

# TWO FUTURES — JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S ESCHATOLOGY AND REVELATION'S APOCALYPTIC

---

JOHN E. STANLEY

This paper develops five comparisons between the theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and the Book of Revelation and offers an apology for an apocalyptic theology.

Moltmann's theology and the Book of Revelation have encouraged me and enabled me to hope at times when I have despaired regarding the future of the world and God's process of salvation. I began studying Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*<sup>1</sup> in 1968 during the week Robert Kennedy was assassinated. That death, coming so quickly after the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., troubled me and caused me to question the viability of a political system that was losing leaders to violence at home while it sponsored violence abroad in Vietnam. *Theology of Hope* helped me to hope amid social upheaval and personal despair over politics.

In 1974, during a master of sacred theology degree program at Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, I decided to study Revelation as a means of understanding, and possibly appropriating, my denominational heritage. I came to understand Revelation as a first-century resistance theology that encouraged the church in Asia Minor to resist the values of the dominant culture of the Roman Empire.

Moltmann, a theologian whose work draws heavily on biblical exegesis,<sup>2</sup> developed what Dorothee Soelle calls a "political theology"<sup>3</sup> slightly before Gustavo Gutierrez published *A Theology of Liberation*<sup>4</sup> and as James Cone<sup>5</sup> was articulating a black liberation theology in the United States. I am unaware of any political reading of Revelation which draws upon Moltmann.<sup>6</sup> Also, although Moltmann's theology and Revelation are future oriented, I am not cognizant of any study which compares their uses of the future as a primary theological category. However, in *The Coming of God*,<sup>7</sup> a 1996 publication, Moltmann comments extensively on Revelation. Moltmann and Revelation's common commitment to the future as a theological category deserves delineation. That is a primary goal of this paper.

---

*John E. Stanley is professor of New Testament at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania.*

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

FALL 1998 • VOL. 53 • NO. 2

A second aim is to offer an apology for apocalyptic theology. Moltmann observes that “for modern Christian theology, the early Christian expectation of the parousia is an embarrassment which it thinks it can get rid of with the help of demythologization.”<sup>8</sup> The term “parousia” often appears in Moltmann’s works. What does he mean by the term? Does “parousia” for Moltmann mean the same thing as what Revelation intends by the claims that Jesus is the one “who is to come” (Rev. 1:8) and “surely I am coming soon” (22:20)? What is the viability of believing in a future coming of Jesus? Or are moderns and postmoderns consigned to a realized eschatology<sup>9</sup> which does not expect Jesus to come again? Does Moltmann envision a final judgment as does Revelation?

As an interdisciplinary analysis this study draws from theological, biblical, and pastoral studies and develops five comparisons between the theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Revelation and offers an apology for an apocalyptic theology.

#### I. MOLTSMANN AND REVELATION BOTH ADDRESS THE FUTURE BUT WITH A MAJOR DIFFERENCE.

Eschatology, an expectant hope of God’s action in the future through Christ, is Moltmann’s dominant theological thrust. His *Theology of Hope*, published in English in 1967, concluded that the major task of the church is to articulate “the horizon of the future.”<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere Moltmann addressed a dilemma between eschatological Christianity and apocalyptic Christianity. Eschatological Christianity comprehends “Jesus in the figure of the universal judge and expects that he will finally bring justice to those who have never received justice, and will make the unjust just.”<sup>11</sup> In eschatological Christianity, the purpose of judgment is a rehabilitation that sets up a kingdom of peace.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, apocalyptic Christianity, according to Moltmann, “subordinates the saving gospel of Jesus Christ—viewed as God’s last offer in history—to the ultimate law of retaliation in the Last Judgment.”<sup>13</sup> Moltmann’s dominant category is eschatology, not apocalyptic. In fact, in *The Coming of God*, Moltmann maintains, “...Christian eschatology has nothing to do with apocalyptic ‘final solutions’ of this kind, for its subject is not ‘the end’ at all. On the contrary, what it is about is the new creation of all things.”<sup>14</sup>

Revelation is a mixed genre that incorporates features of a prophetic letter with apocalyptic language and imagery.<sup>15</sup> John provided three different clues regarding the genre of Revelation. In Rev. 1:1 John defines his text as an “*apocalypse* of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.” Revelation contains literary traits typical of the apocalyptic genre. Such characteristics include significant colors (white, red, green, black), significant numbers (666, 3 1/2 years), visions (1:12-20), auditions (1:10-11), and a journey to heaven (4:1-2). Theological motifs typical of apocalypticism include ethical and temporal dualism. An ethical dualism occurs as conflict wages between God and Satan, the church and the Roman Empire. Temporal dualism prevails as Revelation emphasizes that “the time (*kairos*) is near” in 1:3 and 22:10. Throughout the book John announces the imminent coming of the salvific figure identified as Jesus Christ. Repetition indicates significance as John concludes the Apocalypse with the threefold announcement, “I am coming soon” in 22:7, 12, 20. With these literary traits and the theological emphasis on the imminent coming of Christ, Revelation corresponds to the features of an ancient apocalypse.<sup>16</sup>

John also defined his text as a prophecy (1:3; 22:18-19). In the letters to the seven

churches of Asia Minor, John functioned as a first-century charismatic prophet.<sup>17</sup> In the seven letters, John addressed internal shortcomings of five churches and called these five churches to repentance. To the church at Ephesus John wrote, "Remember then from what you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (2:5). Even the triple series of seven seals, trumpets, and bowls was designed to persuade the unfaithful to repent and change their ways (9:20-22; 16:10-11). These calls to repent imply the prophetic opportunity to change and to cancel, or postpone, God's otherwise imminent judgment.

Revelation also contains features of a letter. Schüssler Fiorenza suggests the introduction in 1:1-8 "characterizes Revelation as a work of prophetic rhetoric that functions like an open pastoral letter to seven Christian churches in Asia Minor."<sup>18</sup>

Reading Revelation as a mixed genre provides hermeneutical balance. A difference between eschatology and apocalyptic is that eschatology is a general orientation to the future whereas apocalyptic is a form of eschatology that announces expected details of an unfolding future and describes the imminence of the divinely controlled end of history with the coming of a saving figure from God. All apocalyptic is eschatological but not all eschatology is apocalyptic. If one reads Revelation merely as a predictive scenario of "what must soon take place" (1:1) as God guides history to a final judgment and a new Jerusalem, human initiative and responsibility are diminished. However, affirming the prophetic aspect of Revelation reminds readers that John wrote to persuade churches to be faithful, to repent, and to resist the dominant culture. The prophetic side of Revelation keeps history open and human initiative alive. The Apocalypse's epistolary dimensions preserve its ethical relevance. As an apocalypse, expecting an imminent end to history, Revelation reminds readers that morality matters and judgment is near. Someone named John composed Revelation from a pastoral concern because churches in Asia Minor were threatened by assimilation into the dominant culture. Whereas Moltmann avoids the apocalyptic dimension of the future by centering on an eschatological Christianity, Revelation expands eschatology into apocalyptic. Thus, Moltmann and Revelation are future oriented but they address the future differently.

## **II. MOLTSMANN AND REVELATION PRESENT POLITICAL THEOLOGIES OF RESISTANCE TO THE DOMINANT CULTURE.**

I began studying Revelation in 1974 out of political disappointment and a pastoral concern. As a child of the Cold War, as a sojourner to Selma, as a person whose social conscience was sensitized in the civil rights struggle, as a tired veteran of the War on Poverty in Appalachia, and as a former Vietnam hawk who turned dove in 1966, my involvement in the moral struggles of this world had drained me of the basic liberalism and optimism that used to motivate me. I looked to Revelation to see if John's world was at all similar to mine. I found a pastor on Patmos who sent a book to seven churches in Asia Minor warning these congregations against assimilation into the dominant Roman culture. John sensed that some of his readers were wondering if the heavy foot of the Empire would continue to tramp upon the church. Maybe the Roman Empire would have the last word in the spiritual conflict between church and state. I came to apprehend Revelation as a rhetorical strategy designed to encourage readers to believe that evil is not

eternal, that the future can be a New Jerusalem rather than Babylon, and that there is virtue and reward in remaining faithful amid social and moral stress.<sup>19</sup> Revelation became a guide for me in the contemporary church's confrontation with wealth, nationalism, violence, and the misuse of power.<sup>20</sup>

Dorothee Soelle defined political theology as "the politicalization of Christian conscience."<sup>21</sup> Political theologians, according to Soelle, are "Christians who are no longer prepared to make use of theology to justify existing injustice."<sup>22</sup> Political theology "is, to take an image from its most important symbol, an exodus theology that makes the departure from each and every Egypt of oppression its own theological theme. Redemption is understood as liberation, Christ is the liberator."<sup>23</sup>

In *Theology of Hope* Moltmann declared that "the Christian Church can consequently no longer present itself to this society as the religion of society."<sup>24</sup> His chapter "Exodus Church" in *Theology of Hope* criticized the privatization of religion and sowed seeds of the corporate political theology that blossomed in his later books. In *The Crucified God* (English edition 1974)<sup>25</sup> Moltmann outlined how the cross can be expounded "as a criticism of society"<sup>26</sup> and demanded that Christian theology free itself from the "needs and demands of the prevalent political religions."<sup>27</sup> He identified five vicious circles of death including the circles of force, poverty, racial, and cultural alienation, the industrial pollution of nature, and the circle of senselessness and godforsakenness.<sup>28</sup> *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (English edition 1977)<sup>29</sup> and *The Way of Jesus Christ* (English edition 1990)<sup>30</sup> define the mission of the church in combat against the destructive dehumanizing tendencies embodied in the five vicious circles of death. *The Coming of God*, "written thirty years after the *Theology of Hope* is entirely in line with that doctrine of hope."<sup>31</sup> For Moltmann, as a political theologian, the task of the church is not to legitimize existing political and economic structures but to be a missionary fellowship that liberates persons to find the meaning of life in Christ and the servant church. Theology seeks to renew life, change the world, and redeem nature.<sup>32</sup> Regarding Revelation, Moltmann notes "it was meant for resistance fighters, struggling against the godless powers on this earth, especially the nuclear powers; it was written, that is, out of love for this world of God's."<sup>33</sup>

Revelation is a political theology. The word "throne" appears in seventeen of its twenty-two chapters. Political language saturates the Apocalypse as John employs the words "authority," "power," "war," "worship its throne," "kingdom," "conquer," "the ruler of the kings of the earth," "the kingdom of the world," and "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Messiah." Furthermore, the leopardlike beast of Rev. 13:1-8 is most likely a reference to Emperor Domitian, and the persecutions John mentions are historical references to local persecutions that arose in Domitian's reign (1:9; 2:10,13; 6:9-11; 12:11; 13:7; 17:6).<sup>34</sup> John used the symbol of Babylon from the Hebrew Bible to judge the Roman Empire for its excessive nationalism, violence, materialism, and idolatry in Rev. 18. Schüssler Fiorenza correctly depicts the political conflict in Revelation: "power confronts power and empire confronts empire. Compromise is not possible."<sup>35</sup>

John's theology of cultural resistance emerges in three ways. The seven conquering promises in chapters 2-3, with their concomitant fulfillments in chapters 19-22,<sup>36</sup> call Christians to stand fast and resist assimilation into Roman and Jewish cultures. Second, John twice issues "a call for the endurance of the saints" (Rev. 13:10; 14:12), similar to

Moltmann's enunciation of "endurance to the end...as the sign and testimony of true faith and as the effect in personal life of the hope for the parousia."<sup>37</sup> Third, John posits the church as the countercultural community which is a social alternative to the dominant Roman Empire. As Schüssler Fiorenza notes

John advocates an uncompromising theological stance because he and his followers view the dehumanizing powers of Rome and its allies as theologically so destructive and oppressive that a compromise with them would mean a denial of God's life-giving and saving power.<sup>38</sup>

Stephen Carter, in *The Culture of Disbelief*,<sup>39</sup> offers a recent rendition of what it might mean for a church to follow the political theology of Moltmann and Revelation. Drawing upon David Tracy's axiom that "...religions live by resisting," Carter argues that in regard to the state, religions should be subversive rather than subservient.<sup>40</sup> The political theologies of Moltmann and the Apocalypse parallel Carter's counsel.

### III. MOLTSMANN AND REVELATION AFFIRM A CRUCIFIED CHRIST.

Their Christologies are anti-triumphalist because they conceive Christ as a sufferer identified with history's underdogs.

*The Way of Jesus Christ* lays out "an emphatically social Christology"<sup>41</sup> as Moltmann asks what Jesus Christ means for those who suffer due to the sins of economic exploitation, racism, political domination, environmental decay, sexism, and sickness. Hence, for Moltmann, "what is most important for Jesus is his quarrel with poverty, sickness, demonism, and forsakenness, not his quarrel with the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."<sup>42</sup> *The Way of Jesus Christ* develops a Christology which "apprehends Jesus as the messianic prophet of the poor."<sup>43</sup> As Moltmann peels away the arrogant claims of modern technology and materialism, he notes that "the history of every form of progress has its other side in the history of its victims,"<sup>44</sup> leading him to conclude that "the crucified Christ has become a stranger to the civil religion of the First World and to that world's Christianity."<sup>45</sup> His earlier work in *The Crucified God* laid the foundation for the radical Christology Moltmann elaborated in *The Way of Jesus Christ*. *The Coming of God* affirms the uniqueness and primacy of the Christ event.<sup>46</sup>

Revelation 5 captures the irony which permeates the Christology of the Apocalypse. John saw a scroll sealed with seven seals. John wept "because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it." Then a heavenly elder told John, "Do not weep. See the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (5:5). Then John depicted the messianic Lion three times as a slaughtered Lamb (5:5,9,12). The agony of John's weeping contrasts with the adoration acclaimed to Christ in vv. 6, 9 and 11 when a heavenly chorus sang "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (5:11). John's Messiah is a crucified Lamb. Twenty-nine times John pictured his divine protagonist as a Lamb. Even in Rev. 19:11 ff., a scene of judgment, John clothes the heavenly judge "in a robe dipped in blood" (19:13). John encouraged and expected the oppressed saints to endure and persevere because they had conquered the

evil one “by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11). Clearly, John’s Christology identifies Jesus as Messiah, Lord, and coming Judge. However, those lofty titles and functions emerge from the lowly Lamb’s identification with the suffering and death which haunted John’s readers. Any modern reading of Revelation needs to begin with the lowly suffering Lamb who offered hope and release to a church suffering from the materialism, nationalism, and violence of the Roman Empire—similar issues which Moltmann addresses.

#### IV. MOLTMANN AND REVELATION ANTICIPATE A COMING CHRIST.

Moltmann’s theological agenda turns theology towards the future. In turning theology toward the future as hope, Moltmann confronted two major obstacles—historicism and an over-occupation with the present. These two traits of modernity are prominent in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann contended that the historian has no valid evidence for making statements about the future because “genuine historical knowledge does not rely on statements but only on evidence.”<sup>47</sup> Bultmann argued theologians cannot speak of the future; we have no basis for understanding the future because all we can experience and know is our past and present. The past must be evaluated in light of our present experience. Likewise, the future will be similar to the present. Rather than speak of God’s actions in the future, Bultmann collapsed the future into our present experience. Bultmann maintained that as an historian and theologian he could not speak of the future coming of Christ in a cosmic sense since there is no corresponding analogy in the present for understanding this future event. How can we hope for what we do not understand and experience in the present?

Moltmann continually discusses the relationship between historical knowledge and the future.<sup>48</sup> Contrary to Bultmann’s existential reading of the New Testament, with its glorification of the present, in *The Way of Jesus Christ* Moltmann posited the primacy of the future over history when he declared, “history is undoubtedly the paradigm of modern European times, but it is not the final paradigm of humanity.”<sup>49</sup> Moltmann contends that Bultmann, and other proponents of realized eschatology such as Marcus Borg,<sup>50</sup> collapse any future action of God into a theology of realized eschatology as new existence for individuals who confront the spirit of Jesus. In contradistinction to Bultmann who asserted that “no future in this world can bring anything new, and all apocalyptic pictures of the future are empty dreams,”<sup>51</sup> Moltmann posits the future parousia of Jesus as the goal of history.<sup>52</sup> Rather than evaluate the resurrection of Jesus through the perspective of an historian who seeks analogies in the present moment for that past event, Moltmann reads history in light of the anticipated final resurrection of Christ.<sup>53</sup> A future event is the key to history’s meaning in Moltmann’s political theology.

Just what does Moltmann specifically say about the future of Jesus Christ? First, he admits the contradiction between our present experience and Christian hope, viewing it as the contradiction between the cross and the resurrection.<sup>54</sup> Second, Moltmann anticipates a parousia of Jesus as the end of time and the beginning of eternity.<sup>55</sup> Third, the parousia will bring renewal. “The crucified One will be the judge, and he will judge according to his gospel. His saving righteousness will renew the world.”<sup>56</sup> Even in judgment, “God’s grace is more powerful than human sin.”<sup>57</sup> Fourth, the future cannot be narrated but only awaited. Because we live by hope, he notes “the legitimate statements

about Christ's parousia do not rest on cloudy surmises about the end of the world, or on the visions of special prophets. They are founded on the historical revelation of God, which points beyond itself.<sup>58</sup> Fifth, the earth and humanity will be redeemed and this renewed nature will be the beginning of the eternal history.<sup>59</sup> Sixth, consistent with his social Christology, Moltmann claims that "those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it.... This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in human society."<sup>60</sup>

Although Revelation anticipates a coming Christ, it also seeks to persuade besieged Christians to endure until God eradicates evil through judgment and renewal. Whereas Moltmann opposes a collapsing of the future into the glorification of the present in a realized eschatology, Revelation protests the Roman Empire's expansion of its present state into the claim to be an eternal monarchy. Virgil, in *The Aeneid*, preserved the Roman claim of being an everlasting empire<sup>61</sup>—a claim which John reserved for God "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:8).

Two major differences exist between Moltmann and the Apocalypse regarding the return of Christ. First, Moltmann's concept of the parousia is slippery. At times one wonders if he is speaking of an actual coming of Christ.<sup>62</sup> Second, Moltmann advocates a universal salvation. He envisions a judgment of rehabilitation that will bring healing and justice to the world; therefore "The Last Judgment" is not a terror. In the truth of Christ it is the most wonderful thing that can be proclaimed to men and women.<sup>63</sup> He voices his hope of universal salvation very anthropomorphically, saying "God finds no rest until all of God's creatures—like in the parable of the Prodigal Son—have returned to God's lap."<sup>64</sup> In Moltmann's eschatology, "...true hope must be universal, because its healing future embraces every individual and the whole universe."<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, for Moltmann, "...hell will go to hell."<sup>66</sup> Revelation, on the other hand, anticipates a judgment that separates saints and sinners and institutes a renewed heaven and earth (Rev. 20:11-21:8). Whereas Moltmann values Revelation as apocalyptic resistance literature, he rejects the moral judgment that is intrinsic to the apocalyptic world view. In the apocalyptic world view God eventually dispenses justice as a discipline. That discipline differs from Moltmann's Universal Salvation.

Despite Moltmann's arguments regarding the validity of the Christian hope as the fulfillment of God's promises, I, like Bultmann, am still a child of Ernst Troeltsch's historicism which seeks analogies in present experience for the New Testament's future promises. I confess that Christ's future coming has no analogy in history. Thus, I am forced to affirm the coming of Christ as an act of faith. I find some support for my faith assumption concerning the future as I think about creation. Can't my faith assumption that God was involved in the beginning of the world, giving a point and purpose to creation, be paralleled by my hope that God will provide a point to the climax of history? Of course, in my moments of doubt I feel that nuclear or environmental destruction involving the misuse of human freedom may subvert God's goal.<sup>67</sup> Moltmann seems to have more faith than I do about God's future. He contends "the expectation of 'the end of the world' is a vulgar error."<sup>68</sup> Celebrating God's ultimate purpose, Moltmann maintains

How should the Creator-out-of-nothing be diverted from his intention and his love through the devastations in what he has created? Anyone who expects 'the end of

the world' is denying the world's Creator, whatever may prompt his apocalyptic anxiety. Faith in God the Creator cannot be reconciled with the apocalyptic expectation of a total *annihilatio mundi*. What accords with this faith is the expectation and active anticipation of the *transformatio mundi*.<sup>69</sup>

Again,

...Christian eschatology has nothing to do with apocalyptic 'final solutions'.... On the contrary, what it is about is the new creation of all things. Christian eschatology is the remembered hope of the raising of the crucified Christ, so it talks about beginning afresh in the deadly end.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of Moltmann's repeated insistence on God's ultimate salvific purpose, in my moments of doubt and anxiety I fear the consequences of human freedom and sin more than I trust in God's ultimate reconciling purpose. I waver between hope and the human disasters that Jonathan Schell called *The Fate of the Earth*<sup>71</sup> and Rachel Carson termed *The Silent Spring*.<sup>72</sup> I know what I want to believe and hope, but my reading of human history dilutes my will to believe. Pessimism (or is it realism?) dampens my theology of hope. But I try to let Moltmann and Revelation fuel my capacity to hope.

#### V. MOLTSMANN AND REVELATION ANTICIPATE A FUTURE GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE PAST AND PRESENT.

In June 1968 as I despaired over the violence wrought to the political system of the United States through the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy, and the attempted assassination of George Wallace, I read Moltmann's section "The Sin of Despair" in *Theology of Hope*. He identified two forms of hopelessness—presumption and despair. On the one hand, presumption is "the premature self-willed anticipation of the fulfillment of what we hope for from God."<sup>73</sup> Presumption depicts the human tendency to label our historical achievements as final and infinite. I found it easy to rail against the sin of presumption in an era symbolized by The Great Society and a grandiose war effort in Vietnam. On the other hand, despair, in Moltmann's theology, is the premature denial of any future fulfillment of our hopes. Moltmann persuaded me not to give up hope. His hope was realistic because it acknowledged the present traumas of suffering, evil, and death. Rather than being escapist, Moltmann's theology of hope called me to become a construction worker with God in shaping a more humane future. He perceived hope as social protest because "hope finds in Christ not only a consolation in suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise against suffering."<sup>74</sup> The conclusion to *Theology of Hope* dramatized the powerful force of hope against inadequate options as Moltmann argued for an open future greater than the present:

...the hope of resurrection must bring about a new understanding of the world. This world is not the heaven of self-realization, as it was said to be in Idealism. This world is not the hell of self-estrangement, as it is said to be in romanticist and existentialist writing. The world is not yet finished, but is understood as engaged in a

history. It is therefore the world of possibilities, the world in which we can serve the future, promise truth, and righteousness and peace.<sup>75</sup>

But Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* was not enough. It nourished me in the final months of seminary. However, as a young pastor, parishioners asked me to preach from the Bible as well as from "those theologians you are always reading." In responding to their valid request I again found help in Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. His expositions of promise in Romans 4, and suffering and resurrection in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 15, helped me move away from the individualistic realized eschatology of Bultmann's New Testament theology to a more corporate theology. A theologian was teaching me exegesis! As I sensed parishioners' and students' needs, a need I share, to know that there is life beyond the grave or cremation, I regularly speak of my belief in an existence John called "a new heaven and a new earth...the new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1-2). Revelation not only is a political theology prophetically criticizing the misuse of wealth, nationalism, and power but it also is an apocalyptic theology of hope promising an eternal future of judgment and/or, healing and wholeness beyond the brokenness of this temporal life.

In conclusion, I value Moltmann's theology because it allows me to hope for eternal life beyond the grave even as it motivates my social action on earth. I value Revelation because of its emphases on morality and eternal hope. A quotation from Moltmann's *The Spirit of Life* summarizes his political theology and hope and shows why I find the theologies of Moltmann and Revelation to be beneficial:

Just because I believe in 'the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come' I must already resist the forces of death and annihilation here and now, and must love life here on earth so much that I try with everything I have to free it from exploitation, oppression and alienation. And the opposite is equally true: because I love life, and stand up for its justice, and fight for its freedom wherever it is threatened, I hope that one day death will be swallowed up in the victory of life, and that then 'there will be no mourning nor crying nor pain any more' (Rev. 21:4f.) Anyone who sees this world and the next in the Christian hope as an Either-Or is robbing that hope of both the courage to live and consolation in dying.<sup>76</sup>

Reading Moltmann alongside Revelation is a strategy that enables me to focus on the present historical situation while anticipating future actions of God in history.

#### NOTES

1. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, James W. Leitch, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).
2. Patrick Miller addresses the need for the disciplines of Bible and theology to interact and "bring together serious attention to the Bible and systematic articulation of the Christian faith." "Can Two Walk Together Without an Appointment?", *Theology Today* 52 (July 1995): 169.
3. Dorothee Soelle, *The Window of Vulnerability*, Linda M. Maloney, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 128.
4. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleston, trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).
5. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969) and A

*Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1970).

6. Neither Richard Bauckhman's *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1995) nor Arne Rasmusson's *The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995) address Moltmann's use of Revelation.

7. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

8. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), p. 313.

9. Marcus Borg expounds such a "realized eschatology" when he argues regarding texts concerning the second coming of Christ "rather than seeing these texts as referring to events of our time, or of any future time, we see them as telling us about the past: They tell us what people in the emerging Christian movement believed," "Thinking About the Second Coming," *Bible Review* 10 (August 1994), p. 16. Borg states, "we do not see the New Testament as speaking about the second coming of Christ in our time or at any future time," p. 16. Borg voices a similar conclusion in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), note 24, 92.

10. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 338.

11. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 338.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, p. 337.

14. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, xi.

15. See the consensus on the mixed genre of the Apocalypse in John E. Stanley, "Some Words on the Bible's Last Word: An Assessment of Four Recent Commentaries on Revelation," *Christian Scholar's Review* 22 (1993): 292.

16. See the definition by the Apocalypse Group of the SBL Genres Project in Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 62.

17. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 45, 50.

18. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, p. 39.

19. Stephen O'Leary's *Arguing the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) analyzes the rhetorical strategy of Revelation and its use by later rhetorists including Hal Lindsey and the Millenites.

20. C. Freeman Sleeper draws attention to the Apocalypse as resistance literature in *The Victorious Christ* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), pp. 56, 61, 120-121, 126.

21. Soelle, *Window of Vulnerability*, p. 124. Soelle is criticizing Rudolf Bultmann for not developing a political theology. Also, consult Robert T. Cornelison's "The Reality of Hope: Moltmann's Vision for Theology," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 48 (1993): 109-120.

22. Soelle, *Window of Vulnerability*, p. 124. A fuller discussion of political theology appears on 128-129.

23. Soelle, *Window of Vulnerability*, p. 124. Richard Bauckham correctly observes that for liberation theology the Exodus was its key whereas Moltmann's political theology is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, p. 104. God's opening up of the future through promise, especially to Abraham, was the key Old Testament motif for Moltmann's eschatology.

24. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 305.

25. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, trans. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974).

26. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, p. 317.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 322 and also Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 97-98.

28. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, pp. 329-332.

29. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
30. See note 6 for publication data.
31. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. xii.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
34. Contrary to Leonard L. Thompson who contends that John "and his audience did not live in a world of conflict, tension, and crisis," *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 95; also consult pp. 174-75, 188, 191, 192.
35. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, p. 50.
36. Compare Rev. 2:7 & 22:7,14; 2:11 & 21:7-8; 2:17 & 19:12-13; 2:26-28 & 19:15; 3:5 & 21:27; 3:12 & 21:2,22; and 3:21 & 20:4.
37. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 339.
38. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 7.
39. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
40. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief*, p. 37.
41. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 71.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
46. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. 233.
47. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity* (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 132.
48. Moltmann, "Eschatology and History" in *Theology of Hope*, pp. 230-303 and *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 212 ff.
49. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 215.
50. See note 7 regarding Marcus Borg's realized eschatology.
51. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, G.R. Beasley-Murray, trans. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 431. A similar view appears in Bultmann's *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 32-34.
52. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, pp. 316, 319.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
54. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 18.
55. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 316.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
57. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. 243.
58. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 320.
59. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, Margaret Kohl, trans. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 246.
60. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 21-22.
61. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, I, pp. 272-90; XII, pp. 823-28; for a similar claim see Josephus, *History of the Jewish War Against the Romans* LCL 3:352; 2:391; 5:378. My dissertation treated Josephus' support of the Roman claim to be an eternal reign, "The Use of the Symbol of Four World Empires to Inspire Resistance to Or Acceptance of Hellenism in Daniel 2, Daniel 7, 4 Ezra 11-12, Rev. 13, and 'Antiquities of the Jews': Insights from the Sociology of Knowledge and Sect Analysis," Ph.D. dissertation. Iliff School of Theology/University of Denver, 1986. John Crossan treats Josephus' support for Rome in *The Historical Jesus* (HarperSanFrancisco: 1991), pp. 97-99.
62. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 314; *Theology of Hope*, p. 15.
63. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. 255; Moltmann claims, "Judgment at the end is not an end at

all; it is the beginning. Its goal is the realization of things for the building up of God's eternal kingdom," *Coming of God*, pp. 250-51.

64. Jürgen Moltmann, "All Things New: Invited to God's Future," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 48 (Spring 1993): 31.

65. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. 132.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

67. As Douglas Hall hopes, "with the one who brought the cosmos into being, *ex nihilo*, there is also the possibility—for there is the will—to bring it to its intended perfection. While faith therefore leaves to God the 'how' of such a consummation, it is never silent about the 'what' and the 'why' of it.... It is time, therefore, for the remnants of classical Christianity on this continent to counter all the rumors of a catastrophic ending that emanate from either religious or secular sources by professing their faith in a God who wills to complete and fulfill the promises of a creation that has been visited and redeemed by the love that made it," *Professing the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 358-59.

68. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 93.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

70. Moltmann, *Coming of God*, p. xi.

71. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982).

72. Rachel L. Carson, *The Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

73. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 23.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 338; Moltmann expresses a similar notion in *God in Creation*, p. 122 and in *Coming of God*, p. 132.

76. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 112.