

A DECADE OF HOPE THEOLOGY IN NORTH AMERICA

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In 1967 Jürgen Moltmann's classic *Theology of Hope* was translated and presented to the American public. Connoisseurs of theological developments were already aware of this book's significance in its original German edition of 1964. The responses to the projected English translation were expected to be favorable, but hardly anyone could have predicted that hope theology would receive so voluminous a reaction, a flood of publications and numerous workshops on this new branch of Christian theology.

It is fitting to attempt a description of this phenomenon during the ten years, 1967-77, since its introduction into the United States. It may seem to many that the hope school has withered into oblivion, like so many fads of the late sixties and early seventies. Here I assume that the hope branch has blended into the total tree of Christian theology. But the branch is there and it has become a definite trend, which in its turn has given life and substance to other theological developments. This will be described in the following sections.

First, we will see which developments in American theology helped prepare the soil for the theology of hope. Second, a summary of the more substantial reactions to Moltmann's book will sketch the rather immediate responses within Christian theology. Third, an evaluation of the hope school in its importance for other theological developments will indicate the present identity of this new trend in Christian thought. Finally, I will point to some areas where hope theology should have made more significant contributions than is actually the case.

PREPARING THE SOIL

A sketch of some developments in North American religiousness may explain the mood and attitude from which hope theology could evoke such a substantial response.

Before World War II, Alfred North Whitehead had been welcomed from England to the United States, and he received the encouragement and support to work out his philosophical reflections on the cosmos as a dynamic divine process. As a scientist, he had developed an awareness of reality which was based on empirical observations and a personal conviction that centers of divine transcendence, eternal events, influence the stream of cosmic history. Thus the positive American response to Whitehead's systematic process philosophy infiltrated some theologians

who feel more comfortable with a dynamic rather than a static world view.

God's Grace and Man's Hope by Daniel Day Williams may be considered an early sprout in the garden of hope. The book was originally published in 1949 by Harper & Brothers. In 1965 Harper & Row issued it as a paperback, because it was expected to be of significance to new developments in American theology: (a) concern for the secular, (b) contextual ethics, and (c) the analytic movement in philosophy, which Williams regarded as a "misplaced revolt against the element of metaphysical structure in all human thinking" (10). Originally, Williams wrote the book out of a conviction that a better world could be made, and that this hope should not be based upon man alone "but upon the fact that God is present in human history" (13). He held that neo-orthodoxy was too pessimistic in its reaction against liberalism and the social gospel. In his book he wanted to describe a "truer Christian understanding of man and God which can be expressed in a structurally sound theology" (13). Moreover, he responded critically to the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, to whom he also acknowledged his debt.

Of course, the American intelligentsia had read and studied publications which promoted a dynamic world view. There were, e.g., Hegel, W. Temple, Hartshorne, and the evolutionary theories of Julian Huxley, Morgan, Alexander, and Bergson. The death of Teilhard de Chardin in the early fifties opened the door for the publication of his writings. Many of his books found eager buyers, especially because the Roman authorities tried to obstruct the marketing of such innovative ideas. There was a Teilhard vogue in the land, and the people heard more about evolution and a hopeful future, which was different from the doomsday sermons they had previously received.

Other developments contributed significantly to an attitude which would favor the basic contention of hope theology. First, the American public experienced the rise of psychology as a new center of interest, an aid in their search for identity. Instead of metaphysical theories about the nature of man, people learned to see themselves as historical beings rooted in a definite past and part of a historically determined context. Psychoanalysis developed insight into our psychic pasts, while other theories emphasized the human potential to grow and mature in response to the challenges of our time. Creativity and growth were presented as forces which would help people liberate themselves from their confinements. The future was mirrored as a land of opportunity where we should be able to live as free, mature, and creative centers of consciousness.

A second major development which helped hope theology was the resurgence of biblical studies. They promoted a twofold awareness: Christianity is not necessarily wedded to Greek-Hellenic philosophies,

and the Bible cannot be interpreted at face value. The roots of the New Testament were rightfully related more closely to the Judaic background, and the terminology of the Bible received its proper (non-Hellenic) context. Thus Christian thought began to understand itself more in terms of a history-oriented Judaism than a timeless idea-oriented Hellenism. The Bible received a context within which it could speak its own language. God, Christ, and Church became renewed aspects in history, which is understood to be ordained with a divine future. The Christian community identified itself less as the sole keeper of divine truth, more as a special center of God's power and light. The people were invited to understand themselves as pilgrims to the land of promise, or as builders of a kingdom to be fashioned in history. To be a Christian came to mean being committed to God's creation and its promises. The former ghetto mentality, where one simply tries to live a morally good life to obtain a heavenly reward in the hereafter, was replaced by prospects of action and responsibility for the current state of affairs.

This development needed a theologian to translate traditional Christian ideas and terminology into a new language which would delineate historical and futuristic perspectives. Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* was to serve the Christian community in such a capacity. But Paul Tillich helped prepare the way with his *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, first published by the University of Chicago Press in 1955. (In 1964 it was reprinted as a Phoenix edition and enjoyed its seventh impression in 1965.) Here Tillich describes some major differences between philosophical ontologies and biblical religion in terms of God and man as persons. The dissatisfaction with universal ideas as presented in classical metaphysics and in the age of scholasticism emerged in Leslie Dewart's *The Future of Belief* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), which resulted in a vociferous debate in 1966 (see *The Future of Belief Debate* [Herder & Herder, 1967]).

Significant developments occurred in at least two realms of social concern in the United States in 1965-66. The quest for power among the blacks emerged as a vital movement which needed theological perspectives. And the issue of civil disobedience grew in terms of violence and revolution as a possible alternative for those frustrated with the Establishment's war in Vietnam. The question of conscience was raised and caused a state of crisis in many cases.

These and similar developments marked the breaking of a soil which would respond impressively to a theology of hope as presented by Moltmann.

MAJOR AND RATHER IMMEDIATE RESPONSES

The year 1967 was a remarkable one for the publication of Christian hope theology in the United States. The Westminster Press published

Wolfhart Pannenberg's classic *Jesus: God and Man*. Harper & Row launched Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, and Macmillan presented Dietrich Ritschl's *Memory and Hope: An Inquiry concerning the Presence of Christ*. Pannenberg's text was originally published in German in 1964, Moltmann's original appeared in 1964, and Ritschl's text was presented in 1965 as part of a lectureship of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The first two books found wide recognition, while Ritschl's very stimulating insights became somewhat lost in the heavy traffic of 1967. Some of his theology, however, found a few responses, to be described in my last section.

It should be noted that Moltmann is a Lutheran theologian, and one might expect that the basic promotion of his work would come from Lutherans. This is true insofar as Carl Braaten contributed significantly to the wider publication of Moltmann's theological contentions. Braaten wrote a number of books which translated Moltmann's insights into a more readable language (cf. *The Future of God*, with the subtitle *The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* [New York: Harper & Row, 1969]). Some major ideas were elaborated in his *The Futurist Option* with Robert Jenson as coauthor (New York: Newman, 1970). His theological efforts resulted in his *Christ and Counter-Christ: Apocalyptic Themes in Theology and Culture*, published by Fortress Press in 1972.

The Augsburg Publishing House, which is primarily Lutheran, responded with a threefold series in 1969. It published *Christian Hope and the Future of Humanity*, *Christian Hope and the Lordship of Christ*, and *Christian Hope and the Secular*. I am not well acquainted with present developments within American Lutheranism, but it seems that Moltmann produced a very important document of Lutheran theology which could help unite the different factions more substantially than news reports indicate.

New Theology No. 5 is part of the respectable series edited by Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman. Each year since 1964 a volume of articles tried to indicate the major trends which characterized that year's theological scene. (The series terminated in 1974.) In 1968 *New Theology No. 5* claimed to be "the best way into Bloch, Moltmann, Pannenberg and the new talk of the future, hope and eschatology." Thus the North American public received a survey of the dynamic thought centering on hope theology and its related debates.

In the same year (1968) Moltmann traveled through the United States to respond with lectures and appearances to the interest which his book had stirred within American Christian theology. He was part of the Duke Consultation on "The Task of Theology Today," April 4-6, where he presented a lecture summarizing major aspects of his book. A number of significant American theologians were invited to respond substantially to

Moltmann's basic contentions. A book, *The Future of Hope* (Herder & Herder, 1970), incorporated the responses from Frederick Herzog, Harvey Cox, Langdon Gilkey, John Macquarrie, and Van A. Harvey. The more critical remarks on hope theology were launched by Gilkey, Macquarrie, and Harvey, although it may be said that their negative reactions were not always based on a proper reading of Moltmann's book. It is helpful for any debate to have such reflective criticism which challenges the validity and significance of a major theological publication. Therefore *The Future of Hope* deserves recognition, especially since Moltmann closed this publication with a response to his critics, "Toward the Next Step in the Dialogue."

Thus 1968 became the year when the hope movement made its presence felt. Publishers understood the trend and geared their efforts in terms of what was "in": hope. Harper & Row published one of Erich Fromm's manuscripts under the title *The Revolution of Hope*, which in the same year appeared as a Bantam paperback. One has the impression that chapter 2, "Hope," was added to an already existing text to make the publication more contemporaneous in terms of the hope movement. However, the book itself has definite merits and can be regarded as a vigorous call to social and human responsibility in an age of technology. Among other related publications is, e.g., Ezra Stotland's *The Psychology of Hope* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969). It is more clinical and less theoretical than William F. Lynch's outstanding *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (New York: American Library [Mentor-Omega], 1966).

Herder & Herder took its share of the action by publishing a number of hope-oriented books. In 1969 it presented *Man and His New Hopes* by Gerald O'Collins, S.J., a quick and perceptive reader of theological books who reports very well on the major contentions in hope theology and the difference among its various authors.

After issuing *The Future of Hope* in 1970, Herder & Herder prepared translations of Ernst Bloch, who is considered to be the father of the hope school. In 1971 it published his *Man on His Own* with a foreword by Harvey Cox and an introduction by Moltmann. In the same year it issued Bloch's *On Karl Marx*, and in 1972 his *Atheism in Christianity*.

Fortress Press made its contributions by publishing Walter H. Capps's *The Future of Hope* in 1970 and *Time Invades the Cathedral* (subtitle, *Tensions in the School of Hope*) in 1972. The former, edited by Capps, contains articles by Bloch, Fackenheim, Moltmann, and Metz. However, Capps's own "Mapping the Hope Movement" is an excellent account of the discussions and debates concerning hope theology down to 1970. His notes contain a wealth of bibliographical references. The second book has a foreword by Moltmann in which Capps receives an endorsement,

especially for his proper analysis of political theology as a branch of hope theology.

A Conference on Hope and the Future of Man was held in New York City on October 8–10, 1971. Primary participants were those interested in Teilhard de Chardin's theories, process thought, and hope theology. Among the renowned speakers were John Cobb, Carl Braaten, Jürgen Moltmann, Donald P. Gray, Daniel Day Williams, and Schubert Ogden. Political theology was represented by Johannes B. Metz himself. The lectures and formulated responses were edited by Ewert H. Cousins and published by Fortress in 1972.

The early influence of hope theology on process thinking can be noted in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), especially in Ralph E. James' "Process Cosmology and Theological Particularity," chapter 21 in this substantial book.

Naturally, the other center of the hope school, Wolfhart Pannenberg, received major recognition. His publications are impressive contributions. After his *Jesus: God and Man*, the Westminster Press published *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (1969), *The Apostles' Creed* (1972), and *The Idea of God and Human Freedom* (1973). Fortress promoted Pannenberg's thought by the publication of his *Basic Questions in Theology* (1970) and *What is Man?* (1970, with the first paperback edition in 1972 and the second printing in 1974).

Some related publications in the perspectives of hope are David O. Woodyard's *Beyond Cynicism: The Practice of Hope* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) and *The God Experience: Essays in Hope*, edited by Joseph P. Whelan, S.J. (New York: Newman, 1971). The latter contains articles from known authors, e.g., Michael Novak, Gabriel Vahanian, Gregory Baum, Daniel Day Williams, Louis Dupré, George Lindbeck, and Avery Dulles. Such publications give substantial evidence for the fact that the hope movement evoked an impressive response from a variety of authorities in theology and religious studies. They represent a genuine spectrum of Christian denominations and show how hope can be integrated in different ways.

Other studies delineated the origin and development of hope theology, e.g., M. Douglas Meeks in his *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974). In its foreword, Moltmann praises Meeks for describing perceptively the basic motives which formed the emergence of the hope school. In a special way it is these motives that should receive greater identification if hope theology is to remain vital.

In linking hope theology to the North American scene in one particular fashion, perhaps one may note that the scholar Herwig Arts wrote his doctoral dissertation on Moltmann and Tillich. He considers these two theologians as fundamental for Christian hope theology (cf. *Moltmann et*

Tillich: Les fondements de l'espérance chrétienne [Gembloux: Duculot, 1973]). Indeed, Paul Tillich has contributed impressively to the viability of Christian theology in the United States. His thoughts are definitely among the more creative and inspiring statements expressive of Lutheran theology. He too prepared American Christianity for a positive response to hope theology as formulated primarily by Pannenberg and Moltmann.

HOPE AND OTHER THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

First, it should be noted that hope theology is not dependent merely on one or two publications. Behind this school are two outstanding and dynamic theologians, Pannenberg and Moltmann, truly creative and productive authors. A number of Pannenberg's publications have already been mentioned in the previous section. The series of books authored by Moltmann is impressive. From his 1968 travels through the United States resulted his *Religion, Revolution, and the Future* (New York: Scribner's, 1969). It contains lectures presented at a conference held by the John XXIII Institute of St. Xavier College in Chicago (the papers presented at that conference are published by Sheed & Ward in *The Future as the Presence of Shared Hope*, 1968) and on other occasions (cf. *Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue*, edited by Thomas W. Ogletree and published by Abingdon Press in 1968).

Moltmann's identification with political theology comes through and takes on more definite shape in his *Hope and Planning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). He returns to the more basic and less practical realm of Christian theology in *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present* (Fortress, 1974) and in *Religion and Political Society* (Harper & Row, 1974). This development culminated in his other major book, *The Crucified God*, which strongly represents the Lutheran world view in its experience of life in the shadow of the cross (Harper & Row, 1975).

Death and evil are substantial phenomena which prevent the Christian from claiming to have already found the promised land or God's kingdom. The dynamic by which this dark side of human existence is placed in the perspectives of redemption and a divine future is typical of Moltmann's hope theology. Thus he reinforces more distinctly the basic contentions already present in his *Theology of Hope*.

In his *Hope against Hope* (subtitle, *Moltmann to Merton in One Theological Decade* [Fortress, 1976]), Walter H. Capps reports Moltmann's reactions to the debates during the Conference on Hope and the Future of Man in New York, October 1971. It seemed that Moltmann became upset with the academic rhetoric and intended to focus attention on the suffering conditions of oppressed persons (44). The pain and apathy resulting from negative experiences of the alienated human

prompted him to place the core of hope theology in the context of crucified human situations. But the final two chapters of *The Crucified God* are devoted to the psychological and political liberation of humankind. Thus the author's immediate concerns remain with the human reality as a political enterprise operating on the social level. Moltmann explains the significance of contemplation (cf. 68) but he does not follow those in search of the mystical (e.g., Merton); Capps explains this development as an understandable reaction to the secular involvement of hope and political theology.

On the contrary, Moltmann continues to drum up support for a Christian movement which understands itself to be a church of eschatological activists. This is the voice of his latest book, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Harper & Row, 1977). Its subtitle, *A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, indicates its theological orientation. (*Time*, May 9, 1977, mentions this publication as a definite contribution of the "hard-cover revival," which makes the religious publishing business prosper.)

Already in 1973 Martin R. Tripole, S.J., announced to American readers Moltmann's theological interpretation of the Christian Church ("Ecclesiological Developments in Moltmann's Theology of Hope," *TS* 34 [1973] 19-35). The book itself, of course, is more substantial than the article could predict, but Tripole refers to Moltmann's lectures on "Die Kirche," which he had begun in 1968 and developed in his fall and winter lectures of 1971-72. Tripole attended the latter part, and his summation definitely reaches the core of Moltmann's ecclesiology as formulated in the most recent volume. *The New Review of Books and Religion* features the following sentence as the most comprehensive statement of Sherman E. Johnson's review: "The world that Moltmann contemplates is a liberated world in which not only will there be harmony among mankind but also between mankind and nature" (*NRBR* 1 [May 1977] 5). The Church is envisioned as liberated and liberating in its vocation.

In the context of the Marxist-Christian dialogue, Thomas W. Ogletree is one of the most vocal spokesmen of the hope school. This can be seen in his article "From Anxiety to Responsibility: The Shifting Focus of Theology," in *New Theology* No. 6 (1969), which is primarily devoted to the major trend of revolution as promoted by religious thought and Christian theologians. This affirmation of the theology of hope is definitely shown in his article "What May Man Really Hope for?" in *From Hope to Liberation: Towards a New Marxist-Christian Dialogue* (Fortress, 1974).

In the context of liberation theology, special reference should be made to Rubem A. Alves. Originally from Brazil, he came to the United States in the Program of Advanced Religion Studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York and finished his doctoral work at Princeton

Seminary during 1965–68. The fruits of his creative studies are contained in his *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington: Corpus, 1969). He makes special references to Moltmann (hope), Richard Shaull (revolution theory), and Reinhold Niebuhr (social theology). His responses to Marxism can be seen in his references to Garaudy, Marcuse, and Marx. A very concise statement of his theology can be found in his article “Theses for a Reconstruction of Theology,” in *IDOC*, International North American Edition, October 31, 1970, 3–16. Alves substantially influenced the writings of another Brazilian theologian, the priest Hugo Assmann (cf. *Theology for a Nomad Church* [New York: Orbis, 1975]).

In the foreword to Alves’ book, Harvey Cox makes some quick comparisons between Moltmann and Alves in their theological concerns. The relation between liberation theology (the Third World) and political theology (European) is evaluated more substantially by Francis P. Fiorenza in his article “Political Theology and Liberation Theology: An Inquiry into Their Fundamental Meaning” (cf. *Liberation, Revolution, Freedom: Theological Perspectives*, edited by Thomas M. McFadden and published by Seabury Press, New York, 1975). In this context Fiorenza considers the work of Metz, Moltmann, and Dorothy Sölle in reference to the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo, Leonard Boff, Hugo Assmann, and Rubem Alves. One of the more basic characteristics of liberation’s identity is its concern for the Church’s viability as a sign of salvation and a center of mission.

Here I have made reference to liberation theology insofar as it does not pertain exclusively to Latin America. The concept “liberation theology” promoted its own branch in the social context of the United States. Significant contributions have been made by James H. Cone (e.g., *A Black Theology of Liberation* [New York: Lippincott, 1970]) and Rosemary Ruether (*Liberation Theology* [New York: Paulist, 1972]). Cone presents many aspects of a New Testament theology by which he substantiates his liberation theology rather convincingly. Ruether has a different approach and associates with the alienation literature of Marxists as presented by Marcuse. This is obvious in her article “Paradoxes of Human Hope: The Messianic Horizon of Church and Society,” in *Theological Studies* 33 (1972) 235–52.

Ruether’s basic contention is that, with the rise of civilization and the accumulation of power by the political machines, the individual and the spiritual communities are alienated. She observes that reactionaries tend to either start a revolution and proclaim the new movement as sanctioned by God, or step outside the affairs of this world and become spiritual ghettos, where one hopes for God’s promises in the next life. Ruether holds that such apocalyptic religiousness is quasi-paranoid. She criticizes the ghetto mentality for not taking initiatives in social renovation. On

the other hand, she bemoans the fact that Christianity made a deal with the Roman establishment and proceeded to become the builder of the Holy Christian Empire, which came to its full glory during the Middle Ages. The Church has lost its prophetic role and identified itself with the state.

Ruether mentions the difference between Judaism and Christianity: the latter assumes redemption already effected in Christ, the Messiah; the former is still waiting for the Messiah to come. The issue is one of security and triumphalism. If one knows that redemption is already a fact, then one can assert this conviction with great confidence. Then life and reality will be molded and ruled according to particular understandings of revelation; or one will let this world rot away in its own stench and inertia because the "new world," the hereafter, has been perceived already. One fails to meet the true challenge of trying to take this life seriously by laboring in it so that a better world will emerge.

Thus we see how the theology of hope has infiltrated Ruether's thought and encouraged her to speak in favor of social action as projected by political theology. Ruether's *TS* article is an extension of her book *The Radical Kingdom* (Harper & Row, 1970). Its subtitle is *The Western Experience of Messianic Hope*, and it contains a survey of "Historical Movements: Christian and Secular" (Part 1). This is followed by an account of "Theological Reflections on Modern Society" (Part 2), of which "Christian-Marxist Dialogue" and the "Theology of Hope" form the last chapters. In the final chapter, "Man as Revolution," she describes her basic understanding of revolution theology. Although she does not pay ostensible homage to the theology of hope, she definitely recognizes the significance of Moltmann in the Marxist-Christian dialogue. She states: "When Bloch is assimilated into Jürgen Moltmann's theology of hope, we have no longer simply a stance for further dialogue, but a Christian-Marxist synthesis on the basis of which a new Christianity questions the adequacy of its recent theological heritage, and tries to recover anew the literal faith in the biblical Kingdom to come" (203).

Ruether's identification with hope theology is also obvious in her *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Seabury, 1974). In his foreword, Gregory Baum explains that Ruether opposes a fulfilled messianism, the source of an untimely triumphalism which can result in a self-righteous judgmental attitude among Christians. Baum perceives Ruether as proposing an unfulfilled messianism. Its significance is found in Baum's statement: "What follows from this is that Christians stand together with Jews looking for the fulfillment of the promise in the future, restless in this world, ever discerning the injustices and the evil in the present, and open to the victorious coming of God's power to renew human life on this earth" (20). Those who read Moltmann's *Theology of*

Hope will recognize the same contention and the same concerns. (Cf. "Jewish and Christian Messianism," in *The Experiment Hope: Essays by Moltmann*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks [Fortress, 1975] 60. Most of the essays mark Moltmann's development after 1967.)

Another branch of liberation theology in the United States is the woman movement. One of its theological contributions is Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1973). Daly is against "reifying" or "thingfying" attitudes, which reduce everything to objects. This occurs on many levels, physical, psychological, and social, and it leads to rapism. She wants to challenge the existing symbolism in the Judeo-Christian tradition, which promotes a masculine and rapist attitude. It is her intention to rehumanize people and their religious context. People need to be liberated from roles imposed on them. They have to mature to a psychic wholeness, which is not victimized by false dichotomies and hostile splits of defensiveness.

In its spring 1975 issue, *Horizons* (Journal of the College Theology Society) included "Symposium: Toward a Theology of Feminism," which primarily discussed Daly's book. In his statement "Mary Daly: Theological Orphan?" John E. Burkhart writes: "In any event, she [Daly] is surely one of the most radical among the theologians of hope. She is, in a word, an unabashed futurist." He makes this evaluation mainly because, "at a fundamental level of ideological commitment, she concurs with Margaret Mead's insight into 'performative' cultures, with the unquestioning instinct that the future will create human lives so novel that the past can no longer offer any useful guidance for the times to come, or even for the times at hand" (119). Burkhart questions how radically new the future human may become and whether any form of continuity could be signified as already characteristic in the present human phenomenon.

Of course, political movements interpret the Bible and other authoritative sources in an opportunistic fashion to substantiate their own cause. A recent form of such Sunday-school theology is playfully part of the Jewish feminist movement. June 1976 saw launched the first independent Jewish women's magazine, *Lilith*. In the Bible Lilith is mentioned as a demon who lurks in the darkness of the night. The more sophisticated research found her to be the legendary predecessor of Eve. She wanted to be equal to Adam, refused to be subservient to him. That was why she was ejected from Paradise. Jewish feminists find in Lilith a primordial symbol which personifies the fight for equality. This use of the Bible does not represent much of theological significance. Theology is more fundamental and basic.

This brings us back to Moltmann's foreword in Meeks's *Origins of the Theology of Hope*. He praises the author for recognizing the basic motives

at the heart of hope theology. These motives have expressed themselves beyond the theology of hope into the realm of political theology, which reached liberation theology in the United States, especially in terms of black liberation theology and a feminist theology concerned with the liberation of women as well as men.

In *Theology in the Americas*, edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Orbis, 1976), we find a substantial account of the areas within which liberation theology has flourished. The book contains papers presented at a Detroit conference (1975) where theologians, policy planners, social scientists, pastoral people, and activists from North and South America were invited to participate. The leading idea was to determine in what way liberation theology could have significance for the United States. Its relevance is obvious in the context of social suffering among blacks, women, native Americans, and Chicanos. But the true significance of liberation theology in a land of free enterprise, career opportunity, freedom of speech and movement, and a democratic consciousness is less easily delineated than in countries where the people as a whole suffer from suppression, and the government is in the hands of dictators. Consequently, theologians in the United States feel less urged to identify with liberation theology and are more comfortable with political theology as promoted by the theology of hope. (Cf. reports on liberation theology in the United States in the October and November 1976 issues of the *National Catholic Reporter*.)

THE QUESTION OF HOPE'S CURRENCY

In *New Theology No. 5* Marty and Peerman wrote an editorial introduction, "Christian Hope and Human Futures," wherein they attempted to assess the importance of hope theology. In terms of its historical context the theology of hope received the following endorsement: "The current theologians [of hope], then, are trying to deal with the past and the present without commitment to the pessimism which people saw in neo-orthodoxy, or the optimism which people saw in its successor, secular theology. They can appreciate both of these generations and are probably more positively related to them than they were to each other..." (11). This statement can be regarded as an acceptable diagnosis of the historical rootage of hope theology. But the editors could not then know the further developments of the hope school in terms of political, liberation, and radical theology.

Marty cannot be held fully responsible for the weak encouragement of hope theology in his article in *Commonweal*, August 22, 1969 (510-11). Regarding the theology of hope, he assumed that "in quiet ways its after-effect should be around for awhile" (511). He did not foresee the dynamic creativity of Moltmann and Pannenberg as prolific authors of many

substantial theological publications. Revolution theology had not yet asserted itself significantly at the end of the sixties, nor was it very clear how much the theology of hope would help in its search for religious perspectives and a Christian theology. The quest for power and identity among the blacks had not yet evolved into a more mature theological self-appraisal. The issue of civil disobedience, in terms of violence and revolution as a possible alternative for those frustrated with the Establishment's war in Vietnam, raised the question of conscience, which caused a state of crisis in many cases. The theology of hope would make an educated contribution to help identify the theological significance of frustration and delineate the necessity of moderate action instead of destructive rebellion. The liberation of women and the feminist movement had not yet found women theologians who would represent their concerns in respectable and well-researched books.

It is difficult to assess how much the theology of hope has contributed to the viability and vitality of contemporary theological and religious thought. Its share, however, is substantial. Its representatives are alive and growing. This we have seen in the contributions of Moltmann, Pannenberg, Dietrich Ritschl, a number of Lutheran theologians in the United States, Ogletree, Alves, Cone, Ruether, Daly, and many others. In addition to the information in the previous sections, it may be noted that the theologian Richard P. McBrien has helped Catholics understand better the significance of their Church as a dynamic center of identity. Much of his ecclesiology is based on chapter 5 of Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* (cf. McBrien, *Do We Need the Church?* [Harper & Row, 1969], and *Church: The Continuing Quest* [Newman, 1970]).

There are some areas, however, where the theology of hope could have made more significant strides than is presently the case. For example, much of contemporary Christology and the research into death and immortality seem to be untouched by the new epistemology so characteristic of the theology of hope. In his excellently structured article "Contemporary Approaches to Christology: Analysis and Reflection" (*Living Light* 13 [1976] 119-44), Avery Dulles presents five types of Christology which characterize contemporary schools: dogmatic, historical, biblical-kerygmatic, liturgical-sacramental, and secular-dialogic. Only Pannenberg and Metz are mentioned a few times; there is no real influence of hope theology in terms of these five types. It is quite obvious that Dietrich Ritschl's hope Christology belongs to the liturgical-sacramental type, but Dulles does not mention him as one of the most significant sources of this approach. If I may conjecture, I would say that the theology of hope, insofar as it promotes association with the historical Jesus (the past) and favors action, belongs partly to the historical and partly to the secular-dialogic groups. Dulles does not pay due respect to

the writings of Ruether as presented in *Faith and Fratricide*. He leaves the question of fulfilled and unfulfilled messianism unnoticed. One can say that the Christology analyzed by Dulles centers almost exclusively on the Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the Gospels and proclaimed at the major ecumenical councils of the early centuries. The theology of hope has entered Christology only insofar as Christ's presence in the worshiping community is being considered. Christ's own future does not seem to be a focal point; as an expression of a fulfilled messianism, it should respond to the criticism presented by Moltmann and Ruether.

In the context of the theology of death, immortality, and resurrection, most of the published work reveals the following characteristics. Death theologians emphasize the existentialistic approach, where one is called to interpret death personally, so that dying can become meaningful. Immortality talk still finds much identification in references to a soul or spirit which is regarded as an immortal principle of the human. Resurrection theology centers on the historicity of Christ's resurrection and the truth of the Gospel narratives. One wants to determine whether the story is historical, symbolic, or kerygmatic in intentionality. Some exceptions can be found, e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp's article "Theological Synthesis and Hermeneutical Conclusions," in *Immortality and Resurrection*, edited by Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy (Herder and Herder, 1970). He definitely disapproves of immortality talk which would make the reality of death a sham (119). He favors a resurrection belief which is based on a hope in the future as signified by Jesus' resurrection. He promotes the insight that the body's resurrection expresses primarily the resurrection of a new community in Christ. This will be the nucleus of a world-wide community emerging in solidarity with a re-created universe in Christ. "The resurrection, therefore, not only expresses a hope for the future but a duty and task for the present" (126). Thus Moltmann's understanding of promise (*pro-missio*) in terms of mission has been integrated into Blenkinsopp's theological synthesis.

It should be noted that the theology of hope consists primarily of a mythological and symbolic language which is traditional within Christian theology. The frustration of process theologians, who want hope theologians to express themselves more clearly in philosophical or universal terms, is justifiable. However, the dynamics of hope reach beyond what is understandable. As such, its language will supersede that which can be explained in universal terms. The significance of God and Christ is not yet fully known, and we suffer from what remains unfulfilled of the divine promise, which inspires us to be hopeful in a particular and Church-oriented way.

This dynamic ambiguity will continue to demand that theology express itself in terms of hope and a future kingdom. Thus the theology of hope

will be needed continually by all those who believe in progress, human action, divine promises for history, future newness, life, and creativity. The frustrations of life are substantial enough to make us modest pessimists or even fatalists. In the presence of alienation, apathy, and spiritual defeatism, hope will be the needed antidote to make the impossible appear possible again. All cultures and civilizations are based on a childlike optimism, which deserves a theology to find and maintain courage, fortitude, and a belief in God's Lordship, which is majestic in its faithfulness to creation as a whole.