

***Creating a Just Future, Jurgen Moltmann, London UK: SCM Press, 1989***

This book deals starkly with the present ecological crisis, and offers a Christian hope, based on the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to move human beings to responsible action, in the face of overwhelming danger. He does not talk of God intervening, apart from through His calling, and enabling, of human beings to take action, so he seems to allow for the destruction of creation by human folly. In that case, he admits that God would suffer loss, yet since He is the transcendent creator beyond His own creation, He would be able to transform the debris of creation, by a new act of creation: "He will bring this annihilated world into the creation of His new world."

Jurgen Moltmann sees the ecological crisis as cause and effect of a spiritual crisis, which produces sicknesses of soul, as well as body. He says that the ecological crisis has already become an ecological catastrophe for many weaker forms of life. He says that the crisis is the result of modern Western thought, which detaches human beings from the laws and rhythms of nature. "Only modern Western civilisations are one-sidedly programmed for development, growth, expansion, and conquest. Yet", he says, "mankind does belong within the equilibrium of nature, and, if nature collapses, then human beings will collapse with it." So, "only an extensive change in the life-style of human beings, and in the forms of industrial production, could ward off the ecological death of mankind. We need an ecological reform of our society, of production, of consumption, and of transport. . . . Ecological justice, which is the basis of a symbiosis of humankind, and nature, capable of survival, will become just as important, in the future, as economic justice, and justice between the generations. . . . Does modern society have a future? Its future is repentance. . . . Because we cannot know whether humanity will survive, we must act today, as though the future of all mankind depended on us, and, at the same time, trust wholly that God will remain true to His creation, and not let it fall."

Moltmann sees repentance as turning to Christ, and receiving His peace. "The peace of Christ is personally perceived through faith, in the depth of one's own heart. . . . The peace of Christ is universal, and permeates the whole creation; otherwise Christ is not the Christ of God." Moltmann goes on to argue that we must discern, and act, according to a moral order within creation: "we can live in accordance with God, only if we live also in accordance with nature".

He realises that the crisis is so great that many may lose their nerve. So He offers hope: “The Christian recollection makes present the suffering and death of Christ, as He was abandoned by God, and, through the anticipation of His resurrection from the dead, rouses hope for the victory of life against the power of death. . . . Hope against danger leads to paradoxical action, i.e., action against appearances, and against prospects of success, because, by virtue of hope in God, one sees more than the eye rightly sees, when it looks into the future of the world.”

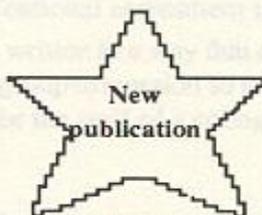
Moltmann looks at the ecological implications of the Sabbath, and Sunday, in a way, which might offer some common ground between Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians. In a section on “The Sabbath of humankind: the divine therapy”, he speaks of the Sabbath as a “feast of creation”, “on which one rediscovers the beauty of created things, and perceives the value of all the things, which one has seen during work, only in terms of utility”. Moltmann, himself, sees Sunday as “that day after the Jewish Sabbath, which Christians had celebrated, from the beginning, as the day of Christ’s resurrection”. Yet he tries to combine the significance of the Jewish Sabbath with that of the Christian Sunday, which involves a compromise between the keeping of the Sabbath and the celebrating of Sunday: “The creation story speaks of ‘evening and morning’. It helps me to begin the day of celebration on Saturday, at noon, and end it on Sunday afternoon. In that case, one relaxes on Saturday, and, at least on this evening, one can trace something of Israel’s Sabbath rest. . . . On Sunday morning, we are then ready to celebrate the day of Christ’s resurrection, and, on it, the first day of the new creation of all things, and to perceive that future, in which all things will be completed.”

Moltmann’s book is directed mainly at Western societies, but it has much relevance for Papua New Guinea, as it becomes increasingly Westernised.

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