁷⁷ The Noahic flood notwithstanding, this is the hope upon which Moltmann's eschatology lives.

Technological Future (New York: Routledge, 2015), 230. Eric Trozzo described this in terms of a 'creep' rather than a 'break'. "The promise is made by the God who will be all in all at the end of time, and so a logic of fulfillment creeps into the open-endedness through his eschatological doctrine of God." Eric J. Trozzo, *Rupturing Eschatology: Divine Glory and the Silence of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 104.

⁵⁷³ This would not, in any way, discount the continued importance of ethics and political theology, for even if redemption is guaranteed, the Christian would still hold a profound responsibility, at minimum, to care for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the immigrant. Moltmann described the importance of political theology as "The theological reflection of Christians who for the sake of their consciences suffer in the midst of the public misery of society and struggle against this misery." *The Experiment Hope*, 101.

⁵⁷⁴ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 95.

⁵⁷⁵ *The Coming of God*, 227.

⁵⁷⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 109.

⁵⁷⁷ *The Coming of God*, 229.

Moving forward, this is a difficulty which needs to be addressed. Because of the ambiguity in Moltmann's eschatology, and the potential break which it represents from the Hegelian system from which he so often looses his theological arrows,⁵⁷⁸ the disjuncting movement reverberates beyond just eschatology *in se* back into the entirety of the theology from which this eschatology breaks. If one were to simply ignore this eschatological break, Moltmann's work still stands as a valuable political theology. There is much to be gleaned from Moltmann, and a great many theological insights that are unique and worthwhile. Yet, because of the emphasis that Moltmann has consistently placed on the eschatological aspects of theology, there remains substantial room upon which to continue the work that Moltmann has initiated. One might even see that this is a dialectical negation which Moltmann himself has initiated. It is this task to which the final chapter of this dissertation will be dedicated.

⁵⁷⁸ Although, it is worth remembering that there also exists ambiguity in Hegel's own notions of 'the end'.

CHAPTER 5: A CREATIVE COMMUNITY OF HOPE

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”⁵⁷⁹ – Nick Carraway

For many years Moltmann’s theology has struck me as unendingly practical: political, but approachable to the sorts of evangelical Christianity in which my own story has for so long been written.⁵⁸⁰ More than just approachable, Moltmann’s work has seemed important.⁵⁸¹ It speaks wisdom into a community that desperately needs wisdom, and

⁵⁷⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 180.

⁵⁸⁰ The term ‘evangelical’ is notoriously difficult to nail down. The National Association of Evangelicals, even, does not have a concise definition, but rather general lines of belief that tend to identify Evangelicals. Writing for *The Atlantic*, Jonathan Merritt described Evangelicalism this way, “To the pollster, it is a sociological term. To the pastor it is a denominational or doctrinal term. And to the politician it is a synonym for a white Christian Republican.” Jonathan Merritt, “Defining ‘Evangelical’,” in *The Atlantic*, December 7, 2015, accessed August 1, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/evangelical-christian/418236/>. The term ‘Evangelical’ can be all these things and more. Yet, no single set of political ideals, cultural indicators, or doctrinal beliefs could adequately incorporate the term. Rather, for our purposes, I use the term ‘Evangelical’ primarily to describe, not to define, those who would self-identify as such. This term is intentionally broad in order to capture a wide swath of American Christianity who find some historical or present identity therein. Even within this self-identified group, however, one can find a wide variety of theologies from those expounded by Robert Jeffress and Tony Perkins to others by Shane Claiborne and Jim Wallis. My ecclesial heritage lies in the Church of the Nazarene, a methodist adjacent (I often use the term ‘methodish’) denomination founded at the turn of the 20th century. The Church of the Nazarene is a proudly international denomination, but within its membership in the United States is overwhelmingly white and heavily politically conservative. See, Pew Research Center, “Members of the Church of the Nazarene,” accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/church-of-the-nazarene/>. Although not exclusively so, it is this, my ‘family’, about whom I think when I hear the term ‘evangelical’ in its common usage. Of course, I do recognize that there are many evangelicals and evangelical groups that demonstrate different demographics and political leanings. E.g., an excellent history of progressive evangelicalism can be found in David R. Swartz, *The Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). For a detailed study of the varieties of evangelicalism see Lydia Bean, *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁵⁸¹ I see in Moltmann’s work tools that can be helpful guides to those all across the theological spectrum. One of the major values that Moltmann continues to add to theological conversation is a broad and critical

comes to that community in a form that feels familiar enough to be let in. This familiarity is a double-edged sword. There are undoubtedly times in which familiarity borders on complicity. Mary Daly called out Moltmann in particular when she said, “Irrelevance is conspicuous in the major works of ‘theologians of hope’.”⁵⁸² Daly was not opposed to hope theology in general, but decried the sort of theologies which were written “without any specific acknowledgement of or application to the problem of sexism or other specific forms of injustice.”⁵⁸³ Yet, Daly was not entirely critical of Moltmann or his project, and indeed in this very same work cited him positively several times.⁵⁸⁴ This is the double-edged sword. Moltmann can, for some, seem harmless. This allows him a privileged place of authority in which to speak truth to power. Yet, simultaneously, he is given this privileged position because he is presented as less ‘radical’ than somebody like Mary Daly.⁵⁸⁵

engagement with the thinkers of modernity who have deeply shaped the nature of the conversation that continues to the present. The importance of this continued engagement was described by Ted Vial, “Full-blown modern concepts of religion and race,” among others, I would add, “rest on post-Enlightenment ideas about culture, history, and human nature. All of the basic modern conceptual categories of identity rest on a fundamental shift in theological anthropology (a shift in the sense of what it means to be human). Our modern sense of what it means to be fully human is based on a specific concept of agency – the ability to effect actions in history.” Theodore Vial, *Modern Religion, Modern Race* (New York: Oxford University, 2016), 12. Although Vial’s historical study focuses primarily on Schleiermacher, Herder, and Müller, I would also include Hegel’s intentionally post-Kantian philosophy as an important harbinger of the categories that continue to structure evangelical theological thought.

⁵⁸² Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 20.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁴ E.g., *Ibid.*, 26, 167.

⁵⁸⁵ Erskine described the difficulty of dedicating so much time to a theologian like Moltmann. Looking directly at an essay in which Moltmann made a plea to white Christians “to surrender their racist identity... and to dismantle racism [through] a ‘redistribution of power’ from the powerful to the powerless,” Erskine said, “Moltmann would benefit greatly from a rereading of black and womanist theologies as he seeks to posit ways to dismantle racism in the White world. His analysis, while helpful, is a little naïve as he has not talked about the way in which the racism embedded in institutions provides structures for the practice of

Despite being married to an accomplished feminist theologian, Moltmann was at times slow to acknowledge the ways in which he could utilize his privileged position in positive ways. Yet, neither was he entirely oblivious. Particularly as he has aged Moltmann has been more likely to offer the sort of explicit critique that Daly wanted from the start. With specific reference to theological sexism Moltmann said, “Masculine sexism is more than just a group phenomenon. It is also a means of psychological warfare, a war waged by dominant men against the women who have to be dominated.”⁵⁸⁶ This sort of explicit denunciation has a place throughout Moltmann’s history, but has rarely been his primary mode of address.⁵⁸⁷

Yet, when one digs beneath the gloss, Moltmann also exists as a figure on the brink of revolution. My community needs to be influenced by other theologians of Moltmann’s generation – e.g. Leonardo Boff, James Cone, and Mary Daly, among a multitude of others – each of which deserves to have the same level of influence as even a great thinker like Moltmann.⁵⁸⁸ Yet, because of accidents of birth and lineage, each of these thinkers is

racism. It is difficult to travel on one set of tracks...” Noel Leo Erskine, *Black Theology and Pedagogy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 128.

⁵⁸⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 277.

⁵⁸⁷ Yet, Catherine Keller looked to Moltmann as an important voice to elevate feminist theology. “It goes without saying, I hope, that this relationist move [of Moltmann’s] in theology, especially with its panentheist depth, resonates profoundly with feminist theology. Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth Johnson, Sallie McFague, Carter Heyward, Rita Nakashima Brock – in short, a critical mass of those Christian feminists who are willing to construct metaphors of the divine do so out of their analysis of subjectivity as co-constituted by its relations: for good or ill, I become part of you as you become part of me.” Catherine Keller, “The Theology of Moltmann, Feminism, and the Future,” in *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, eds. Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, Thomas Kucharz (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 147.

⁵⁸⁸ This points, again, to the fragile relationship between ecclesial/’personal’ theology and academic theology. Generally speaking, I would not expect the common parishioner to have read or have any interest in reading much from Moltmann or Rosemary Radford Ruether. Yet, I also see a role of academic theology

disrespected in ways that Moltmann is not. I would never recommend Moltmann in exclusivity of other such thinkers, but because he already has such an audience, his work remains valuable. The simmering revolution beneath the surface of Moltmann's work should be embraced as a way to incorporate many other voices into the grand theological dialogue.⁵⁸⁹

Moltmann's work demonstrates that throughout his career he has intended to incorporate an incredibly wide array of voices. It is also clear, however, that even a writer as prolific as Moltmann could never hope to incorporate all of the voices deserving of attention. Whether this exhibits a particular failure of or deficiency in Moltmann's theology, or whether it is merely the result of the inevitable editing of a wide-ranging writer, is really up to the eye of the beholder. The aim of this project is neither to defend nor criticize Moltmann's work as a static whole. At face-value, Moltmann, like any other theologian, has obvious strengths and weaknesses. Yet, Moltmann has nevertheless been an incredibly formative figure for the last half-century of western Christian theology. His work continues to be influential for many theologians, and so also influential for the church and for Christian culture.

At the beginning of this work, it was argued that there is a troubling trend in Christian theology that was given the name, 'insular universalism'. Insular universalism

as the training of a clergy who creatively and intentionally helps to form communities that can be influenced by theologians that they may never read.

⁵⁸⁹ E.g. Robert Beckford has described Moltmann as offering "central ideas" of "the theological underpinnings for a political theology," alongside Jon Sobrino. Robert Beckford, *Dread and Pentecostal: A Political Theology for the Black Church in Britain* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011). Thus, I would hope that Moltmann's work could serve as an introduction to somebody like Beckford for whom it has been valuable.

describes a selfish theology which places notions of comfort and safety before biblical commands for justice, mercy, and righteousness. That Christians feel comfortable using their faith to justify fear, hatred, and complacency is out of sync with the sort of theology which Moltmann has sought to describe, and is fundamentally contrary to the way the church ought to situate itself within the world. Bigotry and prejudice, violence and hatred—these are simply not what Moltmann has called ‘the way of Jesus Christ’. While one can and should look deeply at Moltmann’s theology, as we have already begun to do, Moltmann is not the savior of creation, nor even the savior of theology. The work of theology can never be entirely retrospective.

Alongside a theology which seeks to be forward-looking, philosophy can serve to both undergird and productively undermine the theological task. While both politics and theology had a different starting point from philosophy – indeed, in both cases Hegel believed that the starting point actually was the completed philosophical system – the goals of each practice was fundamentally the same.⁵⁹⁰ “Religion and philosophy coincide in one. In fact philosophy is itself | the service of God, as is religion.”⁵⁹¹ It is not the case that religion and philosophy are one, but rather that they coincide in their intention to understand God and that which God has created. “Each of them, religion as well as philosophy, is the service of God in a way peculiar to it.”⁵⁹² Religion, for Hegel, is neither

⁵⁹⁰ Thom Brooks noted that Hegel understood the *Philosophy of Right* to be read as a continuation of the completed system as described in the *Encyclopedia*. “Hegel never intended his *Philosophy of Right* to stand on its own, but instead it was meant to be read against the backdrop of his larger philosophical system... The *Encyclopedia* outlines Hegel’s philosophy with respect to a large variety of topics, including logic, nature, politics, and religion.” Thom Brooks, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy: A Systematic Reading of the Philosophy of Right* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2013), 13.

⁵⁹¹ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Vol. 1*, 79.

the queen of the sciences nor speculative spiritualism. Rather, building off his own theological formation, Hegel looked to Martin Luther as an example of the proper role that specifically Christian theology could play in the world.⁵⁹³ “What Luther initiated as faith in feeling and in the witness of the spirit, is precisely what spirit, since become more mature, has striven to apprehend in the concept in order to free and so to find itself in the world as it exists to-day.”⁵⁹⁴ This, for Hegel, disallows theology to embrace an emotive free-reign, detached from reason, as the basis for either thought or action. Meaningful theology cannot be built upon “the play of fancy.”⁵⁹⁵ Philosophy, as a guiding hand to religious practice, ties theology specifically to the life of the world.⁵⁹⁶ Theology cannot merely be speculation about the nature of God, but, in-line with Volf’s earlier description, must seek to bring about redemption. “What matters is the relationship of *religion* in human beings to *everything else* in their world view, consciousness, cognition, purposes, and interests.”⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹² *Philosophy of Right*, 13.

⁵⁹³ For a discussion of the varieties of Christian theology that were influential for Hegel see Cyril O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 15-16. O’Regan argued that one must take seriously Hegel’s claims of his own Lutheranism, but that such a self-understanding must be highly qualified. E.g., “The plethora of passages extolling the pneumaticism of Lutheran Protestantism are not easy to ignore, even if it is admitted that Hegel makes claims of knowledge of the divine that go far beyond what Luther thinks possible within the ordinance of Christian faith and places the doctrine of the Trinity at the center of an explication of Christianity in a way Luther’s own texts do not countenance.”

⁵⁹⁴ *Philosophy of Right*, 12.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁹⁶ John Ehrenberg understood this move as a direct response to Kant’s ethical understanding, “Hegel was not willing to leave truth to chance by accepting Kant’s implication that all authentic convictions have equal moral weight. He proposed to develop a metaphysics of absolute knowledge that fused essence and appearance. Freedom is not given by a ‘natural’ structure of the self as Kant had claimed, but is created only in interaction with other individuals.” John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 123.

Moltmann, throughout his career has demonstrated a thorough familiarity with Hegel. Moltmann's work has likewise demonstrated a strong Hegelian foundation, even while evidencing influence from theological peers such as Barth and Pannenberg, from later Hegelians, particularly through the Marxist line, such as Ernst Bloch, and even from philosophical/cultural figures like Goethe, Dostoyevsky, and Camus. To say that Moltmann's theology is Hegelian is accurate but incomplete. As discussed previously, Hegel is not only a background influence to Moltmann's theology, but even more so a tool to utilized. Hegel's own religiosity, as it was, and Hegel's conception of religion more generally, are areas in which Moltmann tried to utilize Hegel in creative ways.

In the previous chapter, it was argued that Moltmann accepted too freely that dialectical history could have a definitive end. For Moltmann, eschatology is often conceived as an imposition of novelty from without rather than a development from within. This novelty, at least in Moltmann's conception, represents a finality that differs from the limited finality put forth by Hegel.⁵⁹⁸ Whereas Hegel claimed a finality of 'the concept', Moltmann's eschatology is universal, an actual end of (temporal) history.⁵⁹⁹ So, while it is true that Moltmann is a careful reader of Hegel, it is not the case that Moltmann's entire project is the theologization of Hegel's system. Moltmann has, at times, evidenced a close

⁵⁹⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Vol. 1*, 90.

⁵⁹⁸ For further reading on the dialectical complexity of Hegel's limits, an excellent introduction can be found in G.R.G. Mure, "Hegel, Luther, and the Owl of Minerva," *Philosophy*, vol. 41, no. 156 (April 1966): 127-139. Mure makes the interesting argument that "finalism would never have snared him had it not been for the solidity of his Lutheran faith," *Ibid.*, 139. Although less explicitly Lutheran, one might make a similar argument regarding Moltmann's reformed Christian heritage.

⁵⁹⁹ But, of course, as end, also therefore a new beginning. As Chan Ho Park described, "Moltmann asserts that the new creation will serve as the cosmic temple. The presence of God which dwells in this cosmic temple is the indwelling of his unmediated and direct glory. This indwelling presence makes heaven and earth new, and is also the really new thing in the new Jerusalem." Park, 118.

reading of particular Hegelian movements, but, at other times, has also generalized Hegel's system to make it function as a utilitarian descriptor of Moltmann's own developing thought. This generalization has opened Moltmann to critiques such as that "Moltmann distinguishes in too facile a fashion between Hegel's understanding of absolute Spirit and Moltmann's own concerns."⁶⁰⁰ Such a critique is informative and warranted if one is looking at Hegel on Hegel's own terms, or if one is looking at Moltmann specifically as an interpreter of Hegel. In either case, Moltmann has clearly taken liberties in his reading of Hegel. Without rejecting the spirit in which such critiques are offered, though, when one understands that Hegel remains one of a large group of arrows in Moltmann's theological quiver, it is perhaps not surprising that Hegel is sent in a direction which he would not have intended. This tactic is, of course, not at all unique to Moltmann. Deleuze celebrated just this sort of philosophical utilitarianism as the proper becoming of thought. "[Nietzsche] compares the thinker to an arrow shot by nature that another thinker picks up where it has fallen so that he can shoot it somewhere else."⁶⁰¹

Maintaining this Deleuzian/Nietzschean metaphor, even while Moltmann has picked up and shot his own Hegelian arrow, what next happens with that arrow is ultimately out of his control. And so, a dissertation such as this would be incomplete without moving away from interpretation into the practice of constructive theology. To fail to make this move would run counter to Moltmann's own example, and would also demonstrate a failure to understand the theological importance of context and situatedness. Yet, the

⁶⁰⁰ *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim*, 242.

⁶⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), ix.

practice of constructive theology never develops *ex nihilo*. Every theological speech-act arrives mid-conversation, arising from the pause in which other conversants inhale before continuing. Theology is, therefore, an interruption. It is also a disruption. It is both an outbreaking and an inbreaking. Theology is speech embodied – an historical communal march.

This particular practice of theology is undertaken intentionally within the lineage of both Moltmann and Hegel. In this way, it is neither unique nor entirely creative. As constructive, the preceding discussions were offered as a propaedeutic – not exhaustive, but a guidepost pointing toward that which is to come. The following theology will build particularly upon the notion of sublation as a powerful historical and theological force.⁶⁰² It will be built upon the doctrine of creation described in the previous chapter, maintaining a deep connection between the doctrines of creation and eschatology, without accepting Moltmann’s premise that ultimately *creatio nova* describes a rejection of the continued development of a sublative system. This theology will be developed as an antidote, at least ideally, to the sorts of dogmatic rigidity that allow and celebrate violence, prejudice, and the subjugation of persons.⁶⁰³ The cornerstone of such theology is the sort of epistemic

⁶⁰² An interesting theological approach to the idea of sublation, or, perhaps more accurately, a sublative approach to the idea of theology, can be found in Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan spoke often of sublation, though occasionally noted that he used the term as tweaked by Rahner. E.g., on the relationship between belief and praxis, Lonergan said, “They will themselves live the Christian life that is the sublation of the whole of human living, and they will know a theology that thematizes the sublation of the whole of human living. In this fashion they will preach what already they practice.” Bernard Lonergan, “Questionnaire on Philosophy: Response,” in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1965-1980*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 361.

⁶⁰³ There are undoubtedly countless other examples of theologies with the same or similar goals. This proposal in no way rejects any previous attempt, but rather joins the chorus of resistance to the many varieties of abuses of Christian theology.

humility described and evidenced by both Moltmann and Hegel at various points, although certainly not entirely throughout, their writings.⁶⁰⁴

Tragic Creation

The Christian doctrine of creation, looking to the early stories of Genesis as inspiration, often understands the world to be, in some sense, tragic. The story often called, “The Fall,” is read as a story of the inbreaking of tragedy into an otherwise perfect world. Sin and death enter into God’s good creation when the forbidden fruit passes the lips of Adam and/or Eve. To the point at which this event occurred, ostensibly, there was neither evil nor pain, only life abundant. Harmony and peace were spread across the land as all of creation lived in perfect symbiosis. In trying to bring together the world as described and the world as encountered, “The Fall” becomes an easy way to gloss over the differences encountered. “The Fall” describes why a world which was created as perfect is now filled with death and pain.⁶⁰⁵ Adam and Eve are convenient scapegoats for explaining the difficulties of the world.⁶⁰⁶ Yet, while convenient, such a reading can also become very

⁶⁰⁴ Likewise, such a cornerstone is not, here, unique. Kevin J. Vanhoozer is among many who have pointed to the importance of seeking humility in theological discourse. “Epistemic humility leads to an abandonment of the epistemology of glory, the project of finding out God through theoretical argumentation or of thinking that one can, through reason, attain a context-free God’s-eye perspective. Intellectual humility means that I, and my whole community, must acknowledge the provisionality of our claims.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 366.

⁶⁰⁵ For an interesting study of a theology of ‘The Fall’ see, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994). The premise of this book is to redefine sin as “the violence of rebellion against creation,” as opposed to “rebellion against God.” Although Suchocki demonstrates some Process commitments that differ from Moltmann’s theological heritage, her relational approach is a natural partner for Moltmann.

⁶⁰⁶ Although I use the term ‘scapegoat’ loosely here, René Girard wrote powerfully about this tendency in Christian theology. See especially, René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory

problematic. For those Christians who reject so-called biblical literalism, and therefore have no theological need to cling to young-earth creationism, the notion of “The Fall” simply does not make easy sense.⁶⁰⁷ If there was, indeed, a “Fall,” at which point in evolutionary history did it take place? It was not at the outset of the formation of the planet, as it appears to be in the Genesis narratives, for billions of years passed before the advent of cognition. While there might be theologically justifiable times and ways to speak about sin and sinfulness outside of a direct connection to cognition, it would demonstrate poor execution on God’s part if non-cognitive beings could so disrupt God’s creation as to render it unrecognizable from God’s initial plan.

Moltmann’s version of the creation story does not conceive of first humans in a way that would allow mimetic blame for the problems of the world. Rather, the tragedy evidenced in the present world is not a substantial change from God’s pre-temporal perfection of creation. Nowhere in Christian scriptures is it claimed that God’s creation was ‘perfect’, merely that God looked at it and saw that it was ‘good’. While there might remain solid theological reasons, pertaining to the traditional attributes of God, to consider the possibility of speaking about a primordial creative perfection, there also remain very good reasons to reject this possibility. Even within the traditional Christian stories of creation, one could make a strong argument against primordial perfection.

(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972). Girard’s work is essential reading in exploring the doctrine of creation as it relates to hamartiology.

⁶⁰⁷ An excellent overview of the difficulties here encountered can be found in William T. Cavanaugh & James K.A. Smith, eds., *Evolution and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2017). Of particular value to this present study are essays by Celia Deane-Drummond, “In Adam All Die? Questions at the Boundary of Niche Construction, Community Evolution, and Original Sin,” and James K.A. Smith, “What Stands on the Fall? A Philosophical Exploration.”

The first biblical creation story seems to posit something other than a traditional understanding of *creatio ex nihilo*.⁶⁰⁸ God's creative activity is not described in terms of construction, but in terms of organization. Creation, in this story, is characterized primarily as a practice of differentiation, not one of unification. As the narrative progresses, the overwhelming oneness of chaos, is differentiated to the point that it ceases to have any significant role in the new world. Walter Brueggemann has described this creative movement in these terms, "Chaos has been tamed and subdued so that God now toys with the raging waters that are no longer a threat to creation."⁶⁰⁹ As the story progresses from the initial movement of the separation of the waters above from the waters below, the process of separation continues. God separated the light from the dark. God separated the waters further so that land could appear. Separation and division, necessary attributes for organization, for that which is not divided requires no organization, are replete throughout this narrative. Within the creative world there exists a great multiplicity which itself is profoundly differentiated from God in the act of creation.⁶¹⁰

That this story need not be read literally is irrelevant to this conversation. Theology does not concern itself with creation because it is of fundamental importance to understand 'the beginning of time'. Rather, creation holds a special place within the theological task because it describes, for the first time, something about the nature of God and of God's

⁶⁰⁸ A recent critical study of *creatio ex nihilo* and alternative theories of creation can be found in Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Theologies of Creation: Creatio ex Nihilo and Its New Rivals* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁶⁰⁹ Walter Brueggemann, "Safer than you Think," in *Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann vol. 2* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 164.

⁶¹⁰ This is to say something different than Kierkegaard or Barth's understanding of God's infinite qualitative distinction, however, insofar as the *telos* of creation is to erase entirely this distinction.

relationship with that which has been created. Theological topics/doctrines such as Trinity, Christology, hamartiology, and even atonement theory ought to be conceived from within a particular understanding of creation. If one were to begin with, say, atonement, as entirely removed from creation, the focus of such a theology would be anthropocentric in an unhelpful way.⁶¹¹ In any theological study, creation grounds humanity within a larger organismic reality.

When the act of creation is conceived as a movement of differentiation, it can be that the world is ‘good’ in-line with the first Genesis narrative, while simultaneously being understood as tragic.⁶¹² Through the divine self-contraction, by allowing the possibility of an Other, God’s original creative activity demonstrates a great wager. This is, in many ways, the opposite of Pascal’s wager. By participating in what Jonas described as, “The continued holding-himself-in,”⁶¹³ God is continually and creatively demonstrating an action of hope. God’s hope, and therefore God’s wager, is for the continuance of life in/for the created world. Seemingly contrary to what has just been stated, Moltmann did say explicitly that “God does not throw dice.”⁶¹⁴ Moltmann’s primary concern, though, was to explain that God’s act of *creatio originalis* is not a capricious act. Rather, Moltmann

⁶¹¹ Indeed, I would argue that feminist critiques of Moltmann’s theology of the cross, like those of Dorothee Sölle and Wohnee Anne Joh cited earlier, point to the ways in which Moltmann’s doctrine of creation serves to sublimate Moltmann’s early *theologia crucis*.

⁶¹² One of the most profound expositors of the interplay between theology and tragedy was Donald MacKinnon. An introductory essay in which he described the importance of linking theology and tragedy can be found in, D.M. MacKinnon, “Theology and Tragedy,” *Religious Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (April, 1967): 163-169. A more detailed account can be found in Donald MacKinnon, *The Problem of Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Here, MacKinnon claimed, “Christianity can provide men with a faith through which they are enabled to hold steadfastly to the significance of the tragic.” *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶¹³ *Mortality and Morality*, 142.

⁶¹⁴ “Is the World Unfinished?,” 406.

wanted his readers to understand that “God in his freedom brings into being a creation which corresponds to him.”⁶¹⁵ God’s creative activities are volitional through and through, and they are characterized by the hope for community in spite of difference. Moltmann made it quite clear that the activity of creation is driven by divine love rather than ontological compulsion. So, even while Moltmann claimed that God does not throw dice, he also believed, at least at some level, that creation holds its very existence within its own hands.

Moltmann claimed that theology and science “have become companions in tribulation, under the pressure of the ecological crisis and the search for the new direction which both must work for, if human beings and nature are to survive at all on this earth.”⁶¹⁶ It is this ‘if’ that seems to be so foundationally important for Moltmann’s thought, but also that which seems to make him so uncomfortable - “If nature is to survive at all.” There are many instances throughout Moltmann’s writings in which he seems adamant that creation, particularly the human part of creation, has an inner capacity to utterly destroy itself. Moltmann, for decades, has spoken out against nuclear proliferation because he sees in this technology the possibility of the ultimate destruction of creation.⁶¹⁷

The question, therefore, should be asked of Moltmann, who is to say that God doesn’t roll dice?⁶¹⁸ Moltmann is in a difficult position. On the one hand, he argued for a

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ *God in Creation*, 34.

⁶¹⁷ See, e.g. the chapter called, “Discipleship of Chris in an Age of Nuclear War,” in *On Human Dignity*. Elsewhere Moltmann claimed of the development of nuclear weapons, “It is a fight without victory, a fight without an end – and that at best.” *Ethics of Hope*, 63.

world which is created through God-forsakenness.⁶¹⁹ On the other hand, he desires to theologially begin with the end. He sees eschatology not as a self-sufficient branch of the theological task, but as the lens through which all of theology is viewed. This would, of course, necessitate some sort of understanding of what ‘the end’ entails. This seems to be the crux of Moltmann’s discomfort, and he has a difficult time explaining eschatological hope in such a way that it does not turn into an eschatological certainty. Hope, by its very nature, can only exist in the face of the unknown. And, Moltmann’s own doctrine of *creatio originalis* is a doctrine of the unknown, one might even say a doctrine of thrown-dice.

By God’s self-withdrawal, by allowing the space for an Other, God has created a world in which life and death, living and dying, lie in the hands of the created. Moreover, so long as Christian theology speaks of God as the source of life this theology must also, alongside Hegel’s discussion of Hamlet, understand that death has lurked from the beginning. Death is not an unnatural happening stemming from the poor decision making of one (or two) people. Indeed, according to the first creation narrative, the absence of life, the primordial *tohu va bohu* is primary to the existence of life *extra Deus*. That which lies

⁶¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson penned a terrific essay which describes many of the challenges and possibilities of a theology of thrown-dice. She concluded, “Could it not be that since the human world is on a continuum with the micro world, only mediated by more complex biological matter, the best way to understand God’s action in the indeterminacy of the natural world is by analogy with how divine initiative relates to human freedom? If so, and an eminently coherent case can be made for this position, then divine perfection is ultimately a perfection of relationality and love rather than of self-sufficiency and control. Consequently, omnipotence unfailingly manifests itself not as coercive ‘power over’ but as sovereign love which empowers.” Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance,” *Theological Studies*, vol. 57, no. 1 (March, 1996): 17.

⁶¹⁹ Catherine Keller criticized Moltmann for failing to see the connection between creation in God-forsakenness and God’s birthing of creation. She asked poignantly, “What is [Moltmann’s] ‘literally God-forsaken space’ but that of the hinted-at divine maternity?” *The Face of the Deep*, 18. Although for different reasons, Pannenberg also criticized Moltmann’s understanding of creation in God-forsakenness as “a materially unfounded mystification of the subject” which lacks a trinitarian basis. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 15.

outside of the source of life is always already looking into the face of death. One might even argue that everything which lies outside of the source of life is always already in a process of perpetual perishing.⁶²⁰ God's wager, and the hope of creation, is that the melancholy and disgust experienced by Hamlet will not consume creation from the inside, as it did with Hamlet. On the contrary, in the face of the grief and nausea, God's wager is that creation hopes to truly experience life in the midst of the ubiquity of death. As such, in the divine gamble of creation God has guaranteed continual suffering. However, this suffering is not evidence of a removed and apathetic God. On the contrary, this suffering, the suffering guaranteed by *zimsum*, is a suffering of mutuality. The act of creation not only guarantees the suffering of creation, but likewise that of Creator. As Jonas said, "God's own destiny, his doing or undoing, is at stake in this universe to whose unknowing dealings he committed his substance, and man has become the eminent repository of this supreme and ever betrayable trust."⁶²¹ Just as with the Hebrew conception of the *shekinah*, in which God committed God's presence to a particular time, space, and people, so too, in the *zimsum*, has God committed Godself to the world created through *zimsum*.⁶²² If God's

⁶²⁰ The phrase 'perpetual perishing' comes from Locke through A.N. Whitehead. "The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing.'" Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 517. Although Moltmann rarely cites distinctly Process thought, his focus on relationality has made Process a natural, albeit arms-length, ally. Moltmann took up the idea of perpetual perishing which he described as, "[E]very present passes, and what is past never returns. Expectations becomes experiences, and experiences turn into remembrances, and remembrances will in the end become the great forgetting that we call death. Yet something in us rises up in protest." Jürgen Moltmann, "Is There Life After Death?" in *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Theology and Science on Eschatology*, eds. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 238.

⁶²¹ Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2001), 274.

nature is to be all-in-all, by allowing the existence of an Other, God has wagered on God's own destiny, tying it to the creation which God freely created, and endowed with creative freedom of its own. God is related to creation essentially, not just erotically.⁶²³ If God is so understood, as essentially related to creation, then the tragedy inherent in creation comes more clearly into focus.⁶²⁴

To speak of a tragic creation is not to claim that God made a mistake. Tragedy does not represent a failure on behalf of the Creator. Rather, creation is tragic purposively and necessarily. Tragedy, within the Hegelian understanding described previously, is the understanding that life is not at all “a mere satisfaction gained without struggle, but on the contrary [thrives] only when a deeper breach has rent the subject's inner life and his whole existence.”⁶²⁵ Tragedy is not that death is a possibility; nor even that death is an inevitability. The tragedy of creation is that both life and death must be fully embraced.

⁶²² Fiddes described the relationship between *shekinah* and *zimsum* for Moltmann. “While creation is ‘in’ God, God is not ‘in’ creation but remains ‘over against it’ until the moment of future new creation when the universe will be filled with the presence of God... However, Moltmann finds that he cannot deny indwellings of God in the world during the course of history altogether; he thus describes them as ‘special presences’... He conceives of them as transient hidden presences in which the Shekinah Glory of God is ‘homeless’ in the world, awaiting redemption.” Paul S. Fiddes, *Seeing the World and Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom and Christian Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 253.

⁶²³ Brock Bingaman described this in trinitarian terms, “For Moltmann, the Trinity is *open* toward the world and humanity, moved by seeking love, intent on gathering, unifying, and glorifying humanity and creation.” Brock Bingaman, *All Things New: The Trinitarian Nature of the Human Calling in Maximus the Confessor and Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 25.

⁶²⁴ Tom Oord has placed a strong emphasis on the essentiality of relationship. Although he contrasts what he calls an “Essential Kenosis” model of theology directly with Moltmann's notion of *zimsum*, Oord's understanding of essential kenosis can be helpful in understanding Moltmann's work as well. “Love is God's preeminent attribute. God's kenotic love logically precedes divine power in the divine nature. This logical priority qualifies how we should think God works in and with creation.” Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 162-163.

⁶²⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Vol. 1, trans. T.M. Knox* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 158.

Even as apparently opposite poles, one clearly preferable to the other from the mind's point-of-view, life itself can only be fully embraced when one equally embraces death. Just as God embraced the possibility of relationship through the practice of separation, so too must the possibility of life be embraced through the reality of death. By embracing death, the very negation of life, one acts with intentionality to bring about life more fully. "There is no genuine affirmation of life in this world without the struggle against life's negations."⁶²⁶ Life, as it turns out, is the negation of a negation. Citing Hegel affirmatively, Moltmann pointed to the sublative movements of life, "Says Hegel rightly, '[The Christian life] is not one that shuns death and keeps clear of destruction. It endures its death and in death maintains its being'."⁶²⁷

A doctrine of creation that begins with the notion of the tragic situates the theological task differently than a doctrine of creation that begins with the notion of a utopic nothingness. A tragic creation, in contrast to the utopian creation, is inherently organic and evolutionary. The present existence of creation is not in any way different in kind from the original creation which God intended. The doctrine of a tragic creation does not inherently reject any traditionally 'orthodox' doctrines of the Christian church. If so chosen, one can see *creatio originalis* to be a tragic act while still affirming concepts with strong resonance in Moltmann's own reformed tradition like original sin, human depravity, *sola fide*, and *sola gratia*. Yet, by recognizing the tragic as inherent to creation, rather than an accident related to one person's free will, the orientation of theology shifts from one's

⁶²⁶ *Spirit of Life*, xii.

⁶²⁷ *God in Creation*, 270.

own need for atonement to the need for the redemption of all things.⁶²⁸ The inherent movement of creation is not from sin to salvation but from brokenness to wholeness. Just as Hegel described the triad of Being-Nothing-Becoming, the Christian story is one of Life (in which God is all in all), Brokenness (both as God-forsakenness and as volitional rebellion against the Creator God), and Living (the eschatological future become the eschatological present in which God again dwells among creation in mutually interpenetrative relationship).

Such tragedy is not of the ‘woe is me’ variety. Following Hegel’s methodology, the concept of tragedy is primarily structural, not, as with a thinker like Aristotle, primarily the results of a certain action.⁶²⁹ The crux of tragedy, for Hegel, is that the tragic hero, when faced with two choices – in this case life and death – must wholeheartedly choose one choice – life – even while the other – death – is inherent to the very nature of the hero. Tragedy is a quixotic struggle to bring about that which could be in contradistinction to that which is and/or is not. Tragedy is not an excuse for despair. Tragic creation cries out for redemption. Clyde Woods well described this kind of tragedy, equating it with the historical practice of singing the blues. The blues do not represent the oppressed wailing in

⁶²⁸ Moltmann’s own work demonstrates a transition along these lines. Looking at Moltmann’s early theology of the cross, Adam Kotsko saw Moltmann pointing toward something which he could not yet reach. “Moltmann’s social analysis is not closely integrated into his theological project in *The Crucified God*... The problem here is that Moltmann sets up the cross as an *a priori* brute fact... Centering his theology on an *a priori* non-relational kernel thus seems to keep Moltmann from developing a new theology that truly escapes the terms of the traditional ‘ideological’ theology, despite his obvious intention to do so.” Adam Kotsko, *The Politics of Redemption: The Social Logic of Salvation* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010), 48.

⁶²⁹ “The incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character.” Aristotle, *Poetics*, Trans. S.H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 63.

self-pity, but rather “are the cries of a new world being born.”⁶³⁰ By pointing to creation as inherently tragic, which is something very different than to point to creation as inherently fallen, the role of theology is much the same as singing the blues.

Theology cannot stop at the point of saying, ‘The world is not as it should be’, but must speak life into existence within a world of death. The church should look at the world as broken. The church should sense the tragedy of God’s intentional absence – be reminded again of the cry of dereliction. Yet, the proper response is not Hamlet’s melancholy or disgust, much less the despair of hopelessness. Rather, life in all of its forms must be embraced and celebrated. Theology should not be misconstrued as personal and as primarily concerned with the invisible. Rather, like singers of the blues, an essential task of theologians is, “[To] critique oppressive and uneven social conditions and [to charge] communities to make them better.”⁶³¹ In order to move toward such a blues practice, a theology which is grounded in an understanding of tragic creation, might also reconsider what it means to speak about humanity, in particular, as having been created in the image of God, for this is an important element of the first creation account in Genesis.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998), 39.

⁶³¹ Orlando Serrano, “Blues Conversion as a Third Act of Grace,” in *Embracing the Past – Forging the Future: A New Generation of Wesleyan Theology*, eds. Wm. Andrew Schwartz and John Bechtold (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 36.

⁶³² See Gen 1:26-28. “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.’”

Creation for the *Imago Dei*

The understanding of creation as tragic has primarily been influenced by the first Genesis creation story, along with, of course, the Luria/Jonas/Moltmann variations on God's internalized self-restrictive movement. The idea of tragedy is rooted in the chaos-theology of Genesis 1. Yet, there is also another biblical theme by which the doctrine of creation is often conceived: the *imago Dei* – humankind being created in the “image of God.”⁶³³

The Christian theological tradition has a long history of reference to the concept of the *imago Dei*.⁶³⁴ The concept has its root in Genesis' second story of creation in which God proclaimed, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.”⁶³⁵ A popular interpretation of this verse speaks of the *imago Dei* as both a model by which to understand human nature, and also as a distinctive human attribute that was either lost or tainted, in whole or in part, through the sin of Adam.⁶³⁶ Yet, when read together with a

⁶³³ An excellent biblical theology that deals with the themes of both brokenness and the image of God within the twin creation narratives of Genesis can be found in Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

⁶³⁴ An incredibly thorough and thoughtful account of *imago Dei* theology can be found in J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005). Middleton explained, “Although the Christian tradition has typically treated these verses as containing a central biblical affirmation with significant implications for human life, the entire Old Testament contains only three explicit references to the *imago Dei*... With the exception of a few apocryphal or deuterocanonical references... the idea that humans are made in God's image does not surface again until the New Testament. Even then, however, only two texts speak of human *creation* in God's image.” *Ibid.*, 16-17. After tracing several trajectories of interpretation, Middleton described “its fruitfulness for developing an ethics of power rooted in a theological model of the self as empowering agent of compassion that would be serviceable for the Christian community in envisioning its calling in an increasingly violent and brutal world.” *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶³⁵ Genesis 1:26a.

⁶³⁶ E.g. John Wesley understood three different kinds of ‘image’ that could be contained within the phrase *imago dei*: the political, the moral, and the natural. He described that each of these different images was lost or tainted differently. “Concerning the first aspect, the natural image, Wesley holds that it was greatly marred, but not utterly obliterated by the fall. Adam's understanding, for instance, though still in place was now

doctrine of tragic creation Christian theology might be presented with a different understanding of what it means to speak of the *imago Dei*, not as a characteristic to be lost, but as an intentionally relational practice.⁶³⁷

Previously, the notion of God's essential relationship to creation was introduced as a way to describe that God's love is not merely emotive but inherent. If this is the case, then the general trend in Christian theology of speaking of humankind as having been created in the image of God is incomplete. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, it becomes necessary to speak of humankind as having been created *for* the image of God. The distinction is subtle, but important. To say that humankind is created in the image of God is, at least, to say that humanity shares a likeness with God.⁶³⁸ Such an understanding of being created in the image of God based on shared characteristics lacks a robust understanding of creation being related to, and insofar as possible, in relationship with, God. To speak of creation through *zimsum* demonstrates both an interiorizing and an exteriorizing moment in the life of God. The withdrawn God of the *zimsum*, in the act of

confused and often in error... The political image, likewise, was greatly obscured by the fall... To be sure, instead of humanity constituting a blessing to the rest of creation – through the mediation of graces and benefits from God – it was now a curse... Since Wesley maintains that the moral image is the principal image of God in that it is a reflection of the very righteousness and holiness of the Supreme Being, the greatest disruption [is] encountered here... Having lost the moral image of God, Adam sunk partly into 'the image of the devil' in pride, malice, and in other evil dispositions." Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 29-30.

⁶³⁷ Fretheim described well the complexities in biblical accounts of creation, both within the stories of Genesis as well as throughout the rest of Christian scripture. As does Moltmann, Fretheim describes three interrelated "points of reference" for a doctrine of creation, 'Originating', 'Continuing', and 'Completing'. Fretheim's language of 'completing' actually fits better with my conception of tragic creation than Moltmann's '*creatio nova*'. See, especially *God and World in the Old Testament*, 1-12.

⁶³⁸ Grenz described this view as such, "Perhaps the best-known and historically the most widely held understanding of the *imago dei* views it as referring to certain characteristics or capacities inherent in the structure of human nature. Because they resemble the corresponding qualities in God, their possession makes humans like God." *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 142.

creating, has in a very real way filled the space exterior to God with Godself once again. It is not merely that God has created an other with which God desires to be in relationship. Rather, in creating an other, God has simultaneously shown Godself to be a “God of...” God is not merely God, but a God of creation. God’s very nature has been determined through the act of creation.⁶³⁹ This is what it means to say that God is related to creation essentially, and this is why the language of creation ‘in the image of God’ is incomplete: It neglects the fact that God is also formed in the image of creation.⁶⁴⁰ Thus, creation is not only ‘in the image of God’, but also, and equally importantly, ‘for the image of God’. Creation is made ‘for the image of God’ because, in the mutual inter-relatedness, the ‘God of’ has tied Godself to the ebbs and flows of creation-history. God, the living and dying God, the ‘God of’ now exists as essentially related to creation. This essential relation goes beyond relationship to relatedness.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁹ Harvie noted, “One potential problem with Moltmann’s conception of *zimsum* is the possibility that such considerations introduce history into the being of God, thereby limiting God to the vicissitudes of the created history.” Harvie, 66. Although I would disagree that this is problematic, rather seeing it as a strength in Moltmann’s political theology, Harvie is correct to see this as an implication of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation.

⁶⁴⁰ Although this sounds similar to Feuerbach’s famous insistence that “theology is anthropology,” I mean something different than Feuerbach’s claim that, “Religion, at least the Christian, is the relation of man to himself, or more correctly to his own nature... The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or rather, the human nature purified, freed from the limits of the individual man made objective... All attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature.” Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2008), 12. To say that God’s nature has been determined through the act of creation is to simultaneously emphasize that God exists as other to creation, hence *zimsum*. God’s being is not determined by the individual consciousness, but through the empirical realities of the world which God essentially loves. Creation is not the totality of God, as God is not the totality of creation, but neither can be understood apart from the relationship which they share.

⁶⁴¹ Tom Oord can again help to clarify the distinction, “An important implication of my claim that God has always related to whatever God has created and that God has always been creating is that divine relatedness is also an aspect of the divine essence. In other words, just as God did not voluntarily decide various features of God’s ‘Godness’, so God does not voluntarily decide to be relational. To relate to all others is essential to what it means to be God. To say it another way, it is a property of the divine essence that God relates to everything God creates. While to exist God does not depend upon relations to nondivines, the *ways* in which creatures respond to God affects the moment-by-moment constitution of the divine life. Thomas Jay Oord,

Moving beyond the concept of relationship means simultaneously rethinking what it means to speak of God. God is not only the God of love, or the God who loves, but just as deeply the God who suffers. However, God does not merely suffer vicariously through the suffering of God's creation. On the contrary, taken to the extremes, every single life extinguished, every evil act committed against God's creation, serves to extinguish the image of God. The 'God of', in each moment, simultaneously becomes the 'God who was'. The God who is related essentially to creation, suffers at the hand of the free will with which creation has been bestowed. Likewise, as God suffers at the hand of creation, so too does creation suffer at its own hand. The Creator God, the 'God of', cannot be disinterested in the face of evil, nor does God remain unaffected. The God of *zimsum*, the God who has revealed Godself to be a 'God of', is threatened by the potential self-destruction of creation because this God would simply become a God of nothing. God would be nothing more than an unaddressed subject, the 'God of' would cease to be. This is what is at stake with the conception of God as essentially related to creation. This is the reality of a tragic world. Death has lurked from the beginning.

Beyond even the narratives of creation, this is also the essence of the distinctly Christian message. Mortality is the cornerstone of the incarnation. Christ is only truly human insofar as his own death has lurked from the beginning.⁶⁴² Aside from discussions

"Championing Divine Love and Solving the Problem of Evil," in *The Many Facets of Love: Philosophical Explorations*, ed. Thomas Jay Oord (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar, 2007), 63.

⁶⁴² Bonzo made this point by looking back to creation through *zimsum*, "Creaturely existence is within a forsaken space... The hope of creation is for the redemption of the forsaken space of the abandoned creation by God." Bonzo, 52-53. Bonzo connected this to Moltmann's understanding of the incarnation by which, "The Son of God did not become man simply because of the sin of men and women, but rather for the sake of perfecting creation." *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 116.

of atonement, or the notion of a sacrificial death, Jesus' own life, just like *creatio originalis*, is an act of divine creativity.⁶⁴³ Moltmann said,

Jesus' life is inspired not just by the wish for a life after death, but by the will for life before death, yes, even against death... Freed life, redeemed life, divine life is there, in this world, in our time, in the midst of us... The basic characteristic of the life of Jesus is not the consolation of the beyond, not even the hope in the future, but his becoming human, becoming flesh...⁶⁴⁴

Immortality, then, insofar as the Christian faith has often found hope in the concept, might be said to be found in the ways in which creation both creates and uncreates the divine. Our concern for immortality, according to Jonas, should be played out intentionally in our lives, "When in our brief span we serve our threatened mortal affairs and help the suffering immortal God."⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, it is not only the human lot in a tragic world to live on behalf of the suffering immortal God, but also to live on behalf of the dead of their own kind. In the words of Wendell Berry, "The living must protect the dead. Their lives made the meaning of their deaths, and that is the meaning that their deaths ought to have."⁶⁴⁶ The immortality of the dead needs to be celebrated by remembering rightly the lives led, and by re-membering, putting to flesh, the legacies left by the departed. Our immediate theological concern should not be for our own immortality, but for immortality itself, for

⁶⁴³ McDougall helpfully described, "Integral to Moltmann's vision of the Christian life is that the believer's fellowship with Christ is both mystical and ethical. It is mystical, insofar as the believer is actually introduced into a loving union or indwelling with Christ. It is ethical, insofar as humans are simultaneously drawn into his messianic way of life and his passion, a way of life that entails creative and suffering love." McDougall, 130.

⁶⁴⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 24.

⁶⁴⁵ *Mortality and Morality*, 130.

⁶⁴⁶ Berry, 57.

the ongoingness of creation in the face of self-destruction. Eschatology, as rooted in creation, seeks not a prescribed future, but recognizes that the present is the becoming of the future, already past.

To understand, and perhaps even to celebrate, a doctrine of tragic creation, requires that the empirical world be addressed in a very particular way. If tragedy is inherent to the world, rather than brokenness being an accidental and temporary way of being, the fragility of the global ecosystem must become a point of profound discomfort. Hegel described this as the difference between ‘modern’ tragedy and ancient tragedy. Ancient tragedy demonstrated that the tragic hero was primarily concerned with her own end, whereas in modern tragedy the tragic hero must recognize a much more broadly interconnected world and the necessity to choose in the face of seemingly genuine contingency.⁶⁴⁷ Whereas the Greeks might point toward the gods as their victimizers, the modern hero instead must look at the historical march of the past as both the victimizer and potential savior of the present.⁶⁴⁸

To theologically embrace the inherent tragedy of creation is to make just such a move. One cannot look at the planet, through either a scientific/ecological or a moral lens, and argue that the continued well-being of the planet and its inhabitants is a matter left up to the fates. Rather, to be ‘the hero’ of this particular tragedy, which must be the position in which the church envisages herself, one must take the bold step of choosing the

⁶⁴⁷ Houlgate described Hegel’s ‘modern’ tragic hero as “rooted in character. Individuals act out of character; their fate results from what they are and what they decide and do.” Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 209.

⁶⁴⁸ “They possess the character and passions given to them by nature and society... but nevertheless *they* are ultimately the ones who take the decision to act.” *Ibid.*

simultaneous embrace of life and death, of living and dying, in order that life can be made manifest throughout. We can and should decry the violent taking of life in all forms, but we must simultaneously embrace the notion of death more generally. According to Moltmann, “The relationships at the end and death of man’s life are similar, I believe, to those at the beginning and origin of human life. If at the beginning it is a question of the human *acceptance* of life, here it is a question of the human *surrendering* of life.”⁶⁴⁹

The example of Jesus ought to be paramount for the ethical development of the Christian church. That Jesus died is not in itself exemplary. If the church is to embrace the notion that Jesus was the *Deus-Homo*,⁶⁵⁰ fully God and fully human, then death is a simple necessity of the human experience. That Jesus died “for the sins of the whole world”⁶⁵¹ is also beside this particular point. According to Moltmann,

The crucifixion of Jesus either refuted his preaching in view of his person, or his person in view of his preaching, and so refuted both together; or else his preaching was drawn into his person to the very point of his death, so that on the basis of his resurrection from the dead it had to continue to be preached as ‘the word of the cross’.⁶⁵²

To make Jesus’ death, and therefore also his life, merely about personal atonement, as Christian theology is often wont to do, is to entirely miss the point. The resurrection, the negation of death’s negation, is not evidence of God’s forgiveness of ‘sins’, but a promise for, and an invitation to participate in, the redemptive acts of God’s continuing creation.

⁶⁴⁹ *The Experiment Hope*, 167.

⁶⁵⁰ “Deus-Homo” relates to Anselm’s claim that the entirety of Jesus’ person has to be fully God and fully human in order that the entirety of the human person could be said to be saved. See, Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: The Open Court, 1903).

⁶⁵¹ 1 John 2:2.

⁶⁵² *Crucified God*, 124.

What the embrace of a doctrine of tragic creation *for* the image of God cannot offer is a definitive ethical guideline for ‘proper’ Christian behavior or ecclesial polity. However, at the very least, what such a doctrine provides is the direct connection between the present state of humanity and whatever it is that is meant by ‘original creation’. The goal of the Christian faith, then, cannot be merely to return to a state of primordial perfection as such never existed. Rather, the role of theology is to embrace the continued becoming of creation in the face of its possible existential demise. The eschatology engendered by such a theological cornerstone can never be solely about ‘me’, for my own life is but a minute moment of God’s creative history.⁶⁵³ This reorientation of bringing together individual salvation with the need for communal redemption represents a significant shift for much of Christian theology, particularly for the ‘Evangelicalism’ which puts so much weight on the individual’s private choice.⁶⁵⁴ Such a change impacts how we live, how we worship, even, as Moltmann claimed, how the Bible is read.⁶⁵⁵ “If we read the Bible with the eyes of the suffering we shall see in it the hopes of God. Then we shall realize that the Bible is a most revolutionary and even subversive book... because it points even beyond our

⁶⁵³ A more detailed discussion of this claim, in terms of the modernist theology of John Wesley, can be found in John M. Bechtold, “Wesleyan Theology Beyond the Wesleys: A ‘Post-modern’ Proposal, in *Embracing the Past*, 11-28.

⁶⁵⁴ It would be wise to hear Colin Gunton’s reminder that both individualist and communitarian theological strands need to be held in tension. Gunton centered his argument on trinitarian theology, in a way that would be very amenable to Moltmann’s work, and argued that we must “find room for both the unity of mankind and the free, particular plurality of the many.” *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 98.

⁶⁵⁵ Edward J. Blum offered an interesting pragmatic argument against evangelical individualism while also recognizing that theological individualism has been pragmatically utilized in helpful ways, “In this pre-Civil Rights era – when racial groups were explicitly treated differentially in American law and social organization – individualism could actually cut against racial particularism and discrimination.” Edward J. Blum, “Beyond Body Counts: Sex, Individualism, and the Segregated Shape of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, in *Christians and the Color Line: Race and Religion After Divided by Faith*, eds. J. Russel Hawkins and Phillip Luke Sinitiere (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 165.

present time into the future of God.”⁶⁵⁶ The tragic doctrine of creation is here presented as a narrative, a competing narrative to a story of creation which describes The Fall of humanity, as having possessed and lost the totality of the image of God. This competing narrative is intended, at least initially, to re-orient the theological endeavor from concerns for personal salvation to the quest for universal redemption. Moving in this direction, it will continue to be argued, requires a cultural-linguistic community of faith by which and in which this narrative is cultivated. Christianly, this community is best described in the church, and the church is best described in terms of God’s trinitarian love. It is to this description that we now turn.

A Trinitarian Church

The reorientation made manifest by the embrace of a doctrine of tragic creation encourages a move away from a theology of personal atonement to a theology of universal redemption. Yet, it is definitively the role of the Christian to participate in God’s creative redemptive activities in and for the world. This reorientation changes the way traditional doctrines like atonement and salvation can be conceived. As no longer a primary focal point for a redemptive theology, both atonement and salvation become inherently communal desires. The role of the church thus becomes an incredibly formative theological force.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ *The Experiment Hope*, 8.

⁶⁵⁷ An example of ecclesiology done well, in brief, with a particular focus on ecological issues, can be found in Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Ecology and Theology: Ecojustice at the Center of the Church’s Mission,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, vol. 65, no. 4 (October, 2011) 354-363. The thrust of Ruether’s argument is that a “holistic perspective is central to the biblical vision of redemption [and] it is a Christianity that divorces individual salvation from society and society from nature that is unbiblical,” 354.

Stanley Hauerwas has claimed, “The truthfulness of Christian convictions can only be tested by recognizing that they involve the claim that the character of the world is such that it requires the formation of a people.”⁶⁵⁸ Hauerwas places a strong emphasis on the development of a people, the church, whose role is to practice redemptive activity in the world. Leonardo Boff, without discounting the explicit role of the church, offered an important reminder that there exists something much larger than the human community of the church. “We are not confronted merely with the one earth, but with the one cosmos with all its bodies, particles, and energies forming a unique interdependent community.”⁶⁵⁹ The community of the church yet holds a particular place of importance, because, “We become aware of the uniqueness of those particular components of nature known as man and woman... Only human beings are responsible for making a response (hence responsibility!) to the proposition advanced by creation.”⁶⁶⁰

The introduction to this dissertation described a theological moment in time, or, perhaps more accurately, a theological movement through time, that is beset by naïve selfishness and the propensity for violent “self-care.” Boff’s reminder of the interconnectedness of the cosmos should not be overlooked, but neither should the special place of responsibility held by humanity. It is noteworthy that Boff brought together the ideas of response and responsibility. That creation advances a proposition in need of a response is reminiscent of Romans 8. While this passage is often interpreted as

⁶⁵⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 91.

⁶⁵⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, Trans. Jum Cumming (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 30-31.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

disembodied, as a rejection of the physicality of the ‘present world’, Boff seems to offer a different interpretive opportunity for this text.

The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation but we ourselves.⁶⁶¹

Within the larger context of this passage there is an intentional juxtaposition of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’. Without discounting that distinction, one can still read this passage terrestrially and holistically as a discussion of embodied faith. That labor pains elicit more than simple groans is well-established. The ‘groans’ of creation described here, are the deep and guttural cries from the place in which death and life intersect. Creation, existing in ‘bondage to decay’ hopes for life while simultaneously experiencing the pain which seems like dying.⁶⁶² In the midst of the pain of decay, a slow but decisive experience of dying, creation retains hope for the birth of something new – ‘the revealing of the children of God’.⁶⁶³ If creation is to be redeemed, it will be through the birthing of the children of God. The cries of creation demand a response not from the individual but from the

⁶⁶¹ Romans 8:19-23a.

⁶⁶² Bruce Marshall connects this cry of the world to Jesus cry of dereliction from the cross. He argued, “It might not be too much to say that for Moltmann... the cry from the cross is the key to the whole enterprise of theology; it has to guide our understanding of the incarnation, the Trinity, and the saving work of God.” Bruce D. Marshall, “The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God,” in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, eds. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 248.

⁶⁶³ Catherine Keller made a fascinating connection between the hope for new birth and the emptiness of the chaos of creation. “The darkness over the deep precedes the beginning. The cries of loss – *de profundis* – disrupt the confidence of total origin in a secure end. A wound to the text, *vulnus, vulva* of the text, gapes open, *ginan*, at the beginning of the canon. What losses would have encoded themselves in the biblical beginning?... At best, loss morphs into promise.” *Face of the Deep*, 160.

community that hopes for “the redemption of our bodies.”⁶⁶⁴ The hope for redemption and the responsibility for the cries of creation come together in the community of the church.

Both Moltmann and Moltmann’s Hegel have together provided a sound foundation upon which a political ecclesiology can be built. That such an ecclesiology should be political gets to the heart of the theological world that Moltmann has spent his career building. “A consistent theological doctrine of the church is by its very nature an eminently political and social doctrine of the church as well.”⁶⁶⁵ For Moltmann, ‘politics’ is not something that the church does, but is a necessary reality of who the church is. The church is inherently political because it is an embodied reality within the world.⁶⁶⁶ “If the church were to ignore its social and political *Sitz im Leben* – its situation in the life of mankind – then it would be forsaking the cross of its Lord.”⁶⁶⁷ Ecclesiology takes place within a particular *Sitz im Leben*. Even as a doctrinal commitment of sorts, ecclesiology has to be tied to empirical realities - it is both an intensely personal and interpersonal idea. Taken from the punctiliar moment, each of these traditions is also incorporated into a much

⁶⁶⁴ Romans 8: 23b.

⁶⁶⁵ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 6.

⁶⁶⁶ Described well, “Any sane inquirer will look for evidences of a way of life that appears true to both the tragedy and the triumph of reality, and that enables people to negotiate life’s difficult journey with honesty and grace. If Christianity evidences such a way of life, which it did to many in the ancient world, it does so in community. This is the case because ways of life are created, embodied, and passed down by communities... no individual can learn and live the Christian way of life apart from the community that is the church.” Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp, *People of the Truth: The Power of the Worshiping Community in the Modern World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 15.

⁶⁶⁷ *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 342.

grander historical movement of individuals who all had differing hopes, goals, and expectations.⁶⁶⁸

So, even while the best ecclesiology is always oriented by a particular set of social and political circumstances, there are yet larger-scale issues of an interpersonal coming together that can be informative in a wide variety of particular circumstances. Moltmann can be informative in the development of a political ecclesiology in particular because of his well-developed trinitarian theology. The internal self-relatedness of a trinitarian God, described by Moltmann using the term *perichoresis*, demonstrates that God is better characterized with the term ‘becoming’ than the term ‘being’. *Perichoresis* is a term that relies heavily on notions of movement. It is not, in any way, static. Whatever it is that is meant by the term ‘Trinity’ cannot simply be a fixed relationship of divine persons.⁶⁶⁹

From the outset, *perichoresis* problematizes personhood language without thereby rejecting it in its entirety. That *perichoresis* disallows static interpretation forces us to reconsider our understanding of non-trinitarian personhood alongside trinitarian personhood. Advances in the quantum sciences have already begun to ask incredibly difficult questions about the nature of reality. From speculation that all of empirical reality is merely an illusion⁶⁷⁰ to similar speculation that empirical reality is a complex computer

⁶⁶⁸ Yet, despite these varied origins, as Hauerwas described, in coming together, “The primary social task of the church is to be itself – that is, a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the danger of this existence, trusting in God’s promise of redemption.” *A Community of Character*, 10.

⁶⁶⁹ Catherine Keller described this perichoretic becoming as “a sociality of rhythmic interrelations in which inside and out would no longer bifurcate.” *Face of the Deep*, 18.

⁶⁷⁰ E.g. Justin T. Mark, Brian B. Marion, Donald D. Hoffman, “Natural Selection and Veridical Perceptions,” in *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 266 (2010), 504-515, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://cogsci.uci.edu/~ddhoff/PerceptualEvolution.pdf>.

simulation,⁶⁷¹ even the apparent reality of nature has been called into question. Moving back further, atomic physics had already begun to understand the changing nature of reality based upon individual perception.

Albert Einstein, describing the early debate as to whether light was best characterized as a wave or as a particle, said,

It seems as though we must use sometimes the one theory and sometimes the other, while at times we may use either. We are faced with a new kind of difficulty. We have two contradictory pictures of reality; separately neither of them fully explains the phenomena of light, but together they do!⁶⁷²

This description by Einstein almost seems to be a one-to-one parallel to Hegel's thought: two contradictory propositions which, only when brought together and held in tension form a productive way forward. Einstein went on, "One of the fundamental questions raised by recent advance in science is how to reconcile the two contradictory views of matter and wave. It is one of those fundamental difficulties which, once formulated, must lead, in the long run, to scientific progress."⁶⁷³ The famed physicist Niels Bohr agreed, "An essential element of ambiguity is involved in ascribing physical attributes to atomic objects."⁶⁷⁴

This ambiguity is exactly what Hegel was trying to describe in his dialectical movement. At any given moment two opposing forces, 'Being' and 'Nothing' are creating

⁶⁷¹ Clara Moskowitz, "Are We Living in a Computer Simulation?" in *Scientific American*, April 7, 2016, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/are-we-living-in-a-computer-simulation/>.

⁶⁷² Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *Evolution of Physics: From Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 263.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 414

something new, ‘Becoming’, through the tension of their mutual interpenetration. The ambiguity evident in the debate over wave/particle dualism can be helpful in describing what is meant by the term ‘person’ with reference both to persons in the world and the trinitarian persons of God. Personhood is a dynamic reality, never any one thing, and never capable of being defined from within a single perceptual reality. Remember again Hegel’s statement about ‘Being’ and ‘Nothing’, “The one does not sublimate the other externally—but each sublimes itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself.”⁶⁷⁵ This would seem to be a linguistic way by which one might describe the continuous becoming of personhood. Without becoming bogged down in the debates of the physicists, it is a fair generalization to say that, whatever reality is represented by the term ‘person’, it need not to be conceived as either static or substance.

The trinitarian *perichoresis* demonstrates at least two characteristics which can be useful in the description and creation of ecclesiology: vulnerability and the embrace of otherness. The vulnerability of God is made strongly evident in God’s initial creative self-withdrawal. Vulnerability is a direct requirement of love. Yet, such vulnerability is not only extrinsic to God, but also intrinsic to the very nature of God.⁶⁷⁶ In order to speak of a Trinity, one can see both a unity and a diversity as simultaneous. In order to avoid the classical trinitarian language of substance, Moltmann argued, “The unity of the Trinity cannot be a monadic unity. The unity of the divine tri-unity... lies in their fellowship, not

⁶⁷⁵ *Science of Logic*, 105.

⁶⁷⁶ Elaine Padilla described how God’s internal trinitarian relationships serve to manifest a “liberative perichoresis that births “an *ordo amoris* of radical communal vulnerability [which] emerges from the figure of a God generously open to the multiple ways of loving manifested in the cosmos.” Elaine Padilla, *Divine Enjoyment: A Theology of Passion and Exuberance* (New York: Fordham Press, 2015), 10.

in the identity of a single subject.”⁶⁷⁷ Here, Moltmann’s description of trinitarian unity can be illustrative of the proper functioning of the church. The church is not built upon commonality. Nor is the church strengthened by the gathering together of similarity. The unity of the church is built upon the fellowship of persons, upon the coming-together in common purpose. Moltmann described God as, “Open to man, open to the world and open to time... The Trinity does not only manifest what it is in itself; it also opens itself for history and experience of history.”⁶⁷⁸ This openness of self is the same vulnerability to which the church is called. The church is not the cornerstone of history, nor the driving force behind history, but must be intentionally open to the movements of extra-ecclesial becoming. Just as God has made Godself open to humanity, to the world, and to time, so too must the church allow itself to become open to the possibility of being substantially impacted from without.⁶⁷⁹ The church must refuse to be the sort of insular community that fails to see how its own socio-cultural situatedness impacts its development and its doctrine. Moreover, the church must reject the notion that it stands outside of or above

⁶⁷⁷ *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 95.

⁶⁷⁸ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 56.

⁶⁷⁹ At this juncture, it seems necessary to be reminded that this, as with any, practice of theology is strongly autobiographical and self-referential. While I am not defined by the church, and the church is certainly not defined by me, I have a particularly limited vantage point from which to make theological proclamations. Thus, even this discussion of ecclesiology presupposes something like my own ecclesial reference-point. Kwok Pui-lan, among numerous others, has pointed out how “religious language when spiritualized can be used to camouflage oppressive reality and sacralize the pain of debased servanthood.” Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005) 184. Likewise, James Cone has demonstrated that use of the language of servanthood was used by white missionaries to “[Persuade] most black religious people that life on earth was insignificant.” James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 121. Both of these cases demonstrate how religious language can and is used by those in the majority to maintain the status quo of power and authority. Thus, it is essential for a majority scholar, like myself, to clarify the self-referential nature of this kind of discourse. It is not intended to be prescriptive in every time and place, and I do not claim any special authority outside of my own limited point-of-view. The language of vulnerability is and ought to be a challenge to the majority, but might be, at best, irrelevant to those who are forced into vulnerable states without regard to volition.

culture writ large.⁶⁸⁰ Even as a sanctified community, a community which has been ‘called out’, the church must recognize how deeply responsible it is to shape and to be shaped by its community. If the church is to model trinitarian love, relationship can never be unidirectional.

Moltmann’s rejection of a strictly hierarchical trinitarianism is informative for the church which conceives of itself and has been created in-and-for the image of God. Moltmann recognized that the interpersonal relationships of the Trinity demonstrate a “logical priority of the Father,” but that the complexities of genuine trinitarian theology are only evident in their empirical outworkings.⁶⁸¹ Likewise, the church can see in itself a ‘logical priority’, which is to say, that the church recognizes a particular moral authority inherent in its being. But, this priority, however it is conceived in its concretion, is anything but absolute. This priority is not unidirectional nor is it immune to itself being affected.

Such a conception of the church demands not only existential openness, but also a deep and genuine humility. For Moltmann,

The Trinity corresponds to a community in which people are defined through their relations with one another and in their significance for one another... The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the church as ‘a community free of dominion.’... Authority and obedience are replaced by dialogue and harmony.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Elizondo described the complexity of the church’s relation to the world, “This is the very paradox of church: local yet universal, traditional yet contemporary. The church is not an either/or, but the mystery of the unity of the past with the present, the particular with the absolute, and the finite with the infinite.” Virgilio Elizondo, “Cultural Pluralism and the Catechism,” in *Beyond Borders: Writings of Virgilio Elizondo and Friends*, ed. Timothy Matovina (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 72.

⁶⁸¹ Moltmann was quick to point out that much of trinitarian theology is not genuinely trinitarian. In fact, he went so far as to claim, “In the Western church trinitarian doctrine has almost without exception a tendency to modalism.” *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 190.

⁶⁸² *The Trinity and The Kingdom*, 198, 202.

This openness and this humility are far too often lacking in the present realities of the church; the church continues to see itself at the top of a hierarchical ladder of influence.⁶⁸³ The church rightly believes in its mission(s), and, often, seeks to be a force for positive change in the world. Yet, so long as the church fails to learn, grow, and be changed by ‘the world’, so long as the church sees itself solely at the top of the ladder, its influence will continue to be scattered.⁶⁸⁴ A theology built upon epistemic hubris is essentially non-trinitarian, and therefore neither representative nor constructive of the image of God.⁶⁸⁵ Epistemic hubris is particularly dangerous because it lives most of its life as invisible. Its initial effects are varied and difficult to pin down. The quest for epistemic humility, at least as described here, would represent a drastic change of course for much of the worldwide and historical Christian church. Likewise, it would represent a drastic change of course for many particular embodied communities of the church. Such a drastic change, if it is to happen at all, will never be quick and it will never be easy. The call for humility points a

⁶⁸³ Sallie McFague described the complexity of this hierarchical theological heritage, “The classic models of the Christian tradition have been and still are hierarchical, authoritarian ones which have been absolutized. As feminist theologians have become increasingly aware, the orthodox tradition did a thorough job of plumbing the depths of one such model, the patriarchal, as a way of being articulate about God... The problem does not lie with the model itself of ‘God the father,’ for it is a profound metaphor and as true as any religious model available, but it has established a hegemony over the Western religious consciousness.” Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 29.

⁶⁸⁴ Thomas Reynolds used Moltmann’s trinitarian theology to describe the vulnerability that should be a hallmark of the church, “There is a ‘tragic structure’ to God’s love, the love that communicates value by creating difference. God is vulnerable to creation’s interdependence, feeling pain and loss with creatures... God’s creative, redeeming power then is not domineering but inviting.” Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 166.

⁶⁸⁵ Clark Pinnock spoke well of the humility that he believed inherent to the theological task, “Though we possess a faith once delivered, we do not grasp its significance completely – nor will we till the end of time... We are on the road to truth, not at the end of the journey. God’s Word has not been mastered, nor can it be... We must not be too proud to have second thoughts; we need not regard changing one’s mind as a weakness.” Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 222.

finger directly to beliefs and feelings that many Christians cling to with tremendous passion.⁶⁸⁶ Yet, for a theology that is rooted in a doctrine of tragic creation, for a theology that seeks to build a church that exists in-and-for the image of God, it becomes necessary to reconsider questions of ecclesiology in light of these questions. One way that this change can be instigated is to begin by calling into question long-held notions of identity and otherness, of what it means to be, to belong, and to differentiate.

Identities of Otherness

Here, as is so frequently the case, Moltmann has taken Hegel's thought as a starting point for conversation. In particular, Moltmann looked to Hegel's famous 'Master-Slave Dialectic' to give a theological account of identity and alienation in the world.⁶⁸⁷ Moltmann's discussion of the master-slave dialectic is helpful to this conversation less because it represents a thorough and thoughtful interpretation of the complexities of Hegel's thought than because it demonstrates the ease with which Moltmann moves in and out of the broader Hegelian world.

⁶⁸⁶ E.g., in a passionate call for theological humility, Steven Sherman argued that an over-reliance on biblical text as definitive of revelation is a key cause of theological hubris. "Much of intellectual evangelicalism has been hampered by a largely *text-only basis* for theological knowledge – yet symbol, metaphor, mystery, embodiment, and story provide powerful ways into the truth of the knowledge of God, while also moving back towards faith and humility and away from facts alone and overconfidence. Therefore, we must move beyond an exclusively textual referent with respect to the knowledge of God." Steven B. Sherman, *Revitalizing Theological Epistemology: Holistic Evangelical Approaches to the Knowledge of God* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 252.

⁶⁸⁷ In Hegel scholarship, the terms 'master' and 'slave' are synonymous with 'lordship' and 'bondage'. Although less directly referential to this package from Hegel, the terminology of 'lordship and bondage' occurs frequently in Moltmann's work tracing back to the biblical writings of Paul. Moltmann was also clearly influenced by a Barthian line made manifest in the German Confessing Church. He described 'lordship and bondage' within this lineage in Jürgen Moltmann, "Barth's Doctrine of the Lordship of Christ and the Experience of the Confessing Church," in *The Politics of Discipleship and Discipleship in Politics*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 19-33.

Moltmann used the language of the master-slave dialectic in two key locations. Both of these references point to a similar goal, but they represent the situation in very different ways. The first primary usage of the master-slave dialectic can be found early in Moltmann's career. Rather than coming out of Moltmann's explicitly and intentionally written work, the first reference is found in a book which contains transcripts from lectures that were given at Duke University in the late 1960s. One such lecture, entitled, "God in Revolution," demonstrates how different these and similar lectures can be from the sorts of written theology that Moltmann has produced for mass consumption. In a bizarre turn-of-phrase, Moltmann described that these lectures were not intended to be "a masterful theological soup which you should consume with relish."⁶⁸⁸ Rather, the lectures were meant as an "aperitif to whet the appetite."⁶⁸⁹ As such, these lectures represented a practice of preparation as much as a determined theological stance.

In this instance, Moltmann came to a discussion of the master-slave dialectic through Martin Luther King, Jr., Karl Marx, and Albert Camus. Each of these thinkers offered a specific interpretation of masters and slaves that were influential for Moltmann. The continuing thread that Moltmann saw weaving through each of these men was the idea that the relationship of master and slave demonstrated a two-way enslavement of both master and slave. He saw through King that the perpetrators of white racism were "unredeemed and enslaved by their pride and anxiety."⁶⁹⁰ Marx, likewise, "spoke not only

⁶⁸⁸ *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, 129.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

of the alienation of the exploited proletariat but also of that of the capitalist exploiter.”⁶⁹¹ Camus was less explicit about the idea of enslavement or alienation, but saw that, “As master and slave, neither is a true man and neither can relate to the other in a humane way.”⁶⁹²

By pointing to the dual-sided enslavement/alienation/dehumanization Moltmann was engaging directly with Hegel’s own description of the master-slave relationship. In Chapter 2, the master-slave dialectic was discussed as a systemic rupture of Hegel’s philosophy. When read in terms of the internal development of the self, the master-slave dialectic represents something other than the progressive *telos*-oriented philosophy of history for which Hegel is known. Of course, as discussed in Chapter 3, even Hegel’s philosophy of history is not quite so simple. Nevertheless, it was argued that in Hegel’s own work the master-slave dialectic demonstrates a dialectical difficulty. Rather than moving forward through the dialectical process, the master-slave dialectic describes a situation in which the -in itself and the -for itself might never move forward to become the -in-and-for itself. Rather, the third movement of the master-slave dialectic might be described as the interminable conflict of -in itself and -for itself. This conflict does not move toward resolution, but exists *in se* as the ultimate end of the individual.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ Jon Stewart described this complex situation in terms of the need for an ethics beyond the system. “The ‘goal’ of our dialectical movement is to reach this level of universal mutual recognition... but the philosophical actor is as yet unaware of his identification with a larger social whole and of this dialectical goal.... The ability to identify oneself and one’s truth-claims with the social whole can only take place in the forum of what Hegel calls ‘ethical life’ (*Sittlichkeit*)... Ethics is not merely acting in accordance with abstract ethical principles (as with Kant), but rather it primarily involves the realm of custom and concrete ethical situations.” *The Unity of Hegel’s “Phenomenology,”* 236-237. Although Stewart was writing more directly

Moltmann's interest in the master-slave dialectic is something different than the ontological thought-exercise that Hegel intended it to be. For Moltmann, any such thought-exercise is secondary to the existence of actual master-slave relationships and mindsets in the world. As such, Moltmann did not use this dialectic to think through the development of an individual person, but rather to think through the development of a community of persons.⁶⁹⁴ In the essay cited previously, "God in Revolution," Moltmann took the notion of revolution as the key point for understanding the relationship between master and slave. Citing Marx and King, Moltmann demonstrated that the terms 'master' and 'slave' are emblematic of a wide array of relational actualities that are evident in the world. For King, enslavement was seen through the lens of white supremacy. For Marx, enslavement was seen in the exploitation of the working class. Moltmann wanted the present reality of each of these types of enslavement to be well-understood. Yet, by pointing also to Camus, Moltmann was saying that enslavement can be an internalized psycho-existential reality just as it can also be an inter-personal reality.

Reading through this lecture, it is fascinating that even in explicitly calling for revolution, Moltmann has continued to be regarded as 'safe' in ways which many others are not. The accidents of birth are no doubt primary contributing factors. Even so, the revolution that Moltmann called for was not merely intellectual. Rather, Moltmann was clear that there were dire real-world consequences to the sort of revolution that was

about *Philosophy of Right* in this instance, he noted that the language of 'identification' is not incidentally related to the Master-Slave dialectic.

⁶⁹⁴ A similar line of argumentation can be found in Kain, 52-57. Here, Kain approached the Master-Slave dialectic in terms of power, and in terms of overcoming "the Kantian theoretical consciousness." He argued, "Hegel's point here, I think, is that all theoretical knowledge, all understanding, inevitably marginalizes something or someone; and this sort of knowing is a power," 53.

necessary. “The problem of violence and nonviolence is an illusory problem. There is only the question of the justified and unjustified use of force and the question of whether the means are proportionate to the ends.”⁶⁹⁵ Those who are only familiar with Moltmann’s major works might be surprised to hear this line of argumentation. Particularly in the United States, to speak freely in a way that could be construed as ‘Marxist’ is unusual for a theologian like Moltmann. To be able to do so without being roundly condemned and rejected by the powers that be is yet more remarkable. Moltmann was clear that the continued existence of oppressive relationships was a reality in need of drastic change. To enter redemptively into a situation of enslavement, one cannot simply point to oppressive structures or hate-filled language and expect a sudden change in the relationship. While, at least to public knowledge, Moltmann never participated in or directly encouraged violent uprising, that he initiated a theological argument for it tells of the depth to which he believed in the necessity of revolutionary action in the face of enslavement. “In the present struggles for freedom and justice, Christians must side with the humanity of the oppressed.”⁶⁹⁶

Moltmann’s second primary reference to the master-slave dialectic is far less politically revolutionary. Though, within the context of Moltmann’s Christianity, it retains the possibility of being theologically revolutionary. Moltmann again described the existence of ‘the master’, and the master’s subsequent oppression of the slave, broadly. “It can take the form of political oppression, economic exploitation, social exclusion, cultural

⁶⁹⁵ *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, 143.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

estrangement and sexist humiliation. It takes other forms too. But it is always a crime against life.”⁶⁹⁷ Moltmann here looked at the realities of enslavement in communal terms. “Human life is life in community and communication.”⁶⁹⁸ In this second discussion of the Master-Slave dialectic, Moltmann seemed less comfortable dwelling with what was earlier termed ‘the interminable conflict’ that exists between master and slave. Rather, as with his eschatological framework, Moltmann’s hope for resolution took a stronger place of importance than his quest for revolution. In seeking eschatological resolution, Moltmann said, “Oppression always has two sides. On the one side stands the master, on the other side stands the slave... Oppression destroys humanity on both sides.”⁶⁹⁹ Even from this vantage point, Moltmann still believed that the properly Christian role will always be to side with the oppressed. Moltmann pointed to several differently oriented liberation theologies and celebrated that they were ‘one-sided’ in their pursuit of liberation.⁷⁰⁰ Yet, he also believed:

It is a deplorable fact that after more than thirty years of liberation theology among the poor in the countries of the Third World, there should still be no comprehensive theology for the liberation of the oppressors among the ruling classes in the countries of the industrial West... That theologians in the West should do no more than shrink back from black theology, Latin

⁶⁹⁷ *Experiences in Theology*, 185.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁰ An Yountae made a similar point when she critiqued Hegel’s lack of focus on the negative within the discussion of lordship and bondage. “Hegel, ironically, skips or glosses over the painful process of regressing into the dark depth of the negative, the night of the abyss lurking at the bottom surface of the dialectical self-reflection. As Butler comments, following Kierkegaard, the infinitely self-replenishing subject of the Hegelian dialectic does not seem wholly engulfed by the negative.” An Yountae, “Breaking from Within: The Dialectic of Labor and the Death of God,” in *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology*, eds. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Catherine Keller, and Elias Ortega-Aponte (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 257.

American theology, Korean minjung theology, and feminist theology, or allow themselves to be entertained by them, without having the faintest perception of the changes in themselves which are required, is a reflection of ‘hardness of heart’ in the biblical sense of the phrase.⁷⁰¹

Without blaming the victim, Moltmann problematized the relationship of master and slave by demonstrating that the master’s oppressive structures and behaviors also serve to enact the master’s own oppression. In the same way that the liberation theology of Latin America, coming from the mouths of the oppressed, sought to enact their own liberation, Moltmann here decried that the oppressors are not likewise seeking their liberation from the role of oppressor.⁷⁰² “The liberation of the oppressed from their suffering must lead to the liberation of the oppressors from the evil they commit; otherwise there can be no liberation for a new community in justice and freedom.”⁷⁰³

Moltmann’s discussion about the relationship between master and slave, while intentionally stemming from Hegelian language, privileges the ethical and the political over the ontological. Yet, it is also not entirely removed from the ontological. Moltmann’s intention was to transition pure ontology into an ontology of community. Moltmann’s argument was that being must always be understood as being-in-community. This is not only true anthropologically but to a universal scale. There can be no true be(com)ing, for Moltmann, in utter isolation. This is as true for the master as it is for the slave. Thus, even

⁷⁰¹ *Experiences in Theology*, 187.

⁷⁰² Paulo Freire made a similar argument, “This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.” Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 44.

⁷⁰³ *Experiences in Theology*, 188.

beginning with a different intentionality, Moltmann was, in some ways, following Hegel in trying to describe the movement toward selfhood through a violent quest for survival. Yet, by turning the notion of selfhood from individual to communal, Moltmann has demonstrated a distinctly theological transition. The notion of life in community of which Moltmann speaks is most closely demonstrated in the life of the church.⁷⁰⁴ Moltmann described the church in this way, “The goal of these reciprocal liberations cannot be anything less than a community of men and women, free of fear, in which there are no longer any oppressors, and no longer any oppressed.”⁷⁰⁵

This, ultimately, is the goal of Moltmann’s entire theological project. This community serves as representative of the eschatological Kingdom of God for which Moltmann hopes. Moltmann’s theology offers a means by which the church can at least conceive of itself as other than it is. What Moltmann, through Hegel, offers to the church is a reconception of its very being, a new foundational narrative whereby even individual identity is conceived from within a liberating community.⁷⁰⁶ In Hegel’s rendition of the master-slave dialectic, there is an “awareness that the master/slave or

⁷⁰⁴ Given Moltmann’s early interest in Bonhoeffer, one might see this transition in terms similar to Bonhoeffer’s *analogia relationis*, by which Bonhoeffer described inter-personal relationships in terms of the individual’s relationship to God. Moltmann described, “It was in *Communion of Saints* that Bonhoeffer first saw and describe the I-Thou relationship between man in analogy to the Thou relationship of man to God. It is only in connection with his effect on his neighbor that man can be called the image of God.” *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, 53.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.* See also, Glenn R. Bucher, “Toward a Liberation Theology for the ‘Oppressor,’” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 44, no. 3 (September, 1976): 517-34.

⁷⁰⁶ Although without the same intentionality regarding community development, a similar line of argumentation, whereby one’s own subjectivity is determined by, not determinative of, the other, can be found in the work of Emmanuel Levinas. E.g., “The challenge to self is precisely reception of the absolutely other. The epiphany of the absolutely other is face where the Other hails me and signifies to me... an order... The Ego is through and through, in its very position, responsibility or diacony.” Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 33.

dominance/submission relationship is not only unstable but also premised on modes of false consciousness.”⁷⁰⁷ It is to this same mode of false consciousness that Moltmann has pointed. Moltmann described this false consciousness as, “A situation of paralyzing apathy and the creeping recession of the will to live.”⁷⁰⁸ When the church turns only inward, concerned only with its own safety and well-being, it functionally rejects the theology of hope. The church must first and foremost exist as a community of differentiation – not celebrating commonality but embracing the possibility for change and growth.⁷⁰⁹ The identity of the church, as the identity of the ‘master’, is not set, but is determined in its ongoing relationship with the identity of the ‘slave’. As Hegel described,

The object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness... Just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is.⁷¹⁰

The role of the church, thus, is a dual role of master and slave. The language of servitude is already plentiful in the Christian tradition, but here requires a nuanced understanding. The servitude of the church is not merely servitude toward God, or even servitude toward the world which is understood as God’s good creation. Rather, in order to understand the servitude which is required the church must first understand the

⁷⁰⁷ Michael Allen Fox, *The Accessible Hegel* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2005), 124.

⁷⁰⁸ *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 166.

⁷⁰⁹ Bingaman tied this back to Moltmann’s relational trinitarianism. “Likewise, Moltmann’s holistic Christology emphasizes that reconciliation and redemption, cooperative works of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit, reunite humanity with God, with one another, and with all creation, in a manner that preserves differentiation.” Bingaman, 58.

⁷¹⁰ *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 116-117.

difficulties of its own lordship. As Moltmann has interpreted the master-slave dialectic, one is not a master by chance or by birth, but by the dehumanizing oppression of an other. Until the church recognizes its complicity in this role it can never understand either its own lordship or the servitude to which it is called.⁷¹¹ The church, in this sense, is not called to be a servant of God, for in the internalization of God's *zimsun* God has demonstrated an unwillingness to take on God's apparently rightful role as master. God has rejected the potential for oppression that would come with a creation absent something like free-will. God's creative activity, as here described, is thus representative of the way in which the identity of the church can come to be through the embrace of otherness. Thus, as a community existing in-and-for the image of God, what Moltmann rightly calls for is the redemption of one's own position as master – the rejection of that by which the church manipulates and celebrates power relations at the expense of God's relational image. In Hegelian terms, this represents the sublation of oppression's sublation.

To this point, the theological proposal under construction is in appearance and actuality deeply negative. Stemming from an Hegelian background this negativity is not surprising, and one should be careful not to immediately equate 'negative' with 'bad'. For, Hegel described the mechanism for productivity of negativity. Nevertheless, a theology

⁷¹¹ Rebecca Chopp described, while critically reading Moltmann's ecclesiology, the difficulties encountered at the parish level of pointing toward ecclesial complicity. "Caught between individualism on the one side, and bureaucracy on the other, many seek community, a commonness, a meeting, a recognition of the intersubjectivity of life... Yet, the modern congregation must form its community by trying to appease individual differences, promoting, at most, a common belief or common perspective held by all individuals. This places a tremendous burden on the congregation (and its 'official' minister) to be pleasing to all people, to mold itself into a homogenous whole, to find its fellowship in a group of people that, at least on the surface, are similar, and value each other for their shared opinions, beliefs, and interests. This results, as Moltmann suggests, in a community that exists like a Noah's Ark, a fragile ark in the flood of hopelessness." Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991), 81.

that holds a notion of tragedy at its core, could very quickly incorporate pessimism and insincerity into its practices. Such an incorporation would be deeply problematic for Moltmann, who has built his career on theologically considering hope. As such, in conclusion, it is important to be reminded that even a tragic theology is not a hopeless theology, but contains within itself a kernel of deepest hope for redemption.

Hope For the Future

In the introduction to this dissertation it was claimed that Christian theology, in particular though not exclusively in the form of American evangelical theologies, is often made manifest in problematic and dangerous ways. The primary bedrock of this problematic theology was described as ‘insular universalism’, or the theological tendency to reject any interpretation of one’s own experience as anything but universally valid. Throughout the course of the last two hundred pages, it has been further argued that Jürgen Moltmann offers an encouraging way forward. Even though Moltmann’s theology has achieved a high degree of popularity, insofar as ‘popular’ is an apt descriptor for academic theology, one interpretive lens that has been surprisingly absent in the secondary literature is an understanding of the deep influence of Hegelian philosophy on Moltmann’s theology.

Moltmann’s theology, often regarded in its entirety as a ‘theology of hope’ or a ‘hopeful theology’ speaks a profound message into a world that seems to be drowning in the despair of its own self-destruction. This might sound hyperbolic, but is not meant to be so. The world, at least this world, is inching ever closer to the possibility of its own ecological demise. Troublingly, evangelical American Christians seem to be less concerned about this scientific reality than almost any other religiously-defined group. That

this pattern is notably religious leads to the conclusion that there must be something about evangelical religious beliefs that assuages any notion of danger or culpability. Moltmann has made ecological survival a hallmark of his political theology, and, as such, can offer a revitalized understanding of the doctrine of creation which would disallow a *laissez-faire* attitude toward the possibility of ecological catastrophe.

Moltmann has offered an understanding of creation as taking place in the opening of 'god-forsakenness'. Through having been created in this god-forsakenness, the *telos* of creation is seen to be something more than the individual concern for salvation. Rather, creation is called to move, together, back to the God who is Creator. The eschatological end of creation is redemption, or God once again being allowed to be all-in-all. Moving beyond Moltmann, it has been argued that within the world described by Moltmann, God must be essentially related to creation, and that humanity in particular has been created both in-and-for the Image of God. The ecological realities of the world become yet more pressing when God's own well-being is at stake in the celebration and preservation of God's creation.

Despair is not merely evident in the ever-increasing possibility of ecological catastrophe, but equally in the terrible brokenness of interpersonal relationships. There is a parallel between the interpersonal relationships and the relationship of a community within the created world. In both cases, the theological calling is to enact redemption in moments of brokenness. Using Moltmann as a guide, a trinitarian theology has been constructed, at least in miniature, that requires an inter-personal humility. Using the notion of *perichoresis*, it has been argued that the inter-trinitarian life of God can serve as emblematic of the relationship that humans are called to have with creation and with each

other. For Moltmann, the perichoretic love of God is demonstrated in deep vulnerability and pathos. Such a trinitarian discussion cannot be helpful in every circumstance, and certainly should not be utilized to maintain or encourage continued unequal distributions of power in the world. It should not, for instance, be used to reify gender or racial imbalances in the church and in the outreach of the church. Yet, for those who embody theological or social power, the trinitarian call to vulnerability offers a powerful tool in reforming the world in its brokenness.

Theology holds no magic power to change the minds of those who refuse to accept it in whatever form it is offered. Yet, theological belief has a tremendous capacity to, even unconsciously, change the way an individual sees and approaches the world. Viewing God in trinitarian vulnerability rather than in hierarchical dominance offers the proposition that one's life should demonstrate the same sort of loving openness. To be created in the image of God no longer means existing above 'creation', but places humanity on equal footing with all of creation. This, in turn, might also demonstrate a change in interpersonal relationality, for the rejection of dominance in one form can be transformative of other forms as well.

Bringing together a tragic doctrine of creation with a deeply trinitarian conception of God, a Moltmannian theology can also address an ecclesial community that is built on fear rather than love. As individual persons find themselves being transformed in-and-for the image of God into an inter-connected organism fighting for survival, the role of the church must likewise move away from a focus on exclusion for the sake of 'holiness', and into a focus on inclusion for the sake of wholeness. As Moltmann demonstrated, such a

church would not be passive, nor perhaps even pacifist, but would find common allegiance in the need for redemption rather than in the accidents of birth.

In the end, and from the beginning, nothing is guaranteed. Neither Hegel nor Moltmann brought to a close the studies of philosophy or theology. Both exist as open and transgressive, always becoming something other than what they are, and accessible for what they could be. That a theology, such as that offered here, could be transformative in a/the church, is no guarantee that it will be.⁷¹² Yet, what this sort of theological proposal offers is an Hegelian reassurance that the theological endeavor is always in the process of being sublated – of being simultaneously preserved and transformed. This promise of sublation should give hope that, even at its darkest, even in the brokenness of the church and of the world, redemption is always on the horizon. This, ultimately, is the essence of a theology of hope: what is can become what will be because God’s love has been made manifest in what already was. Ernst Bloch said of hope, “Hope has projected itself precisely at the place of death, as one towards light and life, as one which does not allow failure the last word... Danger and faith are the truth of hope, in such a way that both are gathered in it, and danger contains no fear, faith no lazy quietism.”⁷¹³ Or, in Moltmann’s own words, “The hope of resurrection is belief in creation that gazes forward to what is ahead.”⁷¹⁴

⁷¹² “Hope does not guarantee that one will have only the wished-for experiences. Life in hope entails risk and leads one into danger and confirmation, disappointment and surprise. We must therefore speak of the *experiment of hope*.” *The Experiment Hope*, 188.

⁷¹³ Ernst Bloch, *The Principles of Hope vol. 1*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, & Paul Knight (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 112.

⁷¹⁴ *God in Creation*, 275.

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