

The Kingdom of God in Moltmann's eschatology:

A South African perspective

By

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Introduction.

What does the term “Kingdom of God” mean to us as Christians today? To many it is an irrelevant religious term that is used to describe the idealistic expectations of Christians. Some view it as religious denial when having to face the suffering of a cruel and broken world.

The Kingdom of God is even controversial in the academic world of theology.

Theologians like Schweitzer were adamant that the Kingdom of God should be seen in futuristic terms and not as a concept that is real in the created order (Olivier 1991:160). Others like Dodd argued that the Kingdom was already present at the incarnation and should be recognised in our contexts today (Olivier 1991:169).

At face value, any thought of the Kingdom of God is considered unrealistic when faced with human history. Popular theology has painted the picture of a transcendent Kingdom that would eventually replace the life that we know¹.

Moltmann offers a different definition of the Kingdom of God that is relevant to society. The notion of the Kingdom of God is central to his theology and forms part of his eschatology. It is Moltmann’s view that we do not need to think about the Kingdom in transcendental terms, but that God is actively involved in human history, creating in His creation a dwelling place that we would refer to as God’s Kingdom.

This study is a literary study of his work and I will use Moltmann’s book “The Coming of God: Christian eschatology” as the framework for discussing his views. The structure

of this work is divided into five sections which I describe later in this introduction.

Before I do this, I must answer some questions so as to clarify the process by which I argue for Moltmann's concept of the Kingdom of God:

1.1 What is Moltmann's methodology?

Moltmann finds the start of his theological discourse in the day-to-day experience of human life. This is dealt with more concretely in chapter 1. People ask questions about God that relate to their daily existence and therefore do they strive towards a theology that is based on human experiences of God and God's Kingdom (Moltmann 2000:3). From here, Moltmann consults Church history to find whether the questions being asked at present have been raised before. This is a common method that he uses in the majority of his work. From here the past theories are tested in the light of modern events and new possibilities are raised. These possibilities are then subjected to Biblical scrutiny to establish whether these new proposals hold a sound theological view.

1.2 What is the argument?

It is my argument that Moltmann offers a concept of the Kingdom of God that is neither exclusively transcendental, nor anthropologically based. The exclusively transcendent aspect of the Kingdom of God is not relevant to the real experiences that people have. At the same time, we cannot produce the Kingdom of God through human works.

It is my hypothesis that in Moltmann's theology of the Kingdom of God we find a concept that is relevant to our daily existence by finding a relationship between the transcendent- and immanent aspects of God's being. I am writing from a South African

¹ A good example of this view can be found in Hal Lindsey's book entitled "There's a new world

perspective where there is a strong search for meaning and identity. Although Moltmann uses a sophisticated philosophical argument to describe the Kingdom of God, he nevertheless offers a concept that can be applied.

1.3 How is it argued?

Chapter 1 aims to describe Moltmann's concept of the Kingdom as a Trinitarian theology that serves as the goal (telos) of God's created order. Moltmann's theology is based on a Trinitarian theology and it is therefore important to give this description of Moltmann's view of the Trinity. If there is a place where one can describe Moltmann's theology as being transcendental, then it would be in this concept, but Moltmann deliberately attempts to describe the work of the Trinity in immanent terms. As we will see this Trinitarian approach cannot be described as being exclusively Theocentric as found in Apocalyptic- and Dialectic theology.

Chapter 2 deals with Moltmann's understanding of the Kingdom of God, forming part of the individual's approach to life, death and the hereafter. The first part of the chapter is argued via negativa. It is in what Moltmann does not believe about life, death and the hereafter that we can deduct what his position is. After gaining insight from Moltmann's point of view, I test it in generalised descriptions of human world-views as found in my context, South Africa. These descriptions of different cultures are to be read in a manner which illustrate the relevance of Moltmann's views to our understanding of life and not as a scientific analysis of these different cultures.

If the Kingdom influences individuals, then the Kingdom of God must also have an historic significance. Chapter 3 describes different historic approaches to the establishment of God's Kingdom only to be confronted with the question whether the Kingdom is transcendent or humanly inspired. Moltmann's views here bring these two concepts together, establishing the possibility for the Kingdom of God to extend not only beyond time and space, but beyond any finite limitations that may exist.

This universal understanding of God's Kingdom is described in Chapter 4 where we see that God's Kingdom is not only offered to humanity, but is the journey of the entire creation. In this chapter, the relevance of God's Kingdom in the created order is emphasised.

Chapter 5 serves as the pinnacle of Moltmann's argument, bringing together the different eschatologies which he discusses under the unifying theme of the Kingdom of God. This chapter includes his developing theology as found in his earlier publications. Again the implications of Moltmann's theology for the South African situation is reflected, showing the relevance of his approach. This chapter also serves as a conclusion of the whole project.

Throughout the dissertation, I will use the New International Version of the Bible when referring to Biblical passages.

Chapter 1

Moltmann's understanding of the Trinitarian Kingdom of God.

1. Introduction.

“The Christian has hitherto been *the* ‘moral being’, a curiosity without equal – and, as a ‘moral being’, more absurd, mendacious, vain, frivolous, *harmful to himself* than even the greatest despiser of mankind could have allowed himself to dream.” (Nietzsche 1979:102).²

Nietzsche was probably very close to the truth considering how humanity has tended to distort the Christian message for self-gain. If one were to agree totally with Nietzsche's sentiments, one would not hold any hope for the possibility that life could prove itself to be worthwhile, never-mind being fruitful. If we were to deny totally Nietzsche's views, then we would be blind to the reality of human suffering in the midst of - and sometimes caused by - the Christian religion.

Christian theology, from an historical perspective, has often been a religion that has excluded and condemned, rather than included and encouraged.

Today, one may comment that the Church's policy of exclusion has long been eradicated, but may find that this practice is continued in a subtle manner. A recent television poll showed that 51% of Christians in South Africa consider HIV/AIDS to be

² Italics used in the written source.

a punishment sent by God.³ At the same time, people with homosexual orientations struggle to find recognition within the Church. In many Pentecostal churches, those who have not experienced the gift of tongues, are considered not to be filled with the Spirit. These are all generalisations, but the fact remains that exclusion is real in the Church today.

If the life that the church promotes is the sole example of the Kingdom of God within the created order, then are we adopting an unrealistic expectation? It is no wonder that Nietzsche refuted Christianity and commented on the Christian life: “You will have to look more redeemed if I am to believe in your Redeemer.” (Thielicke 1966:187). The message of the Church to many reflects a “closed” orientation, and they would struggle to associate the message of the Kingdom of God with a true message of hope.

One theologian, who has reacted to a “closed” definition of the Church and the Kingdom of God, is Jürgen Moltmann. To Moltmann, the Church exists to fulfil one function, namely the proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God (Moltmann 1992:239). This gospel is not a gospel that should serve as a tool of exclusion, but as a message that is filled with hope.

Theology that is characterised by hope is theology that liberates. The “word” (logos) of “God” (Theos) by definition should be a word of hope and liberation. It is from this perspective that one can see that God’s offer of liberation and acceptance transcends the Christian religion, but yet God is able to use the Christian faith to convey this message of grace to a broken world.

³ SABC. 2001. CruX. SABC 2. 19 August 2001.

The following verse gives a very realistic impression of the struggle in implementing this strong message of hope in a world and Church that are finite and that know the effects of sin in their existence: “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not understood it.” (John 1:5). There is a challenge in the Christian religion, being a response to God’s grace, also to be a relevant and effective tool of making the Kingdom of God realistic to those who seek meaning.

Jürgen Moltmann uses the concept of the Kingdom of God in such a manner that Christianity changes from a pessimistic condemnation to an optimistic celebration of the renewal of creation.

2. Who is Jürgen Moltmann?

Jürgen Moltmann’s life is characterised by his questioning of God’s presence within the context of suffering.

In his book “Experiences in theology: Ways and forms of Christian theology” (Moltmann 2000:3-9), Moltmann shares his journey of trying to make sense of God’s presence in the midst of death and destruction. As a young man, he witnessed the allied forces of the Second World War destroying his hometown, leaving a friend dead. Moltmann states that already at this point the question arose “My God, where are you?” (Moltmann 2000:3). After joining the German forces, Moltmann was taken prisoner by the British in February 1945. During his three-year imprisonment, Moltmann describes that he had time to “...think about the horrors of war...and the German crimes against humanity in Auschwitz.” (Moltmann 2000:4).

After the war, Moltmann was able to study theology in Göttingen, after which he became a minister of the Reformed congregation in Bremen-Wasserhorst. It is within this context that Moltmann had to minister to a people who had to re-establish a sense of their identity as people and as Christians. One can almost imagine how people questioned the meaning and person of God in their post-war experience: “Who is God?” “How could God allow so much death and suffering?” “Is the Kingdom of God a serious prospect?”

What made matters more difficult, was the effect of Nazi-sympathisers on the running of the Church as well as theological institutions at universities. Lecturers had to take an oath of loyalty to the state (Moltmann 2000:7), which left the integrity of theological training in a very questionable position. With this conflict in mind, Moltmann’s theology became increasingly focussed on the role of theology and of the Kingdom of God in existential reality. Theology is therefore not just the talk about God within the realm of academic conversations, but is the story of every person’s encounter with God within their *Sitz im Leben*.

Considering the theme of the “Kingdom of God” within the context of suffering and the search for meaning, there are very few theologians who can speak with the same authority as Moltmann about a God who is truly present in the history of creation, especially that of humankind. Moltmann’s life experiences and personal quest to make sense of God, as well as establishing the viability of the reign of God within the ruthless world that we have come to know, pose as true witnesses of a theology of hope.⁴

War is not the only catalyst for people to ask about the relevance of the Kingdom of God. In South Africa, we have experienced the transition of our country from a so-called “Christian-state” to a place where every faith and world-view has an equal opportunity to assert its relevance. Secularisation in itself has had a negative impact on the way people think about religion. If one should speak about the “Kingdom of God”, it would be understood by most as a Christian apocalyptic concept that has no real relevance for our daily existence. The message of a theology filled with hope as put forward by Moltmann resonates well with the theology that is needed within the context of South Africa.

South African society cannot be compared to post-World War 2 German society. One may be tempted to draw a parallel between Apartheid and Auschwitz, but one would be doing a grave injustice to the historical differences between these atrocities. A similarity can be found in renewed search for an understanding of the divine, given that the “old definition” of the divine became irrelevant.

To South Africans, the search for an understanding of God outside the parameters of the Apartheid regime takes place in a society that is facing many challenges. Among these are the HIV/AIDS pandemic, rising crime and a high rate of unemployment. How is one to discover the Kingdom of God within such a challenged environment in a manner that is relevant to those who are challenged individually?

Moltmann seems to have discovered the hope that is captured within the concept of the Kingdom of God and made a significant contribution to the realisation of the God of

⁴ Phrase taken from the title of Moltmann’s book (Moltmann, J. 1967. Theology of hope. London:SCM

hope within the German search for self-identity. I believe that his discovery will be able to assist us in our journey as well.

3. A Trinitarian “Kingdom”

Although Moltmann focuses on the journey of discovering God within the contextual situations of human existence, the primary characteristic of the Kingdom of God is that it is a Trinitarian Kingdom.

This is a very important statement in that it implies that the Kingdom of God as a reality is not a Kingdom that is built by human initiative, but is the work of God beyond time and space for the situation in time and space. This is illustrated in Moltmann’s view that God exists in total freedom. (Moltmann 1981:52-56)⁵

The Kingdom of God is nevertheless “God’s Kingdom” and the realisation of such a Kingdom within creation, from a Christian perspective, must first be understood within Trinitarian terms. If it were interpreted by the Church and the world, using definitions related to human history and political structures, then the concept could well be misunderstood and preached as a false gospel.

Even to speak of a “Kingdom” creates an understanding in human minds of our experience of monarchic rulership. This has all kinds of connotations attached to it.

Press.) Not only is this the title of a book, but the word “hope” has also been used to describe Moltmann’s theological construction. (Hart1999:62).

⁵ In this reference, Moltmann draws from Barth’s concept of God’s freedom, illustrating that there is a distinct difference between God and God’s creation. God’s freedom is nevertheless not defined solely on the grounds that God is able to exist without creation, but is to Moltmann proven through God’s ability to live in relationship within the Trinity and by revealing Godself to God’s creation. (Moltmann 1981:56). Assuming that God’s Kingdom exists in the fellowship of the Trinity, is it therefore not possible for the created to “create” the Kingdom of God within its own existence, but is solely dependant upon God for the implementation of this Kingdom.

When we speak of the Kingdom of God as a Trinitarian concept, then we cannot associate the Divine Kingdom with our experience of human governance. This would then imply that the form of power, authority and governance in the Kingdom of God is something foreign to our historic experiences and understanding. It is no wonder that when Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of God, He uses parables and analogies to convey the truths of this Kingdom as being other than what we would expect in the experience of a human monarchic system.⁶

This places a whole new light on how that Kingdom is perceived within the human context.

To Moltmann, the first mistake that one can make in attempting to find the Kingdom of God within the context of our lives, is to work from the premise of a one-sided relationship (Moltmann 1981:4). Here Moltmann describes the human search for an understanding of God taking place from the perspective of creation. It may seem as if creation seeks to experience God without considering that God has the potential for experiencing us. From this perspective, we would only be seeing God's Kingdom working within the confines of creation.

“If one were only to relate the experience of God to the experience of self, then the self would become the constant and ‘God’ the variable. It is only when the self is perceived in the experience which God has with that same self that an undistorted perception of the history of one's own self with God in God emerges.” (Moltmann 1981:4).

⁶ The parable of the labourers in the vineyard is a good example (Matthew 19:27-20:16). The principle of

The attempt to subject God to the experience of humanity to the extent that God becomes the slave of creation, would strip God of any sense of divinity and deny the relationship within the Godhead. From a different point of argument the existence of the Kingdom of God does not depend upon the constant⁷ existence of creation, for the Kingdom of God will not come to fulfilment when God subjectively changes in order to become “all in all”⁸ with creation as the constant.

To Moltmann, God remains God and the world remains creation. (Moltmann 1996:307). The Kingdom of God is therefore, in the first place, grounded on the principle of the relationship between a divine Creator and a fallible creation. The process of the establishment of the Kingdom of God is aimed at the eternal unification between Creator and creation.

The concept of the Kingdom of God is thus not only Trinitarian, but eschatological as well. This anticipated unification cannot be done in a manner that presupposes a Creator’s transformation into something that the Creator is not, but should be a unification where the two-way relationship between Creator and creation is recognised.

The question could be asked whether the Kingdom of God would exist if creation did not. To Moltmann, the answer would lean more towards a ‘Yes’ than a ‘No’. Without the existence of creation,⁹ only the ‘uncreated’ exists. From the perspective of power, dominance and authority, it would only make sense that all that exists is God and therefore subject to God’s divinity (Yes). This freedom of divinity - or the integrity of

wage/grace is totally different to that which would be experienced in a secular monarchy.

⁷ I use this word as the antonym of “variable”.

⁸ Moltmann uses the text in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 as a premise for his understanding of the consummation of the eschaton.

such a Kingdom- can nevertheless only be determined within the context where something (or someone) can choose to rebel against such a Kingdom (No). (Moltmann 1981:53).

Barth would agree up to this point. The reconciliation (or the establishment of the Kingdom of God) between God and the created then purely stems from God as a gift of grace (Barth 1958:345). The nature of the Kingdom of God is thus also redemptive. In a summarised version of Barth's response: the perfect, constant God looks down upon an imperfect, changing and temporal creation and offers as a gift, a relationship with God-self. This reconciliation is the construction of God's Kingdom, being a gift of God, always being within the power, initiative and conditions of the Trinity.

Moltmann agrees that the attempt towards reconciliation is God's initiative (Moltmann 1991:88). The method in which God works towards this unification tells us something more about God.

The Kingdom of God is not just a gift of grace that is bestowed upon creation. If this were the case, then the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. By this we mean that another form of one-sided relationship has developed whereby God is the total constant, creation the variable which cannot respond relationally to God. This rings very true in Augustine of Hippo's notion of predestination (McGrath2001:465-467).¹⁰

⁹ By this definition not only humanity or planet earth, but the whole created order.

¹⁰ Augustine advocated that grace is a gift that is given to those whom God wants to share it with. There is no manner in which a person can earn God's grace. God could for all means and purposes choose to give this grace to the cruellest sinner and deny a saint. This is not an expressed opinion by Augustine, but a possibility in his doctrine of grace.

The Kingdom of God will then concern only the one-way relationship between Creator and creation. It is then not concerned with creation's perception of God, but now God (the constant) refuses to move and identify with a creation that is considered a variable.

To Moltmann, the motive of the Kingdom of God goes beyond grace to the motive of love and true reconciliation between two parties (Moltmann 1981:53).

This construction of unity only happens in process and can never be the theocentric, instantaneous change worked within creation. At the same time it can also not be worked from the understanding that God merely has to be relevant to creation in order to be real. The consummation of the Kingdom of God thus concerns Creator and creation's respective journeys of love towards finding each other in all fullness.

3.1 The existence of the Kingdom within the Persons of the Trinity.

The Kingdom of God in creation, being described within Trinitarian terms, should then also primarily be the result of the interaction of the Persons of the Trinity with creation. The establishment of the Kingdom of God by the Trinity is illustrated within history as the respective work of redemption and restoration by the different persons of the Trinity individually.

Moltmann describes the establishment of the Kingdom of God through the Trinity in the following words: "...the kingdom of glory must be understood as the consummation of the Father's creation, as the universal establishment of the Son's liberation, and as the fulfilment of the Spirit's indwelling." (Moltmann 1981:212)

Within the picture of the development of God's Kingdom being established on earth, Moltmann draws strongly on the concept of the Trinitarian Kingdom as put forth by Joachim of Fiore. According to Moltmann, Joachim develops the progression as follows:

Creation and its initial preservation was seen to be the Kingdom of the Father. Within this Kingdom, creation was intended to be the reign of God. Consequent to humanity's fall to sin, this rule was rebelled against, and the only way in which God could enforce the principle of God's Kingdom was through the law. The relationship between God and creation could then be described as that of Master and servant. The second form of the Kingdom is the Kingdom of the Son. The Son proclaims a gospel of grace and freedom. Within this environment creation is invited to participate in relationship with God as friends. The Kingdom of the Spirit is brought into existence by the fact that the Spirit becomes the means through which creation is renewed and restored to the intended Kingdom of God. At this point creation can assume the title of being "children of God". Only once this process is complete, will God's Kingdom be consummated in the form of the Kingdom of glory.¹¹

Joachim's perception of the development of the Kingdom of God is totally Trinitarian. Each member of the Trinity has to be active within the establishment of this Kingdom in order for the Kingdom to find its perfection. The eschatological journey of the Kingdom itself is locked within the work of the Trinity in order to become the Kingdom that exposes the Trinity's full glory. At the same time as the Trinity is glorified in the consummation, creation reveals its own glory in fulfilling the purpose

¹¹ Summary of (Moltmann 1981:203-209).

for which it was created. This development is nevertheless bound to the chronological impositions of God reacting to the ‘created need’. This interpretation also borders closely on Tri-theism and functional modalism.

Although Moltmann adopts the principles of the contribution of the Trinity within the formation of the Kingdom made by Joachim, this chronological change once again points to a perception of a variable God’s interaction with the constant: Creation. Moltmann develops the thought further to the degree where the “different Kingdoms” are not consecutive in time, but become the continuous roles of the Persons within the Trinity towards the construction of God’s Kingdom within creation.. (Moltmann 1981:221). This nevertheless does not eliminate the element of functional modalism from this model.

3.1.1. The role of the Father in the Kingdom.

To Moltmann, participation in the Kingdom of the Father is an inherent right placed upon creation. (Moltmann 1981:219).

Moltmann agrees with Barth that God is essentially the “owner” of creation, as God is the Creator of this creation (Barth 1966:51 and Moltmann 1985:77). As long as creation is in existence, it belongs to God and therefore forms part of the Kingdom of the Father. Even within the context that creation chooses not to form part of God’s intended Kingdom, the offer is made to creation by God to be unified and to participate in the Kingdom of the Father.

The concept of God working towards the establishment of God's Kingdom in the absence of a clear choice by creation to participate in this offer, echoes from Wesley's teaching on Prevenient Grace. "He (Wesley) insisted on the one hand, that man cannot move himself toward God, being entirely dependent on God's enabling grace. But he also insisted that man is responsible before God for his own salvation, being free to accept God or to reject him" (Williams 1960:41).

Within this process of reaching out to humanity within the context of sin, God's integrity is put to the test. Moltmann asserts that God's intentions within this revelation need to be totally pure, as the Kingdom of God could not maintain an honest existence if the Revealer did not. (Moltmann 1981:53) The context of revelation is a situation of suffering. If God's intentions are truly that of a divine God being the Creator seeking relationship with creation, then the revelation of God cannot be condescending (a God who cannot suffer attempting to relate to God's own creation that finds itself within a situation of suffering). God would contradict Godself and the Kingdom cannot truly exist. If God deliberately changes in order to adapt to the 'created' situation, we end with the dilemma of a changing God within a "constant" creation. Again the Kingdom of God will fail to come into existence.

The focus of the Kingdom of the Father is therefore not to assert authority, but to reveal Godself in such a manner that creation can identify with the creator without God having to compromise God's identity or divinity (Moltmann 1981:59). This revelation's motivation is therefore not rulership, but participation. This revelation for the purpose of participation is already eschatological in nature, pointing towards the

consummated Kingdom of God that is characterised by uninterrupted and continuous participation between God and creation (Moltmann 1967:42).

3.1.2. The role of the Son in the Kingdom.

Whereas the Kingdom of the Father is directed to God's "passive"¹² interaction with creation to work towards a "partnership", the Kingdom of the Son brings a new dimension in the sense that God has physically chosen to experience first-hand the situation that God's creation finds itself in.

The expectation of the physical presence of God within creation is nothing new to history. Moltmann describes how the Jewish faith, with its Messianic expectations, looked forward to the day that God would dwell within God's creation (Moltmann 1990:6). With the arrival of the Messiah, God's permanent dwelling place (Shekinah) will be with God's people. This would be the consummated Kingdom of God within creation.

In the Christian tradition, it is accepted that Jesus was the expected Messiah, but it is also accepted that the Kingdom of God did not come to its consummated state as expected by the Jewish faith.

Moltmann draws the value of Jesus as Messiah within the context of a Trinitarian initiative as the continued offer of participation made by God to creation (Moltmann

¹² I use the word "passive" in the sense that the Kingdom of the Father is already active by mere virtue that both Creator and creation exist. This is not to deny the Kingdom of the Father any activity, as, according to my understanding, God is active in two ways. First, if I can borrow from the line of thought of Barth, God is active by continually choosing for God's creation to exist (Barth 1966:54) and to be its Creative-owner. Secondly, from the same line of thought, God chooses to reveal Godself to God's creation. (König 1991:22)

1990:36). Jesus has not come to undo the work of the Father, but is continuously working in tandem with the Kingdom of the Father. The Son's identity is locked within the identity of the Father. "... This does not mean that He also understood Himself as the 'Son of God' or allowed Himself to be acknowledged as such. He is the Son of the Father." (Moltmann 1981:70).

Jesus proclaims an eschatological message of the coming Kingdom of God. This message is proclaimed in two ways as Moltmann observes. At first, the Kingdom of God is proclaimed from a cosmological perspective¹³. In this line of thought, Moltmann focuses on the divinity of Christ. Moltmann asserts that "If the eternal Logos assumed a non-personal human nature, He cannot then be viewed as an historical person, and we cannot talk about 'Jesus of Nazareth'." (Moltmann 1990:51).

The distinct difference between the person of Jesus and the rest of creation thus has to be found in the Son's special relationship with the Father. Jesus' baptism reflects this relationship as the Father proclaims "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22). The descending of the Spirit upon Jesus is seen to be the authority given by the Father for the work of the Son to continue. As the Kingdom of the Father extended an invitation to creation for the purpose of participation, so does the 'status' of creation develop with the coming of the Kingdom of the Son.

¹³ The Kingdom of God from a cosmic perspective is described in chapter 3.

Moltmann portrays the physical¹⁴ presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ as an announcement of the relationship between Creator and creation no longer being a master-servant relationship, but that of “friends of God” (Moltmann 1981:220).

Secondly, the more immanent work of God within the Kingdom of the Son, would be through what Moltmann calls “Anthropological Christology” (Moltmann 1990:55).

From this perspective, does the eternal Son not only extend a physical hand of friendship towards creation, but also shows what it means for humanity to live within the Kingdom of God. The news of the Kingdom of God is preached in a manner that proclaims that “...God’s future brings the people freedom.” (Moltmann 1990:96).

Moltmann describes this future of freedom in terms of Schleiermacher’s understanding of salvation, that this freedom can only be experienced when a person or persons have come to the ‘consciousness’ of God (Moltmann 1981:2). Again, as we find the Kingdom of the Father seeking continuously to strive towards God’s place of dwelling within creation, so does the Kingdom of the Son proclaim the principle of the Kingdom verbally and through the example of the Son.

Moltmann would agree with Pannenberg when he says “Consequently, with His announcement of the future of God and His proclamation and practice of the love of God for men which was based on it, Jesus is the representative of the divine future among men; and He was finally confirmed as such when God raised Him from the dead.” (Pannenberg 1972:66).

¹⁴ By using the word “physical”, I do not imply that God was not physically present in creation before

It is in this light that the Kingdom of the God within the Kingdom of the Son was proclaimed not only within the incarnation, baptism and life of Jesus, but for Moltmann found its peak also in the cross and resurrection. Moltmann calls this “eschatological verification” (Moltmann 1993:173). Through the resurrection, the work of the Kingdom of the Son is verified to be the work of the Triune God.

The Kingdom of the Son, just like the Kingdom of the Father does not point to itself, and does not consider itself to be the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, but points toward the general resurrection of the dead. It is with this final victory of creation over the inevitable enemy “death”, that creation is able to exist in the eternal “realm of God” (Moltmann 1996:64).

3.1.3. The role of the Spirit in the Kingdom.

Along with the Kingdom of the Father and the Kingdom of the Son, the Kingdom of the Spirit cannot be seen as something independent, but that which complements both the other Kingdoms.

Moltmann, in his description of the Spirit, names the Spirit “The Spirit of life”.¹⁵ This title of the Spirit describes the function of the Spirit within the Kingdom of God.

From the perspective of the Trinity, Moltmann expresses the bond of unity between the Father and the Son as the Spirit (Moltmann 1981:174)¹⁶. In the same manner as the

Jesus, but as a description of the incarnation as God “taking on the human form”.

¹⁵ Title of Moltmann’s pneumatology (Moltmann, J. 1992. The Spirit of life: A universal affirmation. London: SCM Press.

¹⁶ This is an adoption of Augustine of Hippo’s description of the place of the Spirit in the Trinity. (McGrath 2001:312-313)

Spirit functions as the “Spirit of life” within the Godhead, so also is the unifying work extended to that of creation and God.

Moltmann repeatedly stresses the interaction between the persons of the Trinity within this common cause of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. He does so even more specifically when describing the link between Christ and the Spirit. As Jesus is the visible revelation of God’s invitation to participation, so is the Spirit the “power” within that revelation (Moltmann 1992:61). As Jesus is the representation of what it means for God’s Shekinah to be in creation (and thus the established Kingdom of God), so is the Spirit the creative power that brings about God’s dwelling place within creation (Moltmann 1992:61).

The Kingdom of the Spirit is creative in the sense that creation is restored to the intended Kingdom of God, being God’s dwelling place. Moltmann (1992:57) describes the re-creative work of the Spirit by using the following points:

- The creative work of the Spirit is not exclusive to certain individuals as described in the Old Testament (e.g. the work of the Spirit being exclusively used in the lives of kings, prophets, priests and judges), but this renewing work is available to all. This is the underlying theme of the New Testament, particularly witnessed after Pentecost. All who surrendered to the Lordship of Christ are assured of the presence of the Spirit in their lives¹⁷.

- The work of the Spirit seeks a total transformation within creation, so that the Kingdom of God may fully come.

¹⁷ See Ephesians 2:18

- The work of the Spirit is enduring in the sense that the Kingdom of God, when consummated, will be an eternal institution where God can be fully dwelling within creation.

- The work of the Spirit leads toward a place where God does not have to encounter creation through means of revelation or tradition, but that God's encounter with creation can be direct.

The response of creation to the work that is done is found in the change of its own status in relationship to God. From the perception of creation being “friends of God” in the Kingdom of the Son, so now through the work of the Spirit does this relationship develop to the point where creation is considered to be “Sons and daughters of God” (Moltmann 1981:220).

Moltmann asserts further that this brings about a renewed focus in the way which God intends to participate with creation within God's Kingdom. Being “children of God” invokes the right to being heirs. Creation, through the renewal of the Spirit, is therefore not only bystanders “watching how God interacts with creation”, but can truly share in the life of God, being “co-owners” or “co-participators” in the Kingdom (Moltmann 1981:220).

In the Kingdom of the Spirit, this Kingdom does not point to itself, but in the Kingdom of the Father and through the Kingdom of the Son hopes for the eschatological kingdom of glory that will find completion and fulfilment.

3.2 The concept of community within the Kingdom.

If one goes back to the question concerning the possible existence of the Kingdom of God in the absence of creation, one will find that the one characteristic that stands out in Moltmann's teaching on the Kingdom of God within the Trinity, is that of relationship.

The primary relationship that brings the Kingdom of God into a state of reality is the relationship within the Trinity. The mere existence of the Trinity depends upon this relationship. Bauckham comments on Moltmann's use of the relationship within the Trinity as follows: "God's Trinitarian history with the world is a history in which three divine Persons relate both to each other and the world." (Bauckham 1995:174).

It is within this relationship that the concept of God's Kingdom is tested by the interaction between God and creation as well as that of the Persons in the Trinity. The only way for the Kingdom to continue in this dynamic between Creator and creation, is for each Person of the Trinity to participate in the establishment of the Kingdom in such a creation without contradicting Godself or disturbing the relationship within the Godhead.

In the same way that relationship forms the basis of the Trinity, so is the Kingdom of God in creation characterised by relationship. Moltmann uses the model of the relationship within the Trinity to expound on the existential relationships within creation. To Moltmann the use of the term "Imago Dei", understood as human beings being God's image on earth, is not fully justified (Moltmann 1985:215). If we look at the general destructive behaviour of humanity within itself and in its environment, then it is an impossibility to view the physical presence of the perfect God. Instead

Moltmann offers the possibility of using this term and understanding as a calling of human beings (1985:215). “Imago Dei” is therefore a soteriological and eschatological term. Humanity can find itself moving towards being in the image of God as it responds to God’s reconstructive work and participates in God’s Kingdom. This will be dealt with more fully in chapter 2.

As it is in God’s nature to live in community, so is true freedom found in creation when community is striven for (Moltmann 1985:71).

It should therefore be no surprise that when Jesus, the embodiment of the Kingdom of God, shares the summary of the law, He states “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). These laws concern only one principle, namely true community.

The consummation of the Kingdom of God is not found only when humanity is able to practice love towards itself. The Kingdom of God can find its completion only within the context where creation and Creator have found each other and are able to live in full and direct harmony without contradicting themselves. (Moltmann 1996:330)

3.3 The Kingdom as immanent.

The viability of such a Kingdom of God based on relationship seems to be totally idealistic. It is hard to see evidence of the Kingdom of God in our world.

Moltmann stresses the point that we have not reached the consummation of the Kingdom of God yet, but that the Kingdom of the Father is constantly revealing the possibility of participation to individuals who choose to live lives of self-destruction (Moltmann 1996:24). The Kingdom of the Son openly witnesses to the world the realistic hope of the existence of the Kingdom of God within creation and its viability. Through this testimony many experience the renewal of the Kingdom of the Spirit and thereby participate *pars pro toto* in the Kingdom of God (Moltmann 1981:221).

“This is the point at which Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* opened the church to a world as well as to the future.” (Bauckham 1995:10). According to Moltmann, the Church therefore has a distinctive task in being representative of the Kingdom of God in the world (Moltmann 1992:51). We look at this more closely in the last chapter.

The Church is therefore not only the institution where people of faith join to worship, but also the living witness of the work of the Kingdom of God taking place within creation throughout history. Moltmann uses Schleiermacher’s words when saying, “...the experience of the self in faith points towards God.” (Moltmann 1981:2). The immanent Kingdom of God as found in the Church is therefore fully eschatological in nature in that it does not point to itself, but to the anticipated participation between Creator and creation.

As Israel is bound to God by the covenant God made with Moses, so did Israel become the living witness of God's interaction in creation. The gospel has fulfilled the covenant and is still busy, through the work of the Trinity in the church, creating true community. Moltmann (1999b:77) quotes Walter Rauschenbusch, saying: "Ascetic Christianity called the world evil and left it. Humanity is waiting for a revolutionary Christianity which will call the world evil and change it."

The role of the Church is that of the bearer of God's hope.

3.4 The Kingdom as eschatological hope.

"The transcendence of the Kingdom itself beyond all its anticipations keeps believers always unreconciled to present conditions, the source of continual new impulses for change." (Bauckham 1995:10).

As much as the present presents God and the Church with new dilemmas and challenges, so too does Moltmann foresee the driving force, or determination of the witness of the Kingdom of God, as being the hope of the future (Moltmann 1967:16). The only constant in the relationship between God and creation seems to be the common hope in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God. "...from first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope... transforming the present." (Moltmann 1967:16)

In Moltmann's theology the Kingdom of God is in total flux between the construction of the Kingdom of God and the awaiting consummation of that Kingdom.

4. Conclusion.

Moltmann's understanding of the Kingdom of God underlines his whole theology. It is because of the Kingdom of God¹⁸ that God creates¹⁹. In order to bring that into creation, God reveals Godself²⁰. The process of the establishment of the Kingdom of God can only be done through the salvific work of Christ. As the Spirit renews, so does the Church become the messenger of hope through which God continues to interact with creation for the consummation of the Kingdom to take place.

It is vitally important to keep the Trinitarian involvement in mind when considering Moltmann's theology. It is on this premise, as described in this chapter, that Moltmann is able to construct the rest of his theology. Here we do not find a one-sided work by the Trinity as is often observed in dialectic theology. Neither does one find a one-sided work by humanity as found in humanism. Moltmann seeks to develop a balance, a true relationship between the Creator and creation in which harmony can be found.

One is nevertheless left with the impression that Moltmann's theology hinges on a very delicate perception of the Trinity. Does the Trinity solely find its distinctive personae in the process of establishing community with the created? Is there a need for a Trinity before creation or is this a development that was brought out of necessity for the situation at hand? If this were the case, then Moltmann falls into the trap that he himself seeks to avoid: A changing God facing a stronger creation. Do we encounter functional modalism?

¹⁸ God's longing to be in a responsive relationship.

¹⁹ As discussed in point 3.

²⁰ As discussed in 4.1.2

Moltmann nevertheless offers a perspective that very few other theologies can offer: A realistic hope for the Christian faith and for creation. As we journey through the next chapters, we will discover how Moltmann's Trinitarian Kingdom affects the way in which we understand our own lives, the creation around us and the future of God.

Chapter 2.

The Kingdom in Personal eschatology: The meaning of life.

1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I will give a short description of Moltmann's point of view concerning personal eschatology and then see how this may be relevant to the South African situation. This can only be done after the relevant points of view, relating to Moltmann's "Personal eschatology", have been explored within the South African context.

If one is to argue that Moltmann's understanding of the Kingdom of God is one that is not purely transcendental, but immanent, then one needs to ask the question: "Where is the individual in Moltmann's Kingdom of God?". This is an existential question. It is a pity that Christian theology has posed this question as a soteriological and even eschatological question. When giving a description of "Personal eschatology", one would tend to think of it in terms of one's personal position in a broader understanding of an eschatology that is theocentric. A common Christian understanding of this phrase may be posed in the form of a question: "Where will I go after Judgement day?".

Moltmann's understanding of "Personal eschatology" does not refer only to the final judgement, but is concerned with the state of human life in our existential experience. Personal eschatology is about life in all its fullness. (Moltmann 1996:41). Personal eschatology is found in our attitude towards life. "Life" as an experience of existence is also shaped by the way we view death, as well as what we can expect when we move beyond these events.

As Moltmann aims to deal with our “Personal eschatology” in terms of our attitudes towards life, death and the hereafter, its relevance to our experience of life can only be found when we investigate common South African perspectives. Once these are compared, we will be able to assess the ethical implications of Moltmann’s thinking on life in South Africa.

2. Jürgen Moltmann’s views on life and death.

To Moltmann, human life does not refer only to a person being alive, but is identified in one’s philosophy of life in its totality (Moltmann 1996:49). This includes the events of death and the state of existence in the hereafter. Life and death go hand in hand. One cannot live without dying. Death in itself attains a certain meaning, pending our understanding of what is to follow. The one thing that unites all cultures and histories is the fact that we all have an understanding of life in the light of death.

The meaning of one’s life is therefore not linked to the goals achieved in various areas within one’s life, but is derived from how we make sense of the process from life to death and then in turn, to that which is beyond.

It is how life, death and the hereafter are connected by our philosophies that determine whether we have succeeded in actually living in the first place.

When looking at lifestyles in general, Moltmann identifies two main responses to the question of life and death, describing those who live with death as a final destination and those who live as if death does not exist (Moltmann 1996:49-58).

2.1 Death as the ultimate goal.

To Moltmann, the first attitude towards the link between life and death can be described by the question “Is death the finish?” (1996:49).

In this philosophy of life, life is regarded as a stepping stone in our existence. Life is considered a gift of grace that is given to each individual, only to be confronted with the finality of this gift in death (1996:51). This seems to be a very pessimistic way of looking at life, but one finds sanctity of life in this concept that is unequalled. If one is able to site examples of such an attitude in life, the most familiar to the Christian theologian, would be that of early Jewish interpretations of death. Here death is seen as the final event of one’s existence. Passages like Psalm 49:12, Isaiah 40:7 and Job 20:7 clearly illustrate the point of view of a person’s finality within death. (Bowden & Richardson (eds.) 1983:145). The meaning of a long life is then described as being a blessing from God. Since it is only in life that we can encounter God, longevity is God’s gift of prolonging the fellowship that we may enjoy with God.

Later in Israel’s history this opinion changed when people considered the place of God’s relationship to the individual and is specifically challenged in passages like Psalm 16, 49, 73, Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:1 (Bowden & Richardson (eds.) 1983:145). Bowden and Richardson see this attitude of human finitude continued in the theology of the Sadducees (1983:145) as documented in the New Testament.

The Sadducees maintained that death was final, even when religious orders like the Pharisees proclaimed God’s power beyond the point of death. (Bowden & Richardson

(eds.) 1983: 145)²¹. One nevertheless has to be cautious in taking this as a clear indication of the Sadducees' theology as we only learn about the details of their belief through their critics (Buttrick (ed.) 1962:162).

Generally, the belief in a deity creates the possibility for the existence of an afterlife. Atheists, who may see no need for an existence beyond death, may adopt a standpoint similar to that of the Sadducees.

There is another way in which we can interpret death as being the ultimate goal. Stating that this life is a preparation for the life hereafter is a Platonic manner of viewing death as the gateway from this existence to the real experience of life that awaits us after our death. Militant Islamic behaviour, as found in the suicide bombings in New York in 2001 and those continuously taking place in Israel, are very real examples of this approach to life and death.

Moltmann's criticism of this point of view is quite severe. "The notion that this life is no more than a preparation for a life beyond, is the theory of a refusal to live, and a religious fraud." (Moltmann 1996:50) The natural question from a person of faith may be as follows: "If this is only a stepping stone towards another mode of existence, then why did God not create us in that mode in the first place?" If this life is only a preparation for another mode of existence, what could one expect? All would agree that this life is not easy. Does this life prepare us for greater suffering, or greater poverty, or greater death? In essence, this philosophy is contrary to the message of the gospel

²¹ Biblical passages like Mark 12:18 and Acts 23:8 support this perspective.

which reveals a "... living God, who is 'a lover of life'" (Moltmann 1996:50). With this God, life has meaning and cannot merely be an empty, worthless exercise in existence.

Not only does this point of view attempt to race through life in order to arrive at its final destination, but also becomes in itself a contradiction in human behaviour. Moltmann states that "If death is 'the finish', then it is the finish for the dead too. They must be forgotten, so that we can get on with our lives unencumbered." (1996:52). This lifestyle does not promote community, but is mainly concerned with the personal journey of self. Common practices like funerals and memorials become irrelevant. Ancestry becomes meaningless, and our children become beings who are themselves travelling towards their own death with very little regard for the experience of life that has preceded them.

Viewing life and death in this way makes it virtually impossible to live in community. The only way in which a community can deal with the death of a person is by literally allowing the person to pass on without any emotions attached to the event of death. "The inability to mourn becomes the inability to love." (Moltmann 1996:57). Life therefore only concerns the person who is alive, and does not have any ties of responsibility to the broader community. A person who is captivated by the thought of- or journey towards death, becomes indifferent and cynical (Moltmann 1996:55). If life is merely a journey towards the inevitable, then it also becomes meaningless to "remember". The purpose of remembering through the transmission of one's history by means of oral stories becomes obsolete.

One could assume that if a Christian holds this point of view, their picture of God in Jesus must solely emphasise the Divinity of Christ without regarding God's humanity

in the incarnation. The Kingdom of God can therefore not exist in this world²², for this world is imperfect and temporal. It is only in an apocalyptic event²³, that Christ can truly be Lord of all and God's Kingdom can exist (Fuellenbach 1999:84). Even this point of view questions the meaning of the existential experience of life. This is a transcendental understanding of the Kingdom that Moltmann seeks to oppose.

2.2 To live as if there were no death.

When observing human behaviour, this perspective of life and death is perhaps the most natural. "...since in our unconscious we cannot perceive our own death and do believe in our own immortality, but can conceive our neighbour's death, news of numbers of people killed in battle, in wars, on the highways only supports our unconscious belief in our own immortality and allows us-in the privacy and secrecy of our unconscious mind-to rejoice that it is 'the next guy, not me.'" (Kübler-Ross 1969:28).

This point of view is not difficult to find in society. We find it in our language and even in the language of those who have lived long before us. The following is a good example of both. James addresses this issue in his letter to Jewish Christians "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on with business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15).

²² This would imply that true existence is not possible. Life cannot be experienced in this situation. An Apocalyptic event becomes a catalyst through which all will either find true existence or cease to exist.

²³ To the extent where all have to face death or experience it.

Moltmann is just as harsh in his response to this point of view. “To live life as if there is no death is an illusion.” (Moltmann 1996:50). There are many reasons why people might not take note of their own mortality. As Kübler-Ross makes clear in her quote above, the first reason may relate to the fact that we do not experience death “close to us” very often. This makes death something distant and not worth worrying about.

Moltmann identifies another reason, namely the “fear of death” (Moltmann 1996:55). It is in our fear of an unknown experience- or resulting from a disturbing encounter with death - that death is abolished from our vocabulary. This notion can be linked to Freud’s theory of repression²⁴.

In the denial of certain events in our lives, we cannot possibly live life in all its fullness, but only embrace within life that which is comfortable and familiar. “The suppressed awareness of death buries us alive, killing us while we are still living through the force of its suppression.” (Moltmann 1996:51). “To be afraid of death, we surrender ourselves to life less and less...” (Moltmann 1996:55)

The focus on life and the denial of death also affects the way in which people relate to one another and to creation. All that matters in this lifestyle is the moment. “But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and sheep, eating and drinking of wine! ‘Let us eat and drink,’ you say, ‘for tomorrow we die!’” (Isaiah 22:13). In this prophecy,

²⁴ “Repression, according to Freud, occurs when the mind automatically banishes some unbearably painful experience, memory, thought, impulse or trauma into the depths of the unconscious, or when a person experiences an instinctual drive which is utterly unacceptable to the moral standards dictated by the internalised individual conscious.” (König and Maimela 1989:34).

Proto-Isaiah addresses the people of Judah before the exile to Babylon²⁵. A lifestyle that is only focussed on the present life can only be described as being irresponsible and foolish.

Nietzsche himself identified this tendency in human behaviour by referring to those who hold this view as being in the grasp of Dionysus (Nietzsche 1995:5-7)²⁶. By this he means that there are people who live their lives being captivated by their own passion without any regard for the future. The present is what matters and the future will be dealt with when it arrives.

Furthermore, there can be little or no relationship with the dead. If death in itself should be ignored, then so should those who have undergone the experience of death.

Schleiermacher is opposed to this point of view. According to Schleiermacher, it is only when we have a God-consciousness that we are released from fear of death (Moltmann 1996:87)²⁷. The liberation from the fear of death therefore has soteriological implications. If God is the God of the living and the dead, then those who are God-conscious cannot be separated from the dead. If a person, who maintains this point of view, forms part of the Christian faith, then their picture of Jesus must surely focus solely on the humanity of Christ with little consideration for his divinity (Moltmann 1996:52).

²⁵ Isaiah is speaking against those who oppose the Assyrian forces in an attitude of arrogance. This attitude may be the result of "Zion theology" which maintained that victory will be theirs as long as Yahweh resides in the Temple on mount Zion. (Prinsloo 1987:96)

²⁶ Dionysus is a god in Greek mythology who is seen to encourage passion and irrationality without considering consequences. Although Nietzsche does not adhere to this religion, he draws from it in order to illustrate his point on human approaches to life.

²⁷ Moltmann gains his information from: Schleiermacher, F. 1976. The Christian Faith. Philadelphia: No publisher given, p75

We say this because this philosophy of life would require any form of salvation to take place in the parameters of life in the created order. A transcendent Christ would therefore serve no purpose and a Kingdom that stems from the transcendent would not be relevant.

In this Christology, the Kingdom of God can only be realised in the realm of creation where life is experienced. One finds strong elements of this perspective in Dodd's "Realised Eschatology".²⁸ This Kingdom is an anthropocentric Kingdom and cannot find its origin in the transcendent. Moltmann's theology cannot agree with this, given the distinct differences between Creator and creation.

2.3 The existence of the Kingdom of God.

Moltmann suggests a third way in which we can, and perhaps should, interpret life. Both the previous points have attempted to compartmentalise life. In these perspectives, life and death are two separate modes of existence that stand in opposition to each other.

Neither of these two interpretations make any allowances for the possibility of the resurrection of the dead. Moltmann argues that this is the first misconception of existence (1996:65-71). To Moltmann, the term "life" can only refer to life, and all aspects of existential experience that go along with it. To live life in all its fullness means to be fully aware of one's existence in this life, the inevitability of one's death and the hope for one's resurrection from the dead (Moltmann 1996:66). It is only when this complete interpretation of life is accepted, that one is able to live.

²⁸ Dodd argued that the Kingdom of God had already come during Jesus' lifetime. (McGrath 2001:562).

To disregard any aspect of “Life” has serious consequences. To disregard death as part of life creates an obstacle in life, as has been observed in point 2.2. To disregard life, makes this life no more than a cruel prank by God to prepare us for the unknown. To disregard the resurrection of the dead, makes life meaningless and turns death into a bottomless pit of nothingness.

The question may be raised, “What is the purpose of life?” Moltmann’s reply to this would be “to love”. “True human life comes from love, is alive in love, and through loving makes something living of other life too.” (Moltmann 1996:53)

To Moltmann, life - in all its aspects - is linked to relationship (Moltmann 1996:105). Jesus’ declaration of purpose as reflected in the gospel of John reads as follows: “...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b). Underlying this purpose that Jesus speaks of, is the law, which in its very nature promotes relationship²⁹. Not only is our call to life the call to relationship with the living, but to relationship with the dead as well. In an earlier book “The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in messianic dimensions”, Moltmann writes about those in faith: “They find themselves in a community in which the frontier of death has been breached. Through Christ’s resurrection, God has thrown open the future to everyone, the living and the dead.” (Moltmann 1990:189). Life, death and the resurrection therefore have no borders that separate those in different “modes of existence”, but are merely separated by the limitations imposed by our philosophies.

²⁹ The law is summarised by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-38, making relationship with God, neighbour and self the focal points of living.

It is in Christ that we find the ultimate example of life. Jesus is the example of a person who is able to live through experiencing life, death and resurrection. The person who draws near to Christ therefore comes closer to the dead as well. (Moltmann 1996:108). Through the belief in Christ, which describes our salvation, Christ becomes the focal point of the meaning of existence. It is in the acceptance of this model of living that one is faced with one's personal eschaton (König 1980:107, 1970:481). In Moltmann's theology, this is the experience of the Kingdom in the life of the individual. Even at this point we can add that the individual does not experience the full Kingdom within their life, but starts a personal journey of discovering the Kingdom being present in their life.

Life, nor death, nor resurrection should be feared, for it is a state of our existence. Death cannot be more powerful than our state of being,³⁰ for our human spirit, being linked to the Divine "*ruach*³¹", adopts an immortal attribute. (Moltmann 1996:72). Our nature is therefore immortal.

The Kingdom of God is therefore neither transcendent, nor material in nature, but is to the individual the essence of experiencing true and unconfined relationship with both God and humanity. The greatest symbol of temporality, namely death, cannot overcome the Kingdom as experienced in life, nor be its final destination (Hebblethwaite 1984:211). The question may be raised concerning the fate of those who have not undergone a salvation-experience. Moltmann agrees with Hebblethwaite as he argues that the eschaton will be the point where all beings submit to the eternal through the salvation of God. (Hebblethwaite 1984:216), (Moltmann 1996:249). This point will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

³⁰ In other words, death cannot be a bottomless pit of nothingness.

Death is therefore not an altered state of existence, but should be seen as the moment when our being leaves its temporal state and adopts a mode of existence that is independent of our concepts of time (Moltmann 1996:77).

Richard Bauckham comments on Moltmann's definition of life and accuses Moltmann of being inconsistent. Bauckham states that in "The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in messianic dimensions", Moltmann uses Christology as the starting point of life, developing his argument in terms of Trinitarian participation in the discovery of life. In "The Coming of God: Christian eschatology", non-Christological ends are sought and the Trinity does not feature in the individual's understanding of life. (Bauckham 1999:5).

To a certain extent, I agree with Bauckham. Moltmann's argument in "The Coming of God: Christian eschatology" seems to suggest a human understanding of life, death and resurrection that needs to be developed in order to find the true meaning of "life". Very little mention is made of the Trinity's role in this journey. This is very unlike Moltmann, as the Trinity is a key-factor in his theology as discussed in the previous chapter³². Moltmann nevertheless seeks to find the meaning of life within Christological definitions. Moltmann, for instance, agrees with Bloch in stating that the resurrection can only serve as hope within the situation of death, if we take seriously the model of Christ (Moltmann 1996:65).

³¹ Hebrew word, referring to the Divine Spirit.

³² In "The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The doctrine of God", the Trinity is seen as the cause for the existence of the Godhead, as well as, everything that is created. All relationships find their origin in the co-dependence within the Trinity.

The resurrection of Christ can therefore not be an isolated event, but must become an event that demands the participation of the Trinity in creation. Pannenberg's understanding of the resurrection of Christ is very similar to this. Christ is the prolepsis of the eschaton and in the resurrection the possibility becomes available for all to be resurrected (Pannenberg 1972:97). The resurrection is therefore not only the conquering of death, but the "...Resurrection is how the righteousness of God was to be fulfilled in the individual" (Pannenberg 1972:101). The pinnacle of human life is therefore not life itself, but is purely anchored in the resurrection. This resurrection is the annihilation of death (Moltmann 1990:191). The resurrection is not exclusively the work of the Son, but the work of God (Moltmann 1990:213-215).

As in Pannenberg's theology, Moltmann finds the only sign of the reality of the Kingdom being proclaimed through the resurrection (Moltmann 1990:239).

The Kingdom of God is therefore found not only beyond creation nor only in creation, but in a concept which envelops the totality of existence. Klappert agrees with Moltmann when he states: "Man kann dann nicht sagen: «Im Tod wird der ganze Mensch vernichtet «oder» Im Tod hört die menschliche Identität auf»"³³ (Klappert 1997:38). The Kingdom is found in hope, not the kind of empty wishes, but the hope that we have through participating in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

3. Perceptions of life and death in South Africa.

Moltmann's argument is extremely theoretical and one wonders if his ideas are practically attainable in our world.

In this section, I will focus on two population groups in South Africa, namely Black- and White South Africans and see if Moltmann's views are pertinent to either. South Africa is such a diverse country that it is impossible to include points of view of all population groups. Since these are the two biggest groups, special attention will be given to them.

In turn, it is extremely difficult to look at the two major population groups in South Africa and describe their views on complex issues such as life and death. The first main objection to such a description would be that in these two population groups, we are not dealing with people of the same cultural- or historical background. In the black community in South Africa, more than ten different cultures represent true historical- South African ancestry. Each of these cultures has its own unique heritage and world-view. In the white community, one finds just as great a variety of cultures. People descending from the British settlers, Dutch- and Portuguese "explorers"³⁴, French Huguenots, among many, carry with them traditions, world-views and even different emphases in religion.

In describing these cultural perspectives on life and death, one can only refer to them in a generalised manner. Common themes are nevertheless recognisable in these different

³³ My own translation would read "Man can therefore not say: 'In death humanity is annihilated' or 'In death humanity finds its identity'".

³⁴ This term is used in inverted comma's, for neither of these nations were the first to "discover" South Africa. South Africa was already populated by many nations by the time of their "discovery".

understandings of life and death. The second problem that we encounter is that even these generalisations are not consistent in time. As time passes, and different cultures encounter one another in an economically- and technologically changing world, change in culture is inevitable. The descriptions of these cultures are therefore not a scientifically correct interpretation of where black or white people find themselves in their understanding of life and death at this point. It merely serves as a tool to identify those cultural traits, which have travelled with black and white South Africans for some time.

I believe that although we may witness a world and generation that we may not identify as true representatives of our individual cultures, we must acknowledge that our cultural heritages have shaped even them.

3.1 “Life” and “death” from a Black South African’s perspective.

The life of a black individual can never be described without referring to the person’s place in the community. To live is to be in existence in the intricacies of communal life (Setiloane 1986:9).

This philosophy is clearly described in several black cultures, and has been labelled in Southern Africa as the concept of “Ubuntu” (Boesak 1984:20). In the language of the Tumbuka this principle is described as: “*Munti ni munta cifukwa cabanyake.*”³⁵ (Boesak 1984:20). Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes the concept of Ubuntu as “...a person is a person through other people” (Tutu 1999:35).

³⁵ Translated as “A person is a person only because of others and on behalf of others.” (Boesak 1984:20)

When listening to Black people's stories of creation, one finds that even in this concept, human beings are described as coming into existence in the context of community.

Gabriel Setiloane describes two such myths in his book "*African theology: An introduction*"³⁶. Among the Nguni, people who originally occupied the eastern coastal areas of South Africa, the story is told of human beings and animals emerging from a bed of reeds. It is from this bed of reeds that everyone should know that they belong to a community of people and live in a world that is their equal. People and nature therefore need to be respected and any form of abuse is contrary to the definition of one's existence.

Even today among the Swazi-people, an annual festival is held to celebrate this story. At this festival, young girls who are entering womanhood are armed with a reed and perform the "Reed Dance", symbolising the creation of community. King Sobhuza II of the Swazis evidently had to pick a wife from these women each year to symbolise the continuance of communal humankind³⁷.

Among the Sotho-Tswana, who originally occupied the central and western areas of South Africa, this story is told "Our first parents came out of a hole in the ground. They came out together, men with their wives, children and their animals, cattle, sheep, goats and dogs." (Setiloane 1986:5)³⁸. Human individuals in the creation myths therefore cannot exist without being connected to other people as well as creation.

³⁶ Setiloane, G.M. 1986. *African theology: An introduction*. Johannesburg: Skotaville publishers p4-6

³⁷ (Setiloane 1986:5). Setiloane does not give any reference for this statement.

³⁸ Setiloane is quoting from: Willoughby, W.C. 1928. *The Soul of the Bantu*. London: SCM Press, p217.

Setiloane quotes Mbiti³⁹ as changing the Cartesian philosophy of “I think, therefore I am” to “I belong, therefore I am” (Setiloane 1986:10). Life only finds meaning when the individual finds reason and purpose in the broader community.

Community, being the basis of one’s individual meaning, therefore has to be protected at all costs. Anything that may challenge or corrupt this way of living is seen as evil and must be destroyed by the community (Thorpe 1991:113). These “forces” may be not only forces of nature, but may literally range from the defiance of authority by one person to that of complete political systems that undermine the importance of communal life. Not only was the Apartheid-system an infringement on human rights, but it also divided communities.

Death, in Black tradition, is not finality. The departed one is seen to have entered the world of the ancestors, where this person will be remembered for between four to five generations (Mbiti 1970:179). Ancestors may be remembered through sacrifices and offerings presented by the family (Mbiti 1970:179). This can nevertheless not be labelled as “ancestor-worship”, but is a medium through which relationships with the dead are maintained, as the dead have power to influence, help or molest the living (Idowu 1973:179).

³⁹ No reference given.

3.1.1 Liberation.

3.1.1.1 Liberation of identity.

When reflecting on the Black person's encounter with European lifestyles, Allan Boesak finds only bad results⁴⁰. Boesak states that European settlers have always dealt with black people and other ethnic groups with an attitude of contempt (Boesak 1984:16). It is as if European settlers have, throughout history, always sought to dominate the people whom they have encountered. One is reminded of the domination of the Red-Indian of America, the enslavement of the people of West-Africa, domination of the Indian people in India, the Aborigines of Australia and even some colonised states in the East.

Colonisation and domination in Africa has had severe effects on the Black person's perception of life. Boesak describes oppression as having taught black people that they are subordinate to white people. It was only a matter of time before black people started believing this (Boesak 1984:17). Even in the English language, black is often related to something bad or dirty, while white is referred to as something pure and respectable (Boesak 1984:17).

Setiloane describes this conditioning as making Black people believe that they are changing from being "savages" to "people" by adopting western thought-patterns, value systems and even spirituality (Setiloane 1986:1).

Life from the Black perspective has to be understood from the point of freedom within community. As long as the community is forced into an unnatural situation of existence,

the individual will suffer. The Black person living a western lifestyle therefore needs to be liberated from “alien” perspectives of life, in order to find meaning in their community (Boesak 1984:17).

Boesak claims that this liberation can only happen when black people are able to identify themselves in a world that is free from the colonised picture (Boesak 1984:18). To the black person, life can be described as the “Journey of discovery of true humanity” (Boesak 1984:18), something on which western civilisation places little value.

According to Boesak, finding true individuality in community, or the re-discovery of Ubuntu, is an eschatological journey (Boesak 1984:20). It is a process that demands reflection and cannot be achieved in a short time. This liberation is not a physical liberation, but a liberation of thought. Black theology has attempted to do precisely this. Black theology exists to create awareness among Black and White that Black people and their philosophies are equal to that of any other culture (Setiloane 1986:43). At the same time, Black theology is striving towards the creation of an African theology – a theology of diverse people on a common piece of land finding God together (Setiloane 1986:44).

To other Black people, this is only one aspect of liberation that needs to take place.

⁴⁰ Boesak, A. 1984. Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist tradition.

3.1.1.2 Economic liberation.

Itumaleng Mosala, being a liberation theologian, starts his theology from the perspective that true life can only be experienced in the context of complete freedom from oppressive forces.

Mosala sees this process of personal liberation as starting in the economic sector (Mosala 1989:67). According to Mosala, the development of African economics can be described within the identification of three modes of economic activity (Mosala 1989:67-100). The following is a summary of this reference:

The first is named the “Communal mode” of production. It is within this mode that humanity found itself when living in simplicity. Individuals in the family would cultivate, gather, and produce food and other items as the needs of the family arose. Later this mode of economics developed further into what is called the “Tributary mode of production”. In this mode of living, families started living together forming clans. Each clan had a chief who had to supervise the meeting of different needs within the clan. Production was thus no longer linked to one isolated family, but to the direct needs of a greater community.

Mosala then describes the process of the Tributary mode developing into the Capitalist mode of production. Production then became a way of enriching self, instead of producing for the sake of the community (whether big or small). Mosala argues that one will only be able to experience true life within black-society, once this self-centred

economic burden is broken and people will be able to produce for the purpose of meeting the needs of the community.

This Marxist approach unfortunately cannot function in a world that is governed by capitalist economic structures. Although self-identity may be found in this manner, it will come at a great cost. On the other hand, Moltmann claims that modern capitalism is a tool of violent death. “There are political- and economic structures which are unjust because they are used to enforce the domination of human beings by human beings, the exploitation of human beings by human beings, and the alienation of human beings from one another.” (Moltmann 1996:95).

Not only is this battle for self-identity waged against formal colonialism, but must be waged within Black communities as well. Westernization is not imposed, but seems to be embraced by the younger Black generations. Black American fashion has spilled over into the townships, and the ability to drive an expensive German car seems to be every young person’s dream. It seems as if authentic “Black culture” is slowly but surely being replaced by an American vision. This is sad, as it means that oppression is voluntarily embraced at the expense of community.

Life and death among Black people rests upon the ability to identify self as being one in community.

3.2 “Life” and “Death” to White South Africans.

I think it necessary to mention again that these perceptions are generalisations of the views of White people in South Africa.

In a modern perspective, it would be accurate to describe White society in South Africa as having succumbed to the seduction of secularism.

Bester (2001:15) quotes Peterson in his description of the effects of a secular culture. He, Peterson, says this: “Our culture has failed precisely because it is a secular culture. A secular culture is a culture reduced to a *thing* and *function*. Typically, at the outset people are delighted to find themselves living in such a culture. It is wonderful to have all these *things* coming our way, without having to worry about their nature or purpose. And it is wonderful to have this incredible freedom to *do* so much, without bothering about relationships or meaning. But after a few years of this our delight diminishes as we find ourselves lonely among the things and bored with our freedom. ... People begin to see that secularism marginalizes and eventually obliterates the two essentials of human fullness: intimacy and transcendence. *Intimacy*: we want to experience human love and trust and joy. *Transcendence*: we want to experience divine love and trust and joy.”⁴¹ Peterson is speaking from a North American perspective, but describes a lifestyle that is not unique or particular to that part of the world at all.

Secularism and capitalism in traditional White South Africa go hand in hand. In as much as secularism and capitalism are described as social concepts, can one go as far as adopting them as lifestyles. Life is about the here and now, where there is no place to

reflect or rest. Life seems to be determined by schedules and rush-hour traffic. One would think that this type of living is focussed on the individual. This is true in the sense that self-preservation determines most action in secular society. The other side of the coin shows that community is nevertheless important. Community as a whole needs to do well economically and socially in order for the individual to feel in place.

This relationship between secularism and capitalism is clearly illustrated by two American Catholic priests, Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos. They observe the following: “A recent survey of boys in the eighth grade of grammar school revealed that ninety percent of them see their primary goal in life as ‘making money’. Not falling in love and raising a family, not inventing or discovering something new, not exploring the secrets of nature, not making the world a better place, but simply making money – and lots of it.” (1996:64).

Martos and Rohr equate secular society with Anne Wilson Schaefer’s “The White male system”⁴² (Martos and Rohr. p20-21). This system is described as being based on four principles:

The first is that the White male system believes that it is the only system that exists. No other economic-, political- or social structures are considered, but those that are grounded on secular-capitalist principles. The second is that the White male system believes that it is innately superior. In the event of encountering a system other than itself, it continually seeks to dominate. The third is that the White male system believes

⁴¹ Peterson, E.H. 1997. Spirit Quest, in Submersive Spirituality, edited by J. Lyster, J. Sharon and P. Santucci. Michigan: Grand Rapids. p. 3-15

⁴² Martos and Rohr use as their source Wilson Schaefer, A. 1986. Women’s reality: An emerging Female system in the White male society. New York: Harper and Row publishers.

that it knows and understands everything. It is therefore not dependent upon anything but itself. The fourth describes the White male system as believing it possible to be totally logical, objective and rational. This makes it impossible for the White male system to empathise with the suffering.

Moltmann agrees when he describes life in secular society as being available only to healthy men between the ages of thirty and fifty. (1999:84) The bond between the meaning of life and the gaining of riches is strong. At the same time, secular society has also had the privilege of choosing those who may partake in it. This lifestyle does not literally belong only to men in this population- and age group, but to anyone who is willing to commit themselves to this lifestyle without questioning it. The description of White men in this age-group merely reflects the traditional holders of power throughout the world.

Community exists for the benefit of the individual, otherwise the individual will seek another community that will meet their immediate needs. Secularism seldom shows patriotism in the light of communal struggle. The extent of relationships stretches only as far as personal interests lie.

In the existence of self, relationships will suffer. While we find an increase in the number of unmarried couples living together, there is also an increase in divorce. Not only do relationships suffer among the living, but also in the way that White people deal with their relationships with the dead. Ancestry does not seem to matter (Moltmann 1999:86) as it contributes very little to the physical enrichment of the individual. In the event of death, one finds that funerals occur in a short space of time

after the person's passing. This means that there is very little time for mourning and relatives have to return to a normal lifestyle within a matter of days.

Even the manner in which the dead are surrendered to the elements symbolises a break in community. Traditional family burial venues are used to a lesser degree, while individual cremations and the scattering of ashes are preferred (Moltmann 1999:87, 1996:56).

It is surprising that the secular lifestyle views death as the enemy. Death is seen as the opposite to life. Being able to embrace life and all the riches it may offer promotes one's stature in society. Death and poverty are linked. Poverty is equated to failure and death therefore is the surrender to nothingness. If poverty is punishment, does it mean that death is punishment as well? Moltmann challenges this movement's view on death and implies that it is through the "violent death" of others that these economic structures keep intact and promote the concept of life to those who submit to them. "Death is not a consequence of people's sin. A 'natural death' is rare among them: most of them cannot afford it. Their death through the indirect violence issuing from the wealthy countries is an everyday affair, just as everyday as hunger and disease." (Moltmann 1996:95, 1989:3).

Secular society, as the basis of life for the White South African, can be described as being purely anthropocentric. Submitting to a lifestyle that demands forward projection and goal setting leaves little or no room for the concept of remembrance or contemplation. If a person cannot remember, then there is very little place for God (Moltmann 1999:81). White people in South Africa – generally the younger, secular

driven generation – do not have a culture of story telling, which is a symptom of this “amnesia”. Desmond Tutu cites a warning by quoting George Santayana: “ Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” (Tutu 1999:32)

Life and death to the average White person in South Africa are two extremes. One is expected to live so as not to die. Death should therefore be avoided at all costs. If death is the assumed weaker state of being, then one comes to the natural conclusion that the strong are those who continue to live in the reality of death. The Kingdom of God is hard to find in such a secular perspective. Perhaps this perspective would make sense if immortality were an option in this life, but even then, the Kingdom would be considered to be the privilege of the living. In this perspective, that which is able to conquer death, becomes God.

4. Ethical implications of Moltmann’s personal eschatology.

Although it seems as if White, secular society is in total opposition to Moltmann’s point of view, Moltmann will agree in one area. This would be the possibility of experiencing life in all its fullness in the here and now. As the Kingdom of God is not a concept that is linked to the future or existence beyond this one, yet the Kingdom of God is able to exist in the present within the environment of love (Moltmann 1996:53). This has certain social implications.

4.1 Social implications.

“Life” in the secular definition and “life” in the definition of the Kingdom of God, are not the same. The main difference between these two concepts, lies in the way one arrives at this point of awareness.

Moltmann's definition of life in the Kingdom of God exists purely as a result of relationship. This relationship is perceived first in the Trinity (Moltmann 1981:157). As we are created in the image of God, our existence is dependent on our being in relationship.⁴³ Without relationship, life becomes empty and meaningless. White, secular society does not exist in community, but community has to exist for the individual. Moltmann would clearly use this lifestyle as an example of "Living as if there were no death".⁴⁴

One can continue along this line of thought and ask whether modern Black perceptions of life are in fact so much different from the Western way of life? Modern Black living can easily be described as "...no longer determined by the cycles of the earth and the rhythms of the body, but only by the pace of the modern world." (Moltmann 1999:76). This is nothing but slipping into a state of secular existence.

Moltmann's warning in his personal eschatology would be, that if secularism is allowed to oppress white and black cultures, not only would our cultures be destroyed, but also the basis on which we identify as a community.

I think that Moltmann would agree with the traditional Black perceptions of life and death to the extent that one's existence can only be found if one is able to be in community with those around oneself, nature and the natural process of death that we must all experience. Added to this, would be the hope of resurrection. Secular society has a gift to offer in the sense that productivity empowers people. Traditional Black

⁴³ See point 3.2. Being in the image of God is a process of self-discovery.

⁴⁴ See point 2.2.

beliefs concerning life and death offer the gift of existing in community without having to fear one's own mortality.

Moltmann's personal eschatology seems to bring these two worlds together. It searches for the place where the Black person can say "I am an empowered person!" without negating responsibilities to community. On the other hand it is also searching for the place where a White person can say "I am who I am because of people!" without negating the responsibilities of caring for the needs of the community. It is only in such a world that all will be able to say "Dit is my mense die"⁴⁵.

Moltmann's community of faith does not see gender or race, but is part of a Kingdom where no person belongs purely because of their individuality. The dream of the rainbow nation is thus kept alive in Moltmann's eschatology. Relationships with the dead need to be revisited. Remembering one's identity in a life where death is inevitable, makes one's own mortality so much easier to accept. Remembering cannot be done without reflection (Moltmann 1999:78). The meaning of life will thus not be found in the midstream of schedules, but in the reflection and "making sense" of one's actions through contemplation.

4.2 Economic implications.

Moltmann does not agree with the capitalist way of living (Moltmann 1996:95). At the same time a Marxist approach will not help the plea of the poor, but only suppress them into a situation of deeper need.

⁴⁵ Afrikaans saying, translated as "These are my people!"

If capitalism continues to be the economic method used by South Africa, then the Kingdom of God will have to “harness the monster” of greed. Capitalism in itself does not only rob the poor of their livelihood, but also robs the enforcers of their “life”. Moltmann’s theology calls for an economic system that does not exploit relationships. This includes relationship with God, neighbour, self, and creation. Anything that may hinder these relationships must be seen as evil. If capitalism can be directed towards a place where the poor are empowered, then people will be liberated from a great financial oppression.

If this is the way in which we live one will find that pride in self and community will increase. With such pride in being an individual, belonging to a community, it is almost unfathomable to expect a rising in violent crime against people, nature or property. Corruption cannot exist, for life in community cannot function in its presence. Rape cannot exist, for one’s dependence upon every individual is essential. Poverty can be addressed, as life in community calls for equal opportunities in the workplace.

Where we started, thinking about Moltmann’s theology as being philosophical, we now end with an idealistic expectation. Moltmann is aware of the differences between secular and theological expectations. Moltmann argues that his concept of the Kingdom is in essence a concept of hope (Moltmann 1999b:78). The reason why we cannot fathom such an existence is found purely in the fact that we cannot experience it in its totality yet. Moltmann therefore deliberately focuses on the Kingdom of God as the hope of our experience as it is revealed in the resurrection of Christ. Moltmann describes it in a very poetic manner when writing: “The raising of Christ was for me like daybreak following the long night of the eclipse of God (Rom. 13:12).” (Moltmann

1999b:81). To some, Moltmann's understanding of the Kingdom of God is nothing but a dream. To Moltmann, it is the hope that God has a goal for history (1999b:85).

Chapter 3

The Kingdom of God in Historical eschatology: Transformation of time.

1. Introduction.

The experience of the gift of life is central to Moltmann's eschatology as we saw in the previous chapter. We identified different Christian perspectives of how people, especially people in South Africa, define the experience of life. This experience was seen in the light of death and the role that personal salvation plays in the interpretation of life was assessed.

In this chapter, I will describe Moltmann's broader vision in terms of his concept of the Kingdom of God relating to his historical understanding of eschatology. In order to explore Moltmann's historical eschatology, I will identify three areas of existential existence that relate to Moltmann's historical eschatology.

These areas include history as a journey in time, as experienced in the environments of politics and theology. Each of these factors will be analysed individually so as to arrive at Moltmann's concept of the existence of the Kingdom of God in an eschatological-historical environment.

2. Moltmann's historical eschatology.

It is not a strange phenomenon in Christian theology to equate the existence of the Kingdom of God with the experience of personal salvation. Some claim that the Kingdom of God finds its realisation exclusively in the life of the individual who has

experienced personal salvation. This perspective is commonly found in the verbal proclamation of the gospel especially in the Reformed tradition. A good example of this perspective can be found in a sermon⁴⁶ preached by J.H. Kok based on Matthew 24:14: “Daar is het Koninkrijk⁴⁷ der hemelen in het hart, waar de vergeving der sonde persoonlik aanvaar word, en waar de kracht des Heiligen Geestes in de vernieuwing des levens bespeurd word.”⁴⁸ (Kok 1925:222).

The rise of the Pentecostal- as well as liberation movements has again raised the issue of an observable, tangible existence of the Kingdom of God in the life of the believer. “...If God is real, and by the power of the Spirit is actively promoting the Kingdom⁴⁹ of Christ on earth, then this activity will be dynamic and observable, in its results and methods peculiarly divine, and most obviously not duplicable by any human means.” (Clarke, et al 1983:54). Although these perspectives promote the idea of an existence of the Kingdom in the life of the individual, the Kingdom of God may still be seen as not yet being complete. The act of personal salvation is a factor towards the establishment of God’s reign here on earth.

Moltmann does not equate the experience of personal salvation with the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Moltmann 1996:131). This may seem to be a contradiction in terms, since Moltmann’s personal eschatology certainly does describe the presence of the Kingdom of God in everyday existence (Moltmann 1990:100).

⁴⁶ Sermon entitled “Het evangelie des Koninkrijks”.

⁴⁷ Importance is placed upon the concept of a divine kingdom existing within the existential perspective of human beings. Although there is a difference in the concepts of the Kingdom of God, Kingdom of heaven and Kingdom of Christ, the one unifying factor is the transcendent “Kingdom” being experienced.

⁴⁸ “The Kingdom of heaven is in the heart of a person, where the forgiveness of sins has been personally experienced and where the life-transforming power of the Holy Spirit is sought.” (Own translation)

⁴⁹ See footnote 45.

To Moltmann the process of arriving at a link between the Kingdom of God and the experience of personal salvation is reversed from the process stated above. It differs in that Moltmann's definition of personal eschatology exists primarily because of history's journey towards an eschatological point and not the other way around (Moltmann 1996:131). If history's eschatological point were totally dependant upon personal eschatology, then the stance would be a pure post-Millenarianist approach.

“The Kingdom of God is a more integral symbol of the eschatological hope than eternal life.” (Moltmann 1996:131), hereby emphasising the point that the Kingdom of God is a concept that is greater than the culmination of personal salvation as experienced by individuals.

To Moltmann, personal eschatology neither becomes the accumulative basis for the existence of a historical- nor cosmic eschatology, but it exists by the pure nature of history moving towards an eschatological point (Moltmann 1996:132). Moltmann therefore adopts a Gestalt-philosophy⁵⁰ within his approach to historical eschatology.

The question that is raised asks: “What is the eschatological point towards which history is moving?” Let us consider this question in terms of history's journey in time.

⁵⁰ Based upon the philosophy developed by Aristotle stating that “The whole is more than the sum of the parts”. This would imply that the elements earn their value by nature of being part of the whole (Deist 1984:105). Personal eschatology therefore only gains its value through existing as part of a greater eschatology.

2.1 History in time.

“Time...is a question of moments charged with divine significance” (Roberts 1955:114). This viewpoint is quite striking, yet it has a very limiting approach to the experience of God in that which is beyond time. What would happen if time should stop? Does this imply that “moments of divine significance” are totally dependant upon our concept of time? These questions would be difficult to answer by those who have a suppressed concept of death or of any sense of end⁵¹.

2.1.1 Orders of time.

It would seem that a characteristic of those who do allow for a concept of end in existence is to look for a pattern in which the end could be described, or even go as far as to attempt predicting the occurrence of such an event.

In the realm of Christian thought, Moltmann continuously reflects upon two theories that attempt to provide such a pattern as would lead to the eschatological point. The first perspective is that of Joachim of Fiore who identified the progression of the Kingdom of God through the activity of each person of the Trinity in creation as leading to what he called “The Kingdom of Glory” (Moltmann 1981:207-209). The first state of Kingdom is described as the Kingdom of the Father through which the relationship between God and creation can be described as one of Lord and those who adhere to the law. This was to be followed by the Kingdom of the Son, which changes the nature of the relationship to one of friendship. The Kingdom of the Spirit again changes the nature of God-human relationship to the extent that humanity can partake

⁵¹ Moltmann’s description of those living with a suppressed concept of death (Moltmann 1996:54-57) is one of the inability to experience life.

in God's work of hope. This Kingdom would eventually flow naturally into the Kingdom of Glory, which is the consummation of the eschaton.

Moltmann also refers to the epochs described by Orthodox Protestantism (Moltmann 1981:208-209). Here, three Kingdoms are spoken of. The first is described as *Regnum naturae*, which is the equivalent of Joachim's Kingdom of the Father. The second, *Regnum gratiae*, focuses on the work of Christ, and grace bestowed upon creation. This would include both Joachim's Kingdom of the Son and of the Spirit. The final, eternal Kingdom is described as *Regnum gloriae*, whereby all creation will find its final state of being.

Moltmann draws on both these epochal descriptions to describe an historical journey, which is based on the relationship between God and creation. To Moltmann, the historical interaction between God and creation is based upon the search for ultimate freedom (Moltmann 1981:213). In essence, one would be able to describe the absolute transcendent God as being totally free. This is an approach adopted by Barth (Barth 1966:37).

Moltmann's view of God is that although God is transcendent, God chooses to be present in human history, not only in the person of Jesus Christ as described in Barth's theology, but on a continuous basis through the working of each of the persons of the Trinity. The principle of God's freedom is found in the fellowship within the Trinity (Moltmann 1981:215). Human definitions may very well describe freedom as the point where the individual is able to make decisions and live life without the influence of

people or events around him/her. Moltmann describes this as an illusion. (Moltmann 1981:216).

The only freedom that can be found in human history is in the experience of total community. It is therefore in the era of creation that people are created essentially to be in community with God and with one another. The era of salvation only exists for the sake of re-establishing community within humanity and between humanity and God. (Moltmann 1990:268) In Moltmann's pneumatological interpretation, it is essentially the work of the Spirit to create the dwelling place of God in creation (Moltmann 1992:48).

The difference between Moltmann's epochal system and that of both Joachim of Fiore and Orthodox Protestantism is in the manner Moltmann sees the work of community-building within each epoch as the work of the complete Trinity. One would therefore identify passages like John 1 as a Trinitarian activity in creation. Moltmann describes the work of Christ as work done in community with the Father, through the power of the Spirit (Moltmann 1990:86). The Spirit, at the same time constantly points towards the Person of Christ, who in turn works towards the glory of the Father.

It would therefore seem as if the ultimate goal - the reconciliation of all relationships – serves as Moltmann's eschatological point. Personal eschatology is therefore not a premise for the existence of historical eschatology, but an element of God's overall plan of reconciliation.

2.1.2 Telos⁵² or finis⁵³?

What would such an end mean in terms of human history? As much as the Jewish apocalyptic views would favour a totally new order of creation, so would the existentialists opt for a mere goal in history emphasising harmony and prosperity in creation.

Neither of these viewpoints really answers the question: “Will history end?”. Jewish apocalypticism has a religious philosophy that would require such an end. This is seen in apocalyptic writings such as 2 Esdras 7:50, Daniel 2 and 7. The answer to this question, using a definition of history as ‘the story of life on planet earth’, would be an emphatic “Yes!”. In terms of history on earth, as the awareness of time and space through life, existence as we know it will end. It is common knowledge that the sun cannot radiate energy forever and will eventually collapse in itself. If life is present on planet earth by then, it will end.

On a larger scale, Stephen Hawking reminds us that “The universe would expand to a very large size and eventually it would collapse again into what looks like a singularity in real time. Thus, in a sense, we are still all doomed, even if we keep away from black holes.” (Hawking 1988:147).

Finis is an existential certainty. What is described above would be a finis that is introduced from neither God (as a messianic-apocalyptic end) nor humanity, but as a law of nature that cannot be altered. Theological reflection has nevertheless been able to describe a finis that could occur before such a final cataclysmic event.

⁵² Greek word meaning “Aim”, “goal” or “end” (Deist 1984:254)

Pre-Millenarian evangelicals around the world herald finis, as an apocalyptic reality introduced by God. It is according to this opinion that all we perceive at present would be destroyed and the new creation would be brought into existence.

The natural remedy to combat the end of life has therefore been sought. To the first scenario not much can be done, except to submit to the coming rule of God, or to continue alongside the destruction of the “old creation”. The response to the second alternative can be found in the Liberal theology of the 19th century. It is on the premise that “Without the world God is not God” Hegel was able to construct a theology of Idealism through which God works continuously in and through creation so as to reach perfection and ultimate truth (Grenz & Olson 1992:38).

This idea of human activity –in the Name of God- can only be described as post-Millenarianism. This thinking led to Barth’s response in arguing God’s total independence from creation (Van Niekerk 1982:139).

Moltmann does not lose sight of the reality of the end of life. He identifies examples of this reality through citing the nuclear threat, ecological- and economic catastrophes that we can experience at any moment in our lives (Moltmann 1996:135).

In the same way that we may experience an existential end to life and history, Moltmann identifies a second type of Finis that is prevalent throughout the world today. This is seen as the end of people’s concepts of Utopia that are created by political- and/or economic systems (Moltmann 1995:202).

⁵³ Latin word meaning “End” (Deist 1984:96)

In his article “End of Utopia-end of history?” (Moltmann 1995: 202) Moltmann cites the reactions of people dedicated to Marxist-ideologies after the collapse of socialism in the former Eastern bloc. The reactions can be described as being nothing less than the interpretation of events as being the fall of society and the total absence of hope.

Moltmann responds to both these arguments from the premise of eternity. If history as time, as well as systems of all natures, can be described as concepts bound by finitude, so should all who partake in them be aware that change is inevitable. Moltmann writes: “Who wants an ‘end of Utopia,’ and who is served by the dark ‘end of the utopian age’? The answer is obvious. Those who dominate and enjoy the present want to extend their present into the future and are afraid of any alternate possibility. They want to suppress the underside of their history from public awareness. So they declare that their system is the ‘end of history,’ to which, as modern cynicism has it, there is ‘no alternative’.” (Moltmann 1995:202).

To be part of a finite creation therefore implies that even in that state of existence we should anticipate the possibility of change in the reality that is perceived.

Moltmann’s eschatology, although including a finis, is focussed on the telos of creation. The eschatological point in creation is therefore not focussed on the possible destruction of the world, but rather is geared towards a goal that is not dependant upon any finite state of existence. Moltmann describes this state of existence as adopted from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 28: “...God will be all in all”. (Moltmann 1999c:40) This speaks of the telos of creation being the point of perfect

relationship between God and creation and community within creation itself (Moltmann 1996:134).

2.2 Political eschatology.

“Politically speaking, history is always a struggle for power and for domination over other people and over nature”. (Moltmann 1996:134).

The word “Kingdom” is a political term (Moltmann 1996:132), and implies a shift in power. Historical politics can therefore not be separated from creation’s move towards an eschatological point. One can even ask the question whether politics should be seen as an antithesis to the rule of God. Aristotle’s approach to politics speaks of its role as the search for a common good that would ensure the well-being of all who partake in it (Aristotle 1953:70). Surely if the goal of politics and the telos of history coincide then we are speaking of the same journey?

2.2.1 Who is in control?

The theological response to this question would ask who the source is of such a dramatic shift in historical existence.

19th century Liberal theology Protestantism promoted the idea that human beings, through the power of Christ, are agents of the establishment of the rule of God (Bowden and Richardson 1983:327). It is my own thought that one could identify the rise of Nazism as an example of this thinking. This post-Millenarianist approach places the initiative in the hands of creation in order to bring about a concept of existence that is by all means and purposes foreign to existing political systems.

Moltmann identifies other systems that have seen themselves as Holy empires, designated by God to impose a new rule whereby all should submit to the authority of the state. Examples would be the Roman Empire, Portuguese- and Spanish inquisitions and colonialist activities (Moltmann 1996:164-166). The danger that all of these systems face is that they may deceive themselves into taking God's place of authority.

The response to the Liberal theology of the 19th century by theologians like Barth, Brunner, Bultmann and Niebuhr was one emphasising the transcendence of God. To Moltmann, the journey towards the eschatological point in history cannot by any means be fabricated or inspired by human initiative. This does not mean that Moltmann's understanding of God forbids God to partake in creation through political activity.

If politics were the primary tool through which God would work towards an eschatological point, then the stance of the church would be nothing less than a secularised body that bows to the state.

2.2.2 Redeemer nations.

Another name given to the Holy Empire would be that of "Redeemer nation". Moltmann uses this term in identifying communities or groupings who see themselves as fulfilling the divine task, as a nation, to bring about peaceful co-existence (Moltmann 1996:168). This nation, or grouping would thereby identify themselves with the nation of Israel of old, receiving divine instruction to fulfil God's will and so to prosper.

Moltmann's criticism of the United States of America is very severe. In both his books "The Coming of God: Christian eschatology"⁵⁴, and "God for a secular society: The public relevance of theology"⁵⁵, Moltmann refers to the increasing threat of secularisation within communities such as in the superpower of the United States. (Moltmann 1996:171; 1999:6). It is in the creation of a dream of a social-utopia that all would be free and have the opportunity to express themselves in an open manner. The secularised idea of existence does not compare well to Moltmann's definition of the Kingdom of God.

It may very well be within this political framework that the church loses its identity and becomes an instrument, perhaps unknowingly, of the utopian dream of politics.

Ecclesiastical post-millenarianism can be described as an anthropological drive towards the establishment of a Utopia within historical existence, under the guise of the Kingdom of God.

Again, Moltmann warns us through the lessons of the past how politically motivated ideologies misconstrue the essential message of the Gospel. Hereby Moltmann cites examples of the Roman Catholic Church's role in the promotion of Roman ecclesiastical rule, especially during the era of Pope Gelasius I (Moltmann 1996:180).

Perhaps the expectation of redeemer nations are unrealistic in the sense that they seek to create a universal order throughout the world, showing little consideration for the diversity in cultures, world-views and philosophies present. Moltmann states that the

⁵⁴ Moltmann, J. 1996. The Coming of God: Christian eschatology. London: SCM Press

flaw in such an approach would lie in the fact that no society or system can be universalised (Moltmann 1996:177).

2.3 Religious eschatology.

At the same time that politics strives towards a point of unified existence, so does the role of the church change in accordance with the political stance that is dominant.

2.3.1. The missionary role of the Church.

Moltmann observes that all motivations that promote the idea of a utopian existence arise out of a state of crisis. (Moltmann 1967: 234). The 19th century did well in promoting the idea that history could be ended within history by rationalising the concept of historical existence (Moltmann 1967:236).

The Church finds itself in historical crisis when faced with a world-wide post-Millenarianist approach. It seems as if the church can do nothing else but participate in the drive towards building an utopian society. Fuellenbach, responding to Dulles' models of the church raises the question with which the church is faced in modern times: "What can the church do to make the world a better place to live in?" (Fuellenbach 1999:262).

Moltmann acknowledges the fact that the Church should be involved in socially-uplifting practices, but adds that this should only be done as the mission of the Kingdom of God. (Moltmann 1977:10-11) "The real point is not to spread the Church, but to spread the Kingdom" (Moltmann 1977:11).

⁵⁵ Moltmann, J. 1999. God for a secular society: The public relevance of theology. Minneapolis: Fortress

The role of the church in society is therefore significantly different to that of politics. Where politics is concerned with power and authority in human terms, it is the Church's role to promote the rule of Christ. This is not to say that the Church should fall to the temptation of promoting theocracies, but that the nature of the Kingdom of God as eschatological point seeks something more than a post-millenarianist peace.

This Post-millennial view may lead to the point where the onus is put on the Church as a divine agency to establish the Kingdom of God (Boettner 1957:284). Moltmann reminds us that it is not the Church's task to establish the Kingdom of God, but that the Church exists as co-worker in the Kingdom of God. (The Kingdom itself can only exist because of Christ) (Moltmann 1977:193).

2.3.2 The historical place of Christ in the Kingdom.

“The revelation of God which the New Testament talks about when it proclaims the revelation of the crucified and risen Christ is not an historical revelation of God *in* history; on the contrary, the eschatological revelation of God is ‘the end of history’” (Moltmann 1996:136). Moltmann's stance is not an unique stance developed to prove a point, but is a response to Bultmann's argument, which in turn is against Cullmann's placing of Christ in time.

Oscar Cullmann starts by differentiating between time and eternity by ascribing to time the characteristic of being finite (Cullmann 1946:69). God's existence is described as being primarily outside time and God is therefore able to behold historical time objectively. Cullmann differentiates at the same time between the concepts of history

and the history of salvation (Cullmann 1946:81). The latter would refer to God's involvement within history to reconcile creation to God-self.

Predestination and pre-existence would therefore be a reality as God can view history objectively, yet participate immanently. Through God's special vantage-point, God can observe the reality of the end of history. It is through this perspective that Jesus, whom Cullmann places at the centre of the history of salvation, is able to speak of the end. Jesus' perspective is therefore a perspective from eternity. Cullmann further asserts that the Kingdom of God through Christ - as the centre of the history of salvation - is partially possible in the life of the person who is dedicated to the Kingdom. "Faith in the Christ-event already permits the disciple of Christ to 'taste the powers of the future world' (Heb.6:5)". (Cullmann 1946:75).

Bultmann responded to Cullmann's theology by questioning the validity of the difference between the history of salvation and history (Bultmann 1960:275) "Where and how, then does God really reveal himself? *In* history, or *within* history?" (Bultmann 1960:275). To Bultmann, Christ is the end of the history of salvation when viewed in the light of the apocalyptic expectations of the Jewish faith (Bultmann 1960:281). There is no sense in which Christ has to be limited within the concept of time to work towards a mission that can only be completed within the actual end of history.

"Life in the Kingdom means fulfilment. The Christian hope implies the continuation, not the end of history, and the activity of God in the whole of human history will be gathered into the life of the Kingdom when it is consummated." (Roberts 1955:112).

Moltmann responds to Bultmann with the argument that the Christ-event is not an historical event performed in order to end the history of salvation, but that the Christ-event is an event beyond history performed within the confines of space and time in order to reveal God's intentions of reconciliation. Christ is therefore the end of history as Christ is the first to be raised from the dead and journeys with all towards the general resurrection (Moltmann 199:213).

The difference that the Church offers in terms of the Kingdom of God is that Christ is at the centre of its existence. It is only through Christ that the Church exists and through Christ that the Kingdom of God can be proclaimed by the church. The Church would never be able to serve as the catalyst, or the sole foundation of the Kingdom of God in history.

The resurrection is the start of the transformation of history. A political theology then becomes the vehicle towards which creation journeys to the fulfilled Kingdom of God. (Erickson 1977:49)

Moltmann's historical eschatology can be described neither as a pre- nor a post-Millenarianist perspective. The manner in which he arrives at this point is by placing the salvific work of Christ beyond our concepts of time. The end is therefore made public through the person of Christ. Through the work of the Spirit this life is nurtured and enables the possibility of personal eschatology to be experienced. Although the Kingdom of God is not complete in creation yet, the task of the church is to bear witness to the hope of the Kingdom as displayed in the person of Jesus Christ.

3. The relevance of Moltmann's historical eschatology to South Africa.

3.1 Historical eschatology in time.

Since 1994, South Africa has experienced the transformation of thought on many different levels. When investigating reasons for changes taking place in the socio-political context of the country, one is soon faced with a soteriological-eschatological purpose, namely the liberation of people from all kinds of oppression and intimidation so that life may be experienced to the full. This has been the promise of Democracy.

In this journey through time, one cannot help but to wonder where it will all end. Is there a telos or a finis at the end of this story? Moltmann reminds us that we need not take a negative view of finis, but that many people experience finis in the destruction of a political- or economic environment to which they adhere (Moltmann 1995: 202). This was certainly the case in the fall of the Apartheid-regime.

The task of the Church in this context is not only to restore dignity to those who have been oppressed, but also to include those who find themselves in a desert of meaninglessness. I would think that this is the type of community that Moltmann speaks about in his eschatologically-united humanity (Moltmann 1992:226).

3.2 Political influence.

3.2.1 South Africa as redeemer nation.

South Africa is not isolated in the drive towards an Utopian state of existence. In fact, not only does one find characteristics of South Africa becoming a redeemer nation in the future (will be argued later), but South Africa has also experienced the influence of

redeemer nation characteristics in its own history through colonialism, and even in the struggle for democracy.

Again, the nations' identification with Israel plays a vital role. Maimela describes the identification of both British- and Afrikaner nations in a combined framework entitled "The Concept of 'Israel' in White Theology" (Maimela 1987:25-39). In this framework, the British rule is described as a rule concerned with mission. The mission, carrying the Christian banner, was to bring the experience of life to smaller nations (Maimela 1987:30).

This came at a great cost to those who were forced into British rule. The same consequences existed in the rise of the Afrikaner Rule. Maimela, in my opinion, simplifies this identification with Israel by comparing both these nations to Israel occupying the Promised Land by destroying the local inhabitants.

A further comparison with the nation of Israel is made by the liberation movement of that time. Here, the oppressed identify with an Israel in Egyptian captivity. Only through the intervention of God by the liberation of God's people would an humane society be possible. (Maimela 1987:149).

Recently we have experienced another rise in thought within South African history towards making life better for other nations, using our own initiative. This has been done through the vision of President Thabo Mbeki, named the "African Renaissance".

According to De Klerk, the fall of colonialist rule in Africa has left many countries without any sense of identity. In this existence, many countries are considering a return to traditional African ways of living that will only prove economically hazardous when engaging with a continuously growing capitalistic world. (De Klerk 2001:273). It is therefore the goal of the African renaissance to equip African states to deal with the rest of the world on an equal footing, whilst at the same time treasuring the cultures and traditions of every nation.

De Klerk asks the vital question whether the renaissance is actually necessary and concludes that it is vitally important if Africa is to survive. (De Klerk 2001:274).

According to his estimates, Africa already has a debt of US\$227,2 billion. The eschatological vision that is portrayed in the concept of the African renaissance is not necessarily a theological one, but a socio-economic perspective.

Through the South African influence in international deliberations, Africa could become self-sustainable. With tongue in cheek, this process can be described as creating the rest of Africa in the image of South Africa.

From a Christian perspective, De Klerk proposes the building of community, which Moltmann places at the centre of his historical eschatology.

Although Africa already owns a community system called Ubuntu, De Klerk proposes that this system needs to be Christianised (De Klerk 2001:277). The assumption is that the current system of Ubuntu may very well become the source of Christian community in Africa.

Theologically one may ask whether Ubuntu and koinonia would ever be able to be the same? Moltmann suggests that this is possible as the nature of relationships in Africa and Asia are conducive to the growth of a Christian community (Moltmann 1999:78-81). It is quite obvious, that if this is the case, the contextualisation of liturgy and format of Christian worship should be on the agenda for theologians in Africa.

3.3 Theological implications.

What is the role of the church in the process of transformation of South Africa?

Liberation theology in South Africa, especially Black theology, has approached the subject of the Church's involvement in transformation from an anthropocentric point of view. Although Apartheid is in the past, the task of theology is seen as being the platform from which people are made aware of their humanity. Moltmann agrees with this approach to a certain extent, noting that it is the Church's purpose to identify with the poor and to enable dignity to be instilled within the lives of the oppressed. (Moltmann 1990:99).

This prophetic role, played by the Church in the arena of social justice, is where Dolamo draws a parallel between the theologies of Maimela and Barth, describing the liberating acts of God. "God had to say 'No, first to sin, in order for God to say 'Yes' to sinners..." (Dolamo 2001:295).

By this Dolamo expects a social transformation to take place even if personal transformation does not. Dolamo, in my opinion, missed a vital distinction between the different theologies. In Maimela's "No" and "Yes" God is able to speak through a

specific group of people, addressing social- and political injustices that may occur.

Barth's "Yes" and "No" are words spoken by God in the context of human sinfulness.

God's "Yes" and "No" are to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, who becomes

God's "No" and enables God's "Yes" to reach out to the whole of creation. (Barth

1960:58)

The first is an anthropocentric perspective, the latter a theocentric perspective. The only commonality between the two perspectives is in the terminology, which shuns injustice and applauds righteousness.

A modern (post-Apartheid) example of an anthropocentric approach can be seen in the perspective posed by H.M. Dandala. In an article entitled "The role of the Church in the birth and nurture of a new nation" (Dandala 2001:30-42), Presiding Bishop Mvume Dandala of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa outlines the basic points in which the Church needs to engage with society in order for transformation to take place.

Taken from a Christian perspective the points are (Dandala 2001:31-39):

- The establishment of visionary leadership;
- Ground based support and initiatives;
- Social Transformation through fairness and justice;
- Search for a common understanding of truth;
- Remembering the past.

It is easy to see an anthropologic approach in this theology. Although the work of the church, from an anthropological perspective is helpful and encouraged, the warning that

the Church must not slip into the assumption that the Kingdom of God can be established through human initiative must be heeded. If the Church is to do this, it will become nothing more than a secularised tool through which political ideals can be met.

The question in response to an anthropological perspective is: “What makes the church’s stance significantly different to that of politics?”. Dandala rightly asserts that the difference is found in the person of Christ (Dandala 2001:38).

Fuellenbach asks a very important question, namely, whether there is a connection between the Kingdom and Jesus. He answers that question immediately by quoting Moltmann: “Whoever becomes involved with Jesus, becomes involved with the kingdom of God”⁵⁶ (Fuellenbach 1995:211).

De Gruchy agrees with this statement, provided that the Church does not deceive itself into becoming what it is not: “...what is of importance for ecclesiology is the recognition that the church is not the kingdom of God, but exists to bear witness to God’s reign in Jesus Christ.” (De Gruchy 1994:130). Quoting Bosch⁵⁷ on another occasion: “...Missionary activity is not so much the work of the Church as simply the Church at work” (De Gruchy 1994:133).

Prof. Heyns’ critique of pre-millenarianism sheds light on the dangers of using a totally theocentric approach. About pre-millenarianism, Heyns asks about the relevance of such an eschatology within the Christian faith. Pre-millenarianism would imply that Christ would not return once, but twice in order to seal the final victory (Heyns

1963:10). Furthermore, there are no references to such a theology in the major Christian creeds namely: the Apostle's creed, Declaration of Basel, Confessio Helvetica Posterior, Dutch confession, or Heidelberg Catechism. (Heyns 1963:72). Heyns further states that the Church has traditionally adopted a strictly post-Millenarianist point of view (Heyns 1963:74).

Of Post-millenarianism one can just as easily ask whether an end is implied. Post-millenarianism does not make any promise concerning the finality of an end. Would it be too unrealistic to expect the universal conversion of the whole of creation? Perhaps it stretches the philosophy a little too far.

4. Conclusion.

Moltmann's view of the historical significance of the Kingdom of God is helpful to the South African context. It serves as a constant reminder of the numerous traps of self-worship that are present within the world today.

The importance of Moltmann's view is realised when one is faced with the fact that neither a humanly inspired Utopia, nor the religious conversion of all can possibly force God's reign to break into history.

History can only look at one event, the event of the cross and resurrection to find the sign of the promised Kingdom in our contexts. Is this the sign of a transcendent activity beyond the reality of our time and space? No, it cannot be solely transcendent, as this would deny the possibility of relationship between creator and creation. Relationship is

⁵⁶Quotation taken from Moltmann, J. 1991. First the Kingdom of God. Tripod. May-June 1991, Volume

the basis of this Kingdom in Moltmann's eschatology as we discussed in the previous chapter. The Kingdom is therefore a timeless concept that seeks to find its place in the confines of our finitude.

11, p. 6-27

⁵⁷ Bosch, D. 1991. Transforming mission. Maryknoll: Orbis Books

Chapter 4

The Kingdom of God and Cosmic eschatology.

1. Introduction.

In the previous chapter, we saw that Moltmann has taken a fresh approach in the issue of historical eschatology. Responding to Bultmann and Cullmann, Moltmann suggests that all of history is proceeding towards an eschatological point in which reality will find its fulfilment (Moltmann 1996:138).

This reality can be described as follows: Christ, even though participating in history, works from beyond history, to create a new dimension of life that can be described as existence within the Kingdom of God. As Christ is resurrected, all who are resurrected⁵⁸ in/through him experience this existence within the Kingdom of God.

The question that we need to deal with in this chapter concerns the contents of history⁵⁹ that is proceeding towards this eschatological point. It would be pointless for history to move towards the eschaton without containing anything. If this were the case, one would only find the story of the content of history⁶⁰ reaching perfection. I would like to suggest in this chapter that the content of history in Moltmann's eschatology is nothing else but creation.

⁵⁸ Moltmann speaks of this experience as "Personal eschatology" (Moltmann 1996:47-126).

⁵⁹ In this sense, I refer to history as Geschichte.

⁶⁰ Historie

Moltmann's doctrine of creation is mainly recorded in his book "God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation"⁶¹, and we will therefore mostly use this source in exploring his ecological theology.

2. Development of Moltmann's doctrine of creation.

In Moltmann's doctrine of creation, one finds the biggest display in which he changes direction within his own theological framework. William French (1988:79), for instance, argues that Moltmann's earlier works⁶² displayed a theology that is so focussed on the eschatological point of history that it came at the expense of his doctrine of creation. This is a valid point, as one notes that Moltmann did not write "*Theology of Hope*" as a complete systematic theology that would include the notion of an ecological salvation, but as a response to a world dealing with the lack of hope in Christian theology. One encounters in the 1960's the teaching of God-is-dead-theology, which, in my opinion, had no real Christian eschatology to speak of. I would not like to suggest that this book was a response to that theological thinking, but being influenced by Bloch, Moltmann certainly succeeds in establishing Christian eschatology as a major doctrine that should influence the way we interpret all other doctrines.

French describes Moltmann's earlier doctrine of creation as being "open to the future" (1988:79). By this he means that Moltmann's creation is somewhat excluded from his soteriology. Early Moltmannian eschatology would therefore concern the eschaton of God and humanity, while creation would feature as a backdrop in this play. This is more clearly illustrated in the way through which Moltmann explains salvation within

⁶¹ Moltmann, J. 1985. God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation. Translated by M. Kohl. London: SCM press

⁶² French seems to focus mostly on Moltmann's work: Moltmann, J. 1967. Theology of Hope. Translated by James W. Leitch. London: SCM Press.

the human life, through what can be described as a form of Neo-Platonic⁶³ means. We see an example of this interpretation in the following statement:

“The call and mission of the ‘God of hope’ suffer man no longer to live amid surrounding nature, and no longer in the world as his home, but compel him to exist within the horizon of history.” (Moltmann 1967:289). Quotes like these emphasise the distinction between humanity and the rest of creation in such a way that creation is given very little chance of finding complete restoration without the intervention of human beings (if they so wish). Humanity therefore finds itself not as a citizen of nature, but a citizen of history, who becomes instrumental in the outcome of history as it responds to God in a positive or negative manner.

In *God of Creation*, we find a new motivation for existing on planet earth. French rightly describes this change as follows: “Where once he challenged us *not* to live in ‘the world’ as our ‘home’, Moltmann now in *God in Creation* shifts direction to hold that the ‘messianic promise’ is that ‘the world should be home’⁶⁴” (1988:80). Whereas creation was the venue for the salvation of humankind, creation is now described as a co-traveller on this journey towards the eschaton.

French ascribes this change in theological thinking to the changing world that Moltmann encounters (1988:80). As a response to World War II and the liberal theology of the 19th and early 20th centuries, it makes sense for a theological response to look beyond the cruelty of human nature and find hope in the working of God through humanity. The focus is therefore placed on the justification and sanctification of humanity as beckoned to by the eschaton. This is the eschatological message found in

⁶³ Moltmann does not necessarily only focus on the rift between flesh and spirit, but describes a rift

Theology of Hope and *The Crucified God*. This intervention by God must therefore lift humanity out of the suffering of this world and elevate it to the true reality of God's dominion, which can only be described as that which is beyond history (and therefore creation).

In Moltmann's later work, for example *God in Creation*, we find his encounter with another form of human cruelty: the cruelty against creation. This is not only an academic encounter, but also a rising physical awareness within humanity of the ecological crisis that we are facing. This cruelty is so severe that it may cost the lives of all living creatures on this planet. It is therefore in response to the ecological crisis that Moltmann no longer speaks of creation as a sub-deserving entity of God's restoration, but as an entity that holds within itself the key to eternal life for all (French 1988:80-81)

Where history seemed to be open-ended, Moltmann continually nurtures and extends the understanding of human participation in nature towards the establishment of God's Kingdom within the realm of creation.

In this new emphasis on creation's participation in God's restoration of life, it is quite clear in Moltmann's eschatology that the eschaton has to include the physical presence of a restored creation. When we are speaking of the Kingdom of God, we cannot do so without speaking of it as including the environment. One therefore has to see creation as part of the Gestalt of Moltmann's understanding of the Kingdom of God. The restoration of creation is not an activity that is isolated within itself, but is part of the establishment of God's Kingdom.

When reading Moltmann's ecological theology, it is apparent that two underlying themes work towards this growth within the Kingdom of God. I would like to suggest that these two themes are: "The Sabbath" and "The indwelling of the Spirit". It is on these two concepts that Moltmann is able to construct a systematic theology that is environmentally friendly.

3. Moltmann's understanding of the Sabbath.

3.1 The origin of Sabbath.

From a religio-historical perspective, the Sabbath-concept does not find its roots in Christianity, but certainly in the Judaic- and other ancient faiths (Buttrick (ed.) 1962:135).

As Christians, our first encounter with the Sabbath (in scripture) is in Genesis 2:1-4 as the conclusion of the first creation story. Sabbath, in this passage, is seen as the climax that has been worked towards in the creation-event. The Sabbath is not a suffix that carries little or no relevant meaning in creation, but is the expression and existence of creation as a complete entity.

Although the Priestly writer was responsible for this passage, it would be wrong to assume that the concept of Sabbath was adopted from the Babylonian belief system. It is nevertheless interesting to note that the Babylonians did have a similar day of rest as described in Judaism. Although the Babylonians recognised the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth days of certain months as "sabattu", the Judaic "sab'eth" was a concept owned by this nation (Buttrick (ed.) 1962:135). Observing the linguistic

⁶⁴ (Moltmann 1985:5)

similarities between these two words, one could assume that they both derive from a common ancestor. Buttrick states that this concept may have evolved within itself and may not originally have been used as an occasion for worship (1962:135)

Buttrick describes it as follows (1962:135-138): The Sabbath-idea might have developed from the notion that some days are to be seen as “unlucky” or being “evil days”. These days were seen to be under the control of the gods who were hostile to humankind and it would therefore be wise to abstain from work or any kind of physical labour. It is only later in Israel’s history that these days were observed in a more positive light as an opportunity to submit to their deity.

Where the Jewish tradition celebrated this day of worship on what we know as Saturday, the Christian faith adopted this day of rest by celebrating it on the first day of the week, namely Sunday.

The first motivations for this move can be found in the letters of Paul to the early congregations (Col. 2:16-23; 1 Cor. 16:2 and Gal. 4:9-11). This does not mean that Christianity simply adopted the Jewish Sabbath with its meaning into this faith, but it must be said that the Sabbath has also evolved in its meaning to what we celebrate as Christians today. Moltmann rightly asserts that the Christian Sabbath is celebrated, and therefore must be thought of in terms of the resurrection of Christ (Moltmann 1985:7). This is the motive behind Paul’s letters to the early congregations as well. The resurrection of Christ speaks of something new. To some theologians, like Pannenberg, this is the starting point of the establishment of God’s Kingdom (Pannenberg 1968:66). In the same way that one can look at Sabbath as a celebration of creation⁶⁵, so can

⁶⁵ This is done assuming a rather literal interpretation of Genesis 2:1-4a.

Christians interpret the Sabbath as the celebration of the New Creation under Christ (Moltmann 1985:6)⁶⁶.

As humanity encounters this creation, it has the freedom either to negate their responsibility towards life or to embrace the life that has been established in it through the creative work of God.

3.2 Negation of the Sabbath.

McGrath rightly defines Moltmann's doctrine of creation as follows: "Moltmann argues that the exploitation of the world reflects the rise of technology, and seems to have little to do with specifically Christian teachings" (McGrath 2001:304).

This comment is accurate as Moltmann argues that the search for improved technology has only one result, this being the destruction of ecology (1999:96). The nature of humanity in this drive is not innocent either. If technology advanced only for the sake of its own improvement, it could be done in a manner that is mutually beneficial to humanity and the environment. We however know that this is not the case. The search for improved technology is done only for the sake of progress, human progress. This progress is one that is financially beneficial to humanity and comes at the cost of life forms that share this habitat with us. This is a great simplification of the problem on hand, but the seriousness of the issue is observed in the United Nations calling for a World Summit on Sustainable Development.

⁶⁶ "That is why Christians celebrate the first day of the week as the feast of the resurrection: it is the first day of the new creation." (Moltmann 1985:6-7)

In August and September 2002 we witnessed this forum doing its work in Sandton, the outcome only observable in the future as nations are challenged to implement promises made. One can nevertheless be certain that as the greed for progress grows, so the responsible interaction diminishes between humanity and creation. The negation of Sabbath, for both humanity and creation therefore becomes obsolete.

One can only find it extremely sad that the Sabbath-concept is disappearing within modern, secular life. Work on a Sunday is a relatively new experience in South Africa. During the Apartheid era, with its strict Calvinist orientation, work on a Sunday was unheard of. The only place where one would be lucky enough to find a place to do some shopping on a Sunday, would be the café on the corner, and even that would mostly stay open only until one o'clock in the afternoon.

With the abolishment of Apartheid, this strict Calvinist tradition also seems to have fallen by the wayside. At our congregation in the eastern suburbs of Pretoria, it is no strange phenomenon for parents to drop their children off at Sunday school and then proceed for an hour's shopping at the local supermarket.

Moltmann warns that if we should succumb to the temptation of negating our Sabbath for the sake of progress, we would be losing ourselves and become slaves of work and consumerism (Moltmann 1989:87). The ethical implications of being involved in consumer- and other activities on a Sunday is that we do not only surrender our own Sabbath for this activity, but we are infringing on the Sabbath of those around us as well. The negating of a Sabbath is therefore never an isolated activity that affects only

ourselves, but living in a community, it is inevitable that this action involves the lives of those around us.

The challenge in living is to find the balance between progress in human development and the sustainable continuance of creation. One would imagine that the problem in finding this balance occurs only in First World countries, but Moltmann is aware of this unhealthy search for progress even infiltrating even countries where there has traditionally been an awareness of living in equilibrium, for example countries like China.

Moltmann (1989:87-101) blames the Western industrial culture and its ideologies for causing another form of oppression, other than that of colonialism on countries with ancient traditions. At the same time as this search for progress advances on these societies, we find that it comes also at the expense of ancient culture and tradition.

Ancient religions seem to describe the importance of humanity's participation in creation. Ancient Egyptian religion, for instance, focussed on the world as producing cycles of life that are directives to human beings on what they are to produce or to harvest. Moltmann comments on the influence of technology on these religions by stating that whenever society is engulfed by the search for progress, these teachings are more often than not neglected and may even be described as "outdated" (Moltmann 1989:98).

Observing the Sabbath is greater than only resisting the temptation to work on a Sunday. It encompasses an attitude towards creation that allows ourselves, other people

and creation to recover from daily activities. The failure to do this inevitably leads to destruction and death. As an opening statement to their work *Hope against hope*, Bauckham and Hart quote Graham Swift: “There’s this thing called progress. It doesn’t go anywhere. Because as progress progresses the world can slip away.” (Bauckham and Hart 1999:1)⁶⁷

In the greater scheme of things, the paradox is obvious: what we may perceive as progress and advancement is nothing more than slipping into a self-destructive mode of existence. What is therefore described as progress, is actually regression. True progress, according to the teachings of old, and from the perspective of sustainability, is the ability to live in harmony with one’s neighbour and with the rest of creation.

In South Africa, the awareness of the destructive value of westernised progress is not ignored. Nürnberger, writing about the effects of technological and social advancement, gives three reasons for the modern fall of morality and ethics: “...the level of economic structuring which leads to ecological devastation, the level of collective consciousness concerning ecological issues, and finally the level of ethics and its spiritual foundations”. (Nürnberger 1987:45).

In this definition, Nürnberger states that we find a modern search for comfort that is unnecessary. In the search for this lifestyle of luxury, we have fallen into the trap of lusting after what we cannot have. Production of processed materials has become greater than the actual need for these products, and so we find the irresponsible tapping of our natural resources for the soothing of our lusts (1987:49). The second problem in

⁶⁷ Quotation in Bauckham, R. and Hart, T. 1999. [Hope against hope: Christian eschatology in](#)

South Africa and the rest of the world lies in the fact that we have adopted a new mentality towards life in that "...reality can be improved continuously in terms of human interests." (1987:54). This lifestyle can be described as nothing else but basic hedonism. The third problem relates to spirituality. Modern South Africa is still divided when it comes to worship. In many mainline churches we still see the effects of the Apartheid-era in the sense that there is still a distinct "white", "black" and "coloured" church within the same denomination. Each of these sections has its own emphasis, style of worship, and even theological emphases. Hereby spirituality assumes ethnic emphases and can therefore not be described as true communal spirituality.

To Nürnberger, the key to solving these problems lies in the establishment of a common community. (1987:62-64). If people are able to worship in an inclusive way, one will be able to find a society that is united rather than fragmented through political influence. It is this community that lives for each other that is able to think beyond the needs of self and will become a body that is able to comprehend our responsibility towards nature. A common body means common moral stances and the generations to come will be able to learn a unified approach in which we treat each other and nature with dignity and respect.

3.3. Participation in the Sabbath.

One of the easiest ways in which to be in harmony with creation, or show respect towards it, is in participating in the Sabbath.

Moltmann takes this participation in creation through the Sabbath very seriously. Commenting on Moltmann's attitude towards our participation, McGrath says the following: "Furthermore, he stresses the manner in which God can be said to indwell the creation through the Holy Spirit, so that the pillage of creation becomes an assault on God." (McGrath 2001:304).

Failure to care for creation, in other words, negating one's responsibility towards creation in the form of rest, is therefore not only destructive to our relationship with others and the environment, but must also be described as destroying our relationship with God.

Moltmann does not see the Sabbath only as the feast that serves as the pinnacle of creation, but also as an underlying theme within the existence of creation.

Moltmann hereby states that God, being in full experiential Sabbath, does not want to celebrate Sabbath alone, but creates heaven and earth to share in this festive occasion (Moltmann 1999:114). At the same time as God interacts within creation from beyond history, so should the Sabbath also be seen as a gift that comes from the same reality.

It is in the Sabbath that God declares God's own eschaton or goal by stating that what is created is "complete"⁶⁸. One can see this in the light of God's continual perfection being reflected in the perfection of creation. It is obviously in the fall of creation that the created order has also fallen from the principle of Sabbath. Restoration, or the journey towards sanctification is also the journey towards the universal Sabbath.

⁶⁸ Genesis 2:3

Moltmann works from the perspective of a perfectly created creation, which is distorted by sin and therefore finds itself on a journey to perfection that can only be found in the “New creation” (Moltmann 1996:262).

Hereby follows Moltmann’s line of thought that God is in the process, beyond history, drawing all things unto Godself. The final eschatological point for creation would thus be found in creation’s full experience of completion and the celebration of it. Creation would be experiencing the celebration of its own Sabbath within God’s Sabbath.

Perhaps the best place where we find Moltmann’s use of 1 Cor. 15:28, is in Moltmann’s Cosmic eschatology. The reason for this universal approach is not for the sake of universalism, but is for the sake of God (Moltmann1996:259). At this present moment God would be occupying two roles in the existence of creation, namely that of creator and of redeemer. Moltmann further asserts that it is for the sake of unity within God that both creation and redemption need to find completion (1996:259).

In this fallen state, wherein creation does not submit to the Sabbath principle, we find a creation that has taken its destiny into its own hands. Through the gift of free will, creation has therefore decided that it would seek to continue its existence without the guidance of God. One must be fair in saying that it is not the whole of creation that has made this decision, but purely out of the human choice for self-direction is creation forced into a situation whereby it has to suffer the consequences of this decision with humanity.

In this description of the state of creation, one can almost hear Moltmann's earlier thinking where human salvation is done not in the sphere of creation, but as citizens of history⁶⁹. Moltmann describes transition that comes into being through God in creation as a journey from a view of a temporal system that is open to history to the place where this system is replaced by an eternal creation (Moltmann 1996:261). The good news in Moltmann's theology is that, although creation may have chosen to be in a situation where its own future is open, the restoration that God offers would inevitably bring creation to that point at which it is fully restored.

One does not have to assume that the whole of creation is dependant upon the personal salvation of every individual on planet earth. This would exclusively form part of Moltmann's "Personal eschatology"⁷⁰. In other words, Moltmann's Cosmic eschatology is not dependant on Personal eschatology as logic would put it, but the other way around.

It is in the existence of an Historical eschatology that we find the motivation for Personal eschatology to take place. In the same breath Historical eschatology is only able to exist because of the presence of a Cosmic eschatology (Moltmann 1996:132).

Moltmann's views are not shared by most early twentieth century theologians. Regin Preter, a Danish professor of Dogmatics in the mid-1900's, for example, describes the creation of heaven and earth merely as the place where God and humanity can interact (Preter 1967:228)

⁶⁹ This point is motivated under the heading: Moltmann's understanding of Sabbath.

Prenter⁷¹ bases his argument on the description of creation as found in Genesis 1. It is in this narrative that we speak of a creation of both heaven and earth. If God created heaven, then it would simply mean that God existed before both heaven and earth.

It is therefore wrong to equate the Kingdom of God with heaven, as heaven is a created entity and therefore could simply not contain the full person of God. The pre-existence of God to earth does not suggest that heaven is pre-existent in the same manner, but heaven becomes the first restriction that God places upon Godself. At the same time earth is created for the purpose of human habitation. Earth and heaven are linked in creation for the sole purpose of the divine-human interaction (1967:230). Prenter's point of view may therefore be related to Moltmann's earlier views on the place of ecology, but it is apparent that Moltmann has moved away from this perspective.

Prenter's creation is nothing but a stage, or environment that is temporal and will find no lasting existence in the realm of eternity.

Even Barth sees the purpose of the community of Christ as living in a dualistic manner, separated from the "world" (Barth 1962:762-764). The difference in Barth's interpretation is that even the temporal creation is in need of a creator. Perhaps the influence of Neo-platonic teaching in Paul's theology influenced theologians through history to such a degree that they could simply not mention creator and creation in the same breath when it came to the topic of eschatology.

One can only assume that they too could have changed their perspectives, like Moltmann, if they had encountered the needs and crises of the modern world. It would

⁷⁰ This aspect of Moltmann's eschatology is described in detail in (Moltmann 1996:47-126)

be fair to say that the disasters, which a person like Barth would have experienced in his life, would be totally different from the disasters that we are facing today. The only dangers known to them, except for natural disasters, would be those that are humanly engineered. Hereby we can cite examples like World War 2 and the atom bombs that exploded over Japan. Like Moltmann's earlier teaching, this can only call for a theological response relating to God's intervention and change within the human life.

Berkouwer may be the exception to the rule. Berkouwer produces an argument that is against a hermeneutic that implies that the life in the here-after would be different from the life that we know. If life in the here-after is a restored continuation of the life that we know, "Then life on this earth is not devaluated, but called" (Berkouwer 1972:234). We can simply say that Berkouwer may be the exception, as he does not give a clear definition of what he considers to be included in his broad term "life". To Moltmann, this would definitely include the rest of creation.

Calvin B. DeWitt suggests a more practical way in which humanity can interact with creation while observing the Sabbath. He argues that there are four biblical principles that are fundamental to human interaction with creation, one of which is the "Sabbath principle". It is in this approach that creation needs to be given time to recover from human use of its resources (McGrath 2001:304).

The question that one can ask of Moltmann's doctrine of creation is whether Moltmann submits himself to the trap of panentheism. Jonker certainly suggests this (1983:114) as

⁷¹ Summary of Prenter's argument as found in (Prenter 1967:226-232)

he describes Moltmann's world finding completion in God's irrevocable presence within creation through the work of the Son and the Spirit.

I think Jonker's criticism of Moltmann's ecological theology is harsh. It is quite clear in Moltmann's theology that life is sanctified and should not be taken for granted, for it was created not out of necessity, but out of love (Moltmann 1985:75). If Moltmann suggests that 1 Cor. 15:8 portrays an eschatology where creation is seen as the constant, with God continuously penetrating its existence until all things are fully God, then one could agree with Jonker's sentiments.

Moltmann should be understood in much broader terms than this. The only indwelling of God in the realm of creation that Moltmann describes, relates to a restoration of a relationship between creator and creation that was established in the original state of Sabbath as we find in the first creation narrative of Genesis.

At no point in time does Moltmann suggest that creation can find its completion when God is physically in all. We rather find an explanation that suggests a mutual relationship between creator and creation whereby both find completion through each other's perfection (Moltmann 1985:288). This will be explored in the next section.

4. The role of the Spirit.

4.1 Spirit and Shekinah.

To Moltmann, one cannot speak about life without referring to the activity of the Spirit. It is in essence the Spirit of God, or as Moltmann would call it, the *Spirit of Life* that enables all life to experience this gift of existence to the fullest. "The Spirit of God is

called the Holy Spirit because it makes our life here something worth living, not because it is alien and estranged from life” (Moltmann 1992:x).

Life should be seen as sacred and as we have noted in Moltmann’s theology in the points above, that anything that perverts or destroys this life, leads only to destruction and death. “Secularization or profanation is just about as modern and exciting as a man who saws off the branch he is sitting on.” (Moltmann 1997:43).

Commenting on divine speeches in the book of Job, Maarschalk and Viviers suggest that creation should be seen from the perspective of being theocentric, rather than anthropocentric (2002:131). In their assessment of eco-theology in Job, Maarschalk and Viviers emphasise the fact that human beings need creation, but that creation does not necessarily need humanity for its survival. Traditionally humanity has not adopted this approach and therefore we find a species that views the rest of creation as being at the disposal of humankind for the progress of human quality of life. Job 38:26, for instance draws a picture of a creator, who does not sustain creation only on account of the presence of human life, but who has the freedom to sustain creation, even in the absence of human life.

Sally McFague suggests that the primary sin of humanity is the refusal to accept our place within creation as a specie, and as being part of a broader ecosystem (McFague1993:112). Even though the Genesis 1 and 2 narratives may seem to suggest (to many) that humanity has an innate superiority over the rest of creation, we simply cannot accept this point of view if we take the continuation of life on earth seriously. Sin has always been seen as an act of rebellion against God, but within McFague’s

observation it should be broadened to a definition that includes rebellion against God's creation.

This is very characteristic of Moltmann's theology as perceived by Bauckham. (Bauckham 1995:17). When humanity assumes this attitude it only leads to death. The question that is therefore raised has to do with the continual involvement of God within creation. If God is the creator of humanity, redeems humanity and sustains humanity through the work of the Spirit, then we automatically assume that God has an eschatological route prepared for us. In the same way God is creator of creation, redeems creation (especially humanity, which is part of creation), sustains creation. Why should God then not include creation in the eschatological journey?

The anthropocentric viewing of creation sees it as a resource that can be used only for self-advancement. This is the search for power and dominance which in themselves are sources of corruption. This existence comes at the expense of creation. Moltmann quotes Indira Gandhi's term that "poverty is the worst pollution" and adds that in his view, the bigger pollution is the corruption that leads to that poverty (Moltmann 1999a:93-94).

It is in the context of corruption and exploitation that we find the presence of the Spirit. Moltmann clearly states that the presence of the Spirit in the world is not a superficial or pious interaction, but is the involvement of God within the realm of creation's existence and history (Moltmann 1992:54). The Spirit is therefore needed more in places of restoration than places that are already sanctified. "...the creative Spirit becomes the Spirit and power of the resurrection of the dead." (Moltmann 1992:55).

The function of the Spirit is not only the resurrection of the dead, or in other words the restoration of creation, but Moltmann adopts the principle of Shekinah from early Judaism. In the Jewish faith, especially under the leadership of Moses, we find the longing for God to be present with God's people. In this presence one finds life and prosperity. It is therefore no surprise that those belonging to the Jewish faith place such great emphasis on physical buildings such as the Tabernacle and the Temple which represent the presence of God amongst God's people (Moltmann 1992:47). It is further in exilic- and post-exilic prophecies, as well as in the teachings of Jesus that we find a pneumatology that is linked to eschatology⁷². "In the last days God's Spirit would be poured out upon all people...". This is a statement of God's permanent indwelling, or Shekinah, with God's people, including the rest of creation.

It would be a mistake to view the Spirit as the only one involved in the restoration of creation. A major theme in Moltmann's work is the way in which the whole trinity is involved in the restoration-process of creation.

"Finally, the kingdom of glory must be understood as the consummation of the Father's creation, as the universal establishment of the Son's liberation, and as the fulfilment of the Spirit's indwelling" (Moltmann 1981:212). In this statement, Moltmann equates the kingdom of glory with the eschatological point, wherein we find creation being in a state of full restoration, or "Sabbath".

The work of the Spirit in establishing God's Shekinah on earth is therefore not isolated, but always refers to the salvific work of Christ, which in turn always gives glory to the

⁷² Joel 2:28-32; Ez. 37:14; Jn 16:7

Father. Bauckham suggests that Moltmann finds the Perichoresis of the Trinity to be a model of co-dependency between human beings and nature (Bauckham 1995:18). This is a relationship that is not only mutually beneficial, but is mutually essential. It is only in a created order where creation can find a perichoresis within itself, that God can truly make God's home within creation. "The first thing that God sanctifies is always His living space, His environment. We might say that sanctification is *divine ecology*... God sanctifies his whole community of creation through his indwelling." (Moltmann 1997:47).

"The new creation is the glorious perichoresis of God and the world...the whole creation will become the temple which will be lit up by his glory." (Moltmann 2000:50). Not only do God and creation find a synthesis within their exclusive existences, but the eschatological goal finds its completion in this co-dependant relationship, without falling into the trap of panentheism.

This picture of the restoration of creation is much more friendly than the apocalyptic interpretations that we find in the book of Daniel and in the Revelation to John on the island of Patmos. Here we find an eschatological message that is filled with hope. "True hope looks beyond the apocalyptic horizons of our modern world to the new creation of all things in the kingdom of God's glory." (Moltmann 1997:40)

Observing Moltmann's eschatology, one would easily find characteristics of a classic fairy-tale. Bultmann, for instance, can in principle not agree with Moltmann's eschatology as Moltmann uses scripture in a very mythological way to substantiate his arguments. Bultmann sees eschatological language in the bible as myth. (Bauckham and

Hart 1999:74). Bultmann suggests that language that we use in the here-and-now regarding eschatology is simply fitted to a modern frame of reference and therefore cannot with any justice reflect the anticipated future of creation. Our current human language is simply too limited and influenced by our modern frame of reference (Bauckham and Hart 1999:85). Bauckham and Hart nevertheless agree with Moltmann in stating that Bultmann's approach threatens the present and future of faith (1999:85). If we dare not dream of the future on the pure grounds of our own limitations, then we have no purpose even to speak about the existence of God!

A further question can be raised concerning the manner in which Moltmann's eschatology reaches fulfilment through the work of especially the Spirit. Is it possible for Moltmann's eschatological progression in the restoration of creation to be described in modern, scientific terms? One could propose that Teilhard de Chardin's point of view could coincide with what Moltmann is trying to achieve. If all things are progressing to perfection through the process of evolution of Christ as the Omega man, then there should surely be grounds for evolution to have a place in Moltmann's theology without disturbing his argument.

Bauckham rightly asserts that Moltmann is against such an approach. Moltmann (1990:294), asks questions concerning this approach relating to those who find themselves victims within the process of evolution. The victor in evolution does not gain perfection, being in a state of true harmony with the rest of creation, but can only do so at the cost of lives in order for it to gain its own advancement. This sounds a lot like Moltmann's argument against technology, the quest for progress and the negation of the Sabbath as described earlier.

The second problem that Moltmann has with this argument, is that Moltmann's God sides with the oppressed and does not find God's own completion in the successful evolution of one specie at the cost of many others. Moltmann's God needs to be in communion with the dead (Moltmann 1996:108)

4.2 The Spirit and Church.

Where is Moltmann's *Spirit of life* visible in the life of creation?

The first part of the answer should be obvious: The Spirit is the life-giving force within creation (Moltmann 1985:268). The second part of the answer to this question is in the creation of a body that exists within a realm that is greater than that experienced by creation, namely the church. As professed in the Nicene- and Apostle's Creeds, the church is described as being "Catholic" and therefore stretches beyond the created order of time and space.

This makes the Church the ideal vehicle through which God can bring restoration to creation through the work of God's Spirit. The Church, being universal in nature, is the only instrument that can participate in the history of God (Moltmann 1992:64).

"What the church is about is something more than the church. The church is about life in proximity to the kingdom of God, and about the experience and praxis of the justice and righteousness of that kingdom." (Moltmann 2000:15) In the same way in which one can describe the resurrection of Christ as the start of a new era, so too must Pentecost be seen as a new era in the interaction between God and creation. It is in Pentecost that

the Church finds its existence and mandate (Moltmann 1992:35). It is the church that becomes the way through which humanity can experience the presence of God in this created world through the work of the Spirit. The Church becomes the bearer of good news through the power of the Spirit. At the same time the church becomes the provisional reality where eschatology and history come together in anticipation within the present created order (Bauckham 1995:123)⁷³. McFague shares this opinion as she describes the reality of the new creation as something seen in the church (1993:205-207), and nowhere else in the created order.

“From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.” (Moltmann 1967:16).

If the new creation is only able to be created through the presence of the Spirit, then the Spirit is present in Moltmann’s pre-eschaton world through the instrument of the church universal.

One is nevertheless faced with a double standard in the life of the church as described in Moltmann’s theology. It is the same people who make up the membership of Christ’s church that pollute the earth, burn fossil fuels as they travel in their motor-vehicles and discard their polystyrene holders after eating a fast-food burger.

Can Cosmic eschatology and the personal salvation of modern lifestyles talk? It is a pity that Moltmann’s theology does not address this question, for it is difficult to

⁷³ Description of Moltmann, J. 1977. The Church in the Power of the Spirit (Second edition) Translated

distinguish the line that separates the blatant destruction of creation and the day-to-day laissez-faire participation in this destruction as dictated by modern life.

Berkhof perhaps gives the clearest answer in this dilemma. Berkhof describes the renewal of the world in terms of a struggle between the structures of life and existence in itself. He describes the search for progress as being in conflict with personal holiness as this search can be described only as a destructive relationship (Berkhof 1979:514). The secret is to find the balance of both these characteristics within oneself, as they are both inevitably present in life.

Perhaps we can learn something from the Black South African cultures. Peter Kasenene states that "...to be' is to belong" (1994:141). It is impossible to live life from the perspective that one is an isolated individual who has nothing to gain from or offer to those in our communities or even nature. True life can only be found in a sense of belonging to a greater community, which is in itself closely related to the inner workings of nature.

5. Conclusion.

Moltmann's ecological theology can be summarised in the following statement:

Relationship with God calls for relationship with creation as well. This relationship is never mutually exclusive, but through the work of the Spirit, enables God's church to find its peace with itself, its environment and its God. It is in the fulfilment of this journey that creation and God experience the Kingdom of God; Sabbath; Shekinah; the eschaton; true reality.

Chapter 5

The Kingdom of God in Divine eschatology: God will be all in all

1. Introduction.

The question in response to Moltmann's eschatology asks: "Where does Moltmann's concept of the Kingdom of God actually fit in?" Taking each eschatological approach into consideration one finds that there is a clear description of the concept of the Kingdom of God within each of these. Before engaging in Moltmann's divine eschatology, one is tempted to ask: "Will the real Kingdom present itself?"

In each of the previously discussed eschatological aspects, the Kingdom of God is presented as the ultimate and complete goal of God's work of restoration in existence from that perspective. In personal eschatology, the Kingdom of God is found in the grasp of the concept of "life"⁷⁴. In historical eschatology, the Kingdom is portrayed in the event where history is transformed from being driven by the temporal to finding its identity in the eternal⁷⁵. Cosmic eschatology sees the Kingdom as God's universal acceptance⁷⁶. These different emphases create the illusion that the Kingdom of God consists of many different processes at work with different outcomes in mind. This is

⁷⁴ Moltmann does not promote a narcissist outlook on life, but encourages the idea that a full comprehension of the cycle of life on this earth and beyond its parameters can be experienced through personal conversion made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ. (Moltmann 1996:127-128)

⁷⁵ The cross and resurrection are used as the pivotal factor that makes this transition possible. Unlike Pannenberg's eschatology does Moltmann imply that the reign of God, which surpasses the limitations of time and space, breaks through the historical factor, enabling the Kingdom of God to be experienced in historical terms. (Moltmann 1996:195).

⁷⁶ This eschatology does not imply the natural progression of advancement as proposed through the theory of evolution, but creates as an eschatological goal, the return of creation to its initial purpose and mandate given by God. (Moltmann 1996:262).

not Moltmann's intention as we find the common denominator of each of the proposed eschatologies in his divine end.

The ultimate eschatological point and the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God in Moltmann's eschatology is not found in the eschaton of creation as one would think, but in a divine eschatology that brings all of the previously mentioned eschatological points to a unified possibility.

In this chapter, I am going to describe Moltmann's Divine eschatology and through a careful analysis, present the manner in which this eschatology becomes the pivotal point for Moltmann's concept of the Kingdom of God. Interlaced in this discussion, I will also be referring to the South African context and how this concept interacts with our understanding of God.

2. Moltmann's Divine eschatology.

2.1 Why a divine eschatology?

The term "Divine eschatology" is not actually a good description of what Moltmann is trying to convey. It is a term that is filled with questions that may not even be relevant to the discussion about the end. Of course, the process theologians and those who submit themselves to modalism⁷⁷ would encourage the inclusion of this concept in any eschatology.

Does God need an end? Is God incomplete without an end? Any suggestion that God is in the process of self-advancement denies the divinity of God. It is disappointing that

Moltmann does not give sufficient explanation of this eschatology in his book, “The Coming of God: Christian eschatology”, but a definite journey is described in his earlier works: “Theology of Hope”, “The Crucified God” and “The Trinity and the Kingdom of God”. This journey, however, does not concern the eschatological journey of God towards becoming an improved being, but is concerned with God being part of the eschatological journey of creation.

Eschatology in Moltmann’s theology can be described as the relational journey between God and creation. In the previous chapter, we identified that Moltmann views the need for an eschatological point in the same light as the need for salvation. This is not found in a salvific act which promotes only the existential experience of life within the created realm, but is very specifically geared towards restoring creation to its original relationship with God (Moltmann 1985:5). The covenant between God and creation plays this role.

Stemming from this description, Moltmann asks the question: “What is the purpose of creation as we find it in its original relational state with God?”, in other words: “Where are we going?”. It is here that we find Moltmann’s theme for divine eschatology, namely the glorification of God. “The glorification of God is the ultimate purpose of creation.” (Moltmann 1996:323).

The doctrine of creation as found in “God in creation”, does not assume that the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 should be taken literally, but that they should be understood within the context of God’s intended purpose for creation. The Sabbath is

⁷⁷ By using this term, I refer to the idea that God is not unchangeable, but responds in different ways as

seen as being not only the day of rest, but as the ultimate pinnacle of God's creative activity (Moltmann 1985:5-7). In Moltmann's most recent works, this theme is emphasised even more. One sees for instance in this following prayer that Moltmann equates the return of creation to its original relational state with God with the consummation of God's Kingdom:

"A Prayer.

*God, creator of heaven and earth,
it is time for you to come,
for our time is running out
and our world is passing away.
You gave us life in peace, one with another,
And we have ruined it in mutual conflict.
You made your creation in harmony and equilibrium.
We want progress, and are destroying ourselves.
Come Creator of all things,
Renew the face of the earth.*

*Come, Lord Jesus,
Our brother on our way.
You came to seek
that which was lost.
You have come to us and have found us.
Take us with you on your way.
We hope for your Kingdom
As we hope for peace.
Come, Lord Jesus, come soon.*

*Come, Spirit of life
Flood us with your light,
Interpenetrate us with your love.
Awaken our powers through your energies
And in your presence let us be wholly there.
Come, Holy Spirit.*

*God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Triune God,
Unite with yourself your torn and divided world,
And let us all be one in you,
One with your whole creation,
Which praises and glorifies you
And in You is happy.
Amen." (Moltmann 1997:145)*

Seeing that God is the only hope for creation, it means that God should be travelling alongside creation in its eschatological journey in order for God's Kingdom to be established. This eschatological journey, being the development of the Kingdom assumes a twofold theological "development" in creation's understanding and experience of God. This would be, firstly, our understanding of God relating to God's self-revelation, and secondly, the understanding of Trinitarian unity.

2.1.1 Revelation.

"To 'glorify' God means to love God for his own sake, and to enjoy God as he is in himself." (Moltmann 1996:323).

Divine eschatology is about God making Godself fully known to a creation that is bound to God in the covenant of love. The argument for the development of creation's understanding of God comes from the point of view that we do not know God fully. 1 Corinthians 13:12 echoes the mystery of God and the limited knowledge we have of our creator. We know God as creator, redeemer and sustainer. But is this who God really is? Moltmann warns that when we consider God's self-revelation, there is a danger of thinking of ourselves as the constant and of God as the variable (Moltmann 1981:4). Moltmann's point of departure is that we should understand this relationship, not in terms of a reciprocal relationship between equals, but as dictated to by the essence of our beings. God resembles all that is permanent and eternal, while the created order should accept its temporality and flux. This picture is in contrast with Schleiermacher's view that the experience of faith in self should point towards God (Moltmann 1981:2).

The full self-revelation is theoretically impossible. Accepting the description of God as being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent implies that within the limitations of time and space, it would literally take the eternal amount of time and space for God to reveal Godself fully. It is for this reason that we have to depend on symbolic experiences for our understanding of the person of God. Here, two questions are raised. The first concerns the extent to which Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God. In my understanding, there is a difference between *being* full God and being the full revelation of God. Of course in Jesus' state of being fully God, the possibility is given that Jesus could fully reveal God, but if Jesus is *merely* the full revelation of God, it would question the divinity of the person of Christ and also limit the extent to which God is God⁷⁸. The second asks whether a common eschatology is actually possible, given the extreme differences between creator and creation.

Horne sees the possibility of this taking place only through the common denominator between God and creation, namely creativity. He makes an interesting connection between the creative expression of humanity and of God whereby human and divine creative freedom differs only in that humanity cannot experience absolute freedom in their creativity. The link between God and creation is found in creation's participation in creativity whereby God's freedom is released within us (Horne 1997:147). This argument seems very limited as it denies a personal relationship and experience between Creator and creation.

Brunner makes another suggestion, giving the development of God's name through history as a key to God's self-revelation. Brunner's theological picture of God can be

⁷⁸ In this sentence, I mean that it is impossible for Jesus to reveal God fully within the time limits of 30

described as a God who is beyond all, revealing Godself to a finite and limited creation. God, being an eternal being who can only reveal Godself fully in the realm of creation, uses the symbolic nature of names to make Godself understood (Brunner 1970:117). Hereby we find a continuous development of God's name in the Bible as God reveals Godself increasingly to created beings. In this theology we can therefore assume that the self-revelation of God is in the process of full revelation. This is the point that Moltmann wishes to make by using the term "Divine eschatology". It is indeed the revelation of God that is in the process of development, not the personae of God! This too must be understood as divine eschatology as God is in the process of making Godself fully known to a created order.

This form of divine eschatology, according to Brunner is what separates the Judaic/Christian God from the "gods and divinities of paganism" (Brunner 1970:117). The main difference being the way in which the pagan gods were well known by their followers and were fully understood. Their names therefore seldom changed, as their experiences of their gods remained constant. The Jewish experience of God tells a different story. The proper name for God was considered to be "Yahweh", but as Israel experienced different aspects of God, more descriptive names were used (Vriezen 1970:342-345). Among these names are "Yahweh Sebaoth", emphasising the majesty of God, and "Adonai Yahweh", emphasising the Lordship of God.

The whole concept of God is therefore surrounded by mystery. The Name of God is significant in that it is used as a means of revealing two things:

- First, it reveals the existence of God. “God is known only where God makes His Name known” (Brunner 1970:120). Revelation is therefore not merely the imagination of an eager creation to find something beyond itself, but must be an act of freedom and love as Barth would describe it (König et.al. 1975:36-66).
- The Name of God implies that God is Person and therefore directs the manner of relationship between the Creator and creation (Brunner 1970:121). Perhaps the best exponent of this point is Martin Buber. It is in his understanding that God’s self-revelation⁷⁹ does not reveal only the person of God, but also reveals the nature of God’s relationship with God’s creation. Our understanding of God as a response may then be described as an “I-It” or an “I-You” relationship (McGrath 2001:271).

In South Africa, the role of God’s name plays a different part. Here we find the naming of God mostly as a result of certain experiences within the lives of our people.

Maluleke gives the example of Jesus being referred to as Mhamba in Xitsonga. This is not the name of any previously acknowledged deity, but is an original name given to Christ as an experience of the gospel. “Mhamba” literally refers to that which one receives from a traditional healer pertaining to personal well being and health (Maluleke 1997:17).

Perhaps the greatest experience in the development of our understanding of God comes from the role that God is asked to play in the context of our individual lives.

⁷⁹ In Buber’s opinion it is not only limited to God’s self-revelation by means of a name.

2.1.2 Development of God's function.

In order to illustrate this point, I would like to refer to Cochrane's report of a study done by Megan Walker among the people of Mpophomeni (1994:29-35).

The town of Mpophomeni had experienced several situations of oppression and injustice induced by both business leadership and the government of the time. Being predominantly Catholic, the women of Mpophomeni took part in two annual Marian pilgrimages, discovering Mary's presence in every time of trouble.

The observation was made that although the pilgrimages were led within the strict guidelines of Catholic orthodoxy, the person of Mary soon became more than what the church taught. When these women experienced the need for Mary to be not a mere comforter, they started to see Mary as being physically engaged in the daily struggles that they had to face. The picture of a content, comforting Mary therefore changed to a suffering and hopeful one in relation to the specific need of the community at any given moment.

One is not debating the divinity of Mary here, but must be honest enough to find a similar pattern within one's understanding of God. This sudden change is seen in the pictures of God promoted by liberation theology. It seems as if liberation theology, in its reactionary nature "discovers" growth in the character of God by being able to identify with the oppressed and suffering. This goes hand in hand with a physical transformation of the picture of God held by the "orthodox" grouping in that particular context.

To Black theology, God needs to identify with the black person in order to create a true sense of humanity. James Cone has the following to say: “The black community is an oppressed community primarily because of its blackness; hence the Christological importance of Jesus must be found in his blackness. If he is not black as we are, then the resurrection has little significance for our times.” (Cone 1990:120). To the Feminist theologian, God should engage with God’s own sexuality in order to create dignity and equality for women worldwide. Eco-theology calls for a God who is environmentally friendly and so journeys with creation to its consummation. Of course, these are generalisations, but the principle of these suggestions does ask a probing question of liberation theology: How much of the perceived development in the revelation of God can be attributed to our reactions to our environment?

2.1.3 What does Moltmann say?

Moltmann sees a clear link between eschatology and revelation: “If God reveals nothing other than ‘himself’, then the goal and the future of this revelation lies in himself” (Moltmann 1967:46). The key to the Kingdom of God therefore does not necessarily lie in the subjection of historical earthly reigns to the autonomous dictatorship of God. The true Kingdom is the place where God is fully known.

Moltmann acknowledges that this kind of thinking found an awakening in the eschatologies presented by Weiss and Schweitzer. Their work heralded a new understanding in Christian eschatology. Their “Consistent eschatologies” denied the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God during the lifetime of Jesus Christ, focussing completely on a future event whereby creation would be reconciled to God (Olivier

1980:160-161). Schweitzer even goes so far as portraying Jesus' death as a way in which Jesus wanted to speed up the coming of the Kingdom of God (Olivier 1980:163).

This eschatology did not limit the Kingdom of God merely to the self-revelation of God through Jesus Christ, nor does the Kingdom come to fulfilment through the salvific role of Jesus. Jesus is nevertheless placed at the centre of eschatology. Moltmann describes this very well in the light of Consistent eschatology when he views Jesus as the perfect and only means whereby the transcendent is able to break into the realm of the temporal. (Moltmann 1967:37-41)⁸⁰.

Moltmann agrees that the self-revelation of God, particularly in Jesus, must be the start of the eschatological Kingdom on earth. This started portraying itself in the Jewish faith. To Moltmann, scripture, especially the Old Testament, is filled with the imagery where the "revealing of God" is linked with the "promise of God" (Moltmann 1967:42).

The way in which Moltmann describes this continuing self-revelation of God is described in a via-negativa argument, seeing that the Kingdom of God relating to the need for God to reveal Godself may result in a further distorted image of God than what God would hope for. The principal motive for God's self-revelation is the glorification of God, not in the sense that God demands the "lesser" created order to give due homage, but in the sense that the created order can know God for who God really is. In this situation, the created order will find itself in the context of only being able to glorify God.

His first argument is that the motive of God's self-revelation should not be seen as God's self-glorification through others (Moltmann 1996:324). Moltmann rightly asserts that if this were the case, the world, and the rest of created order would be rendered meaningless. What makes God God, is the fact that God is already complete and does not need to be advanced or acknowledged as being God. The old saying can be applied in a spiritual sense: "What does one give to somebody who already has everything?" If God merely invented a notion of the end so that God may be glorified through something else, then rightly, the picture of God would be nothing less than the picture of a super-narcissist (Moltmann 1996:324).

Moltmann also denies the notion of God's self-revelation as being God's self-realisation as promoted by Hegel (Moltmann 1996:329). In a simplistic manner one could describe this approach as the manner in which the world and God are slowly moving towards each other, whereby the eschaton would be able to distinguish only one being in one reality. God is therefore seen as Hegel's thesis and the created, being totally other to God existing as God's antithesis. In this tension, the synthesis is only found in the eschaton, being the Kingdom of God. Moltmann argues that God is beyond polarity (Moltmann 1996:329). This would therefore be the total opposite of the previous argument. Here God's perfection and divinity are called into question.

His third argument is against the proposal put forward by Kant and Whitehead whereby the eschatological journey is seen in the complete interaction between divine and human activity (Moltmann 1996:330-336). Helm, describing Kant's theory of eternal creation, notes how this theory deals with the possibility of an eternal being relating to a

⁸⁰ Moltmann and Bultmann agree in that eschatology should rather be seen as "the eternal sense and

created order (Helm 1997:34). This interaction deals with temporal beings who have the capability of perceiving events and experiences from different vantage points mainly due to the fact that they are bound to space and time. On the other hand, we are confronted by a being who is beyond time and therefore able to witness the same events and experiences from the eternal dimension. It would be unfair to say that both creator and created are on the same journey towards a common goal, given the state of existence of both parties.

Kant therefore emphasises the necessity for the incarnation as this provides the nearest point in which these two realities can meet. Helm of course objects to Kant's views by indirectly asking: "How is it possible for me to be free, knowing that a God exists who is already present in my future, experiencing it as reality?" (1997:43) and "How does God know what time it is in our present?" (1997:44). Moltmann agrees with this questioning as the whole concept of the Kingdom of God being realised depending on the complete and unhindered interaction between the divine and created, leads to the possibility of an end for creation, but does not speak of a journey for God. (Moltmann 1996:330-336).

Liberation Theology seems to go directly against this argument, whereby, as we mentioned before, the revelation of God implies a direct link with the experiences of creation, and therefore requires the immanent presence of God. If process theology in liberation theology, for instance, is true to the development of God, then one needs to assume that history plays a vitally important role in the progress in the Godhead.

Historie either becomes the environment wherein God can find self-fulfilment or it

meaning of time, so that the eschaton was always equally near or remote from every point in time."

becomes the medium through which God is on a definite journey of identifying with all kinds of suffering and rejection, leading to a scenario of complete divine glorification.

Moltmann opts for the second suggestion. What we are noting, is that humanity's understanding of God is constantly changing. This is not to say that God is changing as well. If this were the case, if God indeed changes, then we would be confronted with a classic example of functional modalism.

The question remains of how God continues to travel with the created order as well as identifying graphically with suffering on the cross. Here is where we should take note of Moltmann's theology of the Church. "The church in the power of the Spirit is not yet the kingdom of God, but it is its anticipation in history. Christianity is not yet the new creation, but it is the working of the Spirit of the new creation" (Moltmann 1992:196). Moltmann herein suggests that although the incarnation of Christ did not fulfil the Kingdom here in the created, we cannot count Jesus as failing in his task. If the Kingdom were to come only by the coming of God apocalyptically speaking, one would find only another form of domination that is no different from the cause of great human suffering as experienced through history. For lack of a better description, creation needs to "own" the journey towards the glorification of God. The Church therefore becomes the eschatological community in which the end is being revealed.

Hardy, when describing the relationship between creation and eschatology refers to Barth in identifying the purpose of creation as being about a creator who makes Himself known through creation (1997:109). Hardy warns in the same breath that the

(Olivier 1980:199).

human understanding of personal- and cosmic eschatology should not be clouded by our self-understanding in the present related to the reality of redemption in Christ or of our understanding of the Trinity (1997:112). If the Church should fall into the trap of claiming full responsibility for achieving the Kingdom of God on earth, or of being the sole tool through which God establishes God's reign, then the Church is actually regressing to a post-millenarianist understanding of the Kingdom of God. With Barth, the Church must acknowledge that it cannot speak about God if God has not spoken Godself (Moltmann 1992:208).

The difference between creator and creation calls for a covenant whereby the ultimate goal is the equilibrium in existence between the temporal and the eternal (Hardy 1997:121). Moltmann sees this covenant as being clearly displayed in the person and work of Jesus Christ and through the God-led participation in the establishment of the Kingdom through the Church. Once again, the Church must not be seen as the mere human response to the Word of God, but as the self-revelation of God through people that is only done in the power of the Third person of the Trinity: the Spirit.

2.2 Placing of the Divine eschatology.

The placing of Moltmann's Divine eschatology at the end of his description of eschatology must be considered as being intentional. This strategic placing makes a tremendous theological statement concerning the motive and manner in which the Kingdom of God is established.

The division of the chapters in “The Coming of God: Christian eschatology”⁸¹ tells the following story: First the need for an eschatology is established in that existence is described in terms of physical and spiritual life and death. This situation is brought about by the presence of sin within the created order (Moltmann 1996:49). This personal eschatology is nothing new to the created order, as each individual’s journey is part of an historical journey towards the eschaton, or the Kingdom of God. (Moltmann 1996:129). Throughout history, different institutions like the church and politics have attempted to create an environment that is conducive to the establishment of the Kingdom without any success. This failure can be attributed to the fact that the Kingdom is not something that can be created in the temporal by mortal beings, but that the journey is indeed a cosmic journey that can only find its fulfilment in God (Moltmann 1996:267). It is only in and through the work of God in creation that creation can be restored to its original relational state with God. The environment is created whereby God has to fulfil no other role but be glorified (Moltmann 1996:321).

If Divine eschatology formed the prolegomena of his eschatology, the means through which the Kingdom of God would be achieved would be totally different. It would mean that if God were to be in the process of self-fulfilment or self-glorification, forcefully inducing an eschatological journey on the rest of creation, the Kingdom of God would not be about the restoration of creation to God. God would find glory at the expense of creation. This is a very simplistic and generalised argument against process theology.

⁸¹ Moltmann, J. 1996. The Coming of God: Christian eschatology. Translated by M. Kohl. London: SCM Press

Here is where Moltmann would part company with process theology. Placing Divine eschatology at the fore of any eschatology would assume that God is in a state of flux and therefore drag history along on the journey towards completion, or in other words, reach the narcissistic Kingdom of God. Moltmann's Divine eschatology is completely necessary for the eschatological journey of the created order. The only way in which the created order can ever be restored to an eternal covenantal relationship with God would be for an unchanging God's involvement in an imperfect creation.

I am sure that Moltmann would agree with Barth and others in claiming that theoretically God does not *need* to intervene and be part of this eschatological journey, but – as Moltmann emphasises – God chooses to be part of the created's journey towards the eschaton (Moltmann 2000:58). This makes God vulnerable to the experience of life from the perspective of the temporal. This exposure to the temporal in itself asks something of God, drawing God away from God's original state, namely God's state without the existence of the temporal.

2.3 Divine eschatology and divine suffering.

The question of divine suffering is not a new one. Part of the theological problem of the existence of God relates directly to God's ability to understand, and more so, experience the human situation of suffering.

Early religious thought as described through the Platonic dialogues of "The Republic", denies the possibility of a suffering deity completely (Plato 1987:70-80). To Plato, the meaning of deity assumed the opinion that if God is God, then God should be completely self-sufficient and unchanging (McGrath 2001:274). If God were to

experience suffering, then it would expose God to the possibility of change. Suffering within the realm of the divine would therefore strip God of divinity. These views came to a head during the patristic era, but have lasted until very recently. Moltmann gives two reasons for this: First, the incapacity of God to suffer is precisely that which distinguished God from the created order, and secondly, that salvation is the event whereby those who suffer are elevated to the insufferable existence of God (Moltmann 1981:23).

Moltmann disagrees with this view and disagrees with Barth in whether God chooses to participate in human life through suffering. “The sacrifice of love is not, either, merely a divine reaction to man’s sin. Nor is it a free decision of will on God’s part, in the sense that it need not have been made. For the cross of Christ is not something that is historically fortuitous, which might not have happened.” (Moltmann 1981:32).

To Moltmann, divine revelation cannot be separated from the picture of a God who is physically engaged in the human experience of suffering. “If God would show us Himself, He must show us Himself as a sufferer, as taking what we call pain and loss. These are His portion; from eternity He chose them. The life Christ shows us is the eternal life.” (Moltmann 1981:32)⁸².

Are we witnessing a weakness in Moltmann’s divine eschatology? Could one assume that in this interpretation, the Kingdom of God can be understood as the place where God does not suffer any longer? In response to this suggestion, Moltmann would direct

⁸² Moltmann is quoting James Hilton from the following publication: Hilton, J. 1866. The mystery of pain. London: Publisher unknown (p. 40).

us to the place of his divine eschatology. God suffers out of love for a creation that suffers (Moltmann 1981:32).

As the incarnation is a great eschatological step for both God and creation, so does the cross become the pinnacle of God's experience of life, suffering and death from the perspective of the created order. Moltmann's theology is classically Lutheran. We find this especially in Moltmann's emphasis on a *theologia crucis* (Smit 1994:47). When God is revealed, we see God as the suffering God on the cross. This is perhaps the best way in which we can relay the message of an eternal being relating to the created order. In the same picture is a God to whom belongs all glory, but we cannot see it yet. This is the eschatological journey. This is the discovery of the Kingdom of God.

Is suffering ungodly? Plato would argue: "Yes!" (McGrath 2001:274), while Moltmann sees the God who cannot suffer as deficient and not perfect (McGrath 2001:277). God chooses to suffer and makes the cross a central part of that experience. A valid criticism is found when McGrath argues that Moltmann does not clearly describe to what extent God experiences death (McGrath 2001:280), and may be misinterpreted as being similar to Thomas Aquinas' views of God being merely "moved by our misery" (McGrath 2001:275).

Moltmann states that there are three questions that are asked in suffering which relate to God: (Moltmann 1999:172-174)

- Why? – This question relates to how God can be justified in the event of human suffering.

- Where is God? – This question clearly illustrates that humanity has an integral longing for companionship. Suffering creates the feeling of solitude and isolation, especially in the context of relating to a deity.
- Question of human accountability – Who is actually responsible for the suffering that people experience? St. Augustine of Hippo attempted to answer this question by identifying the source of evil as Satan. The problem was not resolved as the question was raised concerning Satan’s origin. If Satan is the origin of evil and suffering, then one must acknowledge that Satan is a fallen angel, who in turn was created by God. Is God therefore ultimately responsible for evil and suffering? (McGrath 2001:293-294).

Moltmann states that the tables are turned when we find God asking “Adam, where are you? Cain, where is your brother Abel? What have you done?” (Moltmann 1999:174). Even in this response, one may assume that God is a passive observer of human suffering, but to Moltmann these questions are asked in the suffering of the cross. God therefore, by suffering wilfully, makes a statement that suffering is not to be seen as punishment sent by God, but as part of the created situation from which we need to be liberated.

Moltmann is not a stranger to suffering, and experienced tremendous hardships being a prisoner of war during the Second World War. His answer specifically to the second question is found in his quote of Elie Wiesel’s book about Auschwitz called “Night”. In this book, she tells of the experience of an execution of a young child hanged and left to die a slow and painful death. Someone cries: “Where is God?”, whereupon she answers

in her thoughts “Where is He? Here He is – He is hanging here on this gallows... That night the soup tasted of corpses” (Moltmann 1999:179)

Soskice writes: “Christians have learnt from Jews out of the horror of the Shoah that hope in God can abide even in the midst of profound evil, and without ignoring that profound evil.” (2000:79). The hope that Moltmann speaks about is found in the presence of God in every situation of suffering and neglect. It is a hope for the establishment of God’s Kingdom where the tears will be wiped away from the faces of the afflicted. This is the Kingdom where God’s glory becomes the fulfilment of the meaning of life for those who experience existence within the temporal created order. Hereby the hypothesis, stated in the introduction, is confirmed.

2.4. Where is God in South Africa?

During the struggle in South Africa, it seemed as if South African Christians were sure about God’s whereabouts.

Peter Storey, previous Presiding Bishop and District Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa voiced the views of God held by the Anti-Apartheid movement on several occasions. In a national radio broadcast, he said the following: “When people in our land use the name of Jesus to justify discrimination against their fellows, that is the final insult to God.” (Storey 2002:113). Obviously, if one is to superimpose Moltmann’s divine eschatology on this statement, one would be led to seek the glorification of God within these words. Christians throughout the country and the world saw the contradiction of a “Christian state” that did not practice the essence of the divine covenant, calling for mutual and equal relationships between people. The

glorification of God was considered possible when people were able to live in peace and harmony.

Moltmann's picture of the South African situation would therefore have found some sense of fulfilment with the abolishment of Apartheid and the reign of God would be a reality for many in our country.

The dilemma is found in the manner in which we have not experienced the true establishment of the Kingdom of God in our existential experience, or have we? It is almost a recollection of Israel's Messianic expectations and the hearing about a wandering carpenter's son named "Jesus".

Although there is an enormous amount that South Africans can be thankful for, we must acknowledge that there is a lot more to the experience of God's reign in our midst than the change in political leadership. The so-called "prophetic churches" of the Apartheid-era found themselves in exactly this dilemma. Having to be so involved in the struggle against Apartheid they found themselves in a crisis of identity when there was no longer a system to fight against. Along with this experience came a general sense in which our dependence on God was questioned. There is a great truth that must be grasped in the covenantal reminder found in Deuteronomy 6:10-17.

Now we find ourselves in a new struggle. How do we glorify God in the New South Africa? Ben du Toit, director of communication in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa asks exactly the same question, but relating it to the post-modern perspectives that are growing steadily in our society: "Die postmoderne tyd bring ons

du by die punt dat ons indringend sal moet vra na die oorsprong van ons teologiese uitsprake en godsdienstige standpunte. Is ‘n geloof in die God van die Bybel, soos uiteindelik geopenbaar (bekendgestel) is deur Jesus van Nasaret, ‘n geloof wat met integriteit verkoopbaar is in die post-moderne tyd?’⁸³ (Du Toit 2000:60).

I think that Storey gives us the answer to the South African search for the glorification of God by preaching a very Moltmannian sermon⁸⁴ (Storey 2002:79-85). I will only name the points that he used, being sure that this will illustrate the point:

- When we suffer from something, God is with us;
- When we suffer because of cruelty, greed or neglect, God is for us;
- When we suffer for something, God speaks through us;
- When we suffer with others, God is in us.

The key to the experience of the Kingdom of God is consequently not in the post-modern religious expectation of an easy and uncomplicated life. Jesus nevertheless said: “The poor you will have with you always.”⁸⁵ The key to divine eschatology as portrayed in Moltmann’s eschatology can therefore be seen in no other context than the combination of Personal eschatology, Historical eschatology and Cosmic eschatology.

By Personal eschatology, we mean that there is a definite link in our experience of the Kingdom of God when we do not forget the plight of those suffering in our communities, but are actively engaged in sharing the Spirit of Life with them. “

⁸³ “The post-modern time brings us to the point where we have to urgently investigate the origin of our theological declarations and religious views. Is a faith in the God of the Bible, eventually revealed (introduced) through Jesus of Nazareth, a faith that can be ‘sold’ in post-modern times?” – My own translation.

⁸⁴ This sermon was preached at the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg in 1990.

⁸⁵ Matthew 26:11

3. Conclusion.

I think that Moltmann summarises his eschatology very well in the following sentences:

“The Deity who is in himself complete, self-sufficing and blissful, is also complete, self-sufficing and in itself blissful self-love. This causes all living things to join in the divine self-love when they begin to love God and find their happiness in Him.”

(Moltmann 1996:325).

“When God is known face to face, the freedom of God’s servants, his children and his friends finally finds its fulfilment in God himself.” (Moltmann 1981:222).

1 John 3:1-2 gives a clear description that Moltmann’s argument is not an unique view in the Christian faith. In our sinful and suffering environment, we have sure hope that we will be united with God and restored in our relationship with God. When the Son hands over the Kingdom to the Father, then too is our completion handed to us. This is perhaps difficult to see *sub specie temporis*.

As God journeys alongside the created order, experiencing life, suffering, and death, we have sure ground for hope. Living in South Africa, and being part of a continuous and demanding self-discovery of what it means to be an African in a true sense of the word, is in itself an intimidating experience. One continuously faces the question of whether it is all worth it in the end when friends and acquaintances give up hope or label a Christian belief in the control held by God as being pious denial. Then one hears the words of St. Paul and a clear message proclaimed by Moltmann and others, that even in South Africa, “...God will be all in all”⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:28.

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Abstract.The Kingdom of God in Moltmann's eschatology: A South African perspective

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This dissertation focuses on the notion of the Kingdom of God in Jürgen Moltmann's eschatology. The notion of the Kingdom of God is understood in many different ways, most of which bears very little relevance to secular life. The problem is therefore created of people either denying the existence of such a Kingdom (because of its deemed irrelevance) or emphasising the Kingdom to such an extent that the problems confronting life are ignored. It is the hypothesis that Moltmann puts forward an understanding of the Kingdom of God that is relevant to our daily existence.

The notion of the Kingdom of God serves as an underlying theme in most, if not all of Moltmann's works. Having suffered tremendously himself, Moltmann seeks to understand the Kingdom of God as not being purely metaphysical, but a way of living that can enhance our experience of the entire cycle of life.

This is a literature study, using Moltmann's book "The Coming of God: Christian eschatology" as the main source. Each chapter in this dissertation focuses on one section of this theological work, evaluates the progression of theological argument considering Moltmann's other works and then seeks an existential understanding of the point using the South African context. Moltmann's argument starts with Personal

eschatology and proceeds to Historical eschatology, Cosmic eschatology and lastly, Divine eschatology. One therefore finds a natural growth in his argument, seeking the relationship between the immanence and transcendence of God.

In order to confirm the hypothesis, this dissertation considers the various understandings of the concept of the Kingdom of God in light of the human views on life, death, history and creation.

An exclusively transcendent God is proven to be unable to establish a reign in any of these human experiences, rendering the notion of the Kingdom of God irrelevant. A purely immanent God, on the other hand, also creates an irrelevant Kingdom, being proven to be limited by the confines of human thought and experience.

The search in this dissertation is for an understanding of God and of God's Kingdom that will neither deny the divinity of God nor will see the context of life as too finite to be included in the Kingdom of God.

It is the argument that Moltmann's notion of the Kingdom of God provides exactly that. This view is especially relevant to the South African context, as a growing secularised community progressively questions the relevance of the notion of the Kingdom of God. It is especially questioned as the H.I.V./A.I.D.S. pandemic is causing widespread suffering and death in this country.

Moltmann's eschatology is specifically used as the main doctrine in this argument as he views all theology to be based on the eschatological journey of God and creation. The

questions that people ask, namely “Where is life going?” and “What do we have to hope for?” are in essence eschatological questions.

It is my belief that this work will provide a theological understanding of the Kingdom of God that is relevant and accessible to especially the South African context.

Key terms.

Moltmann

Kingdom

Eschatology

Life

Death

Geschichte

Sabbath

Shekinah

Consummation