

Reviews

THE FUTURE OF CREATION by Jurgen Moltmann, SCM Press, 1980. pp 198
£6.95.

The ten essays collected and published here, of which unfortunately the origins are only occasionally indicated, represent the stages of Moltmann's progress from his *Theology of Hope*, through *The Crucified God*, to *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. But not only this; 'they are also intended to illuminate the factual and methodological basis for the eschatological trend of that progress' (Preface). As essays on the theology of creation they are designed to open up an eschatological concept of creation which will take in both 'creation at the beginning' and the promised 'new creation', and at the same time they aim to relate the expectation of the coming of the kingdom to created reality as it exists. For this reason, although grouped thematically round the subjects 'future' and 'creation', *The Future as Creation* (Moltmann's own title) is really rather misleading, though it is also provocative. *Creation as Future* or *The Future as Creation* might have been more indicative of their subject matter (though possibly equally inexplicit) for the two ideas are radically, though perhaps, as with all such collections, in their working out not systematically, related.

Whilst the subjects actually discussed in these essays derive mostly from traditional doctrinal concepts: the trinitarian nature of God, the resurrection, faith, justification and so on, under the surface one is continuously aware of the ideals and the influence, the pressure of liberation theology. In the first chapter Moltmann examines the idea of transcendence in its traditional ambiguity and is only happy when he can relate it to a concept of future which is ultimately both Christian and in the best sense Marxist. From

here we move by way of theology, history and medical science, to the last chapter in which, starting from the traditional Protestant position on justification and relating it carefully to both 'creation' and the 'new creation', he develops a realist christological theology and comes to the conclusion that 'if it is only taken by itself as healing power for sinners and the miserable, without criticism of what is and what considers itself of importance, the gospel becomes the uncritical compensation for existing evil' (p 171). One can detect perhaps more than an echo here of Marx's famous critique of religion in the *Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* where he speaks of the demand to give up illusions about the human condition as 'the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.'

Again and again Moltmann's starting point is seen to be from within a living tradition, it is essentially Protestant – far from what is traditionally regarded as Catholic. Yet in relating God's recreative work to its locus, what is created, and in this effectively rejecting religion as a 'reversed world consciousness' (Marx, *ibid.*) he comes to a truly Catholic position. If those whose starting point is more traditionally Catholic can achieve the same realism and can realise this, there is still indeed a future for ecumenism as well as for creation. These essays are not always easy reading but they represent a great Christian thinker exploring the Church's faith in a way which is the more theological by being historical, critical and above all human' they are an example of theology at its most profound and effective.

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