

## The Theology of Hope: An English-Language Bibliography

Eschatology has always been among the most neglected of Christian theological concerns. In the early New Testament period Christians were radically oriented toward a future which they thought of as the imminent return of Jesus and the consummation of all things – that is, the passing away of heaven and earth and the coming of the new creation. In this radical orientation toward the Parousia, Christians saw their lives, faith, and worship as being ordered toward an immediate divine resolution of all human endeavours. When this resolution did not come to pass as quickly as expected, adjustments were necessary in the Christian conception of time and in the Christian conception of what was meant by the Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> From an imminent return of Jesus, Christians moved to a position that postulated his return at some indefinite future time. This reorientation necessarily involved a kind of compromise with the world and a resulting loss of enthusiasm for the radical meaning of Christian eschatology.

Although the theme occurs throughout the history of Christian theology and living, the church had to wait for our own day for a true renewal of Christian eschatology. In the early part of this century, Weiss and Schweitzer had heralded the renewed interest in eschatology, with their studies of the primitive Christian eschatological hope.<sup>2</sup> However, their investigations, for whatever reason, remained without immediate consequence. It was not until Ernst Bloch's philosophical development of the hope theme and his illustration of it from the Bible that Christian theologians began to see the possibilities for a radical renewal of eschatology.

### *Philosophical Background*

In seeking to answer the question 'Whence the theology of hope?' we understand it to mean at root a reinterpretation and a renewal of Christian eschatology. Undoubtedly this new movement in theology is part of a reaction to the 'dialectical theology' which dominated German theology from the end of the first world war, and which was exemplified in the works of Karl Barth

1. This shift of emphasis is evidenced in the New Testament writings themselves, as has been illustrated by C. H. Dodd and R. Bultmann, among others.

2. Cf. Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (1892), and Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1906). Schweitzer's work appeared in English translation as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1911).

and Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>3</sup> But the philosophical roots of the new direction in theology can be traced back most directly to Hegel, for it was Hegel who first offered a successful philosophical criticism of Kantian idealism. In making his critique, Hegel sought to give an historical perspective to the Kantian explanation of human nature and knowledge. It was the importance of history that Kant had failed to realize. In working out his own dialectic of the Spirit, Hegel began to see all of history as under the influence of Spirit (God).

This Hegelian idealism, although radically different from that of Kant, was itself unsatisfying and incomplete in the eyes of the young Karl Marx.<sup>4</sup> Marx made a critique of the Hegelian dialectic in terms of a materialism which emphasized the sociological reality of the industrial revolution. Thus Marx added the crucial economic factor to the Hegelian world-view. By means of this new dialectical materialism, Marx sought not only to give new life and meaning to philosophy but, more important, to give an impetus to vital forces at work in society – that is to say, to revolution.

Ernst Bloch, a rather unorthodox Marxist, began to develop the hints found, especially in the early Marx, regarding the *dynamic* role of matter in relationship to man's development in history. In his writings, Bloch asserted that matter was itself the basis of future developments in an open-ended process, that is, that matter itself was the root, the ground, the very possibility of change and of development in man and nature. Matter was, in Bloch's term, the *mater* of man in respect to change, development, growth.<sup>5</sup>

The basic philosophical statement which grew out of this reconception of Marxian 'matter,' and which characterizes Bloch's philosophy, is the famous 'S is not yet P' or 'Subject is not yet Predicate.' On this point, Bloch stands in contradistinction to all earlier philosophers, for he posits, instead of a relationship between man and historical (or past) realities, the vital, meaningful relationship of man to the future, which is thought of as the not yet existent ground of possibility. In other words, for the first time in the history of philosophy, Bloch combines the idea of matter and change with the idea of the future. For Bloch it is this future orientation of human nature that gives meaning to the life of man.

### *The Hope Principle*

In his vast work *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch traces, and gives a foundation for, the belief that it is hope which lies at the very heart of man's being. To do this Bloch shows how he finds hope rooted in man's conscious life and activity as well as in man's unconscious. This is the beginning of Bloch's

3. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), for a critique of Barth (pp. 50–69, 279–81) and Bultmann (pp. 182–90).

4. In general, I follow Francis P. Fiorenza, 'Dialectical Theology and Hope: I,' *Heythrop Journal* 9 (1968), 149–63.

5. Cf. S. Paul Schilling, 'Ernst Bloch: Philosopher of the Not-Yet,' *Christian Century*, 84 (1967), 1455–58.

anthropological demonstration of the fundamentality of hope. In consequence of his basic acceptance of the Marxian dialectic Bloch goes on to show how man is also ontologically rooted in hope. He does this by an analysis of reality conceived in terms of the basic principle 'S is not yet P.'

In the course of his anthropological consideration of man as the creature of hope, Bloch has recourse to the whole history of human endeavour in literature, music, the plastic arts, science, and religion. It is, in fact, in the Bible that Bloch finds the supreme statement of man's radical hope. For it is in the Bible that man is best characterized as a creature oriented toward the future, a creature of promise. Even the very name of God himself, 'Yahweh' (which Bloch interprets as 'I will be who I will be'), indicates the fundamentality of the future-orientation.

Many have praised the power and eloquence of Bloch's vision of man. Although disagreeing with fundamental elements in his philosophy, both Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes Metz, the Roman Catholic theologian most influenced by Bloch, have found in his works an inspiration for the reconsideration of eschatology, precisely because of his refreshingly new vision of the heart of the biblical message.

Moreover, Bloch's works became known at the right moment. By the late 1950s the post-war spirit of doom and pessimism was countered by a new spirit of hope, which seemed to grow out of the very pace of change itself. Especially after the launching of the first earth satellites in 1957, men began to feel the hint of new challenges, new horizons, new possibilities. The orientation of society toward the future gave new life to the spirit of hope. Moltmann and others, in theological tandem with this new spirit of the age, have taken up Bloch's development of a philosophy of hope and given it a theological setting which holds great promise for a contemporary interpretation of the gospel.

The bibliography is divided into two major sections. The first lists all the works of Moltmann himself which are readily available in English. The second section gives a listing of works dealing with the 'theology of hope' phenomenon or pertaining to it. An attempt has been made to restrict the list to those articles and books useful to teachers and students, and to dispense with works intended for the general public. Thus many of the news-media articles about the 'theology of hope' movement have not been included.

I wish to record my thanks to all those who have helped me in the collection of this bibliography, and especially to Professor Moltmann himself for his encouragement.

### *A. Writings of Jürgen Moltmann*

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## 2. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

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