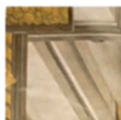
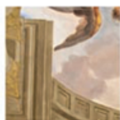
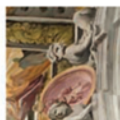
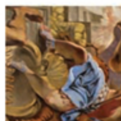
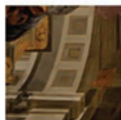
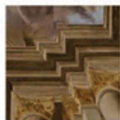
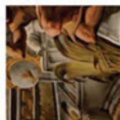



THE MESSIANIC DISRUPTION OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

KORNEL ZATHURECZKY



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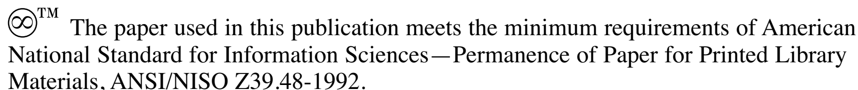
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Introduction

Contemporary Christian theology in Europe is beset with multiple challenges. The challenges are not quite the same for Eastern and for Western European Christianity. The two Europes, however, are one in participating in the history of effects of the Shoah. The Shoah is often reduced to the problem of guilt that confronts the perpetrators of the greatest genocide on European soil. Although the Shoah does raise the problem of guilt and responsibility, it seems that its significance cannot be reduced to the mere recitation of the crimes committed and to the question of responsibility defined negatively as guilt. Responsibility, however, is a much broader concept than the question of guilt. The Shoah has a particular history of effects, which exert their influence even on those who cannot actually share in the guilt of a previous historical era. Yet the descendants of the perpetrators are always and already affected by the history of effects of the tragedy of European Jewry. The challenge of Europe and of European Christianity is to come to terms with this history of effects in a way that not only deals with the question of responsibility as guilt, but of the question of responsibility understood more positively, that is responsibility toward the Other. Coming to terms with the Shoah, however, does not and cannot mean that one ever moves beyond this event. That Shoah is an epochal event means that it has not only altered the course of European history, but that it has put into question the very meaning of the history of Europe defined as the history of progress. The end of European history defined around the idea of progress also means the end of an idea of Christianity defined around the concept of fulfillment.

The idea of Europe as the fulfillment of the highest aspirations of humankind was born out of the idea of Christianity as the absolute religion, which conclusively fulfilled the messianic expectations of the Jews. The disruption

brought about by the Shoah, however, confronts Christianity with a need to confront poignant questions regarding its identity.

Can Christianity continue to define itself as the religion of fulfillment? Although it unmistakably did so in the past, it can no longer afford to do so. If Christianity is not the expression of the faith in the ultimate and conclusive fulfillment of the messianic expectations of the Jews, how is it to be defined? How does one make sense of the long history of Christian self-understanding, which influenced the discourse of the tradition? Can one simply discount fundamental sources that shaped Christian tradition? Can Christianity renew itself after the catastrophe of the Shoah, a tragedy not only of the Jewish people but just as much a tragedy of Christianity? Is there an alternative tradition that has so far been neglected and suppressed and that should be retrieved now?

The self-definition of Christianity as the ultimate religion that fulfills all the expectations of humanity has been proven to be a bankrupt enterprise. The infinite suffering the Jewish people endured in the heart of Christian Europe once and for all invalidates all claims of Christianity as the absolute religion.

The purpose of this work is to retrieve a lost dimension of Christian discourse, namely its initial self-identification as a messianic faith. This means a severe, for some, unduly harsh, critique of the Christian tradition. This critique, however, is born out of a serious engagement with the tradition and the perception of possibilities that lie hidden within it. The outcome of this hermeneutic of retrieval is to enrich Christian discourse about the Trinitarian God, paradoxically, through the ambiguities and negativity of the messianic idea.

Chapter One

The Loss of the Messianic

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AFTER THE SHOAH

The Shoah has become the context of Christian theology of the First World. In a sense the Shoah represents the dissolution of a long tradition of theology that defined the Christian faith without a context, and the beginning of an understanding of Christianity within a context. Through the Shoah, Christianity was confronted with its own identity as a faith, which is essentially rooted in history.

Although the anatomy of the long history of European anti-Semitism and its ultimate culmination in the Shoah is a complex issue (far too complex to be discussed at any length within this work), it is uncontestable that the Christian theological tradition is inextricably implicated in this fateful history.[1] The Shoah ultimately puts into question the whole history of Christian theology and silently judges it. Most of post-Shoah Christian theology, however, cannot cope with the disturbing presence of this silent judgment. What is needed, however, if Christian theology is to be a critical understanding of the meaning of faith in the God of Jesus Christ is to situate the theological task at the very epicenter of the judgment and call for responsibility, which the Shoah represents.

The ultimate legitimation for the "final solution," for the extermination of European Jewry, had an undeniable connection to Christian theology's negative judgment concerning the messianic expectations of the Jews, expectations that were thought to have been wholly and conclusively fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This claim makes a lot of Christians uncomfortable; yet, a conscious confrontation with Christianity's past serves the future of Christian theology more than complicit silence with the executioners.

The way of practicing theology in the shadow of Auschwitz is to unravel the theological legitimation of Auschwitz. The point of beginning for Christian theology is to bring the theological legitimation of Auschwitz under a thorough and severe critique. The statement, which perspicuously encapsulates the point of beginning for this project, is the following: "Jesus is not the end of the Messiah."[2] This statement, in spite of its apparent simplicity, is revolutionary for Christianity for at least two reasons. First, it opens up the possibility for a meaningful conversation with Judaism, no longer regarding the latter as an anachronistic religion that was relegated to irrelevance with the emergence of Christianity. Second, Christian theology itself opens itself up for a more dynamic conceptualization of its doctrine of God.

That Christian theology is deeply rooted in Judaism has become commonplace in postwar Christian theology.[3] On the level of theological reflection there has so far been minimal actualization of the organic connection between the two faiths. Christian theology has kept Judaism at an arm's length, maintaining a facile distance from facing real theological-philosophical implications of its Jewish connections. Although scholarship investigating the Jewishness of Jesus flourished, there has been a virtual sterility regarding the architecture of Christian theology proper. There have been but a few noteworthy attempts to realize a systematic reconsideration of Christian theology in a post-Shoah context, and even these were marginalized by mainstream academic theology.

Unfortunately, recent developments in Christian theology have not given due attention to rectify the basic alienation that has existed for centuries between Judaism and Christianity. Most Christian theological reflections on the meaning of Judaism have focused on the exploration of the Jewishness of Jesus.[4] As important as this "insight" has been for New Testament studies in the past three decades, a mere fascination with the Jewishness of Jesus is not sufficient if it does not find its way into the Christian understanding of God as Trinitarian. In addition, the reality of Jesus the Jew has to be understood on the horizon of a living Jewish tradition. If Judaism is to be considered a partner in dialogue, which it must, Christian theology has to do much more than focus on a fairly narrow interval of time within the history of the people of Israel. The unfolding of the meaning of the Jewishness of Jesus is a minimal requirement of dialogue but, in the long run, it is not sufficient to fully engage both partners in the dialogue. The Jewish faith has much more to offer than the few hundred years scholars' focus on in investigating the historical background of the Jewishness of Jesus. It is the challenge of postwar constructive Christian theology[5] to engage Judaism, as a living tradition, in a creative dialogue that will have palpable repercussions on Christian Trinitarian discourse.

TRINITARIAN SUPERSESSIONISM

There are two interconnected causes for the (basic) historical alienation between Judaism and Christianity. The first cause is, of course, the diametrically opposite evaluation of the messiahship of Jesus. The positive response to the messiahship of Jesus given by the emerging Christian Church was influenced by its promise-fulfillment interpretive strategy, which soon evolved into Christian supersessionism. The other cause of alienation between the two faiths not unrelated to the first was the development of Christian Trinitarian dogma, which, with its accommodation to Greek metaphysical categories, sterilized Christian theology toward the salvation-historical connection with Judaism.[6]

The cumulative result of these developments was that Christian theology basically ceased to have a critical messianic dimension, and soon enough became the source of the uncritical legitimation for the false messianism of the state. The transmutation of the initial messianic expectation of the Christian faith into the political messianism of the political establishment is described in the following manner:

> The initial fulfillment of messianic hope in Christianity was political in nature. As consequence of the turn of events under Constantine, the old apocalyptic martyr eschatology was transformed into an imperial theology. This transposition can only be understood apocalyptically, even if historically speaking the early Christian apologists had already prepared the way. Those who with Christ had fought against the political demons and had suffered under them, began in the Roman empire after Constantine, with Christ to be victorious politically and to rule religiously. The Constantinian turn of events made of once-persecuted Christianity, first the permitted, and than the dominant religion in the Roman empire. From this there developed Byzantinism, from Byzantynism Tsarism in the east, and in the west the theo-political ideal of the Holy Empire which was supposed to endure to the end of time.[7]

The spiritual aspirations for redemption in the early church became transposed to the realm of the political. The promise of redemption became actualized by the political power of the emperor who, in his person, represented the rule of God on earth. The dangerous expectations for the coming of the Messiah became defused by the claim of the emperor to be the uncontested representative of God's rule on earth.

The church rejected the notion of a theopolitical Messiah, and it came to portray the messiahship of Jesus in purely spiritual terms. The Jews were represented as myopic, looking for a political Messiah to deliver them from the political oppression of the Romans. Jesus, according to the spiritualized

narrative of the church, overcame the limitation of Jewish messianic expectations and, instead of leading a political rebellion against the oppressors, resisted involvement in the political. The spiritualization of the messiahship of Jesus was closely connected to the development of the Christian doctrine of God, which required a depoliticized Jesus.

Contrary to the developments of the Christian tradition, which led to the dualism of the political and spiritual, the Jewish faith, defined by the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel, never severed its political existence from its spiritual aspirations. Jewish messianism was rooted in the sphere of the political. According to Martin Buber, the origins of Jewish messianism are found in the sphere of the political, more particularly in the establishment and consequent history of kingship in the history of Israel.[8] The institution of monarchy in the history of the people of Israel was an ambiguous development as the kings were seen as basically usurping the position Yahweh, the God of Israel, enjoyed under theocratic rule.[9] The only king who enjoys the special favors of Yahweh is King David whose rule and person become the paradigm for the messianic ruler of the future. Within the institution of kingship and its ultimate failure to mediate between the divine and the human lies the seed of expectation for a king, specially anointed by Yahweh, through whom God will rule the people.[10] The apparent inadequacy of the idea of monarchy consequently led to an idealization of a monarch who will live up to his divine anointing through his just rule. The idealization of this expected king, however, did not mean its depolitization. The messianic king is a "theopolitical messiah."[11] The remembrance of this positive hope in the theopolitical messiah, rooted in the David-Zion axis, was that through which Israel endured the annihilation of homelessness that succeeded its short period of political autonomy, and out of the confrontation of the glory of the remembered past and the experience of apparent hopelessness of the present was born the eschatological expectation of the messiah.[12] It is this eschatological hope uniting the political and spiritual that Christian theology purposefully neglected in order to provide legitimation to the authoritarian State and to wield absolute control over the ultimate fate of all human beings. Once the salvation-historical connection with Judaism had been abrogated by the metaphysical orientation of Christian dogmas regarding the identity of Christ and the identity of the Christian God, the possibility for a meaningful dialogue was also jeopardized.[13]

Judaism, by and large, resisted identifying its beliefs through metaphysical categories.[14] There have been, however, important instances to encapsulate the meaning of Judaism in a manner similar to Christian creedal formulations.[15] One such attempt to identify the meaning of Judaism in the language of metaphysics came from the towering figure of medieval Jewish philoso-

phy, Moses Maimonides. Although his attempt to formulate a universally binding list of Jewish doctrines never became normative for Judaism, it is still useful to examine his list as it clearly brings out the fundamental differences between Christianity and Judaism. Maimonides' list could still be regarded as an unofficial creed of Judaism.

Maimonides proposed a list of thirteen propositions to express the content of the Jewish faith.[16] In comparison with the ecumenical Christian creeds, the list of Maimonides has two important distinguishing marks. First, his list includes an explicit reference to the Jewish expectation of the Messiah.[17] The second point of divergence between Maimonides and the early Christian Creeds lies in their respective doctrines of God, Maimonides obviously advocating the unquestionable importance, and superiority, of Jewish monotheism over the perceived corruption of Christian trinitarian monotheism.[18]

Christian creeds no longer talk about the expectation of the Messiah. They represent an interpretive tradition, which identified Jesus Christ as the one who conclusively fulfilled all the messianic expectations of the Jews. Although the Christian Creeds express an explicit expectation concerning the return, or Second Coming, of Christ, these creeds do not draw on the critical function of the messianic idea to put into question the legitimacy of the political ruler while offering hope and liberation to those oppressed by unjust political and economic conditions. The meaning of the return of Christ is to redeem the souls of the living and the dead. His return is reduced to the level of spiritual salvation, while leaving undisturbed the false messianism of the oppressive ruler.

The outcome of the comparison between the thirteen points of Maimonides and the ecumenical Christian creeds is symptomatic of Christianity's break with its Judaic heritage: messianism no more, instead, trinitarianism. With this option, however, Christian theology short-circuited any possibility for a meaningful dialogue with Judaism. The silence of the creeds concerning Christianity's Judaic heritage is an implicit judgment regarding the irrelevance of the Jewish faith for Christians, a judgment that proved to be detrimental to Jewish existence within Christian Europe.

THE TRINITY: THE BREAK FROM JUDAISM

The crucial significance of the messianic within the continuity of Jewish existence exposes the blatant neglect of this concept within the Christian tradition. The early Christian creeds represent a decisive break with Judaism, which is signaled by the prominent absence of any explicit reference to Jesus as the Messiah.[19] Since Jesus fulfilled all the messianic expectations of the

Jews in a decisive manner, there is no longer any need to look at Judaism as a continuing partner in conversation. Consequently, the relevance of Judaism is reduced to a mere antecedent to Christian theology. Judaism is present in Christian consciousness but only on a marginal level. Judaism is no longer alive to Christianity. Christian hermeneutical strategies imprisoned Judaism into a reductionistic understanding of the Torah.

The language and orientation of the ecumenical creeds reflect the fact that Christianity's main partner in conversation was no longer Judaism but the larger Hellenistic world. One does not have to endorse the popular idea that the creeds represented the Hellenization of the Christian faith in order to be able to make a case for Christianity's neglect of its foundational Hebraic dimension.

Certain scholars understand the major shift from the Hebraic to the Greek as Christianity's absorption of the Greek world into the world and word of the Bible. The new faith thus, supposedly, Christianized the Hellenistic world, and consequently its concept of God was no longer that of the God of Hellenistic philosophy. The words used to talk about the Christian God gained new significance within this process of absorption. If we accept the plausibility of this theory, there still remains the question about the loss of Hebraic concepts within Christian discourse about God. Talk about the messianic figure of Jesus turned into talk about Christ the Lord. Christ here does no longer refer to a messianic person but is turned into a mere title of designation, a proper name. In a sense, Christian doctrinal formulations renamed Jesus the messianic figure by calling him Jesus Christ.

The neglect of Jewish conceptions of the messianic represented a break with a particular form of discourse, fueled by the disappointments of worldly existence and by the fragile hope for an eschatological restitution of damaged life, and the beginning of the reign of metaphysical discourse about the Christian God, devoid of the ambiguities and negativities of Jewish messianism. The discourse of redemption turned into the discourse of totality.

The doctrine of the Trinity served as the ultimate expression of Christianity's claim to have overcome the particularity of Jewish conceptions of God. The Christian understanding of God as Trinity has been hermetically sealed off from Jewish theological conceptions of God. The trinitarian formulations of Christian theology give absolutely no evidence of any trace of a salvation-historical connection between the two faiths as these formulations stand as eternally valid, metaphysical expressions of the Christian belief in God as Trinity. On the level of Christian trinitarian formulations about the nature of God, the Jewish faith might as well never have existed. The obvious difficulty with such a state of affairs is that it is simply untenable in light of Judaism's history of effects, which made the emergence of Christianity possible at all.

The implications of this seemingly innocent exclusion of Judaism on the theological level have, however, led to serious consequences on the social-political level.

The silence of the foundational documents of the Christian Church concerning the connection between Judaism and Christianity represents the culmination of a process of increasing alienation from the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. Living Judaism becomes an anachronism in the eyes of Christian theology, a judgment leading to consequences, that would reach far beyond the sphere of theology.

Looking at Judaism as an anachronism ultimately finds expression in the anti-Judaic polemic and worse, anti-Semitic vitriol, which gained legitimacy through Christian theology. From the perspective of Christian supersessionism the continuing existence of the Jews was regarded as an anomaly at best, and an intolerable fact at worst. The historical sufferings of the Jews were celebrated as God's punishments of an obstinate people. But if the Jews were punished by God, there still seems to be a special relationship between them and God. Otherwise, why would God punish them? There was apparently no answer to this paradox, at least as the situation was interpreted through the lens of Christian supersessionism, which caused quite a bit of consternation for Christain theologians. But, on the other hand, the superiority of the Christian faith required the rejection of the Other.

One of the most notorious instances of Christian theological anti-Jewish manifestation finds expression through Luther's virulent diatribes against the Jews.[20] The blatantly anti-Semitic invectives of Luther are not to be understood as sudden and unusual eruptions by a particularly emotional Christian theologian. In Luther the repressed anti-Semitism of the Christian unconscious emerges.

The theology of the Enlightenment seemed to have perceived the irrationality of previous Christianity's identity constructions and argued for the superiority of the Christian faith on the grounds of pure rationality. The otherness of the Jews was purportedly overcome by the means of the purported rational superiority of the Christian religion.

Not all theological evaluations of the Jews by Christian theologians, however, end up in such extreme outbursts. A subtler, yet equally derogatory manifestation of Christian supersessionism is found in Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*, the consummate document of the theology of the German Enlightenment: "Christianity does indeed stand in a special historical connexion with Judaism; but as far as concerns its historical existence and its aim, its relations to Judaism and Heathenism are the same."[21]

The comments of Schleiermacher regarding the anachronistic nature of Judaism also point to the fact that even enlightened Christian thinkers regarded

Christianity as a superior expression of the religious aspirations of humanity when compared to the ritual barbarism of the Hebraic faith.

The Christian view of Judaism as anachronistic post-Christos is not an innocent theological viewpoint, but one that had palpable consequences on Jewish existence in Christian Europe.[22] One merely has to take a cursory view of the history of the Jews in Europe and the consistent persecutions they suffered for their "anachronistic" existence.[23] The hatred of the Jews in Christian Europe found legitimation through theological means. With the decline of Christianity in post-Enlightenment Europe one would expect that European anti-Jewish sentiments would subside. Yet, the exact opposite took place, and out of the country of Luther, Kant, and Schleiermacher the "final solution" to the Jewish problem arose and was almost fully implemented by Hitler's Third Reich.

CONSEQUENCES: CHRISTIAN ANTI-JEWISH PREJUDICES

Since the necessary context of Christian messianic theology is that of Auschwitz and the self-revelation of Judaism as an autonomous religious and political force, Christian theology must begin with the dismantling of its deep-seated prejudices toward the Jews. These prejudices exist on many levels, and the Christian theologian must be attentive to all of these levels of prejudice.[24]

The first level of prejudice is what Jürgen Moltmann calls the "the viewpoint of religious indifference."[25] This prejudice refers to that disposition of Christianity toward Judaism that looks at the latter as one religion among many, contributing nothing to the understanding of salvation. According to this view, Judaism, just like any other religion, depends on the message of salvation exclusively proclaimed by Christianity.[26] The great German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who deemed both the election of Israel and Israel's history of promise salvifically irrelevant, encapsulated this attitude toward Judaism.[27]

The second level of prejudice, one that Christianity theology needs to come to terms with in order to clear the ground for a meaningful dialogue with Judaism, is "the viewpoint of necessary contrast." This particular position portrays the rise of Christianity as an answer to the contradiction found within the Old Testament.[28] Moltmann points to the thought of yet another German theologian, the most influential New Testament scholar of the twentieth century, Rudolf Bultmann, as a representative of this form of prejudice toward Judaism.

For Bultmann, the significance of the Old Testament is to present the Christian with a long history of a failure of relating to God through the Law.

The only reason the Old Testament cannot be dispensed with is because it functions for the Christian as a necessary reminder that aids him in avoiding the temptation to base his relationship with God through the Law.[29] The only way for the Christian to relate to God is through totally dispensing with the Law and through embracing the message of the Gospel, the Gospel that urges the Christian to ground his relationship with God on a wholly transcendent foundation. Consequently, Bultmann's existential theology of faith is an intensification of the purportedly antithetical relationship between Law and Gospel. The implication of this position for the perception of Jewish existence is that the formation of Christian identity is completely dependent on the acute awareness of the failure of Israel: "the clearer the Jewish failure through the law, the brighter the gospel of the Christians."[30]

According to Moltmann, the theology of Bultmann looks at the history of the people of Israel as a negative foil against which the authentic way of salvation through the Christian faith is interpreted. Bultmann's point is that Christianity, by desacralizing the Jewish idea of salvation, a salvation whose horizon was that of the expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises on the level of the historical, created the possibility of achieving salvation through authentic faith. The meaning of Christianity is that it turns to the faith of the individual, having realized the utter bankruptcy of achieving authentic faith on the level of the historical. The influence of such a view is essentially detrimental to the Christian's appreciation of the Jew: "No special existence in the history of salvation can be ascribed to Israel any longer, because the Christian faith is not interested in world history, but only in the individual history of the justified sinner."[31]

The third level of prejudice against the Jews that enjoyed a prevalent position in Christian consciousness is "the viewpoint of inheritance." According to this viewpoint, the history of Israel represents a prehistory to the history of salvation represented by Christianity.[32] The prominent German theologian Paul Althaus is the major representative of this viewpoint. Althaus couches the supersessionist position toward the Jews in salvation historical terminology. In Althaus's theology, the church conclusively and irrevocably replaced the Jews by becoming the "new people of Israel." The direct conclusion of this salvation historical replacement is that the Jewish people no longer have any salvation historical significance: "Israel as the historical people no longer has a theological or 'salvation historical' significance. In the Church and for the Church, Israel has no more special position and no more special salvation calling."[33] With the supersession of the salvation historical significance of the people of Israel, the focus shifts to the solitary individual and his need for salvation as a sinner, a salvation that is offered, through faith, by the Christian Church. As a result of this shift, Christianity has no need to engage in dialogue with Judaism, since

the latter is deemed to be in need of salvation itself. The meaning of salvation is now wholly defined by the Christian Church.

Althaus's position, the classic example of Christian supersessionism, is characterized by Moltmann as the height of Christian triumphalism, especially in view of its attitude toward the Jews. Dialogue with Judaism is obviously short-circuited by this position, which finds its quintessential expression in Althaus's declaration of Jesus as the end of the Messiah.[34] According to Althaus, Christianity disinherited Judaism of its messianic expectations as it sees itself as the complete fulfillment of the messianic expectations of the Jews. The consequences of understanding the rise of Christianity in such drastic terms are disastrous in terms of its evaluation of postbiblical Judaism. Althaus's view basically invalidates the very existence and continuing expectations of postbiblical Judaism and sees them as in need of the salvation brought by Christ, a salvation the meaning of which can only be deciphered if one possesses the Christian New Testament as a hermeneutical lens.[35] Such theological dispossession of the Jews of their historical continuity as a people of promise and their portrayal as a failed people of God had serious political consequences, which culminated in the tragedy of Jewish existence in Europe.

The tumultuous existence of the Jews in European history can be easily correlated with Althaus's "dispossession theory." It is worth mentioning that similar attitudes toward the Jews were harbored by such luminaries of the Enlightenment as Voltaire and Kant, both urging the Jew to shed his peculiar characteristics and become an Enlightened individual. The emancipation of the Jews in France was predicated on the dissolution of Jewish communal existence, granting equal rights to the individual without acknowledging the autonomous existence of the Jewish community whose life was regulated by special legislation.

The various forms of Christian theological prejudice toward the Jews delineated by Moltmann expose a fundamental uncertainty about Christianity's identity when facing the Jews. How can Christianity maintain its special identity as the religion of God's universal and unconditional grace when facing the special election and promise of Israel?[36] The identity seeking of Christianity is predicated upon a negative evaluation of the particular existence and history of the Jews. The uncertainty about Christianity's identity results in the continuing suspicion and exclusion of the Jew since the Jew is perceived as a threat to the universal claims of salvation upon which Christianity is founded. This ultimate prejudice toward the Jews, however, is a position that Christianity was never meant to take. "This Christian absolutism is in reality a Christian poverty: It can demonstrate its faith in the fulfillment of all of Israel's promises in Christ only by declaring the concrete promises—for example the promise of a nation and the promise of land—to be invalid."[37]

In order for Christianity to retrieve its initial and fundamental orientation as a messianic way of existence, it must reconstitute its language in a messianic key. For a meaningful dialogue to exist between Christianity and Judaism, Christianity must return to its Judaic roots and regain its messianic orientation, which finds its basis in the identity of Jesus. Through the recovery of its messianic base, Christian theology's fundamental identification of God as Trinity could also be expressed in a language that will make the alternative between messianism and trinitarianism obsolete.[38]

The recognition of the identity of Jesus as the one who was understood by his earliest Jewish followers in whom the messianic expectations of the Jews were met (the authenticity of his messiahship concurrently is being contested by the official Jewish tradition) should be the point of beginning of a further, and more comprehensive, insight connecting Jesus the Jew and his controversial messiahship to the totality of Jewish existence. The connection between Judaism and Christianity unquestionably lies in the person of Jesus: yet, the point of connection is such that it simultaneously represents a point of divergence. The task of an authentic Jewish-Christian dialogue is to explore the meaning of such a paradoxical situation, namely to investigate the difference between the Christian Yes! and the Jewish No! concerning the messiahship of Jesus.[39] When evaluating this crucial difference between the two faiths, one is immediately reminded of the fact that Christianity is essentially born out of an affirmative response to the messiahship of Jesus and that early Christianity, at least in what van Buren calls its "Apostolic Writings," can best be understood as an interpretive tradition that attempts to come to terms with Jesus' perceived identity as the Messiah.[40]

Situating the meaning of Jesus the Jew and his contested messiahship on the horizon of the continuity of Jewish existence is the foundation on which a genuine Jewish-Christian dialogue should be constructed. Hermeneutically locating Jesus on the open horizon of Jewish existence is the only way of acknowledging the Jewish tradition as an authentic partner in dialogue with Christian theology, whose presence is a constant reminder to Christianity of the drastic political consequences particular options within Christian theology ultimately led to.

OVERCOMING TRINITARIAN SUPERSESSIONISM: THE THEOLOGY OF JÜRGEN MOLTMANN

Through the Shoah the theological fallacy of Christian supersessionism was brutally exposed, which, if Christian theology is to take the Shoah seriously, should lead to a completely new beginning for Christian theology. It is by

providing such a fresh beginning upon the ruins of a long tradition of Christian anti-Judaism that the theology of Jürgen Moltmann has its greatest merit.

Among Christian theologians of the postwar era, Jürgen Moltmann has made one of the most profound contributions to Christianity's reconciliation with Judaism, taking the latter seriously as a living reality. It was the theology of Jürgen Moltmann, among other voices of the "new political theology," that made a conclusive break with Christianity's long history of anti-Judaic prejudices, acknowledging the importance and relevance of Judaism as a living tradition to inform Christian theology.

For Moltmann, the most fundamental rupture of the history of Christianity is Christianity's initial break with Judaism.

> The first schism in the history of the kingdom of God began with the separation between Christianity and Judaism. Even if we are not free to annul that schism all by ourselves, we can still overcome its fateful effects and arrive at a common ground crossed by paths which are indeed still divided but which none the less run parallel to one another.[41]

The result of Christianity's break with Judaism has been the marginalization and the persecution of the Jewish people throughout Christianity's history. Christianity disinherited the Jews of their messianic expectations, and through the "Christianization" of the State, Jewish messianism was transmuted into the political religion of the State. For Moltmann, the task of Christian theology lies in confronting its history, exposing the false theological alliance between the State and the church, and in retrieving the Jewish messianic idea for Christian theology, an idea that Christian theology perverted through its embrace of the messianism of the State.

> Through their anti-Judaism, sometimes beneath the surface, sometimes obvious, the Christian churches have been paganizing themselves for centuries. They turned into institutions belonging to the single religion of their respective countries and persecuted people of different beliefs as the enemies of both religion and the state. Just as before the time of Constantine Christians themselves were persecuted as "atheists and enemies of the state," so Christianity, once it had become established as the state religion, persecuted Jews and dissenters as godless people for whom nothing was sacred, and as "people with no allegiance at all," that is, irreligious destroyers of society. The more the church frees itself today from this abuse of itself, the more clearly it will recognize Israel as its enduring origin, its partner in history, and its brother in hope.[42]

The recognition of the continuing relevance of Judaism and its messianic expectations led Moltmann to the fusion of the separated horizons of eschatological hope and christological faith. Christology was cut off from its

messianic base and became the domain of metaphysical speculations about the ontological identity of the incarnate God. On the foundation of the allegorical reading of the Old Testament, the church developed a christology in which the promises of Israel were conclusively fulfilled by Christ. Because Christ fulfilled the messianic expectations of Israel in an absolute sense, the Christian Church dispensed with its initial messianic expectations for the return of the Messiah, and instead defined its faith on the level of ontology. The result was a soteriological scheme dominated by the dual ontological status of the Mediator that not only excluded the role of eschatology but it also led to the marginalization of pneumatology (the doctrine about the Holy Spirit).

> Unfortunately, from early on Christian theology split up the unity of Old Testament messianology into christology on the one hand, and eschatology on the other . . . Christian theology has overstressed the christology, which is cut away from eschatology; and the eschatology has been neglected. This came about because the incarnational christology of the patristic church presented the descent and ascent of the Redeemer in the vertical perspective of eternity, and moved the divine sonship of Jesus into the center. The horizontal history of the ruach—the Holy Spirit—"who spake by the prophets," as the Nicene Creed says, and who shaped the proclamation and ministry of the earthly Jesus, ceased to be noticed. As a result christology also lost the eschatological future horizon of Christ's parousia.[43]

Through this particular reading of traditional Christian theology and his castigation of this theology's essential neo-Platonism, Moltmann attempts to point to the need to retrieve the category of the messianic in order to restore a holistic trinitarianism. The meaning and function of the messianic in Christian theology is to re-situate the human response to comprehend God on the open horizon of historical becoming.

By identifying Christian faith as essentially eschatological, defined by the fundamental act of hoping in the promises of God who acts in history, Moltmann's thought is a necessary corrective to traditional Christian conceptualization of God's transcendence. The transcendence of God is no longer understood as the transcendence defined by the aseity of God's eternity. In Moltmann's theology, God's transcendence is construed within the context of God's historical promises for redemption.

The basic presupposition of Moltmann's theology is the messianic promise of the Old Testament and the Jewish hope founded upon this promise.[44] Moltmann preserves the continuity of Jewish messianic hopes and predicates the reality of Christian hope for redemption on the actuality of Jewish hoping. It is because Israel continues to hope that the church can hope at all.

This presupposition is necessary for the recovery of the original messianic dimension of Christian theology. The retrieval of the messianic is also indispensable for avoiding the marginalization of the Jews and the Jewish faith and for laying the foundations of a meaningful dialogue between Christianity and Judaism, these two now being situated on the common eschatological horizon of messianic hope (undoubtedly realizing the fact that there is an important difference in the quality of hope between Judaism and Christianity).[45]

For Moltmann, Christian theology is defined as messianic theology, and as such it is one form of hope for the Messiah of Israel. Acknowledging the reality of Jewish hope opens up the whole doctrine of the Trinity, which was for long have been understood as being predicated on the very denial of meaningful Jewish hoping and living. The theology of Jürgen Moltmann pursues Christian theology in such a way that it both acknowledges the integrity of the Jewish tradition and preserves the particularity of Christian trinitarianism.

Moltmann retrieves the messianic dimension of Christianity that the latter inherited from the Jewish faith, and he convincingly demonstrates that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which had previously stood as an impervious metaphysical barrier separating Christianity and Judaism, finds its true meaning within a hermeneutical matrix determined by the concept of the messianic.[46]

Moltmann's messianic theology is born out of the context of facing the "dangerous memory" of Auschwitz. There can be no justification to explain the recovery of the messianic theme in Moltmann's theology and his attempt to critique and reformulate traditional Christian doctrines from a messianic perspective other than realizing that his work is situated on the horizon of a historical consciousness affected by Auschwitz. The dialogue with Judaism on the horizon of history defined by Auschwitz is a practice in political theology. In essence, it is in coming to terms with Auschwitz that political theology begins. Doing theology after Auschwitz "must lead to a rethinking of Christianity at its very roots."[47] What a confrontation with the repressed memories of Auschwitz and an overcoming of the bad conscience of Christian theology imply is the uncovering of the false political allegiances Christianity, through its anti-Judaism, made throughout the centuries. Political theology, from the perspective of Moltmann, is the dismantling of such allegiances through the "critical distancing of Christians from the political and civil religion in which they exist."[48]

A true dialogue between Christian theology and Judaism can only begin with an acknowledgment of the bankruptcy of all previous attempts to understand the Jew by the Christian. This is so, because according to Moltmann all previous attempts to understand the Jew merely functioned to define the Christian and deny the autonomy of Jewish identity: "If as Christians we be-

gin with a Christian definition of the Jews, we are incapable of dialogue: we have our position already fixed, affirmed, and judged and expect only affirmation of our prejudice from the conversation."[49] The possibility of true dialogue between Christianity and Judaism is thus predicated on the freedom of the Jew to talk about himself. True dialogue between Christian theology and Judaism thus allows the Jew to reveal himself on his own terms to the Christian. This approach to dialogue with the Other, however, creates a crisis of identity on the part of Christian theology as it has always defined the Jew according to its own terms.[50] According to Moltmann, that is a humbling experience because in the self-revelation of the Jew, the latter confronts the Christian as the victim and looks at the Christian as the ultimate perpetrator of his victimization. As shattering as this encounter is, it is the only way for Christianity to be able to come to terms with its past and define a different future, a future that is now being defined by the horizon of Christianity's encounter with the Jew.

Paul M. van Buren vividly portrays that the dialogue between Christianity and Judaism carries a tremendous existential burden: "We must proceed today under thin but endless clouds of burnt children, mostly Jewish children. Under that cloud it is hard to strike up a conversation."[51]

Moltmann expresses the confrontation with the face of the victim in a way reminiscent of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas:

> We learn to see ourselves in the mirror of the other and to recognize ourselves in the eyes of the other in a way in which we would otherwise not be able to do. For Christians, and especially German Christians in Germany, this is a humbling process, for to recognize ourselves in the eye of the Jew means to be looked upon with the eyes of the victim and of the survivor of Auschwitz.[52]

Moltmann, writing from the context of post-Shoah Germany, expresses the need to come to terms with Auschwitz not only as a German but as a German Christian: ". . . for us it is the only way in truth not only to the recognition of actual history but to authentic Christian existence after Auschwitz."[53]

When evaluating the character of Moltmann's theology it is important to point out its essentially dialectical nature. Moltmann's theology is not merely a practice of a hermeneutic of suspicion, from the perspective of Auschwitz, but it is also a practice in the hermeneutic of retrieval. These are not two different phases of his theological enterprise but rather ones that are dialectically related to each other. His effort to retrieve and bring to light an authentic form of Christianity is achieved through bringing the history of the Christian tradition under severe scrutiny. Yet, there is a basic trust on Moltmann's part that there is actually something he can retrieve, that is, that there is a hidden and

hitherto forgotten tradition, which lies beneath the layers of anti-Jewish prejudice. If there were nothing to be retrieved from the history of Christian tradition, no meaningful dialogue would be possible with the Jews in the post-Holocaust era.

Paul van Buren eloquently expresses the fundamental dialectic between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of retrieval in terms of the concept of a basic "responsibility" that exists between generations:

> We are likewise responsible to those who shall come after us. We owe it to them to think through carefully the possible consequences of what they say and do, for they will have to bear these as we have had to live with what we have inherited. John Chrysostom in the fourth century, for example, or Martin Luther in the sixteenth, never conceived that their vile words on the subject of the Jews would help significantly to produce a climate which a later pagan ruler would take advantage of in order to destroy six million of God's people. We must shoulder our own responsibility for our failure to have offered more than a token resistance to this horror, but our forebears are also answerable. The steps we take and the words we say today could someday mislead or desensitize our followers to become accomplices to evil.[54]

The theological oeuvre of Jürgen Moltmann represents a significant contribution to contemporary Christian theology for many reasons. First, Moltmann, through a confrontation with his own post-Shoah German context, develops a political theology in conversation with a living Jewish tradition. Moltmann's retrieval of the theology of the cross opens up the Being of God to the utter negativity of experience and the meaninglessness of suffering. Through recapturing the full implications of the theology of the cross, the theodicy question is moved from the periphery to the very center of the Christian doctrine of God. Thirdly, Moltmann recovers the category of the eschatological for Christian theology, a retrieval that brings about a significant shift in de-metaphysicizing Christian theology's doctrine of God. The Gordian knot of the time-eternity paradox of traditional Christian metaphysics is cut through by the eschatological categories of advent and novum, categories whereby the earthly irrelevance of the metaphysical God is overcome.

The constructive element in Moltmann's reintegration of the messianic into Christian systematic theology is that it overcomes traditional Christian theology's static and non-eschatological identification of Jesus Christ with the Messiah, an identification that is essentially based on a tenuous promise-fulfillment hermeneutical scheme. It was this form of identification, one that made the messianic a vacuous concept, that served as the foundation for the architecture of Christian theology, and that was at the roots of Christianity's alienation from Judaism.

Moltmann's solution to getting beyond the impasse concerning the identity of Jesus in the Jewish-Christian dialogue is to reformulate the meaning of Jesus' identity by situating it on the horizon of eschatology. It is only on the horizon of eschatology that a productive dialogue is possible. This is so because on this horizon the question regarding the identity of Jesus is turned into a question of hope, hope being a fundamental category of both Judaism and Christianity. It is through the resuscitation of the category of hope for Christian theology in his breakthrough work, *The Theology of Hope*, that Moltmann opens up Christianity to a horizon it once had and that it has always been supposed to share with Judaism.[55] It is on the horizon of eschatological expectations where the Christian understanding of God as Trinity is situated. God as the Trinity is not a God that belongs to the insularity of eternity but a God of messianic expectations whose being is becoming one who is present in and through the suffering of his people.

Moltmann's way of identifying Jesus as the Messiah is an identification that opens up Christianity to Judaism as a living tradition. For Moltmann, pointing to the Jewishness of Jesus does not exhaust the significance of Judaism. Paying lip service to the Jewishness of Jesus is not a sufficiently critical way to deal with the theological justification of anti-Semitism. The only way to address the inherent anti-Semitism of traditional Christian theology is to reconfigure the horizon, which determines the Christian understanding of God. The reconfiguration of the horizon of Christian theology's understanding of God is the task of his groundbreaking *Theology of Hope*. The reconfiguration of the horizon of the transcendent gains an essentially future orientation in Moltmann's theology. This heavy future orientation, explicitly drawing on the philosophy of hope of Ernst Bloch, remains with Moltmann in spite of his attempt to temper it with the retrospective dimension of his seminal work in political theology, *The Crucified God*. It is because of this construction of transcendence that Moltmann has to say "No" to Scholem's construal of Jewish messianism as living in deferred hope. Moltmann, in his response to Scholem's formulation of hope within Judaism as essentially deferred, articulates his position on the nature of messianic hope within Christianity in the following way: "The messianic idea in Christianity differs from this [deferred hope] through the unique and final character of Christ's self-surrender on the cross. His resurrection from the dead brings the dynamism of the provisional into accord with the finality of the sacrifice, so that it would be possible to talk about a final interim period, but not about a holding back of life in the period of deferment."[56] For Moltmann hope in the Now is the essential feature of the Christian faith, which expects the coming of God as the completion of the messianic mission and messianic identity of the Son.

CRITIQUE OF MOLTMANN'S MESSIANISM

In the dialectic between hope and remembrance in Moltmann's theology, hope remains the determining factor, ultimately subsuming the negativity inherent in the act of remembrance. In the final analysis, the Christian theology of Moltmann is a forward-looking theology as it anticipates, within the present, the future of human history through the eschatological arrival of God. The event beyond all events, the coming of God, is simultaneously the arrival of Jesus at the completion of his messianic mission by becoming the Son within the inner-trinitarian history. The anticipation of this future event beyond historical futurity becomes so fervent in Moltmann's theology that in his later writings the character of his thought morphs into a quasi-mystical doxology. Although doxology, or the praise and veneration of God, has always played a prominent part in identifying Moltmann's theology, it has turned into what may be called a doxological positivity in his later writings, especially in his more systematic presentation of his theological enterprise in *Experiences in Theology*. This work abounds in strong statements about the essentially doxological nature of theology: "the beauty of theology lies in its doxology, and delight in God is expressed through joy over existence in nearness to him . . . Easter joy is the doxological utterance of Christian belief in God." [57] As aesthetically alluring as these doxological confessions are, they are at the same time reminders of the evolution of the character of messianic hope in Moltmann's thought.

Moltmann's messianism becomes more and more concentrated on the future, that is, what he calls the qualitatively different future with which the coming of God meets and redeems human history. The emphasis is placed on God's eschatological reign and not on God's presence in experiences of suffering, whether human or nonhuman. The messianic thrust of Moltmann's trinitarianism seems to founder on his eschatological concentration, and it loses the critical edge it had at its sharpest expression, in his theology of the cross, in his theology of the suffering God. It appears that the ad hoc nature of his theology may be too closely influenced by contemporary currents in history and as the tempest of the historical upheavals of the late 1960s and the 1970s subsides so does Moltmann's zeal to stay with particular negativities of existence. One wonders what happened to the critical function of theology as it was delineated in his *The Crucified God* (a work influenced by the "negative dialectics" of the Frankfurt School).[58]

Moltmann lacks consistency in his messianic theology, ultimately leading him to an overly exuberant definition of theology as doxology. Moltmann's doxological exuberance is in direct antithesis to his earlier program of drawing the suffering of creation into the suffering of the crucified God. Doxological exuberance is an overcoming of the "messianic weakness," which was

the hallmark of his retrieval of the theology of the cross. The definition of theology as ultimately doxological is the direct expression of the Hegelian dimension of Moltmann's thought, which even his theology of the cross could not suppress. Moltmann's understanding of history and the essential historicity of God's being bears the mark of a Hegelian orientation of history in which history is ultimately overcome.

WALTER BENJAMIN: MESSIANISM OF REMEMBRANCE

That a messianic philosophy does not need to consummate in a philosophy of positive utopia, as in the case of Ernst Bloch, or in affirmative doxology, as in the case of Jürgen Moltmann, is exemplified by the messianic philosophy of Walter Benjamin. An examination of the thought of Walter Benjamin serves to demonstrate that there is an alternative philosophical attempt to explore the meaning of the redemptive significance of the messianic. Through an examination of the thought of Benjamin it will be demonstrated that the negation of the negative, a key concept in Moltmann's theological repertoire, is not necessary in order to articulate a political theology of redemption.

Benjamin's thought, in spite of its apparently eclectic nature, culminates in a philosophy of remembrance as exemplified both in the theoretical underpinnings of his "Arcades Project" and in his last work on the philosophy of history. In Benjamin's writings there is no projection of a positive utopia, no anticipation of a better future. Knowledge is fragmentary, and it can only be approached through excavating those neglected memory traces that a positivist theory of knowledge, dominated by an uncritical theory of progress, left behind. Benjamin's theory of remembrance is born out of his critical analysis of what he calls the "ruins" of modernity.

Because of his scathing critique of future-oriented teleologies, Benjamin's notion of the messianic appears to be more "applicable" to the post-Auschwitz situation than Moltmann's understanding of the messianic. Benjamin's messianism preserves the total negativity of the experience of Auschwitz, whereas Moltmann's messianism ultimately overcomes particular experiences of suffering through the self-completion of the messianic figure within the eschaton.

Johannes Metz clearly sees the value of the negative theology of Benjamin and the necessity to hold onto a weak construal of the messianic in the following section of his seminal work, *The Emergent Church*.

> Wherever Christianity vigorously conceals its own messianic weakness its sensorium for dangers and downfalls diminishes to an ever greater degree. Theology loses its own awareness for historical disruptions and catastrophes. Has not

> our Christian faith in the salvation achieved for us in Christ been covertly reified to a kind of optimism about meaning, an optimism which is no longer really capable of perceiving radical disruptions and catastrophes within meaning? Does there not exist something like a typically Christian incapacity for dismay in the face of disasters?[59]

Metz's remarks express the fragility of the Christian theological enterprise and the critical function of the messianic to put the brakes on attempts that present the meaning of the Christian narrative with no sensibilities to the brokenness of lives.

BENJAMIN AND MOLTMANN: MESSIANIC OPTIONS

What is peculiarly interesting about the formulation of the messianic in Benjamin's philosophy is that, for Benjamin, the messianic is not a purely eschatological conception, as it is the case with Moltmann. Moltmann characterizes his theology as messianic in light of his essentially eschatological characterization of theology. The messianic in Moltmann's thought refers to an eschatological incompleteness. Benjamin, on the other hand, does not make such determinations concerning the nature of the messianic. In his construal of the messianic he is more faithful to Jewish theology's emphasis on remembrance (Zachor). Even the future is determined by remembrance in that Benjamin views redemption as basically referring to God's absolute remembrance.

The messianic in Benjamin is understood as an interruption. The combustion of this interruption is fueled by the past. Moltmann, however, sees the messianic interruption as an interruption that is fueled by the essential futurity of God. Hope for Benjamin is wholly negative in the sense that it is completely beyond present realizability. "Hope is turned backward like the face of Benjamin's "angel of history." Benjamin sought that transtemporal moment of "now-time" in the finite world as both a utopian hope and a "revolutionary chance for the oppressed."[60] For Moltmann, hope is positive in that hope is with us already through the expectation of the coming of the resurrected Messiah who, through his resurrection, overcame the negativity of human suffering.

Finally, the basic divergence between the thought of Benjamin and Moltmann finds vivid illustration in their favorite angels and their allegorical representations. Moltmann, in the preface of his magisterial book on Christian eschatology, *The Coming of God*, makes an explicit comparison between two angels and their respective orientations:

> during my work on this eschatology of "the coming God" I have again had a picture in front of me: It is the Angel of the Annunciation, by Simone Martini,

> painted in 1315 and now in the Galleria Uffizi in Florence. The angel is not looking back to the wreckage of history, as does Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus," which Walter Benjamin called the Angel of History. This angel of the future is gazing with great eyes toward the messianic Child of the coming God, and with the green branches in his hair and in Mary's hand proclaims the Child's birth. The tempest of the divine Spirit is blowing in the angel's garments and wings, as if it had blown him into history. And its meaning is the birth of the future from the Spirit of promise.[61]

Can Christian theology dispense with the angel of history and have as its guardian angel the angel of the future?

NOTES

1. See Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti Judaism* (Ithaca: NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).
2. This is Moltmann's unequivocal rejection of Paul Althaus's claim. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 2.
3. The watershed document that signaled a new era in the Christian attitude toward Judaism is the "Declarations on the Relations of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (Nostra Aetate) of the Second Vatican Council; see *Vatican Council II Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, new rev. ed., general editor Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport, NY: Costello Pub. Co., 1982). There are similar documents issued by various Protestant denominations. See *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People*, edited by Alan Brockway et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988).
4. The Jewishness of Jesus became the focal point of recent studies of the historical Jesus. See, for example, the excellent work of John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991). The works of John Dominic Crossan should also be mentioned, as they provide controversial reconstructions of the identity of Jesus the Jew. J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994). As important as these books are for providing insights for understanding a particular context in history (coupled with daring conjectures camouflaged under the veneer of objective scholarship), their value cannot surpass the lasting significance of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).
5. Constructive theology broadly defined refers to the efforts of Christian theology to articulate the meaning of the Christian tradition in light of the challenge of modernity: "Theology, as a practice of the Christian community, is a constructive activity that requires critical interpretations of the faith's language about God in the context of contemporary cultural challenges and their theological implications." See Peter Hodgson's *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 10.

6. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 246.

7. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 159–160.

8. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* 1993), 5.

9. See I Samuel 8.

10. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 7.

11. Ibid 8.

12. Ibid.

13. It is important to point out that the purpose of this book is not to argue against the validity of the early Christian Creeds but to make a case for rereading them through a messianic hermeneutics. In this effort this work follows groundbreaking work in Christology by the preeminent liberation theologian, Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

14. Judaism's resistance to compress its identity into metaphysical categories did not mean that its interpretative tradition could not be understood as possessing a sophisticated metaphysical structure. For an intelligent analysis that propagates this possibility, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism as Philosophy: The Method and Message of the Mishnah* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), in which Neusner makes a convincing case for perceiving a middle-Platonic structural dimension to the Mishnah.

15. That there is a metaphysical tradition within Judaism is unquestionable. One of the early figures, if not the founder, of this tradition is Philo of Alexandria. Although Philo's attempt to infuse Judaism with the language of philosophy did not have an immediate impact on Jewish identity constructions, the works of the great Jewish philosophers of religion, Jehuda Halevi, Moses Maimonides, Baruch Spinoza, and Moses Mendelssohn, could all be viewed as progenies of Philonism within Judaism.

16. For the list of the thirteen basic dogmas of Judaism, see Louis Finkelstein's "Jewish Religion: Its Belief and Practices" in *The Jews: Their Religion and Culture*, edited by Louis Finkelstein (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 485.

17. Scholem points out that Maimonides' relationship to Jewish messianic expectations is not unproblematic as Maimonides, in many of his scholastic writings, is completely silent concerning messianism. Yet, as Scholem rightly observes, these instances of apparent exclusion of the messianic theme merely signal Maimonides' judgment concerning the value of the messianic for presenting Judaism as a rational religion. See Gerschom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 24–26.

18. That the list of Maimonides, especially his second article concerning the Oneness of God, may be viewed as a polemic against Christian trinitarianism is shown in Pinchas Lapide's essay "Jewish Monotheism" in *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine: A Dialogue by Pinchas Lapide and Jürgen Moltmann* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 25–44.

19. For a succinct and convincing argument against the charge of hellenization, see Jacques Dupuis, S.J. *Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 80–83.

20. A useful reference on the history of Christian anti-Jewish polemics, including those of Luther's, is Heiko Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age Renaissance and Reformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1984); and Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). See also Gerhard Falk, *The Jew in Christian Theology: Martin Luther's Anti-Jewish Vom Schem Hamphoras, Previously Unpublished in English, and Other Milestones in Church Doctrine Concerning Judaism* (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 1992).

21. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, edited by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), § 12.

22. Whether or not post-Enlightenment Europe can be characterized as post-Christian in a positive sense is a hotly contested topic reflected in the current debate on including or excluding references to the Christian heritage in the constitution of the European Union. A convincing argument for the inclusion of the Christian past may be found in the works of the Italian philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, himself an advisor to the committee in charge of drawing up the constitution. Vattimo's argument is based on his insight that the secularization of Europe itself is a direct consequence of forces inherent within the Christian tradition. See Gianni Vattimo, *Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); and his *After Christianity* (New York: Columbia University, 2002).

23. The major historical incidents of the price Jews paid for their "anachronistic" existence (expulsion from Spain in 1492; expulsions from Eastern Europe; consistent pogroms in Russia, etc.) receive thorough treatment in Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

24. A more thorough treatment of the historical roots and development of Christian anti-Judaism may be found in Rosemary R. Ruether, *Faith and Fracticide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); and Charlotte Klein, *Theologie und Anti-Judaismus: Eine Studie zur deutschen theologischen Literature der Gegenwart* (Munchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1975).

25. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 195.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 195. For a longer exposition on Schleiermacher's argument in the *Glaubenslehre* on the salvific irrelevance of Judaism, the work of Soulen offers an invaluable exposition. See R. Kendall Soulen's *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, especially 68–78.

28. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology an Ethics, 1984)* 195.

29. Ibid., 196–197.

30. Ibid., 197.

31. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 141.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 198.

34. Ibid., 140.

35. "The separation of post-biblical Judaism from the Israel of the promises to the fathers serves only the theological disqualification and the profaning of the Jews." See Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 200.

36. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 200.

37. See Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 199–200.

38. The work of Paul van Buren provides a hermeneutic for trinitarian messianism. "We define ourselves by reference to the Jews because our Way has no starting point and no possible projection except by reference to the Way in which the Jews were walking before we started and are still walking." Paul van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality, Part 1: Discerning the Way* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 25.

39. The paradoxical identity of Christians in relation to Jews is best put by Paul van Buren. "Our Gentile identity is a strange fact. A Gentile is by definition anyone who is not a Jew. It is, however, notoriously difficult to identify exactly who is a Jew. Why then do we define ourselves by reference to that which is itself indefinable? We do so because the authors of our Apostolic Writings force us to do this. We define ourselves by reference to the Jews because our Way has no starting point and no possible projection except by reference to the Way in which the Jews were walking before we started and are walking still." Paul van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality, Part 1* (San Francisco: Harper, 1980), 25.

40. For the use of the term "Apostolic Writings" see Paul M. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality, Part I: Discerning the Way* (San Francisco: Harper, 1980), 16.

41. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), xv.

42. Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 136.

43. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 4.

44. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 1.

45. "Hope for the messiah links Christians with Jews, and this link is stronger than any division." Ibid., 2.

46. The multivolume work of Paul M. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*, has to be mentioned as an eminent effort to unfold the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity through a constructive theological dialogue with the Jewish faith.

47. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 192.

48. Ibid.

49. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 190.

50. See Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 190.

51. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality, Part 1*, 2.

52. Ibid., 190–191.

53. Ibid., 191.

54. See van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality, Part 1*, 47.

55. Moltmann, in *The Theology of Hope*, defines the meaning of the Christian faith as essentially eschatological in nature: "From first to last, and not merely in the epi-

logue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16.

56. See Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 378, n. 103.

57. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 26.

58. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

59. Johann Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Emergent Church* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 25.

60. As Susan Handelman in her brilliant study, *Fragments of Redemption*, aptly expresses Benjamin's approach to hope in the following way, making an important connection to Benjamin's "angel of history" and its stance to human history. See Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 152.

61. See Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, xvii.

Chapter Two

Messianic Possibilities

MOLTMANN AND MODERN JEWISH MESSIANIC THINKING

Messianism properly understood is a desire for the redemption of this world fraught with injustice; it is an intense feeling of the transitory nature of all of existence, an acute awareness of the fragmentary nature of reality. Messianism misunderstood finds expression in the political idea that a particular ruler or nation is invested with a messianic identity to create order in the world. The assumption of the messianic throne is the tragedy of totalitarian rule. Agnes Heller puts it in the following way:

> An empty seat awaits the Messiah. If anyone does occupy it, we can be sure that we would have then a perverse and hypocritical Messiah.[1]

It is in opposition to this perversion of the messianic idea through a strict identification with political power that the new political theology of post-Holocaust Germany, spearheaded among others by Jürgen Moltmann, came to define itself. The new political theology was born out of the ashes of the concentration camps installed by the false messianic pretender who wielded absolute authority and who turned his might against the people of the messiah. It was the "old" political theology of the brilliant legal philosopher and political thinker Carl Schmitt and his idea of the sovereign that embodied an untenable messianic possibility to be rejected. While rejecting the messianism of Schmitt, Moltmann turned to other expressions of messianism in order to reconstruct Christian discourse in and for a post-Shoah context.

The retrieval of the initial messianic orientation of Christianity is informed by Moltmann's fertile dialogue with German-Jewish utopian thinkers of the twentieth century. These include the atheistic messianism of Ernst Bloch; the

messianic philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig; Gerschom Scholem's pathbreaking study of the Kabbalah, and his exhaustive study of Jewish messianic mysticism.

These Jewish thinkers originate mostly from post-WWI Germany, an era of German Jewish intellectual-cultural efflorescence. It was during this time that a new generation of young German Jewish intellectuals recognized the bankruptcy of the assimilationist attitude of their fathers. They rediscovered for themselves those sources of the Jewish tradition and folklore that were labeled as irrational by their assimilationist fathers whose Judaism was a religion of enlightened reason.[2]

ERNST BLOCH: THE DARKNESS OF THE MOMENT

Through the early thought of Jürgen Moltmann, the messianic philosophy of Ernst Bloch exerted a huge influence on the recovery of the eschatological dimension of Christian theology.[3] Although Bloch's later work *The Principle of Hope* was instrumental in Moltmann's reformulation of the meaning of Christian eschatology, Bloch's earlier works played an equally important role in Moltmann's critical engagement with the revival of messianism among the post-WWI German-Jewish intelligentsia. Two works that had a significant impact on the evolution of Moltmann's messianic theology were Bloch's *Geist der Utopie* and *Thomas Münzer als theologie der Revolution.*[4]

Ernst Bloch is often characterized as the philosopher of the revolution, and his philosophy is described as revolutionary romanticism. Bloch's *The Spirit of Utopia* was the result of his search for a new beginning following the senseless destruction of life during the war. In the midst of the "technological coldness" of the age,[5] Bloch discovers utopian impulses that lie dormant in the human being. Bloch's philosophy of utopia presents certain inalienable, not-yet-conscious and not-yet-realized potentialities of the human self, providing an alternative to the alienated, reified existence of the capitalist money economy. These inalienable and not-yet-discovered potentialities of human existence offer hope for a revolutionary future utopia, beyond the oppressive bureaucratization of life by the State. It is through the darkness of the lived moment, facing the total negation of existence by the technocratic State, that the messianic hope for a utopian future is born.

> Yet—and this is of decisive importance—the future, the topos of the unknown within the future, where alone we occur, where alone, novel and profound, the function of hope also flashes, without the bleak reprise of some anamnesis—is itself nothing but our expanded darkness, than our darkness in the issue of its own womb, in the expansion of its latency.[6]

Although it was Bloch's later, more optimistic, philosophy of hope that was instrumental in Moltmann's theology of hope, Moltmann's political theology was also influenced by Bloch's earlier, more pessimistic messianism. Moltmann's political theology is the critique, through the negativity of the messianic sufferings of Jesus, of the false messianic consciousness of modern society. The messianic suffering of Jesus is suffering over the status quo and its incapacity to offer true freedom to both individual and society. At the lived moment both self and society are in exile from their true home in the future revolutionary utopia. Therefore, the meaning of the kingdom of God can only be understood eschatologically, as the homecoming of self and society through the messianic struggle to overcome the bondage of the status quo. The kingdom of God is not the incomprehensible abstraction of eternity in time but the presence of a hoped-for future utopia in spite of the injustices and sufferings of the present moment. Utopia therefore is already present in the depths of the darkness of the moment; "the future . . . is itself nothing but our expanded darkness, than our darkness in the issue of its own womb, in the expansion of its latency."[7]

ROSENZWEIG: THE BREAKUP OF TOTALITY

One of the most important figures of the German-Jewish Renaissance of the Weimar Republic was Franz Rosenzweig.[8] His towering achievement in articulating a philosophy of Judaism had a profound impact on Moltmann's thought.

Rosenzweig's philosophy of Judaism was born from his conversion to Judaism, preceded by a period of vacillation to convert to Christianity. Rosenzweig's return to Judaism over Christianity was not the result of a rejection of Christianity, but it was rather a rediscovery of Judaism. The dynamics of Rosenzweig's decision are reflected in his "astonishing idea"[9] to speak of two modes of truth, the truth of Judaism and the truth of Christianity. Rosenzweig's shocking epistemological formulation had a profound impact on Moltmann's theology. It is Rosenzweig's double theory of truth that lies behind Moltmann's rejection of Christian supersessionism and his insistence on the autonomy and difference of Israel's hope for the Messiah.[10]

> Before God, then, Jew and Christian both labor at the same task. He cannot dispense with either. He has set enmity between the two for all time, and withal has most intimately bound each to each. To us [Jews] he gave eternal life by kindling the fire of the Star of his truth in our hearts. The [Christians] he set on the eternal way by causing them to pursue the rays of that Star of his truth for all time unto the eternal end.[11]

The "New Thinking" of Rosenzweig arises out of the fragmentation of the Hegelian System into the irreducible elements of God, man, and the world. Out of the fragmented isolation of this originary triad emerges a new mode of time, as God, man, and world enter into mutual relations with one another. The triad of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption describes the process of relationality.[12]

Rosenzweig retrieves the notions of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption as the primordial triad that determines the meaning of experience.[13] Rosenzweig's understanding of experience is the very inverse of Hegel's concept of experience. Experience is not integrated in the all-encompassing system of the Absolute. Experience for Rosenzweig regains its singularity; it resists being incorporated into the larger whole of the System.

In Rosenzweig's philosophy, the meaning of time, and thus the meaning of experience, is determined by the triad of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. As a result, every moment in time has its singular significance. This is in stark contrast to Hegel's philosophy of time in which the experience of the moment is immediately sublated by the dialectical movement of history whose *telos* is the realization of the Absolute.

Time is therefore no longer the transcendental category of the Kantian system. For Rosenzweig, every moment has its own temporality as time cannot be reduced to a mere succession of moments. The present moment, the time of Today (*Heute*), cannot be located in terms of a linear understanding of time. There is no progress in time from the past through the present to the future. The past has its own quality of pastness understood under the concept of Creation. The present has its own meaning given by the concept of Revelation. And the future also has its own value, never reducible to the past or the present, through the concept of Redemption. Time is a relational category, whose vehicle is language.

> Temporality is conceived as the life of the "elements," of which language, in its essential transitivity, is the movement; but language that, henceforth, is not just the reflection of a prior thought, its subordinate function, but verb as the breaking out from imprisonment.[14]

The Star of Redemption is a manifesto against all philosophical systems, which, through their totalizing conception of Reason, end up in a teleological vision of history. In contrast to the concept of time determined by a teleological understanding of history, Rosenzweig identifies Jewish existence as one, which operates with a messianic temporality.

> The believer in the Kingdom [of God] uses the term "progress" only in order to employ the language of his time; in reality he means the Kingdom. This is the

> veritable shibboleth that distinguishes him from the authentic devotee of progress: does he or does he not resist the prospect and duty of anticipating the "goal" at the very next moment? . . .Without this anticipation and the inner compulsion for it, without this "wish to bring about the Messiah before his time" and the temptation to "coerce the Kingdom of God into being", . . . the future is no future . . . but only past distended endlessly and projected forward. For without such anticipation, the moment is not eternal; it is something that drags itself everlastingly along the long, long trail of time.[15]

For Rosenzweig, the Jewish people already participate in eternity. In contrast to Christian existence, which is the way to Truth through history, Jewish existence is meta-historical. Both the Jew and the Christian partake of redemption, but they do so differently. The Jewish people already partake of redemption through their transhistorical existence as the eternal people. The Jew therefore needs no conversion. Conversion is the domain of Christianity whose task is to convert the world within history to the expectation of the Messiah. Through his very temporality as the one who lives in the redeemed time of eternity, the Jew has already embraced the Messiah. The significance of Jewish election is that the Jew belongs to a history, which is different from the history of the nations.[16] The Jew's faithfulness to his election, his belonging to a different history, is often perceived by the Christian as the Jews' "hardness of heart" and, according to Rosenzweig, it is the root cause of the Christian's hatred of the Jews.

> The existence of the Jew constantly subjects Christianity to the idea that it is not attaining the goal, the truth, that it ever remains on the way. This is the profoundest reason for the Christian hatred of the Jew, which is heir to the pagan hatred of the Jew.[17]

Rosenzweig's messianic philosophy finds strong resonance in Moltmann's semi-mystical speculations about the Trinity. Rosenzweig's interpretation of the Shema Israel plays a prominent role in Moltmann's dynamic trinitarianism. In his interpretation of the Shema, Rosenzweig defines the nature of God's oneness as a becoming unity. The becoming unity of God expresses the process of interpenetration between the ordinary triad of God, man, and the world. Rosenzweig, drawing on the kabbalistic doctrine of the exile of Shekinah, posits a self-distinction within God.[18]

> God himself cuts himself off from himself, he gives himself away to his people, he suffers with their sufferings, he goes with them into the misery of the foreign land, he wanders with their wanderings . . . God himself, in that he "sells himself" to Israel—and what should be more natural for "God our Father"!—and

> suffers its fate with it, makes himself in need in redemption. In this way, in this suffering, the relationship between God and the remnant points beyond itself.[19]

As long as the eternal people of God, the Jews, remain in exile, this self-distinction also remains in God. Consequently, the redemption of the people, the people returned from exile, and the redemption of the world, do not stand outside of God in Rosenzweig's philosophy. Redemption for Rosenzweig is the constellation within which God, man, and the world arrive at their true meaning through one another. The meaning of God's Oneness is found within the emergence of this constellation, and thus, when Israel acknowledges the Oneness of God through its fundamental prayer, it anticipates within language the unification of the self-exiled God. The Becoming Unity of God expresses not only the infinite responsibility of God toward his people and the world but also the infinite responsibility of man and the world to bring about the redemption of God.

Moltmann draws on Rosenzweig's understanding of the oneness of God as a becoming unity both to illustrate the untenability of metaphysical monotheism and to find correspondence for his speculative trinitarianism. First, Rosenzweig's represents for Moltmann the dynamic monotheism of Judaism, which is not fixated on the numerical oneness of divine being but instead formulates the exclusive belief in the God of the covenant through the relational triad of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. Second, in the Jewish prayer for the sanctification of God, Moltmann perceives the foreshadowing of "the glorification of God in trinitarian terms."[20] It is through the messianic suffering of the Son that the Father suffers the godforsakenness of his creation.

> Does not God's separation from himself in order to suffer with his people correspond on another level to the separation of God the Father from his Son on the cross, in order that he might suffer with the Godforsakenness of the godless and so vicariously abolish it? . . . The unity of the triune God is the goal of the uniting of man and creation with the Father and the Son in the Spirit.[21]

It is the eschatological incompleteness of the truth of Christianity, the characterization of the meaning of Christianity as "the way," that is the foundation of Moltmann's christology.[22] Christ in Moltmann's theology regains his identity as the messianic Son who is on his way to his messianic self-completion.

SCHOLEM: DEFERRED HOPE

Another significant influence on Moltmann's project to reintegrate the messianic into the structure of Christian trinitarian theology is Gerschom

Scholem, the eminent historian of Jewish mysticism.[23] Scholem rejected the rationalist approach taken by the Scientific Study of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*), and instead, focused his attention on the previously neglected irrational dimension of the Jewish tradition.[24] It is through Scholem's works that Moltmann encounters the Jewish mystical tradition and its messianic undercurrents.

Among the enormous output of Scholem's scholarship, it is his magisterial historical study of Sabbatai Sevi that best displays Scholem's interpretation of the meaning of the messianic in Judaism.[25] In his book on Sabbatai Sevi, Scholem provides a detailed historical study of this paradoxical Jewish religious figure and his failed messiahship. Scholem's focus is the life and influence of a marginal figure, Sabbatai Sevi, whose story had been previously excluded from the official canon of meaningful Judaism determined by the historiography of *Wissenschaft des Judentums.* The positivism of the Scientific Study of Judaism derided the irrational, apocalyptic elements within Judaism and portrayed its history as the progress of the increasing rationalization of religion. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement propagated a view of Judaism as a purely rational religion. The positivity of religion represented by the proponents of this movement found its consummate expression in the philosophy of Judaism developed by the neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen.[26]

Scholem's study of the failed messiahship of Sabbatai Sevi and the widespread influence of Sabbatianism brings out the nihilistic dimension of religion that is concealed under the positivity of the official history of Judaism. Scholem's description of the movement as nihilistic is not an overstatement. Sabbatai Sevi was not the Messiah anticipated by the Jewish people, yet his messiahship was widely accepted by diverse communities of the Jewish Diaspora. Paradoxically, his claim for messiahship intensified, and he gained even wider following ensuing his apostasy and subsequent conversion to Islam. The Messiah is the anti-Messiah, whose messiahship is "proven" by the absolute denial of his own messiahship. Positive signs do not precede the emergence of the Messiah. The sign of messiahship is perceived in the total negation of all messianic expectations. The true Messiah is an apostate.

Scholem points out how throngs of Jews all across the Diaspora, and in Palestine, embraced the apostate messiah despite the efforts of Jewish leadership to stamp out the new movement. The "negative" messiahship of Sabbatai Sevi is the "return of the repressed," the manifestation of the marginal.

The paradox of the apostate messiah reflects the contradictory nature of Jewish exilic existence. The pain and contradictions of the exile and the expectations of its end found their way to into the Kabbalah's doctrines of creation and redemption. Creation, in the Kabbalah, is the *Galut* (exile) of God from Godself. God cannot contain Godself within Godself and thus explodes

into an infinite number of fragments out of which the cosmos is created. The Diaspora, the dispersion of the people of Israel, is the representation of the Galut of God on the human level. Israel is not alone in her Galut as this Galut is primordially present in God, who exiles Godself from Godself. The Galut of Israel finds its ultimate meaning in the Galut of God. The God who is exiled shares in the exile of his chosen people. The God of Israel makes himself vulnerable to the vicissitudes of history by going into exile with his people. The Kabbalistic hope for redemption is illustrated by the concept of the unification of God out of the dispersed fragments of creation.

Kabbalistic mysticism, received through the authoritative interpretation of Scholem, became an important component of Moltmann's messianic theology. One of the most influential inventions of Kabbalistic mysticism was its reformulation of the doctrine of the Shekinah. As Scholem suggested, the Kabbalah's doctrine of the Shekinah represented a "radical departure" from the teachings of Rabbinical Judaism on this matter.[27] In the traditional teachings the Shekinah referred to the active presence of God in the world, and it is this presence that guides the people of Israel through their adversities. The Shekinah is identified as the presence of God, or the "face" of God, but there is no indication of any distinction that might exist between God and His Shekinah. In contrast to the Talmudic and Rabbinical understanding, the Kabbalah represents important changes in the conceptualization of the Shekinah.[28] Through the hierarchical system of emanations of the ten shefiroth, the Shekinah is construed as a hypostatically distinguishable feminine aspect of God.[29] Because of the complexity of Kabbalistic symbolism, the Shekinah can simultaneously find correspondence with a manifold of concepts. One such symbolic representation is the Shekinah's identification with the people of Israel. It is this particular identification that introduces the novel idea of the feminine aspect of the divine. "Through this identification, everything that is said in the Talmudic interpretations of the Song of Songs about the Community of Israel as daughter and bride was transferred to the Shekinah."[30] The personification of the Shekinah as the feminine aspect of God and its identification with the Community of Israel, when connected to the original meaning of Shekinah as the in-dwelling or presence of God in the world, leads to the crucial symbolism of the *Galut* (exile) of the Shekinah. While previously the Shekinah was understood as the presence of God with the people of Israel, in the Kabbalistic system the Shekinah among the people refers to the presence of a part of God among His people. In other words, the Galut of the Shekinah is the Galut of a part of God himself from God.[31] The origin of the exile of Shekinah, in other words the separation between the feminine and the masculine within God, is usually attributed to the destructiveness and "magical influence" of human sin.[32] On a mythical level, the sin of Adam, a sin that is repeated in all subsequent human action, was to choose the contemplation

of a part of God instead of the contemplation of the complexity of the tenfold body of God. This act of misdirected contemplation brought about a fissure within the Godhead, the fissure symbolized by the exile of the Shekinah. The goal of redemption is to bring about unity within God, through the reunion of God and His Shekinah. For the Kabbalists the mythological symbolism concerning the Shekinah had practical ramifications in that every act counted as a possibility to end the Galut of the Shekinah and bring about the unity of God.[33]

Scholem in his study of messianic movements in Judaism advances his fundamental assertion, which claims that Jewish messianism can only be defined as a phenomenon of total negativity. Scholem characterizes the negativity of messianism as catastrophic in nature.

> Jewish Messianism is in its origins and by its nature—this cannot be sufficiently emphasized—a theory of catastrophe. This theory stresses the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transition from every historical present to the Messianic future.[34]

Because of the total negativity that the expectation of the messiah entails for the Jew (one expects the messiah to bring redemption to this world of fragmentation, but what the messiah brings is utter destruction) the Jew, according to Scholem, defers his messianic hope. Hope is a wholly negative category for the Jew because of the unsustainability of hope in the present.[35]

It is important to perceive the intensity of the paradox in Scholem's position. Scholem does not say that the Jew has no hope. The Jew does hope, but he does not hope in the Present. It is impossible for the Jew to hope in the Present because active hope in the Present carries with it an index of absolute *nihil*, which no human being can fully contain within himself. Through the realization that active hope in the messiah is existentially impossible, the Jew defers his hope in the Messiah. For Scholem, this deferral of hope is the best way one can incorporate the *nihil* associated with the expectation of the messiah. By deferring hope in the Present, the Jew fully recognizes the absolute *nihil* of what hope in the Present entails and, through the acceptance of his incapacity to hope in the Present, defers his hope.

For Scholem, the basic attitude of the messianic community is a wholly negative one, one that he characterizes as an attitude of constant deferment. Messianic hope is not a positive assurance of future redemption, a world-negating attitude, but a consciousness of the utter unreality of the historical materialization of redemption.

In comparison to Scholem's emphasis on the apocalyptic destruction, or anarchic nihilism of the messianic idea of Judaism, Moltmann's articulation of the messianic gains a more positive dimension through his future-oriented

eschatology. In stark contrast to Scholem's apophatic approach to the meaning of messianic hope, Moltmann, largely influenced by the more optimistic messianism of Ernst Bloch, defines the meaning of messianic hope as something more positive. Moltmann assails Scholem's understanding of the messianic way of life as a life lived in constant deferment, and instead defines the existential effect of the messianic within the present as a life mobilized, as a life in anticipation.[36] For Moltmann the attitude of deferment is impossible for the Christian because of Christianity's implication in history through the cross of Christ and the belief in the finality of his resurrection.

> The greatness of the messianic idea corresponds to the tremendous weakness of Jewish history, which in exile was not prepared for intervention on the historical level. It has the weakness of the provisional, which does not expend itself . . . Thus the messianic idea enforced life in deferment, in which nothing can be done and completed in a final way. The messianic idea in Christianity differs from this through the unique and final character of Christ's self-surrender on the cross. His resurrection from the dead brings the dynamism of the provisional into accord with the finality of the sacrifice, so that it would be possible to talk about a final interim period, but not about a holding back of life in the period of deferment.[37]

The difference between Scholem's and Moltmann's articulation of the messianic reflects what Franz Rosenzweig saw as an essential divergence between Judaism's and Christianity's respective approaches to history.[38] Scholem's understanding of the messianic expectation of the Jews as "deferred hope" is the expression of what Rosenzweig refers to as the "meta-historical" position of the Jews. For the Jew there is no universal history, only the particular history of the elected people. To the fragility of Jewish existence in exile corresponds the exile of the Jews from history. The Jews for Rosenzweig, and for Scholem, are history's other. Consequently, because of the meta-historicity of exilic existence, the Jew is incapable of projecting his expectations on the historical future. It is exactly this inability to have concrete historical expectations that finds expression in Scholem's dictum on Jewish life as deferment.

Moltmann finds Scholem's formulation of messianic expectation as deferred hope untenable for Christianity.[39] For Moltmann, Christianity has to hope for the completion, the full coming of the Messiah. It is the very essence of Christianity to hope and to offer hope to others. Christianity is compelled to hope because of its belief in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus. Christianity's hope through the resurrection is a hope that all things participating in the resurrection of Jesus will conclusively redeem the suffering of this world. It is in this eschatological event where the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus will find its final shape.

CARL SCHMITT: MESSIANISM OF THE STATE

It is not only the utopian messianism of Jewish intellectuals of Weimar Germany that influenced Moltmann's reformulation of Christian theology. A vastly different messianism, which was similarly associated with the Weimar era, also had a lasting impact on his thought. That was the secularized messianism of Carl Schmitt. This option, however, represented to Moltmann the gravest possible misunderstanding of the meaning of the messianic idea.

Political theology is a term that has its origins in the work of the legal/political philosophy of Carl Schmitt and his work bearing the title *Political Theology*.[40] The term "political theology" is surrounded by controversy and ambiguity, mainly because of its purported association with the ideology of the Third Reich. In spite of the understandably negative evaluation of Schmitt's "political theology" in the postwar era, his work has enjoyed a veritable revival in recent decades in both German- and English-speaking academic circles.[41]

Schmitt's political theology is a messianism of the sovereign. What is unquestionably alluring about Schmitt's thought is that it offers a definitive solution to the malaise of the modern liberal state. Schmitt offers a secularized version of the messianic restitution of all things through the finality of decision, through classifying people within the categories of friend and enemy, and through the pseudo-soteriological powers of the Sovereign.

Schmitt, a Roman Catholic legal scholar, resuscitated the work of a Spanish counterrevolutionary intellectual, Juan Donoso Cortes (1809–1854), and the latter's critique of nineteenth-century liberalism's moral depravity. Schmitt appropriated Donoso Cortes' critique to his own context, which was the stillborn parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic. Two basic ideas of Donoso's work became fundamental concepts of Schmitt's political theology.

The first concept that Schmitt took over from Donoso Cortes was that of the idea of "decision." Donoso Cortes depicted the bourgeoisie of his day as "eternal conversationalists."[42] Schmitt in turn applied this depiction to the "conversationalists" of his day: "According to Donoso Cortes, it was the characteristic of bourgeois liberalism not to decide in this battle [between Catholicism and atheist socialism] but instead begin a discussion."[43]

Schmitt divides the German romantic tradition into two separate branches, one leading to the indecision of liberalism, the other to a conservatism that is fully aware of the bankruptcy of bourgeois liberalism. He says,

> German romantics possess an odd trait: everlasting conversation. Novalis and Adam Muller feel at home with it; to them it constitutes the true realization of

> their spirits. Catholic political philosophers such as de Maistre, Bonald, and Donoso Cortes—who are called romantics in Germany because they were conservative or reactionary and idealized the conditions of the Middle Ages—would have considered everlasting conversation a product of a gruesomely comic fantasy, for what characterized their counterrevolutionary political philosophy was the recognition that their times needed a decision.

In the indecision of the German bourgeois middle class, Schmitt detected the major weakness of the liberal democracy of the Weimar Republic: "A class that shifts all political activity onto the plane of conversation in the press and in parliament is no match for social conflict."[44]

The second concept Schmitt borrowed from Donoso Cortes was the very concept of "political theology." Relying on the thought of Donoso Cortes, Schmitt came to the realization that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theology of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent—but also because of their systematic structure."[45]

The context of Schmitt's work was that of the tempestuous legal/philosophical battles over the constitution of the Weimar Republic and its controversial emergency provision, article 48 of the constitution, which promulgated what emergency measures can be taken by the president to restore order in a situation of crisis.[46] According to Schmitt, the categories that the modern political philosophy of the state employs can best be understood if approached as secularized forms of theological concepts. This he illustrates by pointing to the most problematic feature of Weimar's liberal democratic constitution, namely, the problem of legitimation. Is it possible to find a purely rational way to legitimate the constitution, especially if one follows the idea of rationality liberalism operates with?[47]

The real problem of the Weimar constitution (and of any liberal constitutional democracy) for Schmitt is the question of who has sovereign power to declare a state of emergency.[48] The political power that can declare a state of emergency for Schmitt is the one truly legitimate political power of the state. Its legitimation rests solely on its power to declare such a state of emergency and to create order out of the constitutional crisis brought about by the anomalies inherent in liberalism's conception of rationality. The sovereign, the one who declares the state of emergency and seizes power to lead the state out of its crisis, has absolute and unquestioned power over the state.[49] A well-functioning state of order can only be created if such sovereign leads it.

Through his exploration of the legitimation crisis of the liberal democratic constitution of the Weimar Republic, Schmitt came to the realization that the only way to understand the constitutional impasse of the day is if the legal/

constitutional concepts of modern constitutional thought be understood as secularized concepts of theological ideas. Schmitt perceived that the idea of the sovereign had a clear and necessary correspondence to the Christian notion of God's unquestioned and self-justifying sovereignty. The inadequacies and ultimate crisis of the Weimar constitution were a reflection of a secularized version of the fall of man and his perpetual crisis in attempting to govern himself in a world without God.[50] According to orthodox Christian theology, the only way out of the crisis of man is to acknowledge his bankruptcy, the declaration of which takes the form of the sovereign judgment of God, and acknowledge the absolute and unquestionable sovereignty of God. This is the theological scheme corresponding to the crisis of the legitimation of power within the realm of the secular.

Why is Schmitt so crucial a figure for the political theology of Moltmann? First, Schmitt uncovers the hidden, theological dimension of the secular state, and provides a theory of the sovereign in which the sources of legitimations are explored. He does this by appealing to a Christian theological conception of God as a sovereign being. The second reason Schmitt's political theology plays an important part in the development of Moltmann's own formulation of political theology is that Moltmann's thought represents an unambiguous break with Schmitt's theory of the sovereign.[51] Schmitt's political theology is uncritical on the theological level in that he merely takes over the doctrines of orthodox Christian theology. Ultimately, through these doctrines, he finds theoretical legitimation for the sovereign power of the state. Moltmann's political theology may be defined as the systematic and critical reformulation of the Christian doctrine of God in a way that makes impossible the kind of connection Schmitt builds between the Christian God and oppressive political power.

NOTES

1. Quoted by Metz in *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 141.

2. The cultural, intellectual, and religious revitalization of Jewish life of this period is referred to as the German-Jewish Renaissance. The literature on the German-Jewish intellectual-cultural renaissance is vast, and only a few items can be listed in the context of this study. The work of Michel Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) should be mentioned here as it has important sections on the intellectual-cultural renewal of Judaism of this period. One should also point to the classic study of Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001). Finally, Michael Löwy's *Redemption and Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) provides

a profile of Jewish intellectuals of the postwar period who, in various ways and levels, attempted to confront and incorporate (sometimes through negation) Jewish messianism into their thinking. The classic document of the split between the tradition of fathers and tradition of the sons in postwar Jewish existence is, of course, Franz Kafka's famous "Letter to His Father" (1919). In this letter Kafka confronts his father's neglect of the Jewish tradition: "But what sort of Judaism was it I got from you?! . . . It was also impossible to make a child, over-acutely observant from sheer nervousness, understand that the few flimsy gestures you performed in the name of Judaism, and with the indifference in keeping with their flimsiness, could have any higher meaning." See Franz Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 56–58.

3. For a critical evaluation of the influence of Bloch's philosophy of hope on Moltmann's pathbreaking *Theology of Hope*, see Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basing Stroke: M. Pickering, 1987). Moltmann's own evaluation of Bloch's philosophy and its influence on his theology of hope may be found in his "Introduction" to Ernst Bloch's *Man on His Own: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 19–29; and in "Where There is Hope, There is Religion (Ernst Bloch): The Philosophy and Theology of Hope" in Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 143–155. For critical introductions to the thought of Ernst Bloch, see Arno Münster, *Utopie, Messianismus und Apokalypse in Frühwerk von Ernst Bloch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982); and *Figures de l'utopie dans la pensée d'Ernst Bloch* (Paris: Aubier, 1985) from the same author.

4. See Ernst Bloch, *Geist Der Utopia, 1918* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985); and *Thomas Münzer als theologie der Revolution* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967).

5. See Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), especially "Technological Cold," 10–13.

6. Ibid., 200–201.

7. Ibid., 201.

8. The best exposition of Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* is Stephan Moses' *System and Revelation: The Thought of Franz Rosenzweig* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). A chronologically ordered anthology of Rosenzweig's essays with elaborate footnotes is complied by Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan, *Franz Rosenzweig: Philosophical and Theological Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000). Nahum Glatzer's *Franz Rosenzweig His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962) represents an indispensable resource because of its rich biographical content. Recent translations of Rosenzweig's lectures and essays also added an invaluable resource to the study of his thought. These are *Franz Rosenzweig's The New Thinking*, edited and translated by Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998); and Franz Rosenzweig, *God, Man, and the World: Lecture and Essays*, edited and translated by Barbara E. Galli (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998). In addition, Susan Handelman's *Fragments of Redemption* is an invaluable source for demonstrating the huge influence Rosenzweig's thought exerted on Walter Benjamin, Gerschom Scholem, and Emmanuel Levinas.

9. This is a reference to Emmanuel Levinas's evaluation of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption*: "Already before the war I had read Rosenzweig, and I knew of his thesis on the philosophical possibility of thinking of truth as being accessible in two forms: Jewish and Christian. That was an extraordinary stance: thought does not move toward its goal by one sole path. Metaphysical truth was essentially possible in two forms of expression. That was stated for the first time." See "Judaism and Christianity" in Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 163.

10. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions. (*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1–5, and his *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), xiii.

11. See Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. Translated by William W. Hallo. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1985), 415.

12. "The 'elements,' not reintegrable into a totality, enter into relation, not to reconstitute the impossible totality, but to form time." See Emmanuel Levinas, "The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig" in *In the Time of the Nations*, 152.

13. This evaluation of Rosenzweig's thought owes a great debt to Emmanuel Levinas, "The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig" in Emmanuel Levinas, *In the Time of the Nations*, 150–160.

14. Levinas, "The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig," in *In the Time of the Nations*, 152.

15. See Michael Löwy*, Redemption and Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 59, as quoted from Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*, 227–229.

16. See Stéphane Mosès, *L'Ange de L'Histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 48.

17. See Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* as quoted in Alexander Garcia Düttman, *The Gift of Language: Memory and Promise in Adorno, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Rosenzweig* (Ithaca: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 22.

18. The positing of a self-contradiction in God shares a strong resemblance with the Lurianic Kabbalistic idea of "tsimtsum," or negation within the Godhead that made the creation of the finite world possible. As Susan Handelman pointed it out, the notion of a negation within God plays a prominent role in the a-theology of Jacques Derrida and Eduard Jabès. See Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem, and Levinas*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 94–95.

19. Quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 62.

20. Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 334.

21. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 62.

22. Note Rosenzweig's distinction between Judaism as eternal life and Christianity as the eternal way to illuminate Moltmann's christology. Paul M. van Buren's characterization of Christianity as the Way is the foundation of his systematic theology of the Jewish-Christian reality. The uniqueness of van Buren's work lies in how masterfully he draws on the intricate distinction of the philosophy of Rosenzweig in developing a trinitarian theology.

23. For the best exposition of Scholem's thought, see David Biale, *Gerschom Scholem. Kabbalah and Counter-History.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). See also Susan Handelman's *Fragments of Redemption* for an excellent discussion on Scholem's theory of language. Eric Jacobson's recent *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gerschom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) further develops Handelman's focus on language as it compares the political theologies of Scholem and Walter Benjamin. See also Joseph Dan, *Gerschom Scholem and the Mystical Dimensions of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

24. See Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

25. Gerschom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

26. Scholem also attributes an important role in the suppression of the irrational, apocalyptic element within Judaism to Moses Maimonides and his *Mishneh Torah*: "Do not think that the messiah will have to work signs and miracles or perform any spectacular deeds or resurrect the dead and the like . . . And do not think that in the days of the messiah there will be any departure from the normal course of things or any change in the cosmic order." Quoted in Scholem's *Sabbatai Sevi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 12–13.

27. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 104.

28. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 16–17.

29. For an introduction to the kabbalistic system of emanations see Joseph Dan, "Introduction," *The Early Kabbalah*, edited by Joseph Dan (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

30. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 106.

31. Ibid., 107.

32. Ibid., 108.

33. See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, 108. Scholem describes a number of rituals that commemorate the exile of the Shekinah in his "Tradition and New Creation in the Rites of the Kabbalists" in *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*.

34. See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocker Books, 1971), 7.

35. In this formulation of the present impossibility of hope, Scholem has a special affinity with Walter Benjamin's peculiar messianic pessimism. This affinity between Scholem and Benjamin reveals their common debt to the thought of Kafka and what may be called Kafka's nihilistic messianism. Cf. Robert Alter *Necessary Angels, Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

36. Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 193.

37. Ibid., 378 n. 103.

38. For a discussion of Rosenzweig's philosophy of history see Stéphan Mosès *L'Ange de L'Histoire* (Gallimard, 2006).

39. See Gerschom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*.

40. Carl Schmitt*, Politische Theologie: Vier Capitel Zur Lehre von der Souveranitat* (Munich and Leipzig, Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1922); ET Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985).

41. The radical journal *Telos* has been most instrumental in introducing Schmitt to English-speaking academic circles. See Paul Piccone and G. L. Ulmen, "Introduction to Carl Schmitt," *Telos 72* (Summer 1987); Ellen Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School," *Telos 71* (Spring 1987), 37–66; Paul Piccone and G. L. Ulmen "Reading and Misreading Schmitt," *Telos 74* (Winter 1987–1988), 133–140. The standard English biography of Schmitt is by Joseph W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Third Reich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). A very helpful and lucid exposition of Schmitt's thought is Paul Edward Gottfried's *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

42. Gottfried, *Carl Schmitt Politics and Theory*, 19.

43. See Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 52.

44. Ibid., 59.

45. Ibid., 36.

46. The two sentences Schmitt brought under his scrutiny in a brilliant way are the following: "If, in the German Reich, public security and order are considerably disturbed or endangered, the Reichspräsident may undertake necessary measures to restore public security and order, and if necessary may intervene with the aid of armed forces. For this purpose he may suspend, temporarily, in part or entirely, the basic rights as provided in articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153." Quoted in George Schwaab's "Introduction" to Schmitt, *Political Theology*, xx.

47. The adequacy of purely rational legitimation of power was problematized by the infamous article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which prescribed the emergency measures the state can take in case of a political crisis. The ambiguous way the constitution legislates over who can declare a state of emergency and what measures can be taken exposes, at least for Schmitt, the very anomaly of liberal democracy and the inadequacy of its epistemology to draw up an unambiguous constitution and thereby create the basis for the existence of a strong state. The ambiguity of the constitution reveals that the state is in crisis now by the very existence of this constitutional anomaly. The state of emergency cannot be declared by the kind of political power legitimated by the anomalous constitution of the Republic. The article of the constitution, however, signals the solution to the way out of the quagmire of constitutional crisis.

48. "Sovereign is who decides about a state of emergency [*Ausnahmezustand*]." See Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5. Regarding the terminology "state of emergency" and its relation to the constitution see the notes of the translator, George Schwab, to Schmitt's *Political Theology*.

49. It is important to point out that the sovereign is not an ontological category in Schmitt's political theology, which corresponds to the ontology of a divine Being. On this issue, see Ellen Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School: A Rejoinder," *Telos* 73 (Fall 1987), 105–107.

50. See Gottfried's *Carl Schmitt*.

51. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences of Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 115–117.

Chapter Three

Messianic Epistemology

That political messianism does not have to terminate in a theory of totalitarian decisionism (Carl Schmitt) can be seen in the messianic philosophy of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's political theology, informed by his messianism, has an elective affinity with Moltmann's political theology and, hand in hand with Moltmann's thought, it can serve to develop the contours of a discourse of the Christian faith within which trinitarianism and the messianic are no longer mutually exclusive ideas.

The thought of Carl Schmitt held a particular fascination for Walter Benjamin. The connection between Benjamin, the victim of Nazi totalitarianism, and Schmitt, the alleged ideologue of the Nazi political system, remains an enigma for many, so much so that evidence for Benjamin's fascination with Schmitt was suppressed by Adorno.

Benjamin's initial interest in Schmitt's political philosophy may be explained by his own revolutionary impatience with the trajectory of the liberalism of his day. At the same time, Benjamin did not quite share Schmitt's negative judgment of the "eternal conversationalists" of German Romanticism, having written his doctoral thesis on the topic. Benjamin's ambiguous relationship with Schmitt's political messianism was a sign of his lack of determination to embrace a concrete political agenda. Although he naturally had stronger affinities with the Marxist Left, he also elicited frequent disapproval from these circles. Ultimately Benjamin remained on the margins of European Marxism, eager to hope in the coming revolution, yet remaining realistic enough to perceive the very real pitfalls of realizing a communist state. Benjamin remained the philosopher of the margins, refusing to be sucked up in versions of political messianism through a totalitarian state. He rejected the political messianism of the revolutionary working class, and also the political

messianism of the authoritarian Sovereign. The importance of his messianic thinking lies in his insistence on approaching the question of truth through the particular truth lying hidden in the marginal, that which is excluded from the master narrative of European civilization.

After the devastation of World War II, Benjamin emerged, posthumously, as the preeminent literary critic in Europe. The tragic character of his life as a marginalized, homeless peripatetic authentically mirrors the quality of his thought as a philosophy of the underside of existence. It would be facile to anoint Benjamin the patron saint of liberationist philosophies, yet his thought eludes all such forced attempts for classification. Benjamin's thought is defined by his emphasis on the priority of the marginal, the disconnected, the forgotten, disrupting the trajectory of European philosophy and its perennial fascination with philosophical systems.

The significance of Walter Benjamin for European intellectual-cultural thought lies in offering the concept of the messianic as a central category for philosophical thinking.[1] Theodore Adorno has best expressed the messianic orientation of Benjamin's thought.

> Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption; all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.[2]

Thinking is prismatic, not synthesizing. Vision of reality can no longer provide a comprehensive picture of the world. Vision is shattered, and the task of the critical theorist is to allow these shattered fragments to speak for themselves. This is the extreme realism of Benjamin's critical theory.

The messianic in the thought of Benjamin is not an easily circumscribable category. The messianic refers more to a quality of thinking that focuses on marginal features of existence. Benjamin thinks from the margins and of the margins. He elevates the marginal to previously unprecedented epistemological heights.

Benjamin's messianism is a messianism of the fragment. He perceived the messianic force of the marginal and the fragmentary vehemently opposing the totalitarian authoritarianism of the omnipotent State. His messianism is characterized by the fragility of hope in redemption.

The messianic quality of Benjamin's thought lies in his insistence to define thinking as an act of redemption that saves marginal phenomena from the dustbin of forgetfulness. The messianic character of Benjamin's thinking opens up the possibility of an alternative reading of reality, which ultimately rescues the marginal from the selective memory of totality.

BENJAMIN'S HERMENEUTICS

A common complaint for many readers of Benjamin is the presence of apparently irreconcilable ideas in his thought. Yet, in spite of the justified criticism of the incoherence of Benjamin's thought, there is a possible approach to the reading of Benjamin that brings intelligibility to his thought. Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of the Jewish mystical tradition and lifelong friend of Benjamin, suggests two categories to be used as hermeneutical keys to unfold Benjamin's thought.

> Two categories above all, and especially in their Jewish versions assure a central place in his writings: on the one hand Revelation, the idea of the Torah and of the sacred texts in general, and on the other hand the Messianic idea and Redemption. Their significance as regulative ideas governing his thought cannot be overrated.[3]

Benjamin's undertaking as the interpreter of the text of reality resembles the exegetical work of the Talmudic interpreter who relentlessly probes the concealed meaning of the text, firmly believing that the text will eventually yield its meaning to him. The meaning of the text lies in its very depths. It eludes automatic comprehension and presents itself at the end of a tedious process during which the exegete progresses layer by layer.

What appealed to Benjamin about the study of kabbalistic texts was the exegetical skill needed to probe their levels of meaning.[4] Even well after his turn to Marxism, he could write to one of his contemporaries that he could never break with doing research and thinking in a "theological sense" along the lines of "Talmudic teaching of the forty-nine levels of meaning in every passage in the Torah."[5] The exegete has no predetermined goal. The text, which for Benjamin is reality itself, is not violated by forcing on it a meaning from the outside. Instead, the text almost miraculously comes to life and presents itself to the exegete as an image. The "image" lies at the heart of Benjamin's method as a literary critic, as a commentator on the "text" of reality. "The method of this project: literary montage. I need say nothing. Only exhibit (zeigen). I won't filch anything of value or appropriate any ingenious turns of phrase. Only the trivia, the trash—which I don't want to inventory, but simply allow it to come into its own in the only way possible: by putting it to use."[6]

TOTALITY SHATTERED

Benjamin, in a way reminiscent of the endless task of rabbinical exegesis, acknowledged the impossibility of thinking the total, the incapacity to receive

the revelation in its totality.[7] According to the Jewish mystical understanding of the Torah, the materiality of the written Torah represents a shattered tradition. The text itself could not contain the truth God wanted to communicate to Israel. Human language does not have the capacity to fully contain the divine word, yet it is, paradoxically—and in the case of the Torah, miraculously—the only means to serve as the medium for the human to get in contact with the word of God. The written Torah participates in the shattered reality of postlapsarian humanity in that the truth of the divine word is shattered into the text of the written Torah. The latter characteristic of the written Torah explains the reverence Jews pay to the parchment of the Torah, revering it as it is this shattered text through which they know about the expected coming of the Messiah, the one who restores wholeness not only to Israel but also the entire universe. Salvation thus comes through the shattered fragmentary reality of the Torah. This theory of the Torah finds its way to Benjamin's epistemological prologue to his *Trauerspiel* work, where he develops a kind of messianic epistemology.[8] In this messianic epistemology the notion of the fragment becomes similar to the broader text of the Torah. The method of philosophical investigation is determined by the way ideas find their representation. Ideas are the object of Benjamin's investigation, but the way the idea is represented is not the representation of the whole.

> The value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea, and the brilliance of the representation depends as much on this value as the brilliance of the mosaic does on the quality of the glass paste.[9]

MORTIFICATION OF THE TEXT

Reality as text does not appear to the reader as a completed whole but instead as shattered, as fragmentary. The task of the reader of reality is to accept the fact of disorentiation, to immerse himself within particular fragments, approaching them as individual monads while refusing to seek narrative coherence that would create a final synthesis of the infinite fragmentation of life.

The true meaning of the text, the truth of the literary product is hidden behind the semblance (*Schein*) of its material content: "Not until the veil of *Schein* had been rent and the work had been decomposed to the point where it revealed its allegorical, ruinous form could it actualize the salvific potential at its core."[10] The way to the salvific potential of the work of art comes through identifying "the world of literature as a battlefield."[11] The critic is constantly engaged in a battle against the semblance of truth the work of art emanates. The critic stands before the work of art with a readiness to devour

it. "True polemics take on the book as lovingly as a cannibal prepares an infant to be cooked."[12] The true critic is a "destructive character" who "has the consciousness of historical man, whose deepest emotion is an inseparable mistrust of the course of things and a readiness at all times that everything can go wrong."[13] The destructive character encapsulates the dual nature of the messianic. "The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer; he comes as the victor over the Antichrist."[14]

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE MARGINAL

Benjamin's messianic thinking is predicated on a practice of reading that approaches the text of reality in its utter negativity, not from the perspective of the triumph and illusion of totality, but from the viewpoint of the fragment. Reading reality as a shattered text made up of disconnected fragments is a redemptive practice, a hermeneutics deeply informed by the negative hope of messianic interruption. Reality is not experienced through the totality of a system but, rather, through fragments. The marginal, the excluded, becomes the locus of truth. David Frisby emphasizes the continuity of Benjamin's philosophy of the fragment throughout his philosophical career.

> There is indeed an insistence upon the significance of the fragment and a mistrust of systems that extends in Benjamin's work from his early publications down to the later reflections on the Arcades Project. As such, it signifies the rejection of Lukacs's principle of "the domination of the totality over the individual elements" and an attempt to do justice to the uniqueness of the individual element in its extreme form.[15]

By relying on the notion of the fragment Benjamin's proposes a new metaphysics, which leads to a reconfiguration of the meaning of truth.[16] Truth is no longer conceived in terms of the totality of a system. Truth eludes the control of the human mind and cannot be displayed as the product of universal rationality. In Benjamin's thought truth is tied to the concept of appearance. Truth appears through a constellation of fragments of reality, and it can never be apprehended as the end result of the synthesis of thought. Truth appears as a constellation of the fragments of reality.

> The key to understanding Benjamin's early theory of knowledge (which he considered "dialectical" if not yet "materialist") is the concept of "constellation." By regrouping material elements of phenomena—the objects of knowledge—in a philosophically informed constellation, Benjamin sought the emergence of an "Idea" through which "redemption" of the phenomena would be

> effectuated—insofar as contact with the Idea would facilitate their elevation to the homeland of unconditioned truth. In this admittedly recondite procedure, the function of conceptual (i.e. rational) knowledge is strictly delimited: its sole task is to facilitate the arrangement of the phenomena or material elements in the constellation.[17]

Truth for Benjamin is not an abstract metaphysical concept. The concept of truth is intricately connected to the seemingly insignificant details of everyday life.[18] Benjamin's theory of truth is a metaphysics of the everyday.

The metaphysics envisioned by Benjamin lay beyond both objective and subjective approaches to truth. For Benjamin, truth appears (*Schein*) through the negative, through the dissolution of the totality of the system represented by the dichotomy between the object and the subject. The constellation as a theoretical tool points to the epistemological dissimulation of the subject-object paradigm of neo-Kantian positivism.

> The constellation safeguards particularity but fissures identity, exploding the object into an array of conflictive elements and so unleashing its materiality at the cost of its self-sameness.[19]

Objects, previously overdetermined by the tyranny of epistemologies of totality, find their autonomous existence and as such they become sources of truth.

MARGINAL EXPERIENCES

The manifesto of Benjamin's radical reconfiguration of metaphysics is found in his early essay "On the Program of a Coming Philosophy."[20] In this essay Benjamin calls for an opening up of Kant's epistemology to include marginal experiences attributing to these experiences an autonomous epistemological force denied of them in Kant's epistemology.

In this programmatic writing Benjamin expresses his disenchantment with the philosophical orientation of neo-Kantianism, the reigning philosophical movement of his day.[21] Neo-Kantian philosophy determined the meaning of experience according to the criteria of scientific verifiability. It is against this reduction that Benjamin voiced his opposition.

While Benjamin always lauded the revolution Kant's metaphysics brought about in thinking, he remained critical of certain features of Kant's system. Benjamin was dissatisfied with what he considered to be an inferior role the concept of experience played within the edifice of Kantian epistemology.[22] Although Kant acknowledged the importance of experience within episte-

mology, experience ended up being determined by the a priori intuitions of the human mind restricting the scope of possible experiences. In his "On the Program of a Coming Philosophy" Benjamin envisioned a scheme within which experience has an autonomous epistemological status. Benjamin wanted to extend the scope of possible experiences and wanted to include experiences that were previously excluded by Kant. The most notable of the experiences excluded from the epistemology of Kant was religious experience. The purpose of Benjamin's new epistemology was to demonstrate the epistemic depth and significance of experiences the Kantian system did not allow room for.

Michael Jennings describes the significance of Benjamin's philosophy within the larger context of philosophical trends of the twentieth century:

> While western philosophy in the twentieth century has increasingly tended to limit its field of inquiry—in analytical philosophy to the propositional aspects of language, in logical positivism and neo-Kantianism to mathematics—Benjamin is noteworthy for his efforts to expand the scope of epistemological inquiry, exploring as he does the relationship between human cognitive capacity and mystical and religious experience.[23]

According to Benjamin, a future metaphysics has to overcome the singularly shallow concept of experience of Kantian epistemology.

> The concept of the naked, primitive, self evident experience, which for Kant, as a man who somehow shared the horizon of his times, seemed to be the only experience given—indeed the only experience possible. This experience, however, as already indicated, was unique and temporally limited. Above and beyond this form, which it shares with every type of experience, this experience, which in a significant sense could be called a worldview, was that of the Enlightenment. But in its most essential characteristics, it is not all that different from the experience of other centuries in the modern era. As an experience or a view of the world, it was of the lowest order. The very fact that Kant was able to commence his immense work under the constellation of the Enlightenment indicates that he undertook his work on the basis of an experience virtually reduced to a bare minimum of significance. Indeed, one can say that the very greatness of his work, his unique radicalism, presupposed an experience which had almost no intrinsic value and which could have attained its (we may say) sad significance only through its certainty.[24]

The universalization of the epistemic function of experience was none other in the eyes of Benjamin than the privileging of a particular understanding of experience. In Kant's philosophy of experience the uniformization of experience meant that experience became equated with the experience of the

Enlightenment subject. For Benjamin, this approach represents a reductionism that excludes the experience of those who are excluded from the Enlightenment's criteria of subjecthood.

OBJECT WITHOUT OBJECTIVITY

For Kant, there is no unmediated experience of objects. In the Kantian epistemological system experience is made possible by the a priori intuitions of space and time. These forms of intuition are themselves objectively present in the subject before the experience of any particular object by the subject.

For Kant, knowledge of the object ultimately depends on the noetic conditions of possible experience. In other words in the Kantian system experience of the object cannot be otherwise. Actual experience is already determined by the structures of possible experience. Within the context of the mechanical experienceability of objects the very meaning of what the "object" is becomes diffuse. The task of a new philosophy, according to Benjamin, is to describe the phenomenon of such diffusion and its consequences to epistemology, projecting the outlines of a new epistemology.

Benjamin argued for the epistemological autonomy of experience in order to show the revelatory potential of the object.[25] Such redefinition of the meaning of the object led to the epistemological weakening of the subject itself. The redefined subject of Benjamin's program no longer enjoyed the epistemological primacy it had within the Kantian system of knowledge. The subject in Benjamin's epistemological programme is no longer the universal subject of the Kantian system.

Benjamin traced back the epistemological dominance of the subject within Kantian philosophy to the influence of Plato. In classical Platonic epistemology it was through the comprehension of ideas that the philosopher acquired true knowledge. For Benjamin, however, truth remains forever elusive to the grasp of the knower. "Truth, bodied forth in the dance of represented ideas, resists being projected by whatever means into the realm of knowledge."[26] Plato's theory of knowledge, which left its stamp on the whole course of Western philosophy, defines knowledge as possession. During the acquisition of knowledge the object becomes subjugated under the possessive consciousness of the transcendental subject. "Knowledge is possession. Its very object is determined by the fact that it must be taken possession of—even in a transcendental sense—in the consciousness."[27] The object has no epistemic significance apart from being the object of knowledge. "For the thing possessed, representation is secondary, it does not have prior existence as something representing itself."[28]

EXPERIENCE AND MODERNITY

Benjamin's epistemology is largely determined by his efforts to offer an alternative reading of modernity. He wants to map modernity not as a field of triumph but one of decay.[29] His critique, however, is not one of an outsider who is far removed from the reality he observes but one of an insider who immerses himself in the minutest details of his own reality. Benjamin's reading of modernity is peculiar since he assumes the primacy of the fragments over the total. In actuality it is the tiniest fragment that contains the key to the meaning of the whole.

It is through this peculiar approach to modernity that the underside of modernity's blind faith in progress becomes ruthlessly exposed. Modernity is exposed in all its insidious structures within which, under the disguise of disinterested reason, only the voices of victors are meaningful. The exclusion of voices on the margins leads to the atrophy of experience, to the end of genuine narrative, and to the inability to remember.

Benjamin provides a fascinating phenomenology of the modern from the perspective of marginal phenomena, including peripheral players of the landscape of the modern, such as the flaneur, the prostitute, the gambler, and the collector. It is through marginal figures and experiences that Benjamin both exposes the illusory world of the modern and fulfills his messianic calling as the redeemer of the forgotten.

Benjamin draws on the concept of the fragment, borrowed from such writers as Simmel and Kracauer, to tackle the epistemological illusions of modernity.[30] The fragment emerges as the archaeologist of the dream world of modernity applies a kind epistemological shock therapy to the dream world of modernity. The task of the critic is to shatter the dream-image and wake up modernity from its illusory dream.

Benjamin locates the meaning of the modern in the change of the experienceability of the world. In his phenomenology of modernity Benjamin points to the radical change in the mode of perception effected by the emergence of the modern.

Modernity's experience with experience reflects Max Weber's characterization of the modern as "disenchantment of the world." The rationalization of the means of production incorporates the totality of human existence. Everything is experienced as potential merchandise with commodity value. The phenomenon of commodification extends its influence over the human. The decay of experience culminates in the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism.[31]

Commodity fetishism is not simply a socioeconomical phenomenon, but a phenomenon that exposes a deep-seated epistemological fallacy. The veil of

the illusory nature of the modern cannot simply be shredded by means of positing a revolutionary class as proposed in Lukacs's philosophy.[32] Lukacs in his *History and Class Consciousness* saw the irruption of a new future in the historical mission of a new social class, the proletariat. Benjamin, on the other hand, remained skeptical about the concrete utopia forecasted by Lukacs. In Benjamin's philosophy the malaise of epistemology requires epistemological therapy, which leads Benjamin to launch an investigation of the physiognomy of modernity's illusory knowledge.[33] He demonstrates that the illusory world of objects that populate modern consciousness operates on a mythological level, prefiguring the scathing critique of the mythological structure of the epistemology of the modern found in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Modernity's experience with experience refers to the experience of the "New" as immediately out of date. Modernity experiences the "New" as the always-and-already out of date, as the ephemeral. The only value of the "New" is to function as the stepping-stone for the emergence of the "next New." Modernity's experience of experience finds its classic expression in Baudelaire's theory of the modern.[34] The essentially transitory nature of modern experience is masterfully illuminated by Baudelaire.

> By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable . . . This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with.[35]

The time of modernity is a time that offers no pause. What matters for modernity is what is absolutely new. There is, however, no meaningful "New" within the modern. Every "New" instantly becomes old, becomes immediately out of date. The time of modernity is a time of the present, which reifies all objects. The time of modernity has an equalizing effect on experience in that all things are experienced as commodities, as mere stepping-stones in the emergence of the next, ephemerally new thing.[36] In profane time the time of the present moment is immediately covered over by the time of the next new thing.

MODERNITY, TIME, FORGETFULNESS

Modernity is plagued by its perpetual state of forgetfulness, which stems from modernity's particular understanding of time. The time of modernity is the time that corresponds to its experience (*Erlebnis*). The experience (*Erlebnis*) that characterizes modernity is a disconnected experience without tradition.

Experience (*Erlebnis*) is the experience of the individual who had taken the place of the universal.[37] Erlebnis, lived experience, refers to a subject-centered experience that the subject can accumulate and manipulate. *Erlebnis* transpires within one-dimensional time, and therefore experiences ultimately become indistinguishable from one another.

The stage of modernity's experience with experience is the urban reality of city life and cityscape. It is within this reality where the shift from *Erfahrung* to *Erlebnis* became recognizable to Benjamin.[38]

> Experience is no longer a continuous development, but is reduced instead to a seemingly random series of half-impressions, of images and thoughts only partially registered, still less understood. Coherent, integrated experience is destroyed within urban multitudes. Benjamin articulates this process in terms of the transformation of Erfahrung into Erlebnis. Both these terms mean "experience," but of very different sorts. Erfahrung (derives from the verb fahren meaning "to travel") refers to experience as the accumulation of knowledge. It means experience in the sense of being widely traveled, of having witnessed many things, of having gained wisdom. The experience related by the storyteller, is what one may designate as Erfahrung: coherent, communicable, readily intelligible. Erlebnis is concerned with the domain of inner life, with the chaotic contents of psychic life.[39]

Benjamin's early writing on experience compares the time of *Erfahrung* and the time of *Erlebnis* to the time of youth and the time of adulthood, respectively. The one-dimensionality of *Erlebnis* lies in its always-the-sameness.[40] The concept of time that characterizes modernity is the time of the experienced moment (*Erlebnis*). *Erlebnis* is an experience without tradition. *Erlebnis* is the experience of the individual who takes the place of the universal. In contrast to *Erlebnis* (the experience of the lived moment without tradition) Benjamin, through the method of destruction, attempts to recover experience (*Erfahrung*) that is embedded in tradition.[41]

The historical background of Benjamin's critique of the concept *Erlebnis* was the First World War, the outbreak of which was a celebrated event by Martin Buber who saw a vindication of his *Lebensphilosophie* in the sense of community brought about by the war. Benjamin, like his close friend Gershom Scholem, opposed the war from the very beginning and saw in Buber's hasty embrace of the war the essential inadequacy of Buber's thought.

Benjamin's peculiar distinction between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* is put into sharp relief if examined in light of Buber's philosophy of experience as delineated in his epochal work, *Ich und Du*. In this work Buber challenges objectivistic approaches to understanding experience. Scientistic positivism turns the fallible individual subject into an infallible data processor. Buber

describes the event of experience (*Erlebnis als Ereignis*) in dialogical terms. Buber envisages experience as an event that takes place between two equal sides. There is here no subject appropriating the object for its own means. Experience as event "takes place" in the sphere of the "between."[42]

LOSS OF TRADITION

In his seminal essay on modernity's experience with experience, "Erfahrung und Armut,"[43] Benjamin delineates certain social-political implications of the aesthetics of modernity. Modernity brings with it a qualitatively new kind of perception. The new way of experiencing the world is characterized by Max Weber as humanity's disenchantment of the world.[44]

"Erfahrung und Armut" opens with a lament about the state of storytelling in the modern era. The modern epoch experienced the disappearance of the genuine story.[45] The main characteristic of the genuine story for Benjamin is that it creates its autonomous space and time that is not deducible from the space and time of the listener.

Benjamin describes the impoverishment of experience as the end of storytelling and as the dissemination of mere information. "Every morning brings the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information."[46] The flood of information has the illusion of empowering people with knowledge of the world. The value of information, however, is ephemeral. Information culture subdues the whole world under a utilitarian functionality.

Technological society represents the end of difference and the uniformity of experience. The contradictions and coldness of technological society became exposed through the experience of the brutality of the First War. The killing fields of the war and the countless millions of dead were a palpable sign of a new era of human history in which society came to measure its progress by the number of lives killed by new technological inventions.

The kind of poverty that a humanity experience now, says Benjamin, is qualitatively different from all previous epochs.[47] The poverty of experience is attested to by the presence of a plethora of substitute experiences. The galvanization of substitute experiences is a sign of the self-delusion of the modern age.

In "Erfahrung und Armut," Benjamin describes the age of technology as a "new barbarism." This concept refers both to the diminishing of the experience-ability of the world, the aesthetic condition of the modern, and, in a

more positive sense, to the opening up of the experienceability of the world to the masses, to the democratization of experience. The reign of technology homogenizes the experienceability of things. This leveling factor of the new barbarism on the level of experience opens up the possibility of universal participation within the sphere of the political.[48]

The poverty of experience within the modern is closely correlated with modernity's neglect of tradition. The experience of the modern is an experience without tradition. Benjamin, in his phenomenology of the experience of the modern, arrives at an articulation of tradition which is a critique of modernity's elimination of tradition without turning into a conservative traditionalism modernity, rightfully, rebelled against. Benjamin has no interest in evoking a nostalgic past for its own sake. Nor is he interested in resuscitating a romantic cult of the past.[49] Benjamin's approach to the meaning of tradition is best expressed through what he calls "the destructive character."

> The destructive character stands in the front line of the traditionalists. Some pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them, others pass on situations, by making them practicable and thus liquidating them. The latter are called the destructive.[50]

The main problem Benjamin sees with modernity's elimination of tradition is that it disallows authentic remembrance.[51] Neglecting the dead is the most conspicuous manifestation of modernity's understanding of tradition. Modernity quotes the past only in order to demonstrate that progress has been made. The faculty of memory for modernity is one of sheer calculation. Benjamin's theory of tradition is a hermeneutics of danger.[52] The true importance of the past is revealed in light of the inherent forgetfulness of the present. Each present represents the danger of forgetting the past. The infinite forgetfulness of the present is modernity's liquidation of tradition. The tendency of forgetfulness culminates in forgetting one's own forgetfulness.[53]

Modernity's negative prejudice toward tradition, modernity's proclivity to forget, was the central theme of an alternative theory of tradition developed by the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer shares Benjamin's preoccupation with the meaning of tradition in modernity, and therefore his thought may serve to further illuminate Benjamin's thought on the topic.

Gadamer understands tradition in terms of continuities. For Gadamer, the past influences the present through its effects within the continuity of consciousness—*Wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewusstsein*.[54] Gadamer describes the presence of the past as the always-already situatedness of the horizon of

the present. Gadamer's philosophy of tradition is a philosophy of the trace. The past leaves behind inerasable traces that always and already affect the meaning of the present.

In comparison with Gadamer's philosophy of tradition, Benjamin views tradition within the modern to be full of ambiguities. For Benjamin, tradition is fraught with discontinuities. Benjamin's philosophy of tradition dismantles the notion of the singularity of tradition, and with it the idea of universal history.[55]

What distinguishes Benjamin's understanding of tradition from that of Gadamer is that Benjamin approaches tradition through essentially multidimensional, spatial categories. The past is explored as a particular space that hides repressed memories. Tradition is the space of sedimented memory traces.[56] For Benjamin, tradition incorporates a plurality of memories. The past does not communicate itself to the present according to the dictates of a singular subject. Each object is unique as each has its own unique tradition that is not simply subdued by a larger, universal tradition. There is no longer one meta-tradition, called universal history, but now there is a multiplicity of traditions. The goal of Benjamin's redemptive critique of modernity is to rescue objects from being embedded within a universal tradition of interpretation.

The contemplating subject does not reach true knowledge of the past. The hermeneutic characterized by the latter does not recognize the truth within the moment because it arrives there always-already too late. "The contemplative interpretation of a historical constellation, that is its decoding, always shows that the opportunity to utilize it has been missed. The only thing that is interpretively read is always the wound of "too late."[57] Approaching remembrance of things past as a kind of reading is similar to Benjamin's understanding of readership and the hermeneutic Benjamin arrives at in his epistemological prologue to his *Trauerspiel* study. Reading for Benjamin is not a matter of being caught up in the continuous flow of words and sentences. The false continuum of the text is apparent only to the astute reader who enters "into" the text as if into a labyrinth, ready to be lost but simultaneously looking for the secret passage to find the way out of it.

REPRESENTATION

The image of the labyrinth and its application to the reading of texts (and here "text" refers to a full range of applicability that goes well beyond the text understood as a written inscription) appears in Benjamin's investigation of exploring his own memories of the past. Here the concept of representation

(*Darstellung*) comes to the fore, as it is through representations of the past, of ideas concerning the past, that one remembers. Benjamin, in writing about the memories of his own childhood in "A Berlin Chronicle" offers an explanation of the way the past is represented (*darstellen*) through memories: "Memories even when they go on extensively do not always present [darstellen] an autobiography. And here it is certainly not one, not even the Berlin years, the only ones in question [Rede]. For autobiography has to do with time, with lapse [Ablauf], and with what makes up the continuous flow of life here it is a matter of space, moments, the discontinuous. For even if months and years emerge here, it is in the figure they have in the moment of remembering."[58] The notion of *Darstellung* (representation) becomes a focal issue for a revision of epistemology. "It is characteristic of philosophical writing, at every turn, to confront the question of *Darstellung* anew."[59]

Benjamin attempts to work out a concept of representation (*Darstellung*), that is free from the grip of intentionality. As seen in the "Task of the Translator" essay, Benjamin views the hermeneutical preoccupation with intentionality, the reception of the text through deciphering its meaning through searching for the original intention of the author, as misguided. "For what does a literary work 'say'? What does it communicate? It 'tells' very little to those who understand it. Its essential quality is not in communication or the imparting of information."[60] What matters for Benjamin is not coming to understand the text, that is, he is not focused on deciphering the meaning of the text. He is interested in the truth-content of the text, the text being a written text or being life as a kind of text. His method is clearly distinguished from either the method of the meticulous scientific observer or even from the "method" of someone like Gadamer who stresses the uninterrupted continuity of tradition in the understanding of texts.

Benjamin's method to unearth the truth-content hidden in the text is that of digression.[61] "Representation as digression" is the method of his work on the Baroque Trauerspiel. The method of digression implies "the absence of an uninterrupted purposeful structure."[62] In the "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" to his Trauerspiel essay he sets out the epistemological underpinnings of his future, critical work on memory and on the philosophy of history. The representation of the Whole as it is found either in the concept of *Erlebnis* (as it describes the experience of the subject in the manner of an experience of the moment by a subject who is a subject fully saturated with the totality of the moment) or in a philosophy of history that looks at the past as if it can be fully comprehended by the empathy of the historian is countered by Benjamin's notion of representation whose aim is redemptive criticism to rescue phenomena from the semblance of a totalizing idea. Representation is a digression, but that does not mean that it is not the result of an arduous task.

Rescuing critique requires an incredible amount of focus as the critic "makes new beginnings in the process of thinking, returning in a roundabout way to its [thinking] original object."[63] The method, characterized by a seemingly futile obsession with the marginal, is very similar to rabbinical exegesis and its eternal struggle with the biblical text, returning to the same text day after day, being confronted with the same text, a text that cannot be grasped in its totality but that comes under a different light with every new reading. There is no apparent truth about the text, no apparent meaning the exegete can understand and thus have the truth conclusively within his grasp. Benjamin, in a way highly reminiscent of the rhythm of rabbinical exegesis, compares his method to the periodic pause that serves as an interruption between exhaling and inhaling. "This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation. For by pursuing different levels of meaning in its examination of one single subject it receives both the incentive to begin again and the justification for its irregular rhythm."[64]

BENJAMIN ON LANGUAGE

The degeneration of experience as accumulated knowledge (*Erfahrung*) into lived experience (*Erlebnis*) within modernity is the result of modernity's logocentric approach to language. Benjamin's theory of language finds close resonance with his theory of experience. One cannot fully understand his philosophy of experience without understanding his theory of language. Both are part of his critique of the modern and essentially complement each other.

> Philosophy is absolute experience deduced in a systematic, symbolic framework as language. Absolute experience is, in the view of philosophy, language—language understood, however, as systematic, symbolic concept. It is articulated in types of language, one of which is perception.[65]

Benjamin's philosophy of language is an integral part of his efforts to establish a new philosophy that puts into question the epistemological primacy of the subject.[66]

In Benjamin's "On Language as Such and On the Language of Man" all the major themes of his philosophy find their convergence: his push for a new epistemology that goes beyond the object-subject dichotomy of Kantian philosophy; his aesthetic theory characterized by the loss of aura; his theory of the modern as mythic; his inverse theology; and finally, his philosophy of history, his critique of progress.

Benjamin's essay on language extends the meaning of language beyond its restriction to human language. Human language is only one instance of language. For Benjamin "all communication of mental meanings (geistige Inhalt) is language, communication in words being only a particular case of human language . . ."[67] The communication of mental meanings is not the peculiar prerogative of human language. All things have mental meanings, and consequently everything partakes of language. "There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of all to communicate their mental meanings."[68] All communications of mental meanings is to be classified as language. "Language is thus the mental being of things."[69]

The claim that language is all that there is for understanding (and here the meaning of language is equated with the totality of human communication through verbal expressions) reflects a degraded situation for Benjamin. "The view that the mental essence of a thing consists precisely in its language—this view, taken as a hypothesis, is the great abyss into which all linguistic theory threatens to fall . . ."[70] Benjamin makes a crucial distinction between communication through and communication in language: "The distinction between a mental entity and the linguistic entity in which it communicates is the first stage of any study in linguistic theory."[71]

This distinction is important for Benjamin's critique of logocentricity. Logocentricity puts the emphasis on the speaker, on the manipulator of the word. Logos-orientation identifies language with speech. Logos-orientation regards language as merely a means of communication. Speech cannot do justice to the communicability inherent in mental entities. The speech-oriented definition of language ultimately locates the meaning of language in the user of language, in the speaker making language the extension of the speaker.

All things have a linguistic being capable of communication. "Language therefore communicates the particular linguistic being of things . . ."[72] Yet, there is an excess that language cannot fully communicate. Language has its limit to communication, as mental being is not identical with linguistic being.

For Benjamin, a theory of language that views language in utilitarian terms is the major epistemological hindrance to arriving at a true knowledge of things.[73] Communication through language hides such a utilitarian approach to language. Such a utilitarian view of language becomes the means of reification. The process of the reification of consciousness is ultimately rooted in the Fall of language. After the Fall of language, language is looked at as merely a means of communication. In Benjamin's mythical account of the Fall of language, language became a utilitarian tool manipulated by the speaker. The blind faith in progress in the capitalist economy is another

manifestation of the Fall of language. Language as the mere means of communication culminates in the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism.

Within the modern, language became a tool within the process of reification. The decay of experience, the loss of the experienceability of things, is the loss of language, the incapacity of the language of the modern to express difference. All things become commoditized, and the main tool of commodity fetishism is language. The Fall of language and the subsequent logocentrism lead to the homogenization of experience, the illusion of the modern whose New perpetually remains the "Always-the-Same."

Another motif of Benjamin's essay on language, which becomes the main theme of his *Trauerspiel*, is that of the lament of nature or the muteness of language. The lament of nature is nature's lament for language.[74] The muteness of nature is the muteness of the Ding-an-Sich. Benjamin's concept of the language of things is his attempt to come to terms with Kant's limitation of the sphere of reason through the Ding-an-Sich. For Benjamin, Kant's introduction of the Ding-an-Sich is the philosophical silencing of nature. In Kant's philosophy, Benjamin perceives the identity between thought and language. The lament of nature is its lament for nonidentity.

The muteness of nature hides the prelapsarian reality of language. All things have linguistic being. "The linguistic being of all things is their language."[75] The mental entity is differentiated from the linguistic entity in that the linguistic entity is that which is communicable about the mental entity of things. "That which in a mental entity is communicable is its language."[76] When the linguistic being of a thing finds linguistic expression, the language of that thing is realized. The language of a thing is not identical with the thing itself. It is not identical with the mental being of the thing. The mental being of a thing is not identical with its linguistic being. Language is the expression of the linguistic being of a thing: "What is communicable of a mental being, in this it communicates itself."[77] The language of a lamp communicates itself in (and not through!) the language-lamp. The communication of language-lamp does not take place through a deductive process. Language-lamp is immediately communicated in itself. The immediacy of the mediation of language, that is, the language of a thing communicating itself, is what Benjamin calls the magical quality of language. Language-lamp is not a language of words. There is a nonverbal communicability of things. But if language-lamp is not a language of words, how is the lamp known? And whose knowledge is considered?[78] To whom does the lamp communicate itself?

A special case of language is the language of humans through which a person communicates his mental being. The special feature of the language of man is that it is a language of words. A language of words, however, can be manipulated and become a mere means of communication. The language of

words is a language of names.[79] Man communicates his mental being by naming things. Naming language, the language of words, is not identical with language as such; it is one language among the infinity of languages, although the only one naming things.

What is naming? How does language name things? What is man's relationship to the thing named? Man names things as a result of the mental being of things having been communicated to him. The language of naming is not the language of arbitrary signs. That human language is the language of arbitrary signs is a mistaken view of language that regards language as a mere means of communications. The meaning of naming is lost when man communicates his mental being by the name and not in the name. Man communicates by the name when he communicates his mental being to another man. Man communicates in the name when he communicates his mental being to God.[80] In the second case the mental being of man is identical with the language of name. With the language of man, contrary to the language of things, there is identity between mental being and linguistic being: "Naming is that by which nothing beyond it is communicated, and in which language communicates itself absolutely."[81]

Language lost its original power to name things. Language was turned into a functional system of referential signs. Such "weakening" of language ultimately resulted in the impoverishment of experience. Language became a tool in technology's repertoire to manipulate the world. Technology reduced the linguistic expressibility of experience to meaningless chatter.

According to Benjamin, human language over-names.[82] Over-naming liquidates the autonomy of objects to express in language their own experience-ability. Over-naming, by overdetermining things through the word, hinders the possibility of the truth of the thing to emerge. Truth is not inexpressible. It is not the ineffable silence of apophaticism. Truth in language emerges through the shattering of over-naming human language. Transcendence is not found beyond language, in the unsayable, but within the excess of the said, that through its very excess hides the unsaid as "its" immanence. The unsaid is the immanent transcendence of the unsayable of the said. "The 'denied' of language, the 'sphere of speechlessness' is within language; it is not the ineffable outside of language since it is precisely this sense of external transcendence that is to be 'eliminated.'"[83]

BENJAMIN AND BERGSON: EXPERIENCE, TIME, MEMORY

The close connection between text, memory, and experience explored through Benjamin's method of digression leads him to turn to the philosophy of Henri

Bergson. Bergson's special quality of empiricism found resonance with Benjamin's project to expand the field of epistemically meaningful experiences.[84] In spite of his selected reading of Bergson,[85] Benjamin sees in Bergson's thought on memory, experience, and time a major break from the subject-centered nature of Enlightenment rationality. What is particularly important in Bergson's philosophy of time is that he makes an explicit connection between memory and experience. "It [*Matière et memoire*] regards the structure of memory [*Gedächtnis*] as decisive for the philosophical structure of experience [*Erfahrung*]."[86] Moreover, in Bergson Benjamin sees a shift in defining experience in terms of the collective rather than looking at experience in terms of the private property of the individual. "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life."[87] Bergson characterizes memory not as a collection of impressions from the past that is stored away somewhere in the brain. This understanding of memory (*Erinnerung*) is one that corresponds to a particular understanding of experience as the experience (*Erlebnis*) of the present moment. In opposition to this view of memory (*Erinnerung*) constructed around the concept of Erlebnis, Benjamin sees in Bergson an understanding of memory (*Gedächtnis*) that is built around a more organic conception of experience, referred to as *Erfahrung* in German terminology: "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is the product less of facts firmly anchored in memory [*Erinnerung*] than of accumulated and frequently unconscious data that flow together in memory [*Gedächtnis*]."[88]

Bergson's concept of time is markedly different from both the understanding of time found in the historicism school and the concept of time found in the Lebensphilosophie of Dilthey. The historicist school's philosophy of time is grounded in a secularized theological understanding of time, each moment being equidistant from the perspective of the divine. With the loss of explicit God-consciousness, the role of the divine within the scheme was relegated to the historian. The historian is able to look at every moment of the past as a passive observer and is therefore able to determine with scientific accuracy what really happened in each moment of the past. The greatest problem with this approach to history is that it works without the faculty of memory. In the case of the historicism school one can see a philosophy of history, which completely eliminates the function of memory.

Dilthey's philosophical project was guided by his hermeneutics of understanding (*Verstehen*). What dominated his work was the hermeneutical dilemma of understanding that from which one is temporally removed. The obvious target of this hermeneutical concern was the understanding of texts written in the past. The solving of the hermeneutical dilemma created by the confrontation with literary texts of the past had epistemological repercussions

on Dilthey's formulation of his philosophy of history. What makes it possible for the reader to grasp the meaning of a text from the past is the connection between the experience of life out of which the text in the past was born and the reader's experience of life in the present. Because of the universality of the experience of life, the reader, through a particular act of identification, which Dilthey calls the act of empathy, can identify with the experience of the writer and ultimately can come to understand the meaning of the text.

When Dilthey uses the word experience (*Erlebnis*), he does not refer to the standardized experience of the masses. Instead, experience refers to a heightened sense of consciousness of life in which a person is essentially one with the livingness, the vitality, and the creative forces of life.[89]

The major problem Benjamin has with Dilthey's concept of experience is that it is not grounded in the concrete existence of the individual in modern society but that it works instead with a concept of life that is no longer the experience of the common man in society. Dilthey and other vitalist thinkers such as Klages, elevate experience into poetic heights, a move that receives severe criticism at the hands of the French poet Baudelaire. Benjamin turns to Baudelaire and his articulation of the experience of the modern in his criticism of the vitalists' fascination with the poetic. In his interpretation of Baudelaire's introductory poem to his controversial *Fleurs de Mal*, Benjamin perceives a confrontation between the poet and his readers. The readers no longer understand the experiences lyric poetry alludes to: "Poetry has lost contact with the reader's experience" states Rochlitz in his work on Benjamin.[90] Rochlitz also adds that, in spite of the attempts of the philosophy of life of the nineteenth century to "define 'true' experience in opposition to the experience encountered 'in the standardized, denatured life of the civilized masses,'"[91] the masses rejected poetic experience as something incomprehensible, an abstraction with no practical usefulness to life in the modern world.

What distinguishes Bergson's theory of experience from the theories of experience of either the historicism school or the philosophy of experience of Wilhelm Dilthey is that Bergson intentionally excludes the historical determination of experience from his theory as he looks at the pure materiality of experience.[92] By steering clear of this influence and focusing on the convergence of unconscious impressions, in his philosophy of memory, Bergson is able, albeit indirectly, to expose the experience of the modern, something his fellow theorists gravely missed doing as a result of their unbridled infatuation with history.

What interests Benjamin primarily about Bergson's theory of experience and memory is the strong connection Bergson draws between these two. With Bergson there is an insistence on the concrete, on the empirical shown in his

evolutionary theory of time erected on the concept of *durée*. Finally, the concentration on the data of the unconscious is of special significance for Benjamin. Benjamin connects Bergson with the poetry of Baudelaire. What is ultimately missing from Bergson's theory of experience, the concentration on the actual experience of his age, becomes the very focus of Baudelaire's poetry.

In Bergson's theory of memory one can find a certain correspondence with Benjamin's fundamental notion of the "concrete particular." By avoiding the encounter with the actual social-historical experience of his time, Bergson provides a kind of photographic negative of the same experience. Benjamin refers to this complementary experience as a "spontaneous after-image,"[93] which complements "the alienating, blinding experience of the age of large-scale industrialism."[94] Benjamin links Bergson's theory of experience and Bergson's dependence on unconscious impressions with Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Freud's prescription of achieving the reintegration of the self through bringing to the surface the unconscious elements of the Id. The means of coming to terms with Bergson requires a kind of awakening from the world of dreams and taking a snapshot at that point when the awakening occurs, when the unconscious finds materialization in the conscious.

Benjamin's reception of Bergson's theory of experience is connected to the work of Marcel Proust, the preeminent authority on the physiology of awakening. "Proust's work *A la Recherche du temps perdu* may be regarded as an attempt to produce experience, as Bergson imagines it, in a synthetic way under today's social conditions, for there is less and less hope that it will come into being in a natural way."[95] The problem with Bergson, according to Benjamin's reading, is that Bergson believes that one can have control over the content of the unconscious. Proust's view stands in opposition to Bergson's position. Proust makes an important differentiation (one that is of fundamental importance in Benjamin's theory of experience and theory of the modern) between Bergson's understanding of the connection between the unconscious and memory and his own view. "In his [Proust] the *memoire pure* of Bergson's theory becomes a *memoire involontaire*."[96] What is particularly interesting for Benjamin about Proust's concept of *memoire involontaire* is the way in which memory is associated with the experience of particular objects. In comparison to the *memoire volontaire*, involuntary memory is described as being beyond the reach of the conscious efforts of the intellect to recall the past.[97] What fascinates Benjamin about Proust's concept of involuntary memory is that the latter evokes the past not through conceptualizing the past as a matter of temporal distance but as something that resides within the materiality of spatial existence.

Time for Benjamin has a spatial character. This approach to time and memory is clearly visible in his essay on his early childhood in Berlin. In this es-

say Benjamin claims that remembering the Berlin of his childhood is the means to illustrate the consequences of the epistemological program heralded in his early essay "On the Program of a Coming Philosophy." One of the major tenets of this essay was to go beyond the subject-object orientation of Kantian and neo-Kantian epistemologies and realize the epistemic possibilities latent within the object of experience. The theological undertone of the essay on Kant functions to reclaim the role of revelation for epistemology. Obviously for Kant knowledge of revelation was put into question by the limits set by the epistemological reach of pure reason. Benjamin's return to revelation is not a return to a mythical tradition.[98]

Revelation is not found in the whole nor does it have the function to offer an all-encompassing explanation of reality. Revelation is shattered (as Benjamin's theory of language asserts), but fragments of the originary revelation still reside in this shattered linguistic reality. If one looks at history as a whole as the science of recalling events of the past at will, one will never reach the truth of revelation that can still be found in a fragmentary way within material reality characterized by transience. Memory thus becomes a spatial concept in that one finds the past through fully inhabiting material reality and not by disassociating oneself from it. Proust's involuntary memory points to this direction in that Proust situates the past not within an understanding of memory being something temporal but looking at the structure of memory as something material. The past becomes visible not at the urgings of the intellect but as a revelatory function of the object itself. Just as in the traditional concept of revelation according to which the hearer of revelation is wholly dependent upon the revealer of the revelatory speech, the understanding of the past becomes wholly dependent on the material object that brings to consciousness that had been latent in the unconscious. Also, just as in the revelation of the Word of God, the reception of the revelation is never complete so memory remains incomplete and requires the task to return and immerse oneself in the object that evoked the involuntary memory. Benjamin likens the act of remembering to the task of excavating an ancient city buried deep under the surface.

> He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigation.[99]

The time of history approaches life in an autobiographic manner, recounting its happenings in a minute-by-minute fashion. Autobiographies become

the new fetish of the modern and they reveal its philosophy of time. Autobiographies are built upon memory (*Andenken*), which has the function to recall events of the past in order to enrich the meaning of the "lived moment" (*Erlebnis*).[100]

In writing about his Berlin childhood, Benjamin makes an important distinction between memory (*Andenken*) and remembrance (*Eingedenken*). This distinction serves to illuminate his project of overcoming the dichotomy of nature and history by a new archaeology of knowledge. "Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography . . . For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of space, of moments and discontinuities."[101] Time transcends the strictures of historicity and is transfigured into a kind of space to be excavated by the archaeologist of knowledge. As one digs deeper, one encounters not parts of one singular history but a plurality of histories that had been relegated to irrelevance and subsequent disappearance by the faculty of memory. Memory (*Andenken*) is the protective shield around consciousness enlisted in the service of inevitable progress, eliminating difference in one's experience in time:

> The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (Erfahrung), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life (Erlebnis). Perhaps the special achievement of shock defense may be seen in its function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents.[102]

The past is embedded in the history of the particular material object, and it lies beyond the control of the remembering subject. The remembering subject is an abstraction for Benjamin. So is the history this subject writes. For Benjamin there are alternative histories written from the non-place of marginal phenomena. The special quality of Benjamin's messianic thought lies in constructing an epistemology of the non-place, which is achieved by immersing himself in the depths of excluded forms of life.

Benjamin's preoccupation with experience is part and parcel of his messianic thinking. His thought represents the complete reversal of the Kantian understanding of experience. The Kantian concept of possible experience led Benjamin to realize the true significance of what is left out of the Kantian architectonic of reason. The significance of Kantian epistemology for the development of Benjamin's philosophy is to initiate an inquiry about an alternative epistemology that privileges those very experiences that Kant considered to be epistemically vacuous. It is with what is left out where Ben-

jamin's thinking takes place. In a Levinasian sense, Benjamin is thinking from a non-place, a place that is not. It is a place that is condemned to silence by universal reason. Benjamin's thinking from a non-place reflects his personal existence as a European Jewish intellectual. He conducted his intellectual activity on the go, displaced and dispossessed at the very heart of Europe.

NOTES

1. For a succinct overview of Benjamin's background and intellectual development see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 197–212.

2. See Theodore Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 1987), 247.

3. See Richard Wolin, *An Aesthetics of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 48, quoted from "Walter Benjamin" in *Scholem On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

4. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 200.

5. Ibid., 200.

6. Wolin, *Aesthetics*, 47.

7. Benjamin was profoundly influenced by Rosenzweig's epochal *Star of Redemption* and its shattering critique of Hegelian philosophy. For a brilliant exposition of Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* see Stéphane Mosès, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992). Susan Handelman's *Fragments of Redemption* has an illuminating section on the influence of Rosenzweig on modern Jewish thinkers, including Benjamin. See Susan A. Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption: Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Benjamin, Scholem, and Levinas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

8. The *Trauerspiel* study introduces the concept of the ruin as the epistemo-critical foundation of Benjamin's hermeneutics. See the "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" to the *Trauerspiel* study. The Prologue was deemed incomprehensible by the committee Benjamin submitted it to as part of his habilitationschrift.

9. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), 29.

10. Ibid., 71.

11. See Norbert Bolz and Willem Reijen, *Walter Benjamin* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 9.

12. See Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Volume 4 1939–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, 108, as found in Bolz and van Reije, *Walter Benjamin*, 9.

13. See Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 542.

14. See Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 391.

15. See David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 214.

16. See Düttman's helpful discussion on the meaning of truth in Benjamin's thought and his influence on Adorno. "Benjamin defines truth as configuration, as a timeless constellation of ideas which, through concepts, divides and groups phenomena." Alexander Garcia Düttmann, *The Gift of Language: Memory and Promise in Adorno, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Rosenzweig* (Ithaca: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 2.

17. Wolin makes an important remark about the significance of constellation within Benjamin's redemptive critique. See Richard Wolin, "Benjamin, Adorno, Surrealism" in *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, edited by Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 97.

18. Jennings shows that Benjamin's epistemology is an epistemology of the cognitive process rather than an epistemology of a system: "The tacit assumption of Benjamin's essays is maieutic: Benjamin asks the reader to patiently reconstruct larger patterns out of the shards that are presented, in the hope that the reader will emerge not only with 'hard knowledge' but with a sense for the cognitive processes that produced such knowledge." See Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images*, 10.

19. Note the incisive comment of Terry Eagleton in his *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), 330.

20. See "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy" in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings Volume 1 1913–1926* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 100–110.

21. Wolin notes Benjamin's affinities with the surrealist movement that are detectable in his critique of neo-Kantian epistemology. "Despite the fact that in his early years (1916–1925) Benjamin displayed a primarily Germanistik focus (with the important exception of his interest in Baudelaire and Proust), what one might call protosurrealist stirrings can be found in two significant works from this period: the 1918 essay 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy' and the 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue' to his 1925 *Trauerspiel* study." See Wolin, "Benjamin, Adorno, Surrealism," in *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, 95.

22. See Wolin, "Benjamin, Adorno, Surrealism," in *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, 96.

23. See Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 85.

24. See Benjamin, "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," in *Selected Writings Volume I 1913–1926*, 101.

25. Benjamin's preoccupation with Kant and his vision to overcome the subject-object dichotomy of Kantian epistemology by turning to the epistemic depth of experience is bequeathed to his younger friend, the future editor of his works, Theodore Adorno. Adorno's writings are infused with a strange presence of Benjamin's spirit. Adorno "discovered" Benjamin for the post-War German intellectual milieu, a discovery that is not without its inherent distortions. While Adorno is the most influential interpreter of Benjamin's work, his interpretation is a tendentious one that does not do full justice to the tensions latent in Benjamin's thought. See Theodore Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1995) and his *Minima Moralia*.

26. See Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutchen Trauerspiel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963); ET, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), 29.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. "The key to unlocking the secrets of modernity is to be found in obsolescence." See Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 110.

30. For an exposition of Benjamin's notion of the fragment and the influence of Simmel and Kracauer on Benjamin's development of this notion see Frisby's *Fragments of Modernity*.

31. See Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, for an exposition of Benjamin's appropriation of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism.

32. Cf. George Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

33. Finding truth, or the unearthing of truth, is arrived at by taking the surface seriously, so much so that the illusion of it becomes apparent.

34. See Frisby's *Fragments of Modernity*, 14–17.

35. See Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 13.

36. The aesthetic possibilities of the equalizing effect of the time of the modern are brought out in Benjamin's essay on the reproducibility of the work of art. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*. Translated by H. Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–251.

37. One can draw parallels between Benjamin's differentiation between Erlebnis and *Erfahrung* and Plato's distinction between *doxa* (mere opinion) and episteme (true knowledge).

38. "With its swirling, buffeting crowds, its swift and compelling tempo, its rude encounters and intrusive distractions, the modern city gives rise to the disintegration of Erfahrung and its replacement by *Erlebnis*." See Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 173.

39. Ibid., 143.

40. "Why is life without meaning or solace for the philistine? Because he knows experience and nothing else. Because he himself is desolate and without spirit. And because he has no inner relationship to anything other than the common and the always-already-out of date." See "Experience," in Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 1*, 4.

41. For Benjamin's reconceptualization of the meaning of tradition see John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

42. The event of experience is a linguistic event. Behind the two basic kinds of relationality (I-It and I-You) in the world lie two kinds of utterances. For Buber language is the true indicator of dialogical relationality in experience. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone, 1970).

43. See Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty," in *Selected Writings Volume 3* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 731–736.

44. “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’ Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.” See Max Weber, *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.

45. See the description of the situation by George Lukacs in his *The Theory of the Novel* (London: Merlin, 1971).

46. See Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, 89.

47. Ibid.

48. See Theodore Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

49. See McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antimonies of Tradition*, 19. McCole points to the important qualification Peter Bürger makes of Habermas’s characterization of Benjamin’s method as redemptive critique by calling it preservative critique. The importance of Bürger’s qualification is that it avoids Habermas’s critical remarks of Benjamin’s conservatism.

50. See Benjamin, “The Destructive Character,” in *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Book, 1986), 302.

51. For Benjamin’s distinction between memory and remembrance, see Irving Wolfhart, “The Measure of the Possible, The Weight of the Real and the Heat of the Moment: Benjamin’s Actuality Today,” in *The Actuality of Walter Benjamin*, edited by Laura Marcus and Lynda Nead (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 14–16.

52. Johannes Metz, the Christian theologian who made Benjamin’s theory of remembrance the cornerstone of his fundamental theology, refers to Benjamin’s theory of tradition as a hermeneutics of danger. See Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980).

53. See Irving Wolfhart “On Some Jewish Motifs in Benjamin,” in Andrew Benjamin (ed.) *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1989), 165.

54. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method.* 2nd revised edition. (New York: Continuum, 1996), 231–242.

55. It appears that Habermas reads Benjamin as if the latter were a proto-Gadamerian in his fascination with the power of tradition. It is interesting to see that Habermas arrives at similar conclusions about both Gadamer and Benjamin. See Jürgen Habermas, “Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Critique: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin,” in *New German Critique*, no. 17, Spring 1978. See also Habermas, “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality,” in *The Hermeneutic Tradition* edited by G. L. Ormiston & A. D. Schrift (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), 245–272; and Habermas, “A Review of Gadamer’s Truth and Method,” in *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, 213–244.

56. Benjamin’s aesthetics of the modern, characterized by the pivotal notion of the “aura,” attempts to come to terms with the new aesthetic matrix of the modern and the inability to construct a surface that would allow for the inscription of memory traces.

The inability of the modern subject to leave behind any trace of experience is the result of not only the qualitatively new reality of modern aesthetics but also the epistemological consequences of Kant's concept of experience.

57. See Bolz and van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, 51.

58. See Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," in *Reflections*, 28.

59. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 27.

60. Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 1*, 253.

61. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 28.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. See Benjamin, "On Perception," in *Selected Writings Volume 1*, 96.

66. "Languages therefore have no speaker, if this means someone who communicates through these languages." See Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such," in *Reflections*, 316.

67. Ibid., 314.

68. Ibid.

69. The language of naming, the language of man and the logic of the name lead to an insight that bears a striking resemblance to Gadamerian linguistic theory: the essential nature of the human is linguistic. Benjamin's conclusion, however, is much more drastic than that of Gadamer. See Benjamin, *Reflections*, 319–320.

70. Ibid., 315.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 316.

73. The utilitarian use of language, language that is "referential," also implies the kind of subject-object dichotomy Benjamin deemed untenable in his Kant essay, "On the Program of a Coming Philosophy" in *Selected Writings Volume I 1913–1926*. Edited by M. Bullock and M.W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

74. For an exposition of Benjamin's interpretation of the theological theme of the Fall in essentially linguistic catgories see Irving Wolfhart, "On Some Jewish Motifs in in Benjamin," in *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, edited by Andrew Benjamin (New York: Routledge, 1991), 157–215.

75. Benjamin, *Reflections*, 316.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., 317.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., 318.

81. Ibid.

82. "Human language 'overnames' by reducing the expression of other languages to its own terms, silencing them and refusing to open itself to transformation." See Howard Caygill, *The Colour of Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 20.

83. Ibid., 14.

84. Rainer Rochlitz. *The Disenchantment of Art: The Philosophy of Walter Benjamin*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996).

85. On the connection between Benjamin and Bergson, see Arno Münster, *Progrès et Catastrophe, Walter Benjamin et L'histoire* (Paris: Editions Kime, 1996), 107–122.

86. See Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 314.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid. This is an obvious influence by the German Romantic tradition, although Benjamin, in his interpretation of German Romanticism, contests Dilthey's way of appropriating this tradition for his theory of experience.

90. See Rochlitz, *The Disenchantment of Art*, 208.

91. Ibid.

92. Benjamin, in his essay on Baudelaire, says of Bergson: "Of course, the historical determination of memory is not at all Bergson's intention." See Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 314. Bergson, becomes the most influential source of later French phenomenologists (i.e., Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas).

93. Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 314.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid., 315.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. In many ways the recovery of the epistemic value of revelation remains the constant theme of his philosophical project; in the background the influence of Rosenzweig looms large.

99. See Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 2*, 576.

100. See Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 116.

101. See Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," in *Reflections*, 28.

102. See Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, 163.

Chapter Four

Messianic Pneumatology

In the previous section the multifaceted thought of Walter Benjamin was portrayed as an expression of a particular form of messianism whose intention is to rescue marginal forms of life from the modernity's tyranny of forgetfulness. Being influenced by Franz Rosenzweig's monumental critique of totality, Benjamin attempts to envision a future epistemology based on the particularity of marginal experiences. He bases his thought on his theory of fragments, which has close affinities with rabbinical Judaism's interpretive strategies to search the hidden dimensions of the shattered text of the Torah.

Benjamin offers a physiognomy of modernity, bringing under his critical gaze modernity's view of time and experience. The hallmark of Benjamin's theory of experience is its lack of interest in creating a system. Benjamin's focus is on the marginal, the disconnected, as a vehicle of a singularly profound experience.

The complexities of Benjamin's thought ought not to overshadow the singularly important thrust of his project, namely, his revisionary work to reconfigure the meaning of the transcendent within the horizon of modern life. Benjamin preserves the presence of the transcendent for the modern by grounding it in the very transience of worldly existence. Benjamin's understanding of the transcendent is that of the underside of the modernity's life of progress. In this his project shows a remarkable elective affinity with the theological enterprise of Jürgen Moltmann who, in his constructive trinitarian theology, seeks to eliminate the fateful separation between experiences of the transience of life and the eternally same life of the trinitarian God. Ultimately, this rethinking of the meaning of the transcendent has important repercussions on the quality of Christian discourse about God. The apparent insularity of trinitarian discourse is opened up through Moltmann's efforts to view all forms of life from the perspective of messianic redemption.

Moltmann's turn to experience is in many ways determined by the thought of Karl Barth and the latter's theology of the Word of God. Moltmann rethinks the meaning of experience for Christian theology and, by examining liminal situations of life, offers an alternative to the anthropocentric concept of experience of Enlightenment epistemology. Through offering a competing understanding of experience Moltmann also attempts to undermine Barth's focus on the revelation of God as the sole locus of transcendence. In order to overcome the Barthian dualism between experience and revelation, Moltmann introduces the concept of immanent transcendence, a concept he perceives in process metaphysics, and a concept that he eventually correlates with the fundamental concept of his trinitarian theology, the notion of perichoresis (the mutual interpenetration of persons within the Trinity). Through the linking of the concepts of immanent transcendence and perichoresis, coupled with a critique of the filioque clause, Moltmann attempts to overcome what he perceives to be the fundamental dichotomy between redemption and creation, and offers the prospects of a cosmic pneumatology. Finally, Moltmann turns to the concept of the Shekinah in the Jewish tradition in order to show the dimension of negativity that undergirds his cosmic pneumatology.

Moltmann reconstructs Christian pneumatology through the revitalization of the concept of experience arriving at what he calls a "holistic pneumatology." The purpose of this reconceptualization is to free the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the narrow confines of intra-ecclesiastical discourse about the sanctification of the believer and, instead, to understand the Holy Spirit as the source of life and the sanctifier of all things on a cosmic scale.

BARTH, MOLTMANN, AND EXPERIENCE

Moltmann's retrieval of the concept of experience for Christian theology begins with an unavoidable confrontation with the theology of Karl Barth, which, in reaction to the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, problematized the epistemic significance of experience as a viable starting point for knowledge of the Christian God. Karl Barth decried all attempts to ground Christian theology in human experience as idolatrous efforts of human beings.

For Barth, beginning with human experience of the divine assumes continuity between the human and the divine, a continuity that, in his eyes, never existed. Barth, in opposition to the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, claimed that the point of contact between the human being and God is solely established by the revelation of God.[1] It is only through the presence of God,

through God's self-revelation, that the possibility for knowledge of God is given. In Barth's theology of the Word of God there is no feeling of absolute dependence, no immediate consciousness of God in human consciousness as found in the theology of Schleiermacher. In other words, there is no reciprocity between the human and the divine. The Spirit of God is present in the human being only as a modality of God's revelation of Himself to the human. The presence of God—consciousness in the human spirit is wholly dependent on God's revelation to the human being. There is therefore no autonomous experience of God by the human, only an "experience" totally controlled by God's "self-revealedness," Barth's designation for the Holy Spirit.

Joerg Rieger in his penetrating, Lacan-inspired exposition of Barth's theology of the Wholly Other describes the place of experience in Barth's system in the following way:

> The experience Barth considers relevant for theology is exclusively shaped by the Word of God. Experience, as "determination of human existence by God's Word," must not be "confused with a determination man can give his own existence." Barth concedes, "This experience ceases to be an experience." Experience leads to the "real perishing and dying of man." Experience as Barth uses the term, is merely a function of the master signifier. Barth could not be clearer that the self cannot serve as a warrant for the theological enterprise. While the modern self strives for autonomy, the self in Barth's theology—if it appears at all—is completely heteronomous.[2]

For Barth, the total incommensurability between divine revelation and human experience is emphasized by further distinctions in his pneumatology. First, Barth points to the function of the Holy Spirit to bring about reconciliation between God and the human being, who by his nature as a sinner, is utterly alienated from God.[3] The Spirit's work of sanctification coincides with God's work of justification to reconcile the sinner. Consequently, there is no real human experience of the Spirit and the Spirit's work of sanctification, only an absolute dependence on God's revelation. Furthermore, Barth's pneumatology articulates the presence of the Spirit in human existence as an eschatological presence through God's revelation. The otherwise unbridgeable gap between the eternity of God and the temporality of the human being finds a connection through the eschatological presence of the Spirit.[4]

In the theology of Barth, however, the meaning of eschatology is situated on the vertical horizon between time and eternity. There is an absolute difference between time and eternity just as between revelation and human speech. Moltmann's pioneering work in Christian eschatology, *The Theology of Hope*, was a revolt against what he perceived as Barth's mischaracterization of the eschaton as eternity's transcendental irruption in time.[5]

In his major work in pneumatology, *The Spirit of Life*, Moltmann confronts Barth's emphasis on the discontinuity and infinity of difference between God and man. First, Moltmann vehemently opposes the revelation-experience dichotomy Barth's theology bequeathed to contemporary Christian theology.[6] For Moltmann, the primary meaning of God's revelation to the human is expressed through the concept of relationality. This implies that God's revelation essentially involves the experiencing of a relationship with the divine Other, who in his freedom chooses to reveal Himself.

The second level of criticism Moltmann directs at the pneumatology of Barth lies in Moltmann's dissatisfaction with Barth's localization of transcendence within the absolute eternity of God. In reaction to liberal theology's emphasis on the immanence of God within time, Barth's theology put an exclusive stress on the transcendence of God's eternity.[7] With his emphasis on the transcendence of the eternity of the Moment, the Moment of God's self-revelation, Barth closed off every possibility for any experience of God within time. It is not in human experience and in the time of this experience where God was accessible to humans. According to Barth, God was in no way accessible. It is only in the utterance and hearing of God's Word where God made Godself accessible.

Barth's marginalization of experience is closely connected to his understanding of eschatology.[8] For Barth eschatology is a vertical category and not a horizontal one that would allow for a real continuity between the human and the divine. Moltmann traces Barth's formulation of the eschaton along vertical lines back to what he calls the "transcendental eschatology" of Immanuel Kant.[9] The meaning of eschatology is the irruption of the eternal into historical time. Eschatology is not an expectation of the end of history on the horizon of the future. The eschatological moment takes place in the moment shattering all historical expectations.[10] It is in the eschatological moment that God confronts human beings with his revelation and with the demand for hearing the revelation. There is therefore no experience of God other than hearing the revelation of God in the eschatological moment. God is beyond experienceability in historical time and can only be met on God's own terms, in the eschatological moment wherein the eternity of God becomes transposed into time.[11]

If there is no possibility for experiencing God in human history, then Christian theology abrogates its continuity with the faith of the people of Israel. In Judaism the revelation of God finds its meaning within God's promissory history with the people of Israel. If eschatology is defined in terms of the absolute eternity of God, the meaning of history is marginalized. If the horizon of eschatology is the vertical horizon of God's eternity, as it is in the theology of Barth, then there is no sense in talking about messianic expectations for

Christianity. Moltmann's reformulation of the meaning of the eschaton is squarely grounded in his understanding of revelation. For Moltmann the meaning of divine revelation lies in revelation's logic of promise. Moltmann argues against what he calls the logocentrism of "the epiphany of the eternal present" and grounds the meaning of the revelation of God through Christ in the exodus tradition of the people of Israel.

> It is ultimately always the result of the influence of Greek methods of thought and enquiry when the revelation of God which is witnessed in the biblical scriptures is understood as the "epiphany of the eternal present." That describes the God of Parmenides rather than the God of the exodus and the resurrection. The revelation of the risen Christ is not a form of this epiphany of the eternal present, but necessitates a view of revelation as apocalypse of the promised future of the truth.[12]

Barth's theology of divine revelation eliminates all expectations for the redemption of history. In Barth's soteriology, redemption is understood as redemption from time. If one is caught up in the eschatological moment through deciding for the Word of God, one no longer needs to worry about a future of redemption. Redemption is Now as the presence of eternity in time.[13] Barth's theology of revelation does not seem to offer an adequate soteriological solution that addresses the question of suffering within historical time. For Barth, the meaning of redemption lies in the complete reconfiguration of life through a confrontation with the eternal Word. From the perspective of the theology of Moltmann, Barth and his theology of time are far removed from the actuality of suffering that takes place in historical time.

Moreover, avers Moltmann, Barth's soteriology has no satisfying answer to the question of the redemption of historical time. Suffering and injustice, however, takes place in historical time. If God is present in history merely tangentially (as Paul Tillich characterized Barth's theology of revelation)[14] there is no possibility for the redemption of time. Time becomes swallowed up in eternity and becomes ultimately time that is lost, time that is forgotten. Moltmann's criticism of Barth's theology is in direct continuity with the commitments of Moltmann's post-Holocaust political theology. In *The Theology of Hope*, Moltmann came to the realization that Barth's defense of God's Otherness is no longer tenable in the post-Auschwitz context. Joerg Rieger points out that the Barmen Declaration, Barth's manifesto of the "theology of the Other," excluded the real Other, the Jews of Europe: "While the Confessing Church spoke out against the Nazi regime, there remained a certain blindness to the plight of others, especially the Jews."[15]

As powerful as the Barmen Declaration was in rejecting idolatry and taking a stand for the Christian understanding of God at a moment of political

danger, it lacked the dimension of historical concreteness to stand up for the persecuted people of God, the people of Israel.

Behind Barth's lifelong issue with the relevance of human experience for Christian theology was his obsessive need to protect the sovereignty of God's self-revelation.[16] The revelation of God generates its own linguistic universe, which is incommensurable with the language of human experience. The reason behind Barth's systematic exclusion of experience and its linguistic expression from Christian theology was his mistrust of the human subject. Barth was convinced that theology's anthropological turn brought serious distortions into the comprehension of God.

Moltmann's turn to experience does not mean that he is returning to the subject-oriented theology of the Enlightenment. The theology of Barth made such return impossible. Moltmann's retrieval of experience incorporates Barth's critique of experience-oriented theologies into a revision of subject-centered conceptions of experience. That experience can be understood in a dynamic, open-ended way is shown by Moltmann's treatment of what he calls liminal experiences of life. The epistemological importance of liminal experiences is that their meaning is never settled. These experiences evade all attempts for classification.

Moltmann demonstrates the limitations of subject-oriented conceptions of experience by focusing on "liminal situations of life." In these liminal situations the subject is no longer in control of constructing the meaning of these experiences. The subject has no epistemological control over these experiences. Liminal experiences continuously destabilize the subject.[17] Liminal experiences point to the open-ended nature of experience.

Liminal experiences expose the inadequacy of the subject-oriented construal of the meaning of experience. The subject-centered construction of experience reduces every thing to an object defined by the subject. "Whether things, events, or persons, all are 'objects' of possible experience of the conscious subject."[18] All things are experienced according to universally valid rules prescribed a priori by pure reason.[19] The implication of such an anthropocentric scheme is that it excludes perceiving difference in the external world.[20]

Liminal experiences, such as the experience of death and the experience of love, show that these experiences are beyond the control of human reason. "In the elemental experiences of life, love and death we are touched by perspectives of a sensory kind which overpower us to such a degree that we are not master of them."[21]

The experience of life itself, in all its fragility shows the infinite fragility of the subject and its dependence on the forces of life. In spite of all of its anticipations every moment holds something unexpected, unforeseen for the

subject. Instead of being the one in charge of its life, the subject is situated on the open horizon of infinite possibilities life is.

> Out of its fathomless source, life thrusts forward to expression, expression through living. That is why the deeper experiences of life remain uncompleted. We discover ourselves in them again and again, each time in a different way. This is the charm of re-membrance. We experience life with these experiences, and they travel with us.[22]

In contrast to Barth's anthropocentric conception of experience Moltmann redefines experience in such a way that there is no longer any antithesis between revelation and experience. Experience has a particular epistemic depth that allows for "knowing differently." Knowing differently, in the context of Moltmann's investigation, means that one knows according to a temporally different way of being in the world. Experience is not a subordinate epistemic category as it is in Kant. An adequate concept of experience functions both to assert its rightful epistemic position and to subvert the claim of reason for total comprehension.

Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, demonstrated the epistemological impossibility of experiencing things as they are in themselves. Kantian epistemology had devastating consequences for the world of religion. If the thinking subject falls short of knowing things as they really are and can only know the phenomenological imprint of things, there can be no epistemologically certain knowledge of God. Kant made it impossible to arrive at knowledge of God through the experience of things and predicated the experienceability of things on the capacities of the human knower. The unknowability and inexperienceability of the *Ding-an-Sich* functioned as a warning about the limits of reason and the futility of reason's attempt to reach epistemological certitude about God.

> According to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, God is as hidden and unknowable as the Ding an Sich. He is not only unknowable because he is not an object of possible experience. The limits of reason itself have actually made it impossible for him to reveal himself and to manifest himself in the world of experience.[23]

Barth's theology, in spite of his radical break from the theology of the Enlightenment, still owed a great deal to his predecessors, especially to Kant and Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher reacted against Kant's relegation of faith to the sphere of practical reason by redefining the meaning of faith in such a way that it would enjoy immunity from reason's demand for verifiability. For Schleiermacher faith became a supra-epistemic category and therefore faith could not stand in opposition to reason. In relation to Kant's and Schleiermacher's

respective epistemologies of divine revelation, Barth's theology of the Word of God overcame both while preserving essential elements of each. In relation to Kant Barth preserved the former's distinction between the noumenon and the phenomenon; while in relation to Schleiermacher Barth continued to emphasize the autonomy of the Christian faith, now under the guise of the noetic autonomy of divine revelation.

EXPERIENCE IN PROCESS THEOLOGY

Moltmann's critique of the Barthian exclusion of experience is also a critique of a particular formulation of the transcendent predicated upon the epistemic superiority of divine revelation. While not discounting the special character of divine revelation Moltmann, taking a cue from process metaphysics, argues for a more dynamic understanding of transcendence. This approach, moving beyond the dualism of nature and history in its understanding of eschatology, perceives the transcendent in the very transience of life.

Process metaphysics perceives reality as organically interconnected. Everything in the world is intricately connected to each other. That means that change even in one particular thing affects the totality of all things.

The fundamental concept of process theology is that of perishing. According to process metaphysics, a particular thing never entirely ceases ontologically but it becomes incorporated into a future life form. Consequently, perishing is not an entirely negative phenomenon in process metaphysics. Without perishing there would be no possibility for future life.[24] Change in one thing brings about difference within the totality. The focus of process theology is to examine the implications of the process of perishing for the future.[25]

Process metaphysics implies that the difference brought about by the perishing of things affects the totality in such a way that the totality of existence becomes greater. The past fuels the future. There is no real death for process metaphysics. The life-energies of past life are present within the life of the present. Process metaphysics identifies this ever-expanding life, which is behind/within reality with God.

In spite of the affinities between process metaphysics and Moltmann regarding their respective visions of transcendence, there are important divergences between them. Moltmann defines the horizon on which the transcendent can be experienced as an eschatological horizon, while the horizon of experiencing the transcendent in process metaphysics is the horizon of pure temporality.[26]

For Moltmann the merit of process metaphysics lies in its understanding of experience that no longer privileges the human subject as the determining factor of experience. Experience is understood as a complex phenomenon brought about by an intricate network of interconnections between organisms. With its understanding of experience process metaphysics levels the field between the human and the nonhuman and clears the way to a conception of transcendence that reflects the organic connection between all things, both human and nonhuman.

IMMANENT TRANSCENDENCE

Moltmann's notion of immanent transcendence is predicated on the expansion of the meaning of experience beyond the control of reason as understood by the tradition of the Enlightenment. The concept of immanent transcendence hides a critique of the modernity and its tendencies to exclude difference in its epistemological scheme. "As far as the hidden dimension of theology is concerned, I would suggest abandoning the narrow reference to the modern concept of self-consciousness; so that we can discover transcendence in every experience, not merely in the experience of the self."[27] God is experienced not as something disconnected from reality. "The Holy Spirit is by no means a matter of revelation. It has to do with life and its source."[28] For Moltmann when one experiences the livingness of life one experiences the presence of the Holy Spirit, that is, one experiences God. The experience of God is experience of the Holy Spirit.

> The possibility of perceiving God in all things, and all things in God, is grounded theologically on an understanding of the Spirit of God as the power of creation and the wellspring of life.[29]

In Barth's pneumatology the Spirit is defined within the matrix of his theology of revelation. Moltmann's pneumatology defines the Spirit not only as the Spirit of revelation but, just as importantly, as the source of all life. "God the Spirit is also the Spirit of the universe, its total cohesion, its structure, its information, its energy."[30] It is as the source of all life that the Spirit is present in all things and brings to the world of transience the messianic hope of new life. For Moltmann, the experience of God the Spirit is closely correlated with the active anticipation of a different kind of future. It is through the presence of the Spirit in all things that the eschatological hope for the resurrection of life is already present in creation. The presence of the Spirit is a kenotic presence as it is through participating in the suffering of all living things that

the Spirit infuses the whole of creation with the messianic hope for the end of suffering/death and with the expectation of the new creation.

Immanent transcendence is not derived from the ontological constitution of the human subject as in the transcendental Thomism of Karl Rahner. Rahner's transcendental Thomism latches onto certain possibilities of Kant's transcendental idealism, more exactly on the capacity of the human knower to be able to know the limits of his ability to know. Translating this epistemological function of the limit to the ontological constitution of the human being, Rahner claims that the human being is as much determined by that which is beyond the limit of his current state as by that which is within its limit. The human being has a finite existence within the world; the facility of its worldly existence is reflected in the finite limits of its possible knowledge of the world. Yet, behind the epistemological limitations lie certain ontological dispositions, which make it possible for the human being to transcend its factical existence.

Immanent transcendence represents the overcoming of the anthropologically deduced understanding of transcendence and the concomitant expansion of the experienceability of the transcendent. The notion, immanent transcendence, is in direct continuity with the Jewish understanding of the *ruach* and with Judaism's long tradition of Shekinah theology. "The ruach as Yahweh's ruach is of course transcendent in origin; but it is equally true that as the power of life in all the living it is immanently efficacious."[31]

PERICHORESIS: TRINITARIAN EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

It is important to emphasize that Moltmann's use of the notion of the immanent transcendence of God to illustrate the meaning of the experienceability of God in the world is not a resuscitation of Schleiermacher's subjectivist doctrine of God. The basic presupposition of Moltmann's notion of immanent transcendence and his retrieval of experience is his peculiar formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Through the notion of immanent transcendence pneumatology gains a cosmic orientation, stretching beyond the boundaries of both the positivism of revelation and the authoritarianism of ecclesiastical control. The immanent transcendence of God is not ontologically deducible but reflects the perichoretic relationship between the history of the world and God's own trinitarian history.

In pneumatology the meaning of the concept "perichoresis" becomes fully realized. It is through the Holy Spirit that the life of the world, the life of creation, and the life of God interpenetrate one another. Moltmann sees a profound, inextricable connection between the intra-trinitarian and extra-trinitarian

life of God. The life of the Trinity is that which is hidden behind all manifestations of life in the cosmos. This is a very immanentist (almost Spinozistic) understanding of God, but it does guarantee that there is no disconnect between the life of the divine and the life of the non-divine. For Moltmann, the concept of "perichoresis" is the link that connects the intra-trinitarian life of the Trinity to the extra-trinitarian life of God. It is the concept of "perichoresis" that lies behind his notion of "immanent transcendence." Moltmann's use of the concept of immanent transcendence to talk about the experienceability of God in the created order is squarely grounded in his revisionary work in the doctrine of the Trinity. Perichoresis is the main theological concept behind Moltmann's development of a social doctrine of the Trinity. It is within the trinitarian sociality of the life of God that a new understanding of personhood becomes crystallized.

Experience also becomes redefined by this notion of personhood. Experience is not defined as the experience of a solitary ego. Experience is the experience of life within the trinitarian community. The notion of perichoresis is the pivotal concept on which Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity hinges. The Trinity is the perichoretic community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The perichoretic community is the fellowship of love, which invites the whole of creation to be included. "All life, and also all spiritual life, is understood in perichoretic terms, i.e. as life in relationships, and conversely as a structure of relationship which makes life possible at all."[32]

The Holy Spirit is an equal member of the perichoretic fellowship of the Trinity. The unique personhood of the Holy Spirit lies in her opening up the perichoretic fellowship of the trinitarian God to not only human beings but to the whole of creation. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is not the narrow community of the Church but the community of all things living. The fellowship of the Spirit is a messianic community of the whole created order. The indwelling of the Spirit in all things in creation offers the messianic hope of new creation to the world plagued by transience.

The modern discussions on the idea of personhood in less ontological and more communitarian ways have affected Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity. What makes his contribution to both Christian trinitarian thought and to modern theories of personhood significant is that personhood for Moltmann is not only a socially constructed concept but also it is to be understood under the notion of the messianic. God as Trinity is not only the perichoretic community of love but it also is a messianic community. The perichoretic community of the trinitarian love is a messianic fellowship because of its eschatological openness to include within itself the excluded—the detritus of life—and through their inclusion into the messianic fellowship of life offer them redemption.

Moltmann's investigation of the meaning of experience does not take place within a vacuum. It transpires on a horizon, which is already determined by the trinitarian structures of existence. At the same time, the explication of the meaning of experience contributes to an even further expansion of the trinitarian dimension of his thought. His cosmically conceived pneumatology, begun with the coming to terms with the concept of experience, also functions to achieve an even wider scope for trinitarianism. Moltmann's pneumatology is a cosmic pneumatology, which goes beyond artificially established ecclesiastical strictures. Pneumatology is not tied to ecclesiastical structures but is expanded to the totality of creation. "Through the concept of perichoresis, the social doctrine of the Trinity formulates the mutual indwellings of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the eternal community that is manifested through these indwellings."[33] Perichoresis refers to the mutual interpenetration, reciprocal indwellings of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The trinitarian God is the perichoretic community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Perichoresis shows the intimate connection between experiences of life and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is no longer an isolated doctrine any more. Moltmann shows how it is intricately connected to the reality of the world.

FILIOQUE AND PNEUMATOLOGY

Moltmann's pneumatology is one of the most important contributions to contemporary Christian thought. It is through his trinitarian pneumatology that we can measure the consistency of his messianic theology. Does his pneumatology lead to a deeper understanding of the messianic dimension of trinitarian discourse?

Having established the vitality of pneumatology for Christian trinitarian theology, Moltmann addresses what he considers distortions, sore points that the Western theological tradition inherited during the historical development of its pneumatology. According to Moltmann, one of the most fundamental distortions of Western pneumatology is the *filioque* clause. The persistence of Western theology in defending the filioque led to a one-sided trinitarianism and it was also the major hindrance to developing a trinitarian pneumatology in the West.[34]

One of the main problems with the *filioque* clause is that through an apparent subordination of pneumatology to Christology it reduces pneumatology to a function of Christology. Due to its overreaction against Spirit Christologies during the christological disputes of the fourth century, Western theology has been dominated by christology, neglecting pneumatology. What

the West lost by excluding the influence of Spirit christologies was the essential trinitarian orientation of the whole of Christian theology, of both christology and pneumatology. No christology can be developed without pneumatology, and, equally, no pneumatology can be constructed without a christological base.[35] Pneumatology in the West became christologically overdetermined, which resulted in narrowing the scope of pneumatology to the sphere of the Church.

> The Spirit of God had to be solely the Spirit of the Lord, and communicated only through the "spiritual pastors" of the church and the anointed apostolic majesties of the holy imperium.[36]

The Western theological tradition modified the trinitarian language of the Nicene Creed by including the Son as an additional source for the procession of the Holy Spirit (*qui ex patre filioque procedit*).[37] According to the modified version, the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son. The Eastern Church, never accepting this modification of the original Creed, accused the West of subordinating the Holy Spirit to the Son:

> With the introduction of the filioque into the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Spirit was considered as subordinate to the Son from its very origin, the Son being put ahead of the Spirit . . . Through this trinitarian structure, Christological pneumatology is laid down hard and fast, as the only form pneumatology can take.[38]

One of the results of the *filioque* addendum was the conscious and systematic exclusion of the Spirit christologies of the synoptic gospels.[39] The Messiah of the Spirit christologies of the synoptic gospels represented a message about the messianic kingdom of God the increasingly authoritarian Church would not allow to be heard. "Remembrances of the Christ of the Spirit, his Sermon on the Mount, and his non-violent passion, had to be repressed; for these were 'dangerous memories.'"[40] The dangerous memories conjured up by the Christ anointed by the Spirit represented a revolutionary messianism that the Church had already begun to replace with the political messianism of the Church and its subordinate, the Christian State.

The adoption of the *filioque* clause by the West led to an uneven relationship between pneumatology and christology introducing a fixed order of relations within the Trinity, which subordinated the Spirit both to the Father and to the Son.

The doctrine of justification, according to Moltmann, tends to be a showcase for a sort of subordinationism where the role of the Spirit, and consequently the identity of the Spirit, is fully determined by what the Son assigns

to it. In this soteriological scheme the role of the Spirit is to be a "mere" agent of sanctification. The aim of Moltmann's pneumatology is to restore the lost dialectic between christology and pneumatology. His messianic christology already prepares the ground for this restoration.

Maintaining the dialectical relationship between pneumatology and Christology leads Moltmann to make the crucial connection between pneumatology and the theology of the cross. The context of Moltmann's trinitarian thinking and his revisionary theology of the Spirit is his theology of the cross.[41] The theology of the cross, however, becomes infused with his pneumatology, in which the Spirit emerges with its own personhood.[42] In Moltmann's opinion the *filioque* addition acted as a hindrance in developing a dynamic trinitarianism based upon the essential dialectic between the Messianic Son and the life-giving Spirit.

For Moltmann, the *filioque* is the natural outcome of a monarchical orientation to the Trinity.[43] The inclusion of the filioque clause in the development of Western pneumatology resulted in a modalist tendency of Western trinitarianism that attributes a particular role, that of sanctification, to the Holy Spirit. The Eastern Church resisted the compartmentalization of the Holy Trinity according to its operations and, consequently, it was able to maintain a more consistent trinitarian logic in its pneumatology.[44] The pneumatology of the Eastern Church plays an integral part in its trinitarian theology, a contrast to the role of pneumatology within Western theology. The Holy Spirit, within Eastern theology, pervades the whole of the doctrine of God.

The filioque clause led to a peculiar compartmentalization of Western trinitarian theology. The Holy Spirit became exclusively associated with the doctrine of redemption.[45] The decision of the West to include the clause in setting the basic parameters for trinitarian discourse displayed Western theology's tendency to separate the two basic doctrines of creation and redemption in the larger scheme of Christian theology.

In the Eastern Church, where a more dynamic trinitarianism prevailed as a result of the rejection of the filioque, the doctrines of creation and redemption never got separated, and the Spirit continued to be regarded as both the Spirit of Creation and the Spirit of Redemption. As a result of its conscious resistance to allowing the destructive force of dualism to pervade its trinitarian doctrine, the Eastern Church serves as a paradigm for the understanding of experience for Moltmann. In the theology of the Eastern Church there is a strong sense of the mysticism of everyday experience.[46] The pneumatology of the Eastern Church is not a separate level of its trinitarian architecture but one that pervades it at all levels.

The filioque was one of the main reasons that led to the restriction of the scope of pneumatology to the sphere of redemption.[47] As a result of the *filioque*

the Holy Spirit was exclusively understood as the Spirit of Christ, or the Spirit of redemption. Because of the christological subordinationism of pneumatology, the connection between the Father and the Spirit is abrogated and therefore the Spirit is no longer viewed as the Spirit of the Father, or as the Spirit of Creation.

The sole focus on redemption within pneumatology is the sign of the continuing influence of Gnosticism within Western Christianity. This latent Gnostic tendency within pneumatology creates a discontinuity with the Old Testament teaching of the ruach as permeating, vivifying the totality of existence.

The creation-redemption dichotomy was further exacerbated by Christian theology's embrace of the nature-history dualism of modernity.

> Theology has often enough responded to the triumphal progress of science by withdrawing to the field of history, leaving nature to the sciences. . . . Whereas "nature" took on the overtones of what is timeless, static and continually recurring, "history" was filled with remembrance and hope and the real meaning of human life.[48]

The nature-history dichotomy is the culmination of the anthropocentric orientation of Western thought. History is understood solely as the history of the human. Nature is understood as an objective reality. History is a separate sphere in total isolation from nature. The primordial threat posed by nature is overcome by subjugating nature through the natural sciences and creating a sphere, history, which belongs exclusively to the realization of the human spirit. With the juxtaposition of history and nature, however, nature becomes a mere indicator of humanity's progress in history.

The domination of nature is the result of the dichotomous relationship between science and history.[49] Through the invention of the idea of history, nature is reduced to a mere field of data for scientific inquiry. The invention of history completes humanity's alienation from nature. Moltmann's pneumatology is an explicit rejection of the nature-history dualism. The rejection of this dualism becomes the basic presupposition of his holistic pneumatology.

Moltmann expands the scope of pneumatology beyond the confines set for it by a traditional understanding of redemption. The Spirit of redemption is also the Spirit of creation.[50] By shifting the emphasis away from the traditional orientation of pneumatology, which made pneumatology parasitic upon a particular scheme of salvation, Moltmann opens up the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to new possibilities.

Moltmann's expansion of pneumatology is the direct result of his ecological doctrine of God, which is driven by the basic dialectic between creation and redemption.[51] In his *God in Creation* Moltmann's theology gains

an ecological focus. This work in ecological theology expands the meaning of perichoresis to the relationship between God and world: "The history of the creative Spirit embraces human history and natural history."[52]

Through recapturing the dialectical relationship between the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption, Moltmann, in *God in Creation*, works out a revision of the doctrine of God. Both Creation and the Creator are viewed in a dynamic manner in Moltmann's revision of the doctrine of God.

Moltmann offers a dynamic doctrine of God, which overcomes the rupture between the doctrines of creation and redemption. Redemption is no longer viewed simply as a restitution of all things to their original order. Redemption is the realization of the hope for the coming of new creation. God does not redeem as a cosmic janitor. Through redeeming creation God brings about something qualitatively new, something never before experienceable. The focus of redemption is not the sinful human being but the whole of nature, which was divested of its true significance by having been subsumed through anthropologically conceived temporality.

The revision of the doctrine of creation has a dramatic effect on the doctrine of redemption. Previously the doctrine of redemption was understood as the restoration to an original, pristine order of sinless innocence. God corrects that which was corrupted as a result of human sin, restoring things to their prelapsarian, original form. In this scheme the doctrine of creation plays a minimal role as it merely refers to the original order.

In the premodern scheme of redemption the emphasis lies on achieving an original state of harmony. Creation alludes to an original state devoid of the fragmentation caused by sin. In this scheme creation refers to an eternal order, which lies beyond the temporality of human history and as such has no relevance for the work of God in the history of salvation. God the creator and God the redeemer appear to be two different beings. In this view of creation the spirit of Marcion lives on uninhibited.

The reductionistic view of the doctrine of creation leads to an equally reductionistic doctrine of redemption. The doctrine of redemption is parasitic on a static view of creation as it refers to the cleanup work of God who tries to eliminate the disorder of the original order caused by sin.

Because of the inordinate emphasis on the Spirit as the Spirit of redemption, there is in Western pneumatology a strong proclivity to reduce the activity of the Spirit to the individual believer's subjective experience of the saving work of God. In many regards, especially when compared to its Eastern counterparts, Western pneumatology domesticates the Holy Spirit, restricting it to the sphere of the Church and to the experience of sanctification by the believer.[53] Moltmann's main target for the "eternalization" of the ex-

perience of salvation is St. Augustine. In Augustine's theology the experience of God is closely identified with the individual soul's experience of purification and salvation. It is in the human soul that the Holy Spirit takes up her dwelling place. The believer becomes more and more sanctified as he becomes more and more aware of the Spirit's presence. But what is the time of this process of sanctification? If the experience of sanctification, the experience of the ever-growing intensity of the presence of God through the Spirit, has no temporal dimension it remains a vacuous experience, and not the experience of the trinitarian God, says Moltmann. If life in the Spirit, is not related to the life of transience that characterizes everyday life it is no longer the life of the Son, and, ultimately, it is not authentic life at all. The life the Son lived and the death the Son died did not take place in order to overcome life in the world and provide an escape to an atemporal spiritual reality. The reason behind this lamentable dualism between the spiritual and the temporal was the result of the Church's neglect of the messianic dimension of its roots.

The purpose of Moltmann's revision of Western pneumatology is to reinfuse the doctrine of the Spirit with the eschatological energies found in messianic expectations. It is on the horizon of these messianic expectations that the artificial and detrimental separation between Christology and pneumatology, immanence and transcendence, and finally creation and redemption is irrevocably removed.

The eschatological approach to the doctrine of the Spirit is not a new phenomenon within the history of Christian tradition. In a somewhat Christocentric form the eschatological orientation was present within the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons in his doctrine of the recapitulation of all things. Origen extended Irenaeus's doctrine of recapitulation through his doctrine of *apocatastasis*.[54] Although Origen had an apparently weak doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his doctrine of *apocatastasis* became quite influential in Eastern trinitarian thinking.[55] The doctrine of apocatastasis opens up the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be interpreted from a messianic perspective.

Understanding pneumatology from the horizon of eschatology leads Moltmann to connect the doctrine of the Spirit to his messianic theology of freedom. In Moltmann's theology of freedom the Spirit is the messianic agent who brings the messianic mission of the Son unto final completion.

> For freedom is nothing else than being open for the genuine future, letting oneself be determined by the future. So Spirit may be called the power of futurity. Yet the difference between past and future emerges for the Spirit of faith not in the punctum mathematicum of the present and not in the airy nunc aeternum, but in that historic event of the raising of the crucified Christ in which the power of transience and the deadliness of death are conquered and the future of life is

> opened once and for all. Christ did not rise into the Spirit or into the kerygma, but into that as yet undetermined future realm ahead of us which is pointed to by the tendencies of the Spirit and the proclamations of the kerygma. This realm of the future which lies before us cannot be turned into mere "futurity" by reflecting solely on its relation to existence, but it is the future of Jesus Christ and can therefore be inferred only from the knowledge and recognition of that historic event of the resurrection of Christ which is the making of history and the key to it. The "Spirit" who "mortifies the things of the flesh" and gives freedom for the future is not an eternal event, but arises from a historic event and discloses eschatological possibilities and dangers. As a reminder of Christ he is also the promise of his future; and vice versa.[56]

SUMMARY

Moltmann's work in pneumatology is based on his retrieval of experience for Christian theology. The significance of this project can only be understood as an attempt to liberate theology from the restrictions imposed on it by Karl Barth. Barth saw no alternatives between experience and divine revelation, and, in his attempt to uphold the latter, he invalidated the significance of the former. Moltmann deems the Barthian project inadequate as he thinks that Barth's understanding of experience is still determined by the epistemology of the Enlightenment. Moltmann extricates the concept of experience from its anthropological overdetermination and attempts to construe experience as a transcendental, an attempt that echoes certain elements of Karl Rahner's transcendental theology. Experience is described as an immanent transcendent. The goal with the broadening of the scope of experience is for Moltmann to be able to show the relation between experience of life and experience of God. Ultimately what Moltmann is arguing for is that all true experience of life is experience of God the Spirit who is perichoretically present within the depths of life processes. Moltmann then goes on to argue against what he perceives as distortions in trinitarian discourse that marginalized the role of the Spirit, and with that the role of experience in theology. He vehemently argues against the *filioque* addendum, which he perceives to have led to the supremacy of christology in Latin trinitarianism. Related to his dissatisfaction with the *filioque* and the subsequent domination of christology is his continued attack on what he calls the pervasive dualism within the structures of Christian theology.

Moltmann's recovery of the concept of the messianic for Christian theology goes well beyond certain Christological identifications. Through Moltmann's pneumatology the messianic gains universal significance. With the messianic orientation of his thought, Moltmann's revision of pneumatology

displays the full dynamism of his trinitarianism, conclusively establishing the connection between the messianic dimension of Christianity and Christianity's trinitarian understanding of God. Through his pneumatology, Moltmann demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity can only be adequately understood if approached through the concept of the messianic. The recovery of the messianic idea and its fusion with Christian trinitarian thought also represents the end of a theological alienation between Judaism and Christianity, an alienation largely caused by Christianity's non-messianic, metaphysical approach to the doctrine of the Trinity.

NOTES

1. For Barth's theology of divine revelation see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume 1, Part 1* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Press, 1975).
2. See Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 142.
3. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 6. For Barth's pneumatology see Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).
4. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 6.
5. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 39. Moltmann in his critique of Barth cites Barth, who characterizes eternity as "unhistorical, supra-historical, or 'proto-historical'," Ibid., 40.
6. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 6.
7. Moltmann's criticism of the theological method of Barth is not new. It is in direct continuity with his groundbreaking work in theology, *The Theology of Hope*, which represented a revolt against the restrictions of Barthian theology. In *The Theology of Hope* Moltmann took on the "Time-Eternity" dichotomy that the theology of Karl Barth bequeathed to modern theology.
8. For an enlightening discussion on the epistemological presuppositions of Barth's theology see the excellent section on "The Theology of the Transcendental Subjectivity of God" in Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, 50–58. William Abraham's *Canon and Criterion* is a useful reading of Barth's epistemology of divine revelation from the perspective of the analytical tradition. The merit of Abraham's reading of Barth's epistemological dilemmas lies in providing a historical matrix within which Barth's theology took shape. See William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
9. The connection between Barth's formulation of eschatology and the philosophy of Kant can be found in a theoretical chapter of Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, the work that represented a major shift in the Barth-dominated scene of German Protestant theology of the post-WWII era. See Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 45–50.

10. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 14.

11. Ibid., 13.

12. See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Eschatology of Revelation," in *Theology of Hope*, 84–94. Here Ibid., 84.

13. Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 14.

14. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973).

15. See Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 66.

16. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 54.

17. Under liminal experiences, Moltmann has the experiences of life, love, and death in mind. "In the elemental experiences of life, love, and death we are touched by perceptions of a sensory kind which overpower us to such a degree that we are not master of them." See Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 20. For the philosophical background of the concept of liminal experience see the thought of Karl Jaspers. See O. Schrag, *Existence, existenz, and transcendence: an introduction to the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1971). David Tracy's *Plurality and Ambiguity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 76, illuminates the Nietzschean background of the concept of the "limit."

18. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 30

19. "The self-consciousness of the human subject actively constitutes his world of possible experience." Ibid., 29.

20. Ibid., 30.

21. Ibid., 20.

22. Ibid., 22.

23. Note Moltmann's characterization of Kant's concept of God and its relation to Kant's concept of possible experience; see Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 31.

24. On the phenomenology of perishing see Eberhard Jüngel's *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), especially 202–206.

25. For a useful introduction into process theology see John Cobb, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1977). For the philosophical underpinnings of process theology see Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

26. Process metaphysics is indebted to the vitalism of Bergson. A discussion of Bergson's philosophy of time and experience is found below in relation to Walter Benjamin's philosophy of time. For Bergson's concept of time and experience, see Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1990).

27. Ibid., 34.

28. Ibid., 7.

29. Ibid., 35.

30. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 16.

31. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 42.

32. See Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) 147.

33. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 16.

34. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981), 178.

35. Yves Congar's "no Christology without Pneumatology and no Pneumatology without Christology," quoted in Ralph Del Colle, "A response to Jürgen Moltmann and David Coffey," in *Advents of the Spirit An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology,* edited by Bardford E. Hinze and D. Lyle Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 345–346.

36. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 59.

37. For a comprehensive summary of the history of the *filioque* controversy see Dietrich Ritschl, "The History of the Filioque controversy," in *Conflicts About the Spirit*, edited by Hans Kung and Jürgen Moltmann (New York: Seabury Press, 1979). See also Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 261–316; and Jaroslav Pelikan's authoritative study of Eastern Christianity, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).

38. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 71.

39. Ibid., 59.

40. Ibid.

41. "Pneumatic christology is only realistic when it is developed into the trinitarian theology of the cross." See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), 37.

42. "My starting point is that the efficacy of Christ is not without the efficacy of the Spirit, which is its goal; but that the efficacy of the Spirit is nevertheless distinguishable from the efficacy of Christ, and is not congruent with that or absorbed by it." See Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, xi.

43. See Moltmann, "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit," in *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 58; and his *Spirit of Life*, 290–295.

44. "Ever since the Cappadocian Fathers, the tradition of the Eastern Church has emphasized the reciprocity between pneumatological Christology on the one hand, and Christological pneumatology on the other." See Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 59.

45. "In both Protestant and Catholic theology and devotion there is a tendency to view the Holy Spirit solely as the Spirit of redemption." See Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 8.

46. "Experience of the Spirit is experience of the divine life which makes our human life truly living." Ibid., 278.

47. Ibid., 8.

48. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 31.

49. Ibid.

50. Moltmann redefines the meaning of the doctrine of creation. For his revision of the doctrine, a project that has strong affinities with process theology, see Moltmann's

God in Creation. For Moltmann the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption are not to be artificially separated as seen in Orthodox systematic theologies. The doctrines are dialectically related to each other. Redemption may even be seen as the culmination of what is referred to as the New Creation. The Spirit is not only the Spirit of redemption, a customary role assigned to it in Western theology, but also the Spirit of New creation.

51. Moltmann sees an organic continuity between creation and redemption: "Redemption is the final new creation of all things out of their sin, transitoriness and mortality, for everlasting life, enduring continuance and eternal glory." Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 9.

52. See Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 34.

53. "It would seem as if the Spirit of God is simply and solely the Spirit of the church, and the Spirit of faith." See Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 8.

54. For the doctrine of apocatastasis, see the work of the towering figure of early Christian thought, Origen, *On First Principles* translated by G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), especially Book VI. For the resurrection of this doctrine in contemporary Christian theology, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Word and Redemption 1–2* (New York: Herder, 1964-65).

55. For Origen's subordinationist trinitarianism and weak pneumatology, see Origen, *Treatise on the Passover and Dialogue of Origen With Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

56. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 212.

Chapter Five

Messianic History

The messianic hope of Benjamin is a negative hope, reflecting his appropriation of the Jewish prohibition against the representation of the transcendent, a hope, born of the demand of the text for interpretation. Paradoxically, the negative hope for messianic fulfillment does not arrive from a promised future of eschatological consummation, but it emerges from the forgotten experiences of the past through the faculty of memory. Instead of a positive expectation of future redemption, Benjamin's messianic thinking locates hope within the hidden layers of unwritten histories. The task of the following chapter is to demonstrate how the various levels of Benjamin's thought converge in his philosophy of history. By pointing to the priority of memory and of the demand never to leave the past behind, Benjamin's philosophy of history is shown to provide an alternative to the future-oriented messianism of Moltmann.

THEOLOGY: CRITIQUE OF TOTALITY

In Konvolut N 2,1 of his Arcades Project, Benjamin vindicates theological terminology as appropriate for use in reading reality as a kind of text. "Keep reminding oneself that the commentary on reality (since here it is a question of commentary, a construing of detail) calls for a method completely different from that required for a text. In the one case theology is the basic science, in the other philology."[1]

Benjamin refers to the experience that "prevents us from fundamentally understanding history without theology."[2] Rolf Tiedemann remarks that certain interpreters "denounce the theological terminology, i.e. 'redemption,' 'Judgment Day,' 'Antichrist' and 'Messiah,' as being imposed on the Theses."

Theology does not refer to an explicit belief in the existence of God (although Scholem mentions that Benjamin, at least in his early period, never denied the existence of God).[3] Theology for Benjamin functions as the possibility to think differently about the world.

Theology cannot fully disappear because it represents the negation of the fallible historical goals of humanity.[4] The presence of theology puts into question the narrative of history. Historical materialism can only be triumphant if its efforts to change the world are fueled by theology's negative judgment about the world. Transcendence is defined by Benjamin as total negativity, as the negation of the status quo.

Benjamin's philosophy of history represents his complete and unequivocal break from all previous philosophical approaches, which imputed "forceful concepts to the course of history."[5] For Benjamin, the chronicler provides the model for the historian who instead of explaining events in terms of causal relations presents them as significant illustrations of the "history of nature."[6]

> The historian is bound to explain in one way or another the happenings with which he deals; under no circumstances can he content himself with displaying them as models of the course of the world. But this is precisely what the chronicler does, especially in his classical representatives, the chronicler of the Middle Ages, the precursors of the historians of today. By basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation—an inscrutable one—they have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders. Its place is taken by interpretation, which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world.[7]

The chronicler makes no distinction between minor and major events within history. History, for the chronicler, is not the passing of time through an unhindered continuum interspersed with major events, so-called "turning points" that are supposed to give the illusion that history is not meaningless. For Benjamin, "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments. Each moment it has lived becomes citation à l'ordre du jour—and that day is Judgment Day."[8]

Against the tendencies of modern philosophy and historiography, which he believed were inevitably leading to oppressive and dehumanizing totalitarianism, Benjamin revolted from early on through relying on the concept of the messianic. The concept of history, which is defined by the dubious notion of progress, is self-defeating and self-emptying. As a result of an abstraction,

which philosophers call the telos of history, eventually all moments lose their significance.

Benjamin delivered an address to the Free Student League of Berlin in 1914 about the idea of history, which, in its basic outline, remained more or less permanent for him. He wrote,

> There is a conception of history which out of confidence in the infinity of time discerns only the rhythm of men and epochs which, quickly or slowly, advances on the road to progress. . . . The following consideration leads, against this conception, to a determinate State in which history rests collected into a focal point, as formerly in the utopian images of thinkers. The elements of the end condition are not present as formless tendencies of progress, but instead are embedded in every present as endangered, condemned and ridiculed creations and ideas. The historical task is to give absolute form in a genuine way to the immanent condition of fulfillment, to make it visible and predominant in the present . . . however, it is only comprehensible in its metaphysical structure, like the Messianic realm or the idea of the French Revolution.[9]

Both idealist and materialist philosophies of history were based on a causal approach to history, and they culminated in the positivistic idea of historical progress. The predominance of progress is present even in the case of Marxist dialectical materialism. "According to Marxism, it is 'true human beings' who always 'make their own history,' in order to consummate it in the foreseeable future as a 'Realm of Freedom' . . . 'according to a collective will to a collective plan' and 'in full consciousness.'"[10] This is the very epitome of the positivist understanding of history, which becomes anathema for Benjamin: "He could no longer be convinced that every historical event derives from another by necessity and that all events together constitute a progressive motion."[11]

The idea that there is only one singular history is the greatest illusion of modernity for Benjamin. The singularity of history, and the one-dimensionality of its time, is of a mythological quality that conceals the infinite layers of forgotten, unrealized histories, and their time. The task of the critic is to act as an archaeologist of forgotten histories who probes the hidden layers of time.

> He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters the earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is the deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand—like precious fragments or torsos in the collector's

> gallery—in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding. True, for successful excavation a plan is needed. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam, and it is to cheat oneself of the richest prize to preserve as a record merely the inventory of one's discoveries, and not this dark joy of the place of the finding itself. Fruitless searching is as much a part of this as succeeding, and consequently remembrance must not proceed in the manner of a narrative or still less that of the report, but must, in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner, assay its spade in ever-new places, and in the old ones delve to ever-deeper layers.[12]

Benjamin's philosophy is characterized by a constant preoccupation with ruins, with marginal features of experience. The task of the archaeologist of time is fueled by the messianic urge for redemption. His task is to awaken forgotten histories, to call back the dead to life. The inverse possibility of redemption emerges at the moment of interruption. Benjamin refers to the interruption as the moment of the Now (*Jetzzeit*): "A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop."[13] The time of the Now (*Jetzzeit*) cannot be manipulated by will. It eludes all attempts at forecasting time.

Messianic time, the time of the Now (*Jetzzeit*), is a spatial category. Messianic time is a transvaluation of epistemology into an archeology of knowledge. With the messianic tiger leap to the past, the historian trained in Troeltsch's paradigm of history gives way to a new brand of historian endowed with messianic consciousness. Messianic time is the space of redemption.

The messianic cessation of happening is a crystallization of a moment with no causal determinations. Messianic time is eschatological time, not derivable from the sequence of past-present-future. It is a time within which the history of lost time is gathered. Messianic time is the negative space of silenced suffering. It is not time that is characterized by the positivity of Buber's eternity of the present moment. The time of the messianic cessation of happening is a time that arises out of the fragments of decaying life and appears as a constellation of these fragments. The constellation represents time in three-dimensional spatiality as opposed to the one-dimensional linearity of empty time.

The messianic cessation of happening bursts open the sequential understanding of time that always remains unfulfilled and redeems every lost moment. Within messianic time every moment is remembered, and through remembrance redeemed. It is the revolutionary transformation of the "once upon a time" view of past events (*Erlebnis*) into authentic human experience (*Erfahrung*) wherein "memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theater."[14]

The method used to prevent the now-times from being subsumed under the mythic, homogeneous, empty-time of the "always the same" (*Das Immergleiche*) is the "dialectic at a standstill" (*Dialektik im Stindstall*) that immobilizes humanity's historical progression "through a homogeneous, empty time."[15] Dialectic at a standstill (*Dialektik im Stindstall*) is the point of convergence of Benjamin's philosophy of language, theory of experience, and philosophy of history. Benjamin describes the point of convergence in the dialectic at a standstill in the following way.

> It isn't that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present casts its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.[16]

Through the *Dialektik im Stindstall* objects are rescued from the false determinations of the time of the Present. The time of the messianic (Jetzzeit) rescues the objects ruled by the tyranny of universal tradition. "Benjamin conceived of the dialectical image as a powerful antidote to the concept of progress, for him the most dangerous ideological weapon in the capitalist arsenal."[17] The dialectical image interrupts the seemingly unstoppable flow of time. The dialectical image is formed when the dialectical movement of history comes to a standstill (*Dialektik im Stindstall*). The moment of the dialectical image is the moment of the messianic cessation of happening when the weak force of the messianic "overcomes" the profane.[18] Dialektik im Stindstall may be perceived at those focal points of history that are laden with now-time—just as Robespierre viewed ancient Rome as a "past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history."[19] His effort, however, is not to bring about a reincarnation of Rome with the questionable cultural treasures it represents. The perpetuation of the so-called cultural treasures, which are really spoils that have fallen at the feet of the victor, is what the angel of history looks at with utter horror perceiving it as an accumulation of rubbish, "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage."[20] To this image of destruction corresponds the dialectical image as a moment of redemptive remembrance through which forgotten time emerges and with it the forgotten histories of despised things.[21]

The redemptive possibilities hidden within history make the presence of theological concepts essential. "In the 'Theses,'" says Rolf Tiedemann, "Benjamin is not 'writing' history but is developing a 'concept' of history which

in no way excludes 'immanently theological concepts.'"[22] The religious imagery of the Last Judgment figures prominently in Benjamin's "Fuchs" essay, as it is this dogma that represents for him the demand to remember.[23] It is at the Last Judgment where forgotten histories will come to life again and where the illusion of history as progress will finally be exposed. Benjamin's reference to the Last Judgment aims to signal the essentially incomplete nature of history. Benjamin uses the figure of the collector to illustrate his theory of history. The true collector collects material that no one else deems worthy to keep. What the collector keeps is what others have discarded as useless.

Benjamin's insistence on the essential incompleteness of history proved to be unsettling to many of his contemporaries, including Max Horkheimer. In his response to Benjamin's Fuchs essay, Horkheimer explicitly castigated Benjamin for his "unreal" understanding of history. Horkheimer deemed Benjamin's concept of redemption to be ethically futile. For Horkheimer, the dead are dead, and one cannot undo what has already happened. It is futile to occupy oneself with the extinguished hopes of the past.[24] Horkheimer, a Hegelian at heart, could not take the incompleteness of history totally seriously. Horkheimer pointed to what he saw as the complete being incorporated in the incomplete. "Past injustice is done and finished. Those who have been beaten to death are truly dead." These comments, however, are tempered by Horkheimer's distinction between two kinds of incompleteness.

> Perhaps there is a distinction between positive and negative incompleteness, so that the injustice, the terror, the pain of the past are irreparable. Justice in practice, pleasures and works behave differently in relation to time, since their positive character is largely negated by their transitoriness. This is indeed true for individual life, for which death validates its unhappiness, but not its happiness. Good and bad do not relate to time in the same way. This discursive logic is inadequate to those categories as well.[25]

Benjamin, in his response to Horkheimer's criticism, vindicates the use of theological concepts in his philosophy of history. The corrective to Horkheimer's philosophy of history lies in understanding history not as a science of the spirit but, rather, as a form of remembrance.

Redemption originates in the past and is directed toward the present as its veritable future. The work of redemption is to "brush history against the grain," to rebel against every sort of successive, linear understanding of time, being the very epitome of bourgeois middle-class Weltanschauung, and to counterpose now-time, which is "shot through with chips of Messianic time."[26]

Past, present, and future are void of meaning, in spite of the fact that these are the very elements that are carriers of the transcendent. The transcendent is not to be found beyond history, neither should it be equated with history.

THE OTHER OF HISTORY

The task of the historian, "to articulate the past historically," is in direct opposition to nineteenth-century history writing hallmarked by Ranke's dream to write history "the way it really was." The mission of the true historian is to shatter the mirror of the kaleidoscope "where with each rotation everything that has been ordered collapses into a new order."[27]

Smashing the mirror of the kaleidoscope, the favorite tool of nineteenth-century historiography for creating illusory images of order, is the means that serves to awaken the past century from its dreaming consciousness. The image of dream and awakening is Benjamin's fundamental metaphor to visualize his task as a political dream-interpreter of history. "Benjamin regards history as permanent catastrophe and ceaseless ruination."[28] His interpretation of history stands in antithetical relationship with the futile enterprise of those who are so overcome by *acedia* that they attempt to resuscitate "'ancient Carthage."

Surveying history as a linearly unbroken chain of events belongs to the phantasmagoria of nineteenth-century bourgeois consciousness. Benjamin perceives the danger of totalitarianism in the motto of Gottfried Keller, "The truth will not run away from us," and declares that it is at this point where historical materialism takes its leave.

This condescending attitude to truth, however, is the product of the dreaming of modernity that believes it has full control of assessing the past. Yet, writes Benjamin in Thesis V, "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again."[29] Recognition comes at the moment of interruption, when the mirror of the kaleidoscope is shattered. The moment of destruction, however, is simultaneously a moment of hope. This may be the hope and redemption of the present if, and only if, the present realizes that the primary claim for this hope belongs to the past that flits by at the very point of awakening. "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth."[30]

The realization of the messianic connection between past and present that takes place at the instant of awakening is enveloped in the language of theology, which Benjamin uses unabashedly as the sole vehicle of thought through which language can express the arrest of the flow of thoughts that is "a sign of a Messianic cessation of happening." There is a "concealed, nonmanifest content of redeemed life in the historical age,"[31] and the task of the historian is to capture these "fleeting and ephemeral traces of the path to salvation."[32] In other words, the task/duty of the historical materialist is to

remember, having been endowed with a weak Messianic power that belongs to the past. For Benjamin, the philosophy of history becomes Heilsgeschichte, the history of salvation, and the task of the historical materialist is to rescue moments of the past, which emerge during the Now-times (*Jetzzeiten*), from the fate of oblivion that incessantly threatens to consume them.[33] Because of the messianic task to remember, the Now-times may become moments of redemption.

The "Other" of history is run over by the locomotive of progress whose immense speed is generated by the struggle of the "Other." The "Other" represents a tradition, too, though civilization by neglecting to preserve it is incapable of remembering it. It is the task of the historical materialist to pull the emergency brake on the locomotive and be "man enough to blast open the continuum of history."[34]

> A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed.[35]

Humanity, while traveling on the locomotive of civilization at full speed with an undiminished faith in progress, is simultaneously emptying itself of meaning. Only the realization of the ever-pressing presence of dangerous memory can disrupt the process of self-emptying. Memory is no longer defined as recalling past events, but it is the presence of the past within the present. The past "looks" at the present in an anticipation of its redemption and simultaneously warns the present that in the next moment it will inevitably become a past for the "next" present. Herein lies the danger of remembrance, and that is why one has to strive for the "second present" of the past.

'THESES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY'

Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" is the last and probably most perplexing of all of his writings. The reemergence of theology in this aphoristic piece is bewildering because it was thought to have been relegated to irrelevance after Benjamin's turn to historical materialism. With the reappearance of theology one could see merit in Scholem's assessment of Benjamin's thought

consistently gravitating toward the theological.[36] Scholem's unequivocal judgment concerning the centrality of theology in Benjamin's thought, however, misses the ambiguity inherent in the re-emergence of theology in the final phase of Benjamin's authorship. The ambiguous nature of theology is vividly illustrated by the curious analogy Benjamin makes in the first of his theses. In this analogy Benjamin refers to a chess automaton of the eighteenth century that gained notoriety by winning all of the games against its human challengers. Everyone was astonished by this apparently thinking machine until the discovery was made of a dwarf hidden inside the machine who guaranteed that the puppet would make the moves necessary to defeat its opponents. The dwarf represents theology that animates the puppet, historical materialism.

How does this image translate into the realm of philosophy? Does Benjamin finally embrace here Carl Schmitt's political theology and its secularization thesis (according to which modern political theory is nothing but the secularization of theological concepts)?[37] Or, rather, is there here an explicit criticism of Marx's critique of religion?[38] Is Benjamin insinuating that Marx's critique of religion was insufficient to eliminate false desires for the transcendent? Has theology managed to survive the critique but is now forced into anonymity? Is not the absolute claim of the historical inevitability of the rise of the working class to power and the ushering in of a new and equitable economic system predicated upon the philosophical vacuum left behind by the dismantling of the absolute claims of theology? Benjamin in the Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History" illuminates his first theses on history with an explicit reference to Marx. "In the idea of classless society, Marx secularized the idea of messianic time."[39]

For Benjamin no revolutionary class can claim absolute significance within history. History renders making such absolute claims within it impossible.[40] The significance of the emergence of the revolutionary class is not to claim absolute power within and over history but to bring about an interruption within the continuum of historical existence. How does this disruption relate to Marx's understanding of the role of the revolutionary class within history?

The revolutionary class, according to Benjamin, acts not as an agent of absolute power but one of a peculiar power that is able to cause the interruption of historical time. The peculiar power of the proletariat draws on the secret power of the forgotten past, which brings disruption and unease to the well-ordered reality of the historical present. By relying on the secret power of remembering forgotten and suppressed moments of the past, this revolutionary class brings about an alternative present, in contradiction to the experience of the present within historical time.

Here the theological underside of the proletarian revolution comes to the fore. The real power of the proletariat comes from a source that seems to have

been discredited by Marx but becomes the critical source for affecting liberation in the present. Can it be said that this liberation is final and complete? Does the proletariat bring an end to the progress of history, itself being the inevitable outcome of history's progress?

According to Benjamin, no such understanding of the proletariat and its function within history does justice to the emancipatory potential immanent within history. If the proletariat is understood as the inevitable outcome of the dialectical movement of history, one is thinking in terms of totality; that is, one elevates something, the working class, to the level of the unconditioned. The power of the proletariat, if it is truly emancipatory, cannot be an absolute power but one that is derivative.

Benjamin has trouble accepting the interpretation of Marx made by Georg Lukacs, the most important Marxist theoretician of his day, that there is a particular social class, the proletariat, that is infused with absolute emancipatory significance. For Benjamin, Lukacs's faith in the proletariat acts as a quasi-religious belief, which is seriously tainted by appropriating modernity's idea of progress.[41] It is against the idea of progress that Benjamin's "On the Concept of History" makes a final and powerful argument. Instead of looking at a revolutionary class imbued with the power to realize an emancipated society in which all are equal, Benjamin examines whether history itself can be understood differently from the official Marxist (and modernist) interpretation.

The concrete for Benjamin is not a realized social order in the future. Rather, the concrete is found in the concealed underside of the history of unstoppable progress. The concrete is found in the forgotten moments of the past, particular moments of the past that were not granted entry into the domain of historical remembering, as they were relegated to be useless for the present.

But how does theology enter the picture? What does theology have to do with the reconfiguration of the philosophy of history? How is Benjamin's use of the theological similar to and different from the political theology of Carl Schmitt whose thought held Benjamin, to the chagrin of many, in fascination? These questions are answered as Benjamin comes to terms with the construction of the theological through the concept of the messianic. In a sense it can be said that for Benjamin it is the concept of the messianic that guarantees the hidden presence of the theological within the secular. The messianic (or the theological) makes its presence felt through a particular demand to remember. The task of the revolutionary class is to remember, to rekindle the hidden potentialities of past generations.

Remembering for Benjamin is a theological task. In the act of remembering one depends on a transcendent source, a source that is wholly beyond the

possibilities of one's existence, yet a source that is completely inherent within existence. The source of the transcendent power of remembering belongs to past and forgotten generations who once fully participated within the flow of existence (and thus one can say that the transcendent power of remembering is found within the immanence of existence), yet whose presence within history was relegated to a total irrelevance by those who were in charge of writing the official account of the past; that is, the victors and their perspective of history.

Remembrance is necessitated by the presence of a grave inequality within history that tends to silence the voice of the conquered, giving absolute prominence to the voices of victory whose reminiscences become determinative of the way history is written. The alternative to this shocking image is the modification of the established science of history by remembrance.

> Remembrance can make the incomplete (happiness) complete, and render the complete (suffering) incomplete. That is theology; but remembrance gives us an experience which forbids us to regard history completely without theology, any more than we should record it directly in the form of theological concepts.[42]

CRITIQUE OF PROGRESS

The problem for Benjamin with the official account of history writing is not only that it is written from the perspective of the conquerors but also that it is predicated on an idealized understanding of time. The experience (*Erlebnis*) of the present moment takes precedence over the time of experience within which previously unrecognized moments can have a chance to emerge to significance.[43] The possibility of experiencing time differently cannot be constructed around a monolithic idea of history within which every moment of the past has a predetermined place. This overdetermined understanding of history is arrived at by the appropriation of a theological understanding of time and history. That is because now, instead of a divine plan of salvation (salvation history), there is a secularized form of this notion of history in which the experienced moment of the present acts as the redemptive goal of all previous moments of history. The travesty of the modern concept of history is that instead of having one predetermined goal of time, as in the theological understanding of history as salvation history, now there is an infinity of such goals. Each experienced moment of the present (*Erlebnis*) becomes immediately superceded by the next moment of experienceability.

The problem with the elevation of the experience of the time of the present to the level of ultimate significance is that it is an ultimately self-defeating

act. That is, because the moment of the present becomes a moment that lacks any form of concreteness and, through the idealization of time, it has no effect on temporal existence. Benjamin proposes a more organic conception of history against the idealization of time of the historical school of the nineteenth century, hallmarked by Ranke's comment. "Every moment in time is equidistant from the divine."[44] Benjamin's concept of history relies on the immanent presence of the transcendent within time and it stands in contrast to Ranke's conception of history that relies on an idea of transcendence absolutely outside of history.

The time of the present (the experience of the moment of the present) is replaced by the time of the Now, which is found beyond the experienceability of the time of the present.[45] The "time of the Now" therefore has an alternative form of temporality from the time of the present, a kind of temporality that contradicts the homogenous and idealized temporality of the time of the present. The time of the Now comes about through an act of remembering evoked by the "weak messianic power with which the generation of the present is endowed by the preceding generation."[46]

Benjamin refers to a "secret agreement between past generations and the present one."[47] The present has the absolute responsibility to acknowledge this agreement and to act as a messianic agent of redemption. But why is there this need for redemption? Why the absolute obligation to remember the past? Is the faculty of remembering not merely a faculty of nostalgic function that has no practical relevance for the experience of the present? Also, how can the act of remembering be concrete? Does the present not remember the past (for example, a concrete event in the past) according to its own design? Can one talk about the past as something that is the construct of the present, a present that inevitably becomes the past of a future present? Is remembering therefore an abstract hermeneutical act without any element of concreteness? Benjamin's notion of "the time of the Now of recognizability" serves as a means of preserving the concrete within the act of remembering, thereby avoiding the reduction of remembrance to a mere hermeneutical exercise.

The danger of reducing remembrance to a kind of hermeneutical "fusion of horizons" is that the concrete becomes subsumed under this fusion, and, in spite of all claims to the contrary, it becomes lost.[48] This is not to say that Benjamin's theory of history does not offer its own hermeneutic. Out of his criticism of modernity and modernity's construction of time, memory, and history, the hermeneutical importance of the concrete becomes crystallized.

The figure representing Benjamin's hermeneutic of the concrete is the figure of the chronicler. The chronicler is a peculiar figure as he personifies the importance of the concrete through his tedious recording of the ordinariness of seemingly common events and people. The chronicler's task should not be

mistaken for the method of the modern historian. The task of the modern day historian is hallmarked by an elevated claim that the past can be reconstructed as it really was.[49] The seemingly mundane task of the chronicler is predicated on an obligation not to make a name for oneself as is common among historians, but to preserve the concrete in the present, which is in danger of becoming a forgotten past. The way that the chronicler writes his anonymous chronicles for the future encapsulates for Benjamin the method of remembering. It is in a moment of danger, at the threat of forever forgetting the past, that remembering takes place.

The danger lies with the threat of allowing the concrete to disappear from the grand scheme of history writing, thus Benjamin's fervent, albeit peculiar, adherence to historical materialism. Within this commitment to historical materialism lies the secret commitment to theology. Within the task of the historical materialist to rescue the concrete from the claws of the ideal lies a secret connection to theology.

> Class struggle, which for a historian schooled in Marx is always in evidence, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined and spiritual things could exist. But these latter things, which are present in class struggle, are not present as a vision of spoils that fall to the victor. They are alive in this struggle as confidence, courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude, and have effects that reach far back into the past. They constantly call into question every victory, past and present, of the rulers. As flowers turn toward the sun, what has been strives to turn—by dint of a secret heliotropism—toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history. The historical materialist must be aware of this most inconspicuous of all transformations.[50]

The ultimate goal of the class struggle is to rescue phenomena from the forgetfulness of historical existence. The task of the historical materialist is to be engaged in a struggle to remember. The historical materialist is to be captured by images of the past that demand recognition for the sake of transforming the present. Paradoxically, in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," remembrance of the past takes the place of what is traditionally associated with the task of historical materialism, namely fighting for a better future.[51] Benjamin is highly critical of the future orientation of Marxism because he perceives within it the manifestation of modernity's preoccupation with the "always new." Within historical materialism, it is the working class that is always renewing itself, going beyond itself, taking charge of its fate within history by dominating the development of the latter through the class struggle.

Benjamin has an alternative interpretation of history from history as class struggle. He seizes upon the truth of Marx's claim and infuses it with his notion of tradition. For Benjamin what is important about tradition is that

underneath its apparent continuity, there is a simultaneous crisis, a "shattering of tradition."[52] Benjamin looks at Marx's articulation of the philosophy of history as an ever-intensifying class struggle through the lenses of his own formulation of tradition. The constant threat of forgetting the past within modernity is the threat of leaving out of history what really matters, what is truly concrete. The shattering of tradition refers to the change within experience as found within the modern. The tradition that modernity works with has the appearance of continuity with what went on before, but as a result of relying on the modern understanding of experience (*Erlebnis*) the tradition of the modern does not have the capacity to hold onto, to preserve the concrete.

The crisis of tradition for Benjamin is the crisis of the epistemological foundations of modernity. What is problematic about the epistemological orientation of the modern is that it relies on an idealist understanding of the subject and defines experience (*Erlebnis*) in accordance with a questionable definition of the subject. Even efforts to bring about a shift in epistemology by focusing on the thing itself, as attempted by the phenomenological approach of Husserl, work with an absolute notion of the subject, the latter being the source of reason as universal and absolute.[53] The task of historical materialism is to overcome such epistemological fallacies and to bring out the epistemological significance of the "concrete particular."[54] What is not quite explicitly stated in Benjamin's "Theses on the Concept of History" is brought out with great clarity by his closest intellectual ally, Adorno, in *Negative Dialectics*. In a sense, the programmatic opening of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* is the epistemological formulation of what is implicitly intimated by Benjamin's theses on history: " To use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity . . ."[55]

Adorno, in defining the task of philosophy, situates Benjamin's notion of the "concrete particular" in the following way: "Philosophy, in view of the present historical situation, has its time interest where Hegel, at one with tradition, registered his disinterest: with the non-conceptual, the singular and the particular; with that which since Plato has been dismissed as transitory and insignificant, and upon which Hegel hung the label of 'foul existence.'"[56] The temporality of the "concrete particular" is the time of the interruption of tradition. It is the unique temporality of the moment of danger that puts into question, paradoxically by its own fragility, the epistemological primacy of the subject, this latter being the guarantor of the continuity of tradition: "The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its own recognizability and is never seen again."[57]

That Benjamin does not dispense with the notion of tradition but drastically reformulates it is evident in his formulation of what constitutes the danger

within the moment. "Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it. For both, it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it."[58] There is a hidden tradition that becomes visible at the moment of interruption, at the moment endangered by forgetfulness. The hidden tradition comes to life and becomes the catalyst of a revolutionary moment rescuing the dead from the threat of oblivion. The emergence of the hidden tradition is the result of an act of remembrance through which the weak messianic power of the present realizes its indebtedness to the dead. Consequently, the true act of remembrance is a messianic event. Because every moment is a potentially messianic moment, there is an alternative history distinguished from the idea of history offered by the historical school.

The latter's view of history is characterized by Benjamin as the complete eradication of "every vestige of history's original role as remembrance [*Eingedenken*]."[59] Historicism claims that it can make the past come to life in the present, but "the false aliveness of the past-made-present, the elimination of every echo of a 'lament' from history, marks history's final subjection to the modern concept of science."[60] In Benjamin's estimation, the Marxist idea of history, with its utopian positing of a future classless society, also succumbed to a notion of time found within the positivist view of history. What became eliminated from Marx's view of history is the trace of the messianic. As was pointed out above, Benjamin viewed the theoretical construct of historical materialism as a derivative of the theological, more specifically, the eschatological notion of the messianic. In order to bring out the critical function of historical materialism, one has to acknowledge its origin in the messianic. "A genuinely messianic face must be restored to the concept of classless society and, to be sure, in the interest of furthering the revolutionary politics of the proletariat itself."[61]

Benjamin suggests a definition of the revolutionary moment in contradistinction to Marx's view of the purpose of revolution within history. "Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train—namely, the human race—to activate the emergency brake."[62] It is only through the return of the messianic origins of historical materialism that the latter can preserve its revolutionary potential and (as was intimated in the first theses on the concept of history) win all the games it faces. Of course, the "game" at hand, the very context of the thesis, is the fight against fascism. At the moment, however, fascism seems to be winning the game as it is given

the recognition to be an ally (an obvious reference to the Hitler-Stalin pact over which Benjamin expressed his greatest concerns). The acknowledgment of Hitler's regime as an ally is in Benjamin's eyes the failure of the Marxism of his time to come to terms with the real origin of the revolution, namely the messianic. Without this return to the messianic, Marxism implicates itself in the philosophical fallacy of historicism.

What is the significance of the messianic as it relates to historical materialism? One of the most important functions of the messianic is that it safeguards the focus on the concrete. This focus on the concrete is what distinguishes the philosophy of historical materialism from all other philosophical systems that preceded it. It is the messianic core of historical materialism, even if it is found in a secularized form, which is behind Marx's programmatic statement in his "Theses on Feuerbach." "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."[63]

For the archaeologist of memory, time is a spatial category.[64] Behind Benjamin's conceptualization of time in spatial categories lay his notion of the ruin that he introduced in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Benjamin's notion of the ruin unlocks the epistemological significance of his philosophy of history. The time of history, the time of unimpeded progress of reason, conceals the time of nature, a time with spatial dimensionality.

> To the spiritual restitution in integrum, which introduces immortality, corresponds a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in this totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of Messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away.[65]

The messianic is not found in a utopian future, but it is found in a present, although in an unexpected way. The unexpected form of the messianic is what Benjamin refers to as the ruin.[66] The messianic moment is a moment of the ruination of the present. It represents the total upheaval of history and the historical moment. The messianic moment brings an end to the idea of history and the notion of time as defined by the logic of causality and it brings illumination to the nudity of the moment.

Epistemologically speaking, the messianic moment affects the dissolution of the subject as well as the object, this later being subjugated under the epistemological primacy of the subject. The "messianic cessation of happening" brings about the absolute critique of history, and the neglected memories of the forgotten past find their configuration in the dialectical image. "The dialectical image is an occurrence of ball lightning that runs across the whole horizon of the past."[67] There is knowledge within history, but it is not the kind

of knowledge history as science claims itself to produce. Here one can see Benjamin's dissatisfaction with Dilthey's efforts to achieve epistemological legitimacy for the sphere of history by establishing history as a science with a logic of its own, bringing it epistemologically on par with the natural sciences. In Benjamin's eyes, Dilthey's efforts to establish the scientific legitimacy of history rest on a false causality that connects the individual in the present with past worlds through empathy.

A true knowledge of history comes about, according to Benjamin, when one is confronted with the ruins of the past that appear as a constellation in the dialectical image. The dialectical image is the experience of the moment of the Now in which the constellation of the ruins of the past emerge in confrontation with the subject's image of the past. Just as the consciousness of one's self is put into question by the emergence of memory traces from the unconscious, so does the subject of remembering become threatened and ultimately dissolves in the dialectical image. Here Benjamin, alluding to his essay on Baudelaire, calls the dialectical image "the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity."[68]

Brushing history against the grain is Benjamin's formulation of Marx's dialectic between the superstructure and the base structure. The problem of certain strands of Marxism in the eyes of Benjamin is the problem of conformism, the elimination of the dialectic between base-structure and superstructure, and the false idolization of labor and the working class. The Gotha Program of the German Social Democrats, a program that incidentally came under the scathing critique of Marx, defined labor as "the source of all wealth and all culture."[69] Benjamin counters the false utopia this understanding of work produces with a counter-utopia, which in his case is the utopian society, organized around labor as communal, found in the writings of Fourier.

What is problematic about the idealized understanding of labor is that ultimately it remains a mere abstraction completely unrelated to the material conditions of the working class. The material conditions are worsening simultaneously with the progress of the products labor produces. The position delineated in the Gotha Program does not realize that the modernization of labor is a further step in man's disenchantment from the world; a further step in the mastery of nature that ultimately contributes to the intensification of man's alienation from his work and ultimately from his own self. Fourier's curious depiction of the organization of a utopian society of labor functions for Benjamin to signal the possibility of an alternative to the process of reification within modern society. In the utopian picture of Fourier's phalansteries one can find hidden Benjamin's solution to the ultimate catastrophe of the capitalist commodity economy. The solution is a kind of reenchantment, a revivification of tradition, but tradition understood differently.

The reconfiguration of tradition is also described by the image of the angel of history Benjamin perceives in Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, a painting he owned for many years.

> There is a picture by Klee called Angelus Novus. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is this storm.[70]

This pessimistic image conveys a palpable sense of hopelessness. It appears that the forces of redemption cannot compete with the elemental force of destruction present in the history of progress (as defined by the capitalist commodity economy). The image is paradoxical in another sense, in an almost fatalistic one, in that the angel is kept in flight by the wind of progress. The angel wants to contemplate, but it is immediately taken up to flight by the destructive wind of progress. Benjamin, in a startling way, locates the origin of the storm within Paradise.

What generates this storm at that particular location, a location that is generally associated with the original harmony of God's creation? Is there already a potential for dissolution within the harmony of original creation? Is the Fall from the state of harmony inherent within Paradise? The angel of history looks toward this point of harmony, but at the same time he sees the future of this harmony within the past as catastrophe. Can the angel redeem by his very gaze alone history, which from his perspective is an eternal past? Does that gaze have this redemptive potential?

The landscape of ever-increasing destruction surveyed by the angel of history has a startling resemblance to Benjamin's theory of allegory elaborated in his Trauerspiel study. Baroque allegory is the site of a particular understanding of history that portrays history as the sight of alienation. The time of allegory is distinguished from the time of the symbol.

> The measure of time for the experience of the symbol is the mystical instant in which the symbol assumes the meaning into its hidden and, if one might say so, wooded intention . . . Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in

> allegory the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratia of history as petrified, primordial landscape.[71]

God redeems every moment lost in the history of progress by not forgetting, by holding these moments eternally in his memory. Benjamin quotes the Jewish tradition according to which only God remembers perfectly.[72] It is because of God's unfailing remembrance that the people of Israel were saved, and it is through remembrance that Israel could already anticipate the moment of final redemption.

Redemption, however, for Benjamin comes only at the price of destruction. He sees redemption within history not as a telos, not as something that will take place at the end of history; rather it is something that can be found within the course of history as the messianic interrupts the regular course of events and through this interruption levels a verdict, a judgment (*Gericht*) against the official tradition of history writing. Benjamin likens the official text of history to a dream-image that needs to be smashed so that experiences of primal history may be uncovered from the collective unconscious of humanity.[73] In this way Benjamin appropriates Freudian psychoanalysis to his task of being a "political interpreter of history."[74]

The way history is written by the official interpreters of history corresponds to a mythological dream-image. The truth about history, however, cannot be identical with this dream-image. Although the dream-image is essential as a starting point—the energy of the dream is indispensable—so that the truth, in Freudian terminology, be cathected on the level of the conscious. The task of the historical materialist is to make sense out of what appears at these moments of cathexes. Benjamin refers to these moments as constellations through which the truth appears. Just as every story the analyzed shares with the analyst has a hidden meaning—in Lacanian psychoanalysis the hidden text of the unconscious reads like language—the archaeologist of the past approaches his subject, history, as a text, every line of which is hiding a subtext. The special task of the reader of the past is that these subtexts appear suddenly and only for an instant. This is thus a special kind of readership that confronts one who is interested in the truth behind the visible text of history:

> "The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again. 'The truth will not run away from us': this statement by Gottfried Kellner indicates exactly that point in historicism's image of history where the image is pierced by historical materialism. For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image."[75]

'AGAINST THE GRAIN'

The method of the historical materialist in his evaluation of the cultural products transmitted through history is a method that combines elements of both ideology critique and a hermeneutic of suspicion. The growth of knowledge that modernity has produced is evaluated by the cost of its production. With the rationalization of the world, reason, and with it knowledge, becomes instrumental, itself part of the process of production that alienates the human from himself. The world is overexplained. There remains nothing that can be brought under the scientific rationality the human itself has produced. This process of the instrumentalization of reason was clearly brought out in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which bears the indelible mark of the genius of Benjamin. The evaluation of the process of modern rationalization and its consequences is described in this seminal study of the chief architects of the Frankfurt School as the myth of the rational created by the modern. Enlightenment epistemology was to give a program that would liberate human knowledge from the bondage of gaining legitimation by the illicit authority of religious mythology, but it has overstated its case so much that it ended up resembling the structure of the mythological it intended to debunk.

The dialectic of Enlightenment has become undialectical in that it made claims of absolute knowledge on spurious grounds of rationality. It is exactly because modernity defines "tradition" as the history of the ever-increasing rationalization of the word that Benjamin focuses on the critique of this conception of tradition. Benjamin's critique of modernity's conception of history, this latter being the transmitter of tradition as progress, disturbs the uninterrupted flow of history because it regards its task as to "brush history against the grain."[76] Brushing history against the grain offers entry points to a countertradition that is not the tradition of the victors but the tradition of the suffering the alienating force of modern instrumental reason creates. Brushing history against the grain creates moments of time, times of recognizability when the cultural treasures paraded around by the victors of history are recognized as "owing their existence not only to the efforts of the great geniuses who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of others who lived in the same period."[77]

In the above discussion of Benjamin's philosophy of history, it was shown how Benjamin appropriates major themes of Jewish theology for his thinking. Although these religious concepts are torn out of their original context, they nonetheless preserve the essentially apophatic orientation of Jewish theological thinking. Benjamin's theologically informed philosophy of history is the culmination of his lifelong critique of totality and progress. The reason theology cannot be eradicated is because it is theology that of-

fers the source of resistance against political totalitarianism and its drive to offer positive utopias for humanity. The role of theology is a wholly negative one as it, from the critical standpoint of the eschaton, puts into question both the triumph of reason and its fallible promises of historical redemption. History is an essentially incomplete phenomenon, and it is false hope to expect its final completion from the future. Divining the future is strictly prohibited for the Jews. The present, however, can become meaningful as the unrealized possibilities of the past are remembered in the messianic cessation of happening.

NOTES

1. See Gary Smith, ed., *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 47.
2. See Smith, *Benjamin*, 176.
3. See Gerschom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: Schocken, 1981).
4. See Norbert Bolz, "Aesthetics? Philosophy of History? Theology!" in *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, edited by Gerhard Ritter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
5. Smith, *Benjamin*, 176.
6. See Rainer Rochlitz, *The Disenchantment of Art. The Philosophy of Walter Benjamin* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 228.
7. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 96.
8. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 254.
9. Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49.
10. Smith, *Benjamin*, 177.
11. Ibid.
12. See Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," in *Reflection*s (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 26.
13. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 262.
14. Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," 25.
15. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 263.
16. See Walter Benjamin, "N On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress" [N2a,3], in *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 462.
17. In Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 37.
18. The image of vectors is found in Benjamin's "Theologico-Political Fragment" in Benjamin, *Reflections*, 312–313.

19. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 263.

20. Ibid., 259. Benjamin's powerful aphorism succinctly encapsulates his paradigm of history: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." Ibid., 258.

21. Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 114.

22. See Rolf Tiedemann, "Historical Materialism or Political Messianism?" in Smith, *Benjamin*, 183.

23. See Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," in *One-Way Street* (London: Verso, 1979).

24. Ibid., 181–182.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 265.

27. See Bolzand Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, 45.

28. See Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 13.

29. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 1968), 255

30. Ibid., 254.

31. Wolin, *Walter Benjamin*, 48.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 264.

35. Ibid., 263.

36. See Gerschom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin," in *Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

37. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

38. The pivotal importance of the critique of religion is found in Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach." See *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed.*, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 143.

39. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume IV* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 401.

40. Note certain affinities between Benjamin's philosophy of history and Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

41. Lukacs's view of history retains the positivity found in historicism's view of history as uninhibited progress. However, the dissimilarities between Lukacs and the historicist school are much more substantial. Lukacs's view of history is an activist philosophy of history, in that progress is achieved by the rise of the proletariat to political power, and not by an automatic betterment of the world. For Lukacs progress in history is not inevitable, at least not in the naïve sense of the historicist school. Lukacs retains the bourgeois belief in progress, but the form of progress is altered. The vehicle of progress for Lukacs is not the bourgeois individual but the revolutionary class of the proletariat. Behind the historicist view of progress (that became exposed as illusory through the events of the First War) lay the belief in the infinite betterment of the human. On the theological front the work of Karl Barth and his revolutionary commentary on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* shattered the lie behind

the idea of human progress. On the hermeneutics of the historicist school, see Gadamer's *Truth and Method Second, rev. ed.*, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1996).

42. See Tiedemann, "Historical Materialism," 182.

43. *Erlebnis* is the experience of the Self within an isolated moment in which the emphasis is on the experience of the Self with its own experience. Within the time of *Erlebnis* there is a lack of real confrontation with what the moment offers. For Benjamin, the time of *Erlebnis* is empty time because it is completely determined by the "I" of experience. Against this time of the "I" he sets up the "Time of the Now." The "Time of the Now" has a kind of objectivity that leads to the dissolution of the "I" of *Erlebnis*.

44. For an exposition of Ranke's thought, see Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1996), especially 200–215.

45. See Rosenzweig's concept of the time of the Now (*Jetzzeit*) in his *Star of Redemption* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

46. Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 390.

47. Ibid.

48. For the concept "fusion of horizons," see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306–307.

49. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 391.

50. Ibid., 390.

51. Ibid.

52. John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.

53. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 71.

54. Ibid., 74.

55. Ibid., 69, quoted from Theodore W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1997), xx.

56. Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics*, 69, quoted from Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, 8.

57. Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 4*, 390.

58. Ibid., 391.

59. Ibid., 401.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., 402.

62. Ibid.

63. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 145.

64. For the notion of labyrinth in Benjamin's critical theory, see Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*; as well as Carol Jacobs, "Topographically Speaking," in *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, edited by David S. Ferris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

65. Benjamin, *Reflections*, 313.

66. For the epistemological significance of the concept of "fragment" see Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, (New York: Verso, 1990), 29.

67. Benjamin, *Selected Writings 4*, 403.

68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., 393.
70. Ibid., 392.
71. See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 166.
72. See Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” in *Illuminations*.
73. See Bolz and van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, 47.
74. Ibid., 46.
75. See Benjamin, *Selected Writings 4*, 390–391.
76. Ibid., 392.
77. Ibid.

Chapter Six

Messianic Suffering

The messianism of Walter Benjamin is characterized by an obsessive concern with the fragments of life, with the description of and immersion in these fragments, fragments that lie on the margins of modern existence, fragments that cannot be integrated into a larger system. These fragments, however, have the potential to disrupt the triumphant narrative of the modern. It is this disruptive and disturbing force of messianism, which Christian history and discourse suppressed, that Moltmann, compelled by the catastrophe of the Shoah, turns to in order to undermine the triumphalism and implicit anti-Judaism of Christian trinitarian discourse.

Moltmann approaches the doctrine of the Trinity from a messianic perspective, which not only guarantees a sense of continuity with the messianic faith of Judaism, but also safeguards Christian theology from expressing its faith in an overly positive way. The messianic dimension of the Christian faith is a constant reminder of the incompleteness of the present and of the necessity of hope for the future. The doctrine of the Trinity is not the expression of a Christian triumphalism of doctrinal superiority, but it is the expression of the mystery of God who redeems his suffering creation through becoming one with it through the messianic mission of the Son.

> The doctrine of the Trinity is no longer an exorbitant and impractical speculation about God, but is nothing other than a shorter version of the passion narrative of Christ in its significance for the eschatological freedom of faith and the life of oppressed nature.[1]

The challenge of the continuing existence and flourishing of Judaism and its messianic idea is to unsettle the metaphysical sterility, which characterizes much of Christian trinitarian thinking. The starting point for constructing a

trinitarian theology, which is no longer immune to the living tradition of Judaism, is to realize the common messianic hope that binds Jews and Christian together. The messianic hope these two traditions share is stronger than the obvious differences in the particular characteristics of this hope: "Hope for the messiah also links Christians with Jews, and this link is stronger than the division."[2]

Through neglecting this connection Christian theology elevated the Son within the Trinity to such metaphysical heights that he has no longer any connection to Jesus who preached the irruption of the messianic kingdom. In order to regain the messianic dimension of Christianity, upon which the initial identification of Jesus was based, Moltmann proposes to reread Christology by a messianic hermeneutic:

> we shall continually have to translate the name "Christ" back into the title "messiah," so that we can take in what is originally meant: Jesus is the messiah; the Church is the messianic community; being a Christian means being human in a messianic way.[3]

THE DIVINE PATHOS

Moltmann's dialogue with modern Jewish sources plays a crucial role in his revision of the Christian doctrine of God. Moltmann develops a dynamic trinitarianism, which overcomes the strictures of metaphysical conceptions of God. Moltmann's reconstruction of trinitarian theology eliminates the irreconcilable contradiction that exists between the impassable God of metaphysics and the suffering God of the gospel narrative.[4]

The goal of redemption, the completion of the messianic mission of Jesus, does not lie in attaining an all-encompassing system. The meaning of redemption, if understood messianically, lies in the redemption of the fragmentary nature of reality. The hope for Messianic redemption is born in the humiliation, the fragility, and in the kenosis (self-emptying) of those no longer considered human.

In the theology of Abraham Heschel, Moltmann perceives an effort to retrieve a lost tradition within Judaism that had been suppressed by Jewish rationalist philosophers of religion such as Philo, Maimonides, and Spinoza. Heschel returns to the most fundamental category of Jewish existence, that of the covenant, and makes it the central concept of his philosophy of Judaism. It is from this fundamental category, which reflects the essential relationality of God, that Heschel develops his "theology of the divine pathos."[5]

Heschel's theology of the divine pathos situates the meaning of God between two extreme positions. The first position is that of metaphysical theism,

which emphasizes the self-sufficiency and impassibility of God, while the second position portrays the divine being as the Wholly Other, beyond the reach of reason. For Heschel, God's covenant with the people of Israel is the expression of the divine pathos. The anthropomorphic language that describes the relationship between God and Israel is the language of divine pathos. When metaphysical monotheism eliminates the language of the biblical narrative, the result is an abstract conception of God.

The idea of the divine pathos prevents one from looking at Jewish monotheism as an abstract idea. It expresses God's essential commitment to the people of Israel, communicated by the prophets.[6] The divine pathos is the calculated intention of God who freely decides to respond to the human situation. God's self-revelation through the words of the prophets is a revelation of God's pathos to his people, and therefore it is an essentially relational category. Heschel expresses the relational nature of God's pathos, in distinction from essentialist metaphysics, in the following way:

> Pathos denotes, not an idea of goodness, but a living care; not an immutable example, but an ongoing challenge, a dynamic relation between God and man; not mere feeling or passive affection, but an act or attitude composed of various spiritual elements; no mere contemplative survey of the world, but a passionate summons.[7]

God's pathos is not a necessary response to human conduct, yet the human situation evokes God's pathos.[8] Man is not merely a passive recipient of God's pathos but an active agent who moves God to respond to the human situation with his pathos. Understanding the divine pathos as an essentially relational attitude of God toward Israel also illuminates the meaning of God's Law, or God's ethos. There is an essential dialectic between God's pathos and ethos.[9] The true meaning of divine ethos, God's moral law, is the expression of the divine pathos. Similarly, pathos is grounded within the moral law.[10]

The divine pathos is of a transitive character. It reflects the absolute decentered nature of God who, in his freedom, extends his care toward human beings.[11] The transitive character of the divine pathos points to the inseparability of the human situation from God. The human situation is not something extrinsic to God but, through the divine pathos, is an intrinsic part of God Himself. "The predicament of man is a predicament of God Who has a stake in the human situation."[12] Being influenced by the human situation does not imply that God is somehow psychologically affected by the human predicament. The context of the divine pathos is God's history with the people of Israel. That means that the history of God's people directly affects the life of God. If the people suffer, so does God suffer with them. In the same way, if the people of the covenant flourish, so does God flourish with them.

The influence of Heschel's theology of divine pathos on Moltmann's messianic theology is manifold. Firstly, it contributes to Moltmann's critique of abstract monotheism. The meaning of Jewish monotheism cannot be understood without the meaning of the covenant. The theology of divine pathos understands the oneness of God not in absolute terms but within the context of the covenant. The meaning of Jewish monotheism is not only that there exists one God, but that the one God exists in a covenant relationship with the people of Israel.[13] Heschel's relational approach to the meaning of Jewish monotheism also plays a crucial role in Moltmann's trinitarian hermeneutic of the covenant.

The second important insight of Heschel's "theopathy" is the notion of God's vulnerability, that is, God's capacity to suffer. Moltmann unequivocally rejects the doctrine of God's impassibility and develops his trinitarian theology driven by the hermeneutics of the cross. The suffering of the crucified Christ is not extrinsic to the life of God, but it is an intrinsic part of the trinitarian history of God Himself. The suffering of the Son is a trinitarian event and as such it reveals the essential vulnerability of the trinitarian God.

Through the messianic suffering of Jesus, a vital connection between the suffering of all things and the suffering of God can be perceived. The meaning of the suffering of the Messiah is revealed through the resurrection, which "endorses and fulfils his messianic claim."[14] The resurrection is not the overcoming of the contradictions of the Messiah's suffering, but it is its eschatological verification. The resurrection is the eschatological consummation of the messianic mission of the Son to suffer for all things.[15] Because the crucified One is the resurrected One, the messianic sufferings of Jesus can be understood as divine sufferings. The mystery of suffering finds its ultimate meaning in the mystery of the suffering of God who is on the way to his glorification through the messianic suffering of Christ.[16]

Moltmann distinguishes between the active and passive suffering of Jesus, who does not simply endure his passion, constituting the passive side of his suffering, but who also experiences his suffering as the consequence of his surrender to the will of the Father.[17] The purpose of the active suffering of Jesus is to expose the contradictions of the current age and, through suffering these contradictions, usher in the new aeon—the kingdom of God.[18] The active suffering of Jesus is messianic suffering in that it takes place between the time of the old and the qualitatively different time of the new aeon. The messianic suffering of Jesus takes place in the messianic time of transition, between the time of the world and the time of the new aeon. As a result, the suffering of the Messiah is a creative suffering because it prepares the way for the new creation of all things. The Messiah and his suffering are the gateway to the emergence of the new aeon. Not only does the Messiah experience the

suffering of the old world, the world of transience, but the world, through its own suffering, also participates in the suffering of the Messiah. It is through "the fellowship of suffering" that the world of transience partakes in the messianic promise of the new creation.[19]

The fellowship of suffering between the suffering Messiah and the world of transience is realized through the act of remembrance. The remembrance of the suffering of Christ has its own temporality, a temporality that stands in stark contradiction to the temporality of historical time. Remembrance is not merely an act of retrospection but one with a forward-looking orientation. Remembrance of the suffering and death of Christ anticipates the end of all suffering, the coming of a new temporality. The vehicle of the temporality of the new world is the messianic temporality of the suffering Christ whom God raised from the dead.

Moltmann's messianic theology is driven by a basic dialectical relationship between the crucifixion and the resurrection. The dialectic between cross and resurrection finds expression in Moltmann's designation of Christ as "a paradoxical Messiah."[20] The paradoxical Messiah brings redemption through his sufferings. His sufferings are characterized as apocalyptic sufferings in that they anticipate the end of the time of the world, the end of historical time, and the irruption of a qualitatively different kind of time, the time that belongs to the "new creation."[21] The sufferings of Jesus are in solidarity with the sufferings of the whole of creation.[22] His messianic mission to confront the time of the world with the time of the kingdom of God leads to his apocalyptic sufferings. The death of Christ cannot be understood as the death of a disconnected individual but rather as the apocalyptic death of all things. Through the messianic sufferings of Jesus and his vicarious death for all things the world of transience is opened up to the horizon of the future of the new creation.[23]

In the resurrection of the suffering Messiah, the future of creation has already begun. The expectation of the end of time is not a fatalistic expectation but rather a hope for the coming of the future kingdom of God.

> Expectation of the approaching end is directed, not towards the death of this world, but towards the birth of the world that is new. Because the kingdom of God is "at hand," the end of this Godless world has also come into view.[24]

The messianic is a category of mediation between the historical and the eschatological.

> Through his mission and his resurrection Jesus brought the kingdom of God into history. As the eschatological future the kingdom has become the power that determines the present. This future has already begun. We can already live in the light of the "new era" in the circumstances of the "old" one. Since the eschatological

> becomes historical in this way, the historical also becomes eschatological. Hope becomes realistic and reality hopeful. We are given this the mediating name of "messianic."[25]

The messianic is the presence of the eschatological future, the kingdom of God, within historical time. The messianic is a mediating category between the life of unfulfillment and the life of fulfillment. "It is already the presence of the future in history. It is a fragment of the coming whole."[26] The price of messianism, as Scholem insisted, is a heavy burden, as it is through the destruction of the world that redemption is achieved. Similarly, in Moltmann's theology redemption is the coming of the new aeon through the complete annihilation of the old world. The ruins of the old world come to new life under the constellation of the new creation.[27]

Without an adequate theological interpretation of the meaning of time, one cannot arrive at a theologically meaningful interpretation of suffering. Suffering takes place in time, as does the remembrance of suffering. Remembering the suffering of the Messiah is the key to understanding the specifically Christian concept of time. The importance of Moltmann's theological interpretation of time is that it demonstrates both the historical situatedness of the experience of time and the inadequacy of the concept of history to fully determine the meaning of the experience of time.

Moltmann, drawing on Horkheimer and Adorno's seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is critical of both prehistorical conceptions of time as well as historical and post-historical experiences of time.[28] The connection between these three stages of time-experiencing is established through Moltmann's exposition of Mircea Eliade's concept of the "myth of the eternal recurrence of the same."[29] Archaic societies worked with two different conceptions of time. They distinguished between the time of the mundane and the time of extraordinary occurrences. Unusual events in the life of society and the individual were comprehended through the means of repeatable rituals. The potentially disturbing events were disarmed through the repeatability of rituals. The threatening experiences of time of these occurrences were de-individualized through their incorporation into an eternally existent myth. The experience of the moment, because of its eternal repeatability, is indistinguishable from the experience of all other moments. In this scheme, time is understood as an eternal cycle, as the eternal recurrence of the same. As a result, there is no possibility for the emergence of anything qualitatively new.

Messianic time is distinguished from both primordial time and historical time. In Moltmann's theology the time of the present is a time imbued with messianic expectations. Messianic time not only interrupts the flow of historical time, but it also represents the expectation of a final and conclusive overcoming of the time of history. Messianic time is the time of the marginal, that which falls outside of the purview of historical time.

In his exploration of the meaning of time, Moltmann differentiates the time of "imminent expectation,"[30] messianic time, from both chronological and kairological time. The "time of imminent expectation" is not calculable time as is the time of chronos, which depends on the identity of measurable time units. Chronological time, for Moltmann, is the time of the "always the same," and therefore it is incapable of being the vehicle of hope for the coming kingdom of God. Neither is kairological time an adequate expression of the Christian conception of time. The time of kairos expresses the moment of existential awakening to the presence of eternity in the moment. The kairological approach to time is fraught with the contradictions of the time-eternity dialectic. The time-eternity dialectic does not offer an adequate explanation of the meaning of the temporality of this world of suffering and can only posit an existential attitude through which eternity is experienced in the now. The time of kairos is not messianic time because it offers no hope for the restitution of all things. It cannot be an expectation for the whole creation because of its narrow focus on the isolated subject. The major inadequacy of the kairological understanding of time is that it reduces the meaning of the suffering of Jesus to the level of the individual. The demythologization of the apocalyptic dimension of the kerygma simultaneously eliminates the essentially eschatological horizon of the gospel proclamation.[31]

In contrast to the temporality of chronological time and kairological time, the full soteriological significance of the suffering of Jesus can only be understood through the messianic time of Jesus' apocalyptic suffering in solidarity with the whole of creation. Messianic time is determined by both the apocalyptic horizon of the transience of all life and the eschatological horizon of the future life of all things. It is this specifically messianic temporality that explains the messianic mission of the Son, who endures the death of all things. His death creates the possibility of life without transience in the kingdom of God.

> Jesus dies the death of all living things. That is, he did not only die "the death of the sinner" or merely his own "natural death." He dies in solidarity with the whole sighing creation, human and non-human—the creation that "sighs" because it is subject to transience.[32]

The paradoxical nature of messianic time reflects the dialectical nature of Jesus' messiahship. The Messiah is not only the crucified one but also the resurrected one:

> If the resurrection event is an eschatological one, then the risen One cannot be what he is only from the time of his resurrection. He must also have this same identity in his suffering and death on the cross, in his proclamation and ministry, in his whole life from the very beginning.[33]

Messianic time rescues the time of the marginal, alternative histories excluded from universal history, and gathers them up for the time of eternal life. Eternal life is not the time of eternally same, but the time that overcomes the determination of time by history. The clearest manifestation of messianic time is the time of the Sabbath, which is referred to as "messianic intermezzo." The messianic time of the Sabbath anticipates the end and final redemption of history. "The history of the world finds its goal and consummation in God's eschatological sabbath."[34] Messianic time anticipates the time of eternity, which brings an end to the empty time of mere historical succession. Eternity, the time of the life of God the Trinity is not the time of the always-the-same but the time in which excluded moments find space to realize themselves. Eternal life is the realization of forgotten and repressed histories, which, though excluded from the history of progress, became part of God's history. "God forgets nothing that he has created. Nothing is lost to him. He will restore it all."[35] The reason God does not forget is not because God stands above history in God's eternity. Rather, the absolute remembrance of God refers to God's essentially historical nature. Moltmann, obviously drawing on Ernst Bloch's messianic philosophy of hope, develops his messianic theology of the trinitarian God through a peculiar hermeneutic of the eschatological consummation of God's history.

Moltmann inverts Hegel's insights about the relation between God and history. Hegel's understanding of this relationship is thoroughly teleological. *Geist* comes to its self-realization within history. The self-realization of *Geist* is identical with the consummation of history. With Moltmann no such teleological orientation is present. The chronological scheme of past-present-future is shattered in Moltmann's theology of history. God comes from the future, the sphere of redemption, and is proleptically present as the future of every moment within time. The past also has its own futurity. Every moment of the past has a future that is the presence of redemption in every past moment. The past therefore never becomes extinguished. It is never overcome by the newness of the present. It cannot be overcome as the possibility of the fulfillment of the past's futurity lies within the future God holds for it. The meaning of the past, for Moltmann, lies exactly in the fulfillment of this latent possibility. This latent possibility for Moltmann is the messianic potentiality of each moment.

REDEMPTION THROUGH SUFFERING: THEORIES OF ATONEMENT

The messianic in Moltmann's theology is not simply a religious category but one that is loaded with political ramifications. Moltmann contrasts his understanding of the messianic with the approach of Martin Buber, who perceived

the messianic as the presence of eternity in time. In opposition to Buber's existentialist interpretation, Moltmann defines the messianic as the hope for a future liberation within the present time of political oppression. It is through the presence of an alternative future, the presence of the kingdom of God in the time of history, that the oppressed can have a realistic hope for their coming liberation.

> The heart of messianism is to be found in political experiences for which a theological interpretation had to be found, if the people were to survive as God's people . . . If, using Buber's phrase, we term the messianic future "the absolute future," then it does not belong within time at all, not even future time . . . Unlike Buber, we are therefore distinguish between the messianic future in history, or at the end of history, and the eschatological future of this whole history—that is between the "Last Days" and the new eternal aeon.[36]

Moltmann's political theology is fundamentally a theodicy, but not in the sense that it contends to justify God in the face of the suffering of the innocent. Such a defense remains a futile task. Theodicy, if understood as the justification of God, reflects an inadequate concept of God for Moltmann. Moltmann understands theodicy as the process of God's own self-justification through the messianic suffering of Jesus. Through these sufferings, God himself suffers the pain of his creation. God does not overcome the suffering of his creation through the singular suffering of Jesus.

> God and suffering belong together, just as in this life the cry for God and the suffering experienced in pain belong together. The question about God and the question about suffering are a joint, common question. And they only find a common answer. Either that, or neither of them finds a satisfactory answer at all. No one can answer the theodicy question in this world, and no one can get rid of it. Life in this world means living with this open question, and seeking the future in which the desire for God will be fulfilled, suffering will be overcome, and what has been lost will be restored. The question of theodicy is not a speculative question; it is a critical one. It is the all-embracing eschatological question.[37]

In Christian theology it is the doctrine of justification that focuses on the redemptive significance of Christ's sufferings. Moltmann finds previous formulations of the doctrine of justification overwhelmingly christocentric. These christocentric approaches to justification reduce the meaning of redemption to a mere transaction between a sinless Christ and a sinful humanity. Christ suffers death in place of sinful human beings so they will not have to experience the consequence of their sin, eternal death. The suffering and death of Christ are understood functionally as they serve as the means for

atonement for the sins of the believer. Through the suffering and death of Christ, the sinner no longer has to experience death because Christ has already experienced it for him. Since death is conclusively overcome through the atoning work of Christ, all of life, including all the sufferings of life, is a mere preparation for better things to come. Life in the here and now becomes the function for life in the hereafter.

The traditional understanding of justification through its theory of atonement elevates the suffering of Jesus to such height that next to his suffering all human suffering becomes dwarfed. In this scheme the suffering of Jesus becomes an atypical expression of suffering in that it becomes so magnified that it overshadows the significance of suffering, human or nonhuman, in the world. Traditional theories of redemption are found lacking in that in them there is a virtual absence of the relevance of the suffering of Jesus for nonhuman suffering.

The greatest problem with the exchange-oriented soteriological scheme, which instrumentalizes the suffering and death of Christ, is that it lacks the essential dialectic between cross and resurrection and it is therefore inadequate to express the messianic identity of Jesus.[38] The suffering and death of Jesus can only find its soteriological significance if they are understood as the suffering and death of the resurrected Christ.[39] In the same way, the resurrection can only be understood as the resurrection of the crucified Christ.[40] The meaning of the cross and the death of Christ is not the function of a soteriology that defines redemption in terms of sin. If the meaning of justification is understood messianically, justification is not merely salvation from the deadliness of sin but, just as importantly, salvation for a qualitatively new life.

Moltmann's theology of the cross explores the meaning of suffering in an inverse way from previous attempts. Moltmann locates suffering within the intra-trinitarian life of God. He suggests that suffering is not an incidental feature of existence but that it is incorporated within the life of God. He asks about the meaning of the cross and suffering of Christ in terms of the inner life of God, that is, in terms of the experience of suffering of the Father within the Godhead.[41]

The meaning of suffering is conceived according to a trinitarian logic, which is encapsulated in the basic dialectic between the theology of the cross and the doctrine of the Trinity. It is this dialectic that guarantees that the doctrine of the Trinity does not become an abstract teaching of Christian theology but remains organically connected to the messianic mission of Jesus.

> The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ. The formal principle of knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity . . . the theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the

> Trinity must be the theology of the cross, because otherwise the human, crucified God cannot be fully perceived.[42]

Moltmann's theology of suffering is part of his larger doxologically oriented theological vision. Paradoxically, it is suffering that reveals the eschatological glorification of God. It is through suffering that God arrives at his eschatological glorification.

Moltmann views suffering as something that infuses the whole world.[43] For him, suffering is not an incidental feature of existence but one that pervades the totality of the created order. Suffering is a cosmic phenomenon as all things experience the constant decay of their life. The universal decay of nature refers to the transience of life itself. Everything in existence is perishing. The full meaning of redemption can only be understood with the acknowledgment of the cosmic dimension of suffering. The experience of decay and of the transience of life finds its quintessential manifestation in the suffering and death of Christ.

> Our life is a fragment, naturally, a fragment of death. The life which is reborn to a living hope also remains a fragment. But it now becomes a fragment of the coming beauty of the kingdom of God.[44]

Through the Kabbalistic image of *zimzum*, Moltmann illustrates the experience of fragmentation within the created order. At the moment of creation the Godhead explodes "into" his creation, and consequently fragments (sparks) of God are now found in every part of the created order. The meaning of redemption, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, is found in the unification of these scattered fragments. The sign of the coming Messiah lies in the regathering of the fragments of creation into fragments of redemption. The Messiah is present in every moment of suffering and, through his presence, the eschatological possibility of redemption is also present. The presence of the Messiah cannot be experienced as an abstract totality because it arises as a constellation out of the world of fragmentation and decay.

Moltmann's Christ is not the ontological abstraction of the metaphysics of two natures. He is the Messiah who identifies with the decay of existence and through his kenotic identification, rescues creation from its ultimate decay. The Messiah redeems the incomplete by identifying with it. The Messiah is on the way, continually gathering within himself the infinite fragmentation, caused by histories of suffering. Redemption is not only redemption from suffering; redemption is also redemption through suffering.

The connection between the cross of Christ and the materiality of existence is an essential determining factor of Moltmann's soteriological scheme. The importance of the cross is to emphasize the sheer materiality of Jesus' sufferings.

The challenge of the theology of the cross is to defamiliarize the cross. According to Moltmann, the cross lost its aura, it became irrelevant with the emergence of the modern, an era dominated by the idea of progress. The cross became an object among all other objects as it fell under the rule of reproducibility.[45] The aim of Moltmann's theology of the cross is to rescue the cross from the manipulating gaze of the modern. Moltmann's theology of the cross is a deconstruction of the privatized form of religion characteristic of western Enlightenment consciousness. The deconstructed Christ is no longer the manipulable object of the reified consciousness of the modern individual.

Moltmann's efforts to overcome the narrow anthropocentrism of the bourgeois cult of the subject find a clear manifestation in his concept of the "Always Greater Christ," which represents the culmination of his christology. The category of the "Always Greater Christ" reflects the consistent messianic underpinnings of Moltmann's theological method and it also serves as a transition to his pneumatology. Moltmann's pneumatology represents the extension of his messianic theology and the ultimate fusion of the messianic and trinitarian dimensions of his thought.

KENOSIS AND TRINITY

The significance of the suffering of Jesus in relation to the suffering of untold millions can only be answered by the logic of kenotic trinitarianism. For Moltmann, kenosis not only refers to the condescension of God to the level of the human in the person of Jesus. Kenosis is not merely an event in the economy of the Trinity, but it is also an event in the trinitarian fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This understanding of kenosis overcomes the artificial distinction between the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity through a "solidarity christology"[46] in which the question of suffering is no longer external but is internal to God.

> If he were only one victim more, his suffering would have no special meaning or importance. But if God himself is in Christ (II Cor. 5.19), then through his passion Christ brings into the passion history of this world the eternal fellowship of God, and the divine justice and righteousness that creates life; and he identifies God with the victims of violence. But the reverse is then also true; for this means the identification of the victims with God, so that they are put under God's protection and with him are given the rights of which they have been deprived by human beings.[47]

What is the logic of Moltmann's trinitarianism? If there is a common thread that runs through Moltmann's extensive writings it is his oft-repeated

claim that it is the event and experience of the cross that determines the structure of trinitarian logic and trinitarian discourse. Without a theology of the cross there can be no talk about a trinitarian God.

The event of the cross is often portrayed in ways that suggest that the sufferings Jesus endured were superhuman sufferings, that is, his sufferings belong to a different class from the sufferings of mere humans. The purpose of Moltmann's pneumatology is to correct this position. Pneumatology, the doctrine of the Spirit, both undergirds and simulataneously expands christology. The meaning of the theology of the cross can only be understood adequately if understood pneumatologically; that is, as an event and and experience endured in the power of the Spirit. The power of the Spirit, however, is the power that makes the kenotic surrender of the Son possible.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal presence of God in the world: The personhood of the Holy Spirit is reflected in the particular mode of God's presence in the world. God's freedom finds expression in his freedom to primordially decide the mode of his presence as the suffering one, as the humiliated one, as a fragmentary presence, a presence in passion.

Moltmann turns to the Shekinah theology of the Jewish tradition to recover the messianic dimension of Christian pneumatology. Through the exploration of the Shekinah tradition Moltmann arrives at several insights for the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. First, the Shekinah points to the presence of God among the people as a specifically personal presence.[48] Second, the Shekinah points to a self-distinction within God in that the Shekinah is the presence of God who in his sovereignty decides to be present in the history of the suffering of his people.[49]

The idea of self-distinction illuminates the third feature of the Shekinah tradition, which Moltmann draws on for the construction of his holistic pneumatology. The self-distinction within God is a self-distinction that is rooted in God's kenotic self-surrender to suffer with his people. "Through his 'self-distinction,' God can humiliate himself, be with his people, and identify himself with his people's fate."[50]

Through appropriating the kenotic understanding of the Shekinah, Moltmann develops a kenotic pneumatology.[51] Israel experiences the presence of God through the Shekinah who suffers with them, and it is through this identification with suffering that the messianic hope for Israel's final deliverance is born. The messianic hope and the suffering presence of God are dialectically interrelated. Israel's hope for her final deliverance from suffering is identical with the self-deliverance of God from his exile.[52] The messianic hope is ultimately hope for the unification of God himself. The Shekinah theology expresses the historical experience of God and its basic dialectical structure of remembrance of suffering and expectation for redemption.

In Moltmann's pneumatology, the Shekinah theology of Israel is expanded to involve the totality of the created order. The kenosis of God is a cosmic kenosis in that God is in exile for the whole of his creation. The Spirit is present in the created order of decay and transience. The Spirit identifies with the suffering of every created being, yet it also infuses all things with the hope of new life. Not only humans but also the whole of creation experiences God through his Spirit.[53]

The meaning of the kenosis of the Spirit is to open up the trinitarian community of love to all things in creation. The kenosis of the Spirit is the realization of the perichoretic community of freedom between the Creator and the Creation. Creation finds its true meaning, arrives at its goal, through being infused with the life-giving Spirit, God's ruach.

Kenosis is a messianic category. It is inextricably connected to the messianic mission of the Son. God's Shekinah descending and resting on him marks the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. The messianic mission of Jesus begins with and is empowered by the special presence of God in his life. Without the messianic presence of the Shekinah, as the presence of God among the afflicted people in exile, there would be no messianic mission. "The self-emptying of the Spirit is accordingly the pre-condition for the self-humiliation of the Son. The Spirit of God is the spirit of kenotic self-surrender."[54] Behind Moltmann's *pneumatologia crucis* lies the recognition that kenosis is not only a category of christology, but it is also a fundamental category of pneumatology. The suffering of the Son, the messianic child, is, simultaneously, the suffering of the Spirit with the Son. "The Spirit is the transcendent side of Jesus' immanent way of suffering."[55] It is only through the kenosis of the Spirit that the messianic suffering of the Son becomes comprehensible. It is through the "condescendence" of the Spirit that Jesus becomes increasingly aware of his messianic identity, and through the kenosis of the Spirit he could endure the eclipse of God, his total abandonment by the Father.[56] The presence of the Spirit within the suffering and death of the Son is the presence of new life, the qualitatively new life of the resurrection. The kenosis of the Spirit has a double significance. Firstly, it is through the life of the Spirit that the Son conquers the nihil of death. Secondly, through the Son's sending the Spirit infuses the totality of the created order with the promise of the resurrection. For Moltmann the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the fellowship of redeemed humanity, but it has an all-encompassing scope that includes all things. Kenosis on the cosmic level is the Spirit's identification with the universal decay of living organisms, and it is through the drawing in of all things into the perichoretic community of divine life that all things participate in the messianic promise of redemption.

Moltmann understands the meaning of the kenosis of the Son as a trinitarian event. What makes the kenosis of the Son possible is the power of the Holy Spirit. The love of the Father in Jesus, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, infinitely opens itself up to creation and is infinitely rejected through the death of the Son. In this the infinite freedom of God is manifested. God in his infinite freedom willingly faces the reality of absolute rejection.

The meaning of the resurrection is the triumph of love over absolute rejection. God reveals himself as infinite love through the trinitarian history of the passion of the Son. This history incorporates absolute rejection—and here with the actualization of absolute rejection the kenotic structures of God's Being become manifest.

The kenosis of the Son is the kenosis of God through which God the Father, in the power of the Spirit, irrevocably becomes the God who is historically affected. God does not only make history, but he himself becomes part of the vicissitudes of his own history in order to make this history part of his eternity.

God is present within history through a presence that is both immanent and transcendent. The coming of God in and to history offers an alternative to teleological conceptions of history. In contradistinction to the homogeneous view of history as Totality, the coming future of God offers the messianic hope for each forgotten moment, pointing to the plural nature of history. [57]

The Holy Spirit is the crystallization of the plurality of histories into a constellation. The emergence of this constellation has close affinities with the Kabbalistic conception of the uniting of God.[585] According to the Kabbalah, redemption (tikkun) arrives with the unification of God, when all the people of the Israel celebrate the Sabbath simultaneously. For Moltmann, this Jewish expectation of universal redemption gets translated into trinitarian pneumatology in that redemption becomes the ever-clearer experience of life made possible by the Holy Spirit. The possibility for the experience of life in the midst of this transitory world comes through the condescension of the Spirit.

The retrieval of the messianic base of Christian theology necessitates a continuing dialogue with contemporary Jewish messianic thought, as exemplified in Moltmann's efforts to engage various Jewish expressions of messianic thinking. Through his insistence on dialogue, Moltmann reaffirms the common path, predicated on the common hope for the kingdom of God, which Judaism and Christianity share. Jewish messianic thinking informs Christian theology to construct a theology that is aware of the acutely incomplete nature of present reality, including the harshness of suffering in the world. Moltmann develops his messianic trinitarianism by placing this sense of incompleteness at the very center of his thought. His messianic christology is not merely an

outcome of his conversation with modern Jewish messianic theology. It is, just as importantly, the expression of his trinitarian theology of the cross. Moltmann's concentration on the concept of the messianic also leads him to offer a theological interpretation of time by pointing to the specifically messianic dimension of time, the time of the apocalyptic sufferings of Jesus. Ultimately, it is within messianic time where the forgotten memories of unredeemed sufferings are remembered and redeemed. Behind the soteriological program of Moltmann's christology lies the unfolding of his trinitarian logic of divine suffering. The concept that controls his trinitarianism is the concept of kenosis, a concept that informs his notion of the "Always Greater Christ," and finds its final realization in his pneumatology.

NOTES

1. Moltmann, *Crucified God*.
2. See Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 2.
3. Ibid., 1.
4. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 21–25. "Christian theology acquired Greek philosophy's ways of thinking in the Hellenistic world; and since that time most theologians have simultaneously maintained the passion Christ, God's Son, and the deity's essential incapacity for suffering—even though it was at the price of having to talk paradoxically about "sufferings of the God who cannot suffer." Ibid., 22.
5. Ibid., 25.
6. "Prophecy consists in the inspired communication of divine attitudes to the prophetic consciousness . . . the divine pathos is the ground-tone of all these attitudes. A central category of the prophetic understanding for God, it is echoed in almost every prophetic statement." See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets Volume 2* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 3.
7. Ibid., 4.
8. Ibid., 5.
9. Christian theology represented Judaism as the religion of inflexible law while presenting itself as the religion of grace that liberates people from the bondage of the law. By emphasizing the dialectic between divine pathos and ethos, Heschel's philosophy of Judaism puts an end to such fatal misrepresentation of Judaism.
10. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 5.
11. Ibid., 5–6.
12. Ibid., 6.
13. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 27.
14. Ibid., 170.
15. Ibid., 171.
16. Ibid., 172.

17. For the "Theology of the Surrender of Christ," see Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 172–178; and his *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 75–83. It is in the latter work where Moltmann first makes the crucial distinction between active and passive suffering: "It [Jesus' suffering] is no unwilling, fortuitous suffering; it is *passio activa*," 75.

18. See Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

19. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 156.

20. Ibid., 164.

21. Ibid., 153.

22. "In 'the sufferings of Christ' the end-time sufferings of the whole world are anticipated and vicariously experienced." Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 155.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 158.

25. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 192.

26. Ibid., 193.

27. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 154.

28. See Theodore W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

29. See Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

30. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 158.

31. See the works of Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich as representatives of the kairological approach to time. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957); and Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

32. See Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 169.

33. Ibid., 170.

34. Ibid., 302.

35. Ibid., 303.

36. See Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 21.

37. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 49.

38. The task of Moltmann's masterpiece *The Crucified God* is to unfold the significance of this dialectic for a trinitarian hermeneutic of the cross. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, especially the section "The Significance of the Cross of the Risen Christ," 178–187.

39. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 213.

40. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 161.

41. One can blame Moltmann's phenomenology of the experience of suffering in God as portrayed in his *The Crucified God* for not giving adequate emphasis to the role of the Holy Spirit in the Father's experience of the suffering of his son. It is important to note, however, that the pneumatology found in *The Crucified God* is at an early stage in Moltmann's career and therefore cannot be the measure of his mature

pneumatology. See von Balthasar on the immanent Trinity and on the meaning of suffering within the godhead.

42. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 241.

43. "History has concentrated for the most part on man's struggles for power and on class and racial struggles. If we are to find a universal history of man, we must look beyond these to the 'history of suffering in the world.'" See Johannes Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, *Faith and the Future*, 89. Here Moltmann quotes Walter Benjamin's brilliant study on the baroque mourning play.

44. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Open Church Invitation to a Messianic Lifestyle* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1985), 40.

45. As a result of its obsession with the New, modernity lost its ability to remember. It is this loss of the capacity to remember that ultimately led to the devaluation of the cross.

46. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 130.

47. Ibid., 131.

48. "The Shekinah is not a divine attribute. It is the presence of God himself. But it is not God in his essential omnipresence. It is his special, willed and promised presence in the world." See Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 48.

49. Moltmann refers to Franz Rosenzweig's use of the Hegelian notion of self-distinction within God to express the meaning of the Shekinah as the self-surrendering presence of the self-surrendered God. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 49.

51. "The idea of the Shekinah points toward the kenosis of the Spirit. In his Shekinah God renounces his impassability and becomes able to suffer because he is willing to love." Ibid., 51.

52. Ibid., 49.

53. Ibid., 57.

54. See D. Lyle Dabney's *Die Kenosis des Geistes., Kontinuitat zwischen Schopfung und Erlosung im Werk des Heiligen Geistes (*dissertation, Universitat Tubingen, 1989) as quoted in Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 64.

55. Ibid., 62.

56. "This growing certainty of his messiahship is a clear sign of the presence of God's Spirit in the absence of God the Father which Jesus experienced." Ibid., 65.

57. For Moltmann, in spite of certain allusions to the contrary, history is still viewed in a unitary manner. There is thus no plurality of histories as in post-modern philosophies of history. When he talks about history, he ultimately means one history that binds all things together.

58. See Franz Rosenzweig's work *The Star of Redemption* for a modern interpretation of this Kabbalistic insight.

Chapter Seven

Messianic Optics: Elective Affinity between the Messianisms of Walter Benjamin and Jürgen Moltmann

The messianic philosophy of Walter Benjamin, and with his peculiar, yet consistent, application of Jewish apophaticism, provides the possibility for a rereading of the theology of Jürgen Moltmann. This particular approach to Moltmann's oeuvre is also a reading beyond Moltmann, beyond kataphasis; it is a practice of what Slavoj Zižek calls "tarrying with the negative" that derails the proclivity of a dialectics that hastily absorbs the negative in order to reach a final synthesis.[1] This hermeneutical stance dampens the overly positive language that characterizes Moltmann's later, doxological turn in his trinitarianism. Benjamin's theories of language and experience lead to the unearthing of the linguistic implications of Moltmann's theology of the cross. The cross points to the fragility of language to name God. It is through acknowledging the messianic excess of the cross that trinitarian language regains its messianic dimension. The confrontation of the thought of Moltmann with the philosophy of Benjamin's messianic philosophy results in the reaffirmation of the messianic grounds of Christian existence in general, and Christian language about God in particular. The following is a reading of the theology of Moltmann through the messianic hermeneutic of Benjamin, demonstrating the need and the possibility of messianic trinitarianism.

The basic question of Christianity in Moltmann's theology is not the question about the identity of Jesus that theological definitions have formulated, confessing this identity as fully human and fully divine in one undivided person. Merely confessing that Jesus is both divine and human does not identify Jesus but only creates a metaphysical language game in which it is impossible to name God. But why, one might legitimately pose the question, is metaphysical language inadequate to name Jesus in his divinity? Moltmann's answer is found through his focus on the special temporality of the question about the identity of the Messiah: "Are you he who is to come?"

Interestingly, Jesus' answer, if it counts as an answer at all, seems to evade answering the question in an unequivocal manner. Instead, it points to the results of his ministry among the sick and the outcast of contemporary Jewish society. Is there any meaning behind this apparent obfuscation on Jesus' part? Was Jesus unable to name himself, and is this inability to name what may be behind the so-called "messianic secret" theory? Is it impossible for him to name himself within the time of the present? Moltmann suggests that the question put to Jesus (and interestingly not to the disciples) is "the question about the messianic 'hour.' It is a 'temporal' question."[2]

Although the messianic question is a "temporal" question, it implies a kind of time that cannot be measured by any chronological device. The "temporality" of this question evokes the unique temporality of messianic time and through this it puts into question the time of history: The messianic question is the linguistic expression of the basic impulse of Christianity to "brush history against the grain."[3]

The cross is the major hermeneutical lens through which the diverse themes of Moltmann's theology gain focus. From a hermeneutical perspective, the curiosity of the cross is that although it serves as the main point of reference in the construction of a hermeneutic of the cross ("the word of the cross"), it resists becoming absorbed by it. The cross never becomes identical with the hermeneutics of the cross. The special function of the cross in Moltmann's theology to continually deconstruct any systematic approach built around it[4] is reminiscent of the anti-hermeneutical stance of Benjamin's "destructive character."[5] The unique hermeneutic of the cross lies in its anti-hermeneutical function.

The aesthetic significance of the cross in Moltmann's thought lies in its deconstructive presence. In Moltmann's theology, the "cross" plays a central role in a way similar to the notion of "pure language" in Benjamin's thought. In Moltmann's aesthetics of the cross, the cross eludes all efforts to be captured by acts of translation. In effect, the cross ultimately frustrates language. It is something untranslatable to human language.

For Moltmann the cross is something that is incommensurable, beyond human efforts to understand its meaning. Or, rather, incommensurability in this case "means" that the cross is beyond hermeneutics (it "means" nothing). Moltmann sees the true significance of the cross in the history of its rejection, culminating in the absolute rejection of the cross by modernity, hallmarked by Nietzsche's famous annunciation of the death of God:

> Modern, post-Christian humanism has done a great service by bringing to the fore once again this original and natural dislike of the cross. In this way it has reminded Christianity, which has made itself so much at home in European civilization, of its original and fundamental alienation.[6]

Through the exploration of the aesthetic and linguistic dimension of Moltmann's *theologia crucis* one can perceive a kind of elective affinity with Benjamin's thought, especially in terms of the latter's construal of the connection between aesthetics and language. In Benjamin's thought, language and aesthetics are closely intertwined. The main text that brings out the organic connection between his theory of language and aesthetic theory is his famous essay on translation, "The Task of the Translator." In this essay Benjamin not only delineates his theory of language (through drawing on a peculiar exegesis of the book of Genesis), but he also raises the dilemma of the reception and receivability of the work of art.

According to Benjamin's essay the reception of the work of art takes place within the framework of language. It is through the impossibility of understanding the work of art that the essence of language, and with it, the origin of the multiplicity of languages, emerges. The text is translatable because the act of translation is the witness to the afterlife of the original text.

> The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity The history of the great works of art tells us about their antecedents, their realization in the age of the artist, their potentially eternal afterlife in succeeding generations. Where this last manifests itself, it is called fame. Translations that are more than transmissions of subject matter come into being when in the course of its survival a work has reached the age of its fame . . . The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering.[7]

A true translation is thus one through which the life of the original not only becomes transparent, but also begins to flourish through the translation as its afterlife. The original source of this flourishing, however, is not found within the potential of the original work, but is fueled by its approximation to pure language. The vehicle of the appearance (showing forth) of pure language for Benjamin is the very act of translation.

For Moltmann, the major task of theology is a matter of translatability. For Benjamin the translatability of texts raised the issue about the reception of the work of art and led to the shocking opening line of the translation essay, a line that subverted all previous hermeneutics of reception. That line stated: "No work of art is ever intended for the receiver."[8] The meaning of the text is not found within an intention that the reader can perceive through a method of interpretation. Within this shocking and at first unacceptable thesis lies hidden Benjamin's epistemological vision of dissimulating the subject-oriented epistemology of the modern.

How is Moltmann's work connected to this Benjaminian subversion of modern epistemology? For Moltmann the reception of the cross functions as

that critical moment in which the inadequacies of the modern become exposed. What is paradoxical about the cross, depicted as a useless object for the aesthetic sensibilities of the modern, is that it generates language, "the word of the cross," through the testimony of the Early Church, most eminently through the testimony of the Apostle Paul. What is the connection between the cross, this preeminent work of art concealed in debasement and the language generated by it, namely the "word of the cross"? This is the great paradox Christian theology confronts itself with and the paradox recognized by Moltmann in all its ramifications: aesthetic, linguistic, and epistemic.

Can approaching it through purely linguistic means ever exhaust the cross, or does it rather expand the boundaries of language by always going beyond the limits language tries to set for it? The paradox that exists between the cross as an aesthetic object and the "word of the cross" is brilliantly brought out by the hermeneutical investigations of Friedrich Schleiermacher. In one of the fragmentary remarks found in his *Hermeneutik*, the paradox of the cross, the essence of Christianity, is designated as a paradoxical event that subverts the meaning of human language by expanding the scope of language as such. Christianity creates language.[9] The danger that is inherent in the above statement of Schleiermacher (one that Moltmann resists) is to equate Christianity and the cross with a purely linguistic expression (although describing it as a special sort of language), that is, to identify the cross with the "word of the cross." This identification has been made by certain followers of the theology of Karl Barth and his theology of the Word of God. The emblematic work of this misappropriation of Schleiermacher's thesis is the influential and programmatic work on the nature of doctrine by George Lindbeck by the same title, *The Nature of Doctrine*.[10]

Interestingly, the protest against treating Christianity as a "language game" or "speech event"[11] comes from a Jewish philosopher, Hans Jonas, quoted by Moltmann: "The crucifixion was more than a speech event."[12] The logocentric approach of post-Bultmannian hermeneutical theology and its American brainchild, Yale post-liberal theology, are epistemologically suspect in that both approaches reduce the cross, the truth of the cross, to mere linguistic content: "There is a reality in the crucified Christ which cannot be identified with any Logos in such a way that it is replaced."[13] For Moltmann, the cross creates language, but this does not by any means imply that the truth of the cross is fully emptied into the language created by it.

What is peculiar about St. Paul's characterization of the word of the cross is that he claims it to be "the one revelation of the crucified Christ in the light of his resurrection from the dead."[14] Is this too strong an assertion? Is St. Paul equating the "word of the cross" with the cross itself? How can he be sure that the revelation, which he claims to be the exclusive and conclusive word about

the cross, actually corresponds to the event (the event of truth) it claims to be the testimony of?

If the cross resists all interpretations, all possibilities of reception, how should one categorize the "word of the cross"? Is it supposed to be the one exclusive interpretation of the truth of the cross? Or, is it, as Karl Barth understood revelation, God's correspondence to Himself within the language of Revelation He Himself created? But then there is still the problem of finding the distinguishing mark between human language and the language of revelation. Is the difference between these two merely a difference in grammar, the language of divine revelation having a wholly different grammatical structure from that of human language?

Karl Barth answers this question in the affirmative as he asserts the existence of a separate linguistic sphere of revelation. It is the grammar of divine revelation, within which God corresponds to His own self as Trinity. In other words, according to Barth, the grammar of revelation is the grammar of trinitarian speech, a grammar that is wholly different from the grammar of human speech about God. Human speech about God, according to Barth, always-and-already misspeaks about God, as it is unable to name God (identify God through language appropriate to God) in the correct manner.

But how does one start speaking about God as a human who is fully determined by the structure and inherent limitations of human language? How does one find oneself at home in the language that names the trinitarian God?

Barth's linguistic orientation reveals his own understanding of the cross as a finished event, as an event that conclusively determined the end of human history from the perspective of God's eternity. Aulen, in his famous work on the typologies of atonement, describes this orientation as the "Christus Victor" approach.[15] Moltmann warns of the dangers inherent in the explicit triumphalism of this approach by stressing the importance of the excess of the cross of the crucified Christ over the one true preaching ("the word of the cross") about it. "The crucified Christ is more than the preaching of the cross. For the very reason that this preaching is the only adequate access which the godless have to God who was crucified, this intrinsic distinction must not be removed. Precisely because the person must be apprehended in the word, the word cannot be taken for the person himself."[16]

The cross of the crucified one in Moltmann's theology and its function within the language of revelation has certain affinities with Benjamin's theory of language. Bringing out these correspondences leads one to a messianic conception of the transcendent. Benjamin rejects an instrumental theory of language that looks at language as a mere means of communication. Benjamin's theory of language represents a peculiar twist to apophatic theology in its particular localization of the transcendent. The standard approach to

negative theology is to locate the transcendent beyond the boundaries of language, labeling the true experience of the divine as ineffable. Benjamin, in contrast, has a theory of language that locates the transcendent in the "denied" of language, ". . . the 'denied' of language, the 'sphere of speechlessness' is within language; it is not the 'ineffable' outside of language since it is precisely this sense of external transcendence that is to be 'eliminated.'"[17]

The "denied" of language points to a configuration of the absolute (the transcendent) as immanent within language. The immanent absolute of Benjamin's philosophy of language is one of the latent configurations of the infinite concretization of language, as opposed to a novel configuration of language that emerges as a result of the infinite expendability of linguistic expressions. Benjamin's immanent absolute is the infinity that belongs to the infinite inscribability of a particular linguistic surface as opposed to the infinity of configuring possible linguistic surfaces.

Howard Caygill, in his work on Benjamin's theory of experience, further clarifies Benjamin's distinction between two infinities of language and the importance of this for Benjamin's understanding of the transcendent.

> *On Language As Such and on the Language of Man* translates the immanent totality of speculative experience developed in the theory of colour into the philosophy of language. The relationship between mathematics and language which however imperfectly informs the essay, emerges in the contrast between language as an infinitely extended field of possible utterances and language as a mode of designation and intention capable of generating an infinite number of languages. In the first case, language is analogous to the transcendentally infinite surface of inscription while in the second it is analogous to the speculative infinity of configured surfaces.[18]

In a sense, by making a distinction between two kinds of infinity (one being the infinite expressibility of language while the other being the immanent infinity of configurations in which language can take form), Benjamin manages to preserve the truth of apophatic theology and the latter's denial of the expressibility of the absolute within the assumed infinity of the expansion of linguistic expressions. In apophatic theology the infinity of God is beyond, or rather different from, the infinity ascribed to the expandability of human linguistic expressions.

From Benjamin's theory of language and translation one learns that the "denied" of language, that which is speechless within human language, is there because human language arrogates to itself a specific role belonging to the creative word of God. The "denied" of human language is the result of the Fall, which Benjamin reads through the categories of his linguistic theory, and the concomitant abrogation of the transparency of the naming of "pure

language." Pure language is grounded in the absolute naming with which God created the world. Now, human language assumes the creative capacity and the special infinity of the divine word and names things or translates the language of things into itself, while not realizing that. Through the misappropriated capacity of naming, it reduces the infinity of the creative word of God into another kind of infinity.[19] The reduction of one kind of infinity to another by human language creates what Benjamin calls the "denied" of language, the "unsayable" hidden by the "said," while being distinct from the "unsaid." Within the "said" there are the two infinities of language: one is the infinity of the "unsaid" that strictly belongs to human language, whereas the "unsayable" is the marker of the infinity of language as such. The "unsayable" is the language that properly belongs to the absolute, although in an indirect sense, an absolute that is transcendent in its immanence.

How can one recover the "unsayable"? How can one say the "unsayable"? This is where the messianic dimension of Benjamin's linguistic theory comes to the fore, and it is at this point that Moltmann's messianic theology, the recovery of language in a messianic dimension, finds a certain convergence with Benjamin's thought and distinguishes itself from all other Christian constructive theologies. The "unsayable" of the said, the "denied" of language, comes to speech again in the messianic world and thus the unsayable, the mute lament of nature, is the cipher of the messianic. "The messianic world is the world in which language is shared absolutely and all translation is complete."[20]

The cipher of the messianic in Moltmann's theology is found in the muteness of the cross of the crucified Christ, which resists all identification, all possibility of naming, by human language. The infinity of the "unsayable" of the cross of the crucified resists all translation into any word about it. The word of the cross can never become a substitute for the cross of the crucified one.

Moltmann demonstrates the impossibility of absorbing the cross into the "word of the cross" by turning to the central question concerning the identity of the Messiah: "Are you He who is to come?" For Moltmann this is the question that has priority over other questions inquiring about either the divine or human origin of Jesus, questions that unfortunately determined the language of Christian theology and questions that ultimately caused a seemingly irreparable disconnect between the linguistic universes of Christianity and Judaism. In order to retrieve the original, messianic impulse of Christianity, Moltmann suggests a return to this question and the linguistic implications of the messianic question.[21]

The messianic question is also an eschatological question in that it asks about the identity of the person in terms of his messianic future, a future that

is not reducible from the determinations of worldly time to a calculable futurity. The language of this question is heard within human language, but at the same time it puts into question this human language, by placing it on the horizon of the messianic. Therefore, in the posing of this question, there is a force that destabilizes any human response. Yet, without the posing of this question, any attempt to identify the crucified one is doomed to failure. "But the messianic question not only points to its answers in Jesus, but also hinders that answer."[22] The failure of the Christian Church was to give an answer to this eschatological question through the strictly historical, and as a result it looked at itself as the historical fulfillment of the messianic expectations inherent in the messianic question.

> The kingdom of redemption was seen as already present in the church, or in the Constantinian state, in one's exclusive denomination or in the Christianized secular world . . . This gave rise to the triumphalism of the theocratic state church, which regularly led to the persecution of the Jews and representatives of unfulfilled messianic hope.[23]

In Moltmann's theology the irreconcilable tension between the cross of the Crucified and the word of the cross has already been emphasized. The examination of the relationship between these two demonstrated that the word of the cross can never exhaust the meaning of the cross. The meaning of the cross awaits eschatological fulfillment in the eschatological future. It is within this eschatological future that the resurrection of the crucified one also arrives at its full meaning. In the tension between the cross and the "word of the cross," it was pointed out that there is a special linguistic difficulty in attempting to identify the meaning of the cross through language. Moltmann arrives at the conclusion that no pure identification is possible. The cross generates a semiotic field that is unreachable by any word of the cross.

There is another dialectical relationship of pairs present in Moltmann's theology, one between the "name of Jesus" and the "titles of Jesus." The examination of Moltmann's treatment of these two reveals the secret to the structure of Moltmann's theology. This structure is clearly built on a linguistic foundation, and a convincing argument can be made that the linguistic distinction between "name" and "titles" leads Moltmann to unfold his messianic theology, which determines his trinitarian language about God.

Moltmann's critique of Christian trinitarian language about God finds its impetus in the linguistic implications of the "name of Jesus." Although for Moltmann talk about God in a trinitarian fashion is the correct way, his embrace of trinitarian language comes with a qualification. The issue Moltmann raises regarding Christian trinitarian language is that, for it to be proper lan-

guage about God, it needs to be an answer to the messianic question pertaining to the identity of Jesus. Christian trinitarian language, however, can only be a provisional naming of God. The naming of God is an eschatological event. This can be seen in the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2:11 where the messianic question finds an answer in the form of an eschatological confession.[24] It is within the ultimate positivity of Moltmann's essentially eschatological outlook, which crystallizes in this eschatological confession, that one can observe the basic divergence between his thought and that of Benjamin.

The negative utopia that hallmarks the intellectual imagination of Walter Benjamin (whose affinities in this matter lie with Franz Kafka) clearly distinguishes him from Moltmann's inclination to embrace a positive utopia, influenced by the messianic philosophy of Ernst Bloch. The obvious difference in orientation between Benjamin and Moltmann is that the former explicitly embraces the Jewish prohibition to probe what lies ahead in the future. "We know that the Jews were prohibited from inquiring into the future: the Torah and the prayers instructed them in remembrance. This disenchanted the future, which holds sway over all those who turn to soothsayers for enlightenment."[25] Moltmann, on the other hand, is more skeptical about the task of turning one's attention wholly to the past through the faculty of remembrance. For Benjamin, the act of remembering itself has the messianic energy to save the past from the dustbin of forgetfulness. Benjamin's utopian thought is never positively articulated in terms of providing a concrete image of the future of messianic reconciliation.

Benjamin has no hope in the future of history, or, more correctly, he does not have a specific vision of the end of history wherein history will be swallowed up by a revolutionary future.[26] He believes that any teleological orientation to defining the meaning of utopia suffers a serious handicap. For Benjamin, utopia is not the goal of the dialectical movement of history. His thought is entirely different from the usual Marxist understanding of utopia, which understands the latter as the inevitable goal of the dialectic of history.

Benjamin is not hopeful in that he does not define utopia in terms of an expectation of a better future. Moltmann, on the other hand, is compelled to have a positive hope by the force of his own tradition. "Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God. In the New Testament there is no faith that does not start a priori with the resurrection of Jesus."[27] Moltmann, in comparison with Benjamin, is not content with reducing his theology to the task of remembering the dead and excavating the past in general. Merely remembering, or dwelling in the past, even in the sense of becoming an archeologist of forgotten memories of the past à la Benjamin, does not suffice for Moltmann. "It will no longer be possible to regard the past only archeologically and take it merely as the origin of the particular

present."[28] For him the critical function of remembering is that it is associated with remembering a particular dead body, namely the dead body of the crucified Christ. This particular body becomes paradigmatic in Moltmann's theology. This body is the terrain in which death is absolutely confronted and where messianic hopes for redemption are realized.

The locus of transience in Moltmann's theology becomes the mortal body of the crucified Messiah. The mortality of this body, the aesthetics of decay located in the body, becomes the vehicle of Moltmann's later critical theory. The upside of this turn to the body of the crucified is that within the aesthetic of decay he perceives possibilities of an eschatological glory. As a result, Moltmann's thought, especially beginning with his book on pneumatology, The Spirit of Life, takes an increasingly doxological orientation, one that is not quite prominent in his early, breakthrough books, *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*. The history of the crucified body of Jesus becomes the positive key to understanding the history of the trinitarian God.

The location of utopia in Moltmann's theology is on a horizon determined by the resurrection of the dead body of Christ. Therefore, for Moltmann, what determines the articulation of the meaning of the messianic is the paradoxical continuity of the dead body of Jesus and the resurrected body of Christ. The true meaning of history is found in the history of this particular body.

The body of Christ functions in Moltmann's thought in a fashion similar to the "concrete particular" in Benjamin's thought. Because of the particularity of the body of Jesus and its dying, Moltmann can perceive a kind of cosmic connection that signifies the universal importance of the body of Jesus. "Jesus died the death of all living things. That is, he did not only die 'the death of the sinner' or merely his own natural death.' He died in solidarity with the whole sighing creation, human and non-human—the creation that 'sighs' because it is subject to transience. He died the death of everything that lives."[29]

What is peculiar about the body of Jesus is that, in spite of it being dead, it has a future through the power of resurrection, the power traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit.[30] Moltmann is interested in exploring the meaning of the particular future of this particular body to find out how the future of the body of Christ is related to the future of all things. Moltmann's theology makes an important connection between different futures through its focus on the particular body of Christ and the future of this body, which holds an eschatological hope for the revivification of all bodies, whether animate or inanimate.

Moltmann's theology of hope is not preoccupied with the future as temporal future. Rather, he is focused on the future of the body of Christ, which holds the promise of messianic redemption; that is, the transformation of the whole of decaying existence into the kingdom of life in the Spirit. The future history the resurrected body of the crucified Christ holds is not an abstract fu-

ture but one that is identified with the personal presence of the Spirit. The future is not an abstraction for Moltmann but represents the particular life within which existence in decay finds its vitality through the Spirit of life. The horizon of history for Moltmann is determined not only by the particular death of Jesus that took place at a particular historical moment within history. The horizon of history is determined by the future of his death, which overcomes the *nihil* of deadliness through the power of messianic life.

The resurrection of Jesus is the locus of Moltmann's critique of progress. The resurrection of Jesus remains incomprehensible to the historian not only because it resists the attempts to categorize it under the historically similar, through the historical method's use of analogy, but also because it proves to resist all efforts of capturing it through categories of dissimilarity. The resurrection is beyond both the similar and the dissimilar.

> The eschatologically new event of the resurrection of Christ, however, proves to be a novum ultimum both as against the similarity in ever-recurring reality and also as against the comparative dissimilarity of new possibilities emerging in history . . . The resurrection of Christ does not mean a possibility within the world and its history, but a new possibility altogether for the world, for existence, and for history.[31]

Therefore the resurrection of Jesus stands outside of any possible experience within the continuum of history. It is an unparalleled event. For that reason the resurrection functions in the theology of Moltmann in a way similar to the role that the concept "messianic cessation of happening" plays in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History."[32] As in Benjamin's thought, so in Moltmann's, the messianic interruption of the flow of historical time is brought about by the act of remembering.

In *The Theology of Hope* remembrance is defined by a predominantly future-oriented understanding of the resurrection of Jesus.[33] However, in this work, Moltmann makes it clear that remembrance is a critical event in that it calls into question the customary way things are determined by modern historical consciousness. "It [the expectation of the future in light of the remembrance of the resurrected Christ] must therefore contradict all rigid substantio-metaphysical definitions of the common core of similarity in world events, and therefore also the corresponding historical understanding that works with analogy."[34]

In *The Theology of Hope*, Moltmann dwells on the negativity of bodily existence, on the negativity of suffering in the world. This serves as a mere foil to generate hope for a better future. *The Theology of Hope* defines the messianic far too much in terms of a future-orientation, future not in the sense of

a forecastable future but a future that one can anticipate only through God's promise (God's future). The horizon of hope is created by an expected fulfillment that the promise of the resurrection of Jesus creates: "This eternal life here lies hidden beneath its opposite, under trial, suffering, death and sorrow. Yet this its hiddenness is not an eternal paradox, but a latency within the tendency that presses forwards and onwards into that open realm of possibilities that lies ahead and is so full of promise . . . in the contradictions of the body, in the painful difference between what he hopes and what he experiences, the man of hope perceives that his hoped-for future is still outstanding."[35]

The Crucified God represents a palpable shift in Moltmann's messianic theology. The shift is defined as one of emphasis, away from the future-orientation found in Moltmann's phenomenology of hope, toward a reconfiguration of the time of remembrance affected by the crucified Christ. "*Theology of Hope* began with the resurrection of the crucified Christ, and I am now turning to look at the cross of the risen Christ. I was concerned then with the remembrance of Christ in the form of the hope of his future, and now I am concerned with hope in the form of remembrance of his death."[36]

The Crucified God also represents a shift in terms of the philosophical influence Moltmann draws on, away from the utopianism of Ernst Bloch to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. This change in the philosophical underpinnings of Moltmann's thought brings him closer to the philosophical world of Walter Benjamin. Instead of his emphasis on the "negation of the negative," Moltmann "stays" with the negative, a philosophical orientation characteristic of the critical philosophy of Theodore Adorno.

"Staying with the negative" means a concentration on the concrete death of the crucified Christ and the corresponding concrete experience of pain suffered by the Father of the crucified One. Ultimately, the shift toward the concrete enables Moltmann to lay the foundations for his future contributions to trinitarian theology. Trinitarian theology for him is a theology grounded in the concrete.

For Benjamin, the concrete is found within the messianic moment, within the "time of recognizability." Through the messianic moment an alternative view of history emerges through which one is confronted with the past in all its concreteness. The past becomes visible as a landscape of horror, riddled with the ruins of forgotten and unrealized moments.[37]

The shift toward the concrete for Moltmann suggests a turn to the political. Remembrance is a political task, and Moltmann admittedly draws on the founder figure of the "new" political theology movement,[38] Johannes Baptist Metz, and his notion of "dangerous memory."[39] Metz describes the memory of the crucified Christ as "dangerous memory." The dangerous memory of the dead Christ brings about a complete upheaval in the traditional conceptions

of God as an apolitical being who dwells in the sterility of the next world. Remembering the crucified Christ is a radical event fraught with dangers: "It is not positive and constructive, but is in the first instance critical and destructive. It does not bring man into a better harmony with himself and his environment, but into contradiction with himself and his environment."[40]

The influence of Benjamin's messianism on Moltmann's early, more apophatic theology, may be detectable. Reading the following section in Moltmann's *The Crucified God* one can immediately notice palpable affinities with Benjamin's famous "Theologico-Political Fragment," the quintessential expression of both Benjamin's political theology and his philosophy of history:

> The messianic history of life runs counter to the history of the suffering of the world which leads to death, and approaches it from the future. But in this counter-course it has a redemptive relationship to the whole history of death and the dead.[41]

Moltmann, however, does not exhibit the consistency of apophatic thought demanded by the Jewish messianic idea and so consistently demonstrated by the philosophical practice of Walter Benjamin. The later work of Moltmann shifts back to his beginnings in the theology of hope and its overwhelming focus on the eschatological future. Remembrance of the past is conclusively overcome by a doxologically oriented expectation for God's future, the *Novum*. As Robert Cornelison, one of Moltmann's most faithful American interpreters, pointed out, the future orientation of Moltmann's thought hides a basic antinomy.

> The greatest strength in Moltmann's theology, the Novum, also turns out to be its fundamental weakness. Moltmann's emphasis on the radically "New" does not take seriously enough the factors in the world and in the human constitution which make transformation difficult if not unlikely.[42]

In contrast to the ultimate exuberance of Moltmann, the messianic philosophy of Walter Benjamin stays with the negativity of phenomena driven by a messianic teleology of origin ("In the origin is the end"). Behind his messianic obsession with the past, however, lies the fruit of his apophaticism.

> Every negation has value only as the backdrop for the outlines of the vital, the positive. So it is of decisive importance to continually redivide this tentatively isolated, negative part, such that, with a shift of point of view (but not that of standards!), it too, will reveal a new positive element, different from the one previously described. And so on ad infinitum until all of the past has been brought into the present in historic apocatastasis.[43]

NOTES

1. See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).
2. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1974), 111.
3. See Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Volume 4 1939–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 392.
4. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 32–81.
5. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 3* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 541.
6. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 34.
7. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 71–72.
8. See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations*, 68.
9. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 86.
10. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadephia: Westminster Press 1984).
11. See the works of Fuchs and Ebeling for a post-Bultmannian hermeneutical theology: Gerhard Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1973); and Ernst Fuchs, *Jesus: Wort und Tat* (Tubingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 1971).
12. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 75.
13. Ibid., 75.
14. Ibid., 73.
15. See Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An historical study of the three main types of the idea of the atonement* (London: SPCK Press, 1970).
16. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 75.
17. Howard Caygill, *The Colour of Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 14.
18. Ibid., 15.
19. The infinity Caygill refers to is the infinity belonging to the infinite inscribability of a particular linguistic surface as opposed to the infinity of configuring possible linguistic surfaces. Ibid., 17.
20. Alexander Garcia Düttman, *The Gift of Language: Memory and Promise in Adorno, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Rosenzweig* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 3.
21. Jürgen Moltmann and Johannes B. Metz, *Faith and the Future* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 109.
22. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 100.
23. Ibid., 101.
24. In this earliest Christian hymn the name of Jesus is identified on a cosmic scale: "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." [Phil. 2:11] as quoted in Moltmann, *Faith and the Future*, 118.

25. See Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Volume 4*, 397.

26. See Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992) on Benjamin, modernity, and the transition from utopia to heterotopia, especially 62–74.

27. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967), 165.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 169.

30. Who Jesus, the Son, is finds meaning in the Spirit. Yet the meaning of Jesus is not complete until his resurrection finds eschatological consummation through the resurrection of all living things that suffer from the transience of life.

31. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 179.

32. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations.*

33. Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope*, 180.

34. Ibid.

35. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 213–214.

36. Ibid., 5.

37. Cf. Gerschom Scholem, "Walter Benjamin and His Angel," in *Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), on the significance of Benjamin's angel of history.

38. In Moltmann's judgment the old political theology was associated with the thought of Carl Schmitt and was implicated in its association with fascism.

39. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 5.

40. Ibid., 39.

41. Ibid., 165.

42. See Robert Cornelison, *The Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr and the Political Theology of Jürgen Moltmann in Dialogue: The Realism of Hope* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 192.

43. In Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 38, quoted from N Ia, 3 (Benjamin, Arcades Project N 1a,3).

Chapter Eight

Trinitarian Discourse: Doxology Born of Remembrance

One of the tasks of post-Shoah Christian theology is to open up the metaphysical isolation of the Christian community's discourse about the trinitarian God to messianic perspectives that Christianity always-and-already shares with the Jewish tradition. Judaism, even in its modern, secularized expressions, consistently preserved the destabilizing force of reading reality through the lens of messianic expectations. As we have seen throughout this book, modern expressions of Jewish messianic thinking, coupled with the perfidious attempt to eliminate the Jewish presence at the heart of Europe, confront the Christian tradition to examine the contemporary relevance of its initial messianic identification of Jesus. The question that occupied this book was to explore the ramifications of Jewish messianisms and the language of messianism for the trinitarian language of the Christian community.

An exploration of contemporary Jewish messianisms has served the particular function to expose a certain level of sterility that characterizes Christian discourse about the trinitarian God. Reconceiving Christian discourse about God as messianic discourse has opened up trinitarian discourse's insularity toward its own messianic origins, weakening the structures of trinitarian language in order for it to be the expression of the fragility of faith in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jews of Europe.[1] It is within the weak structures of belief in the shadow of the Shoah where God is named, through the praise of the forgotten ones. Thus redemption, the full revelation of the glory of God, is always accompanied by a "kind of darkness and unknowing."[2]

In light of the necessarily hesitant language about redemption, and consequently about the Redeemer, the triumphalist undertone that characterizes the naming and identification of God, revealed to the Christian community as the Trinity, functions "as if" the restitution of all things, including the language

of worship and praise, has already taken place. The underlying thesis of this book has been that it is because the Christian community speaks from the perspective of the "as if," the community cannot but use language that is in need of restitution. If the trinitarian naming of God, a naming performed communally in the doxological praise of God through the Eucharistic liturgy names God properly, it is to continue to share in the language of unredeemed life. Naming God in the worship of the Christian community is a naming in hope for the healing of the world and for the healing of language itself. It is messianic naming.

What guarantees that Christianity, even in its language of praise, expresses the yearning of the Created order for language is the ineluctably embodied identity of the Christian God. That one of the Trinity became flesh, suffered in the flesh and rose to a redeemed flesh is the locus of Christian messianic hope for the restoration of all things, and as such it must have repercussions on the language of doxology where the trinitarian God is named through the praise of his glory. The incarnation is therefore no mere fodder for metaphysical speculations regarding the ontological identity of Jesus. Rather, it reveals the basic messianism of the Christian faith and its understanding of God's kenotic, self-empting identification with Creation, a Creation that is in the state of decay and agony.

One of the greatest temptations in the life of the Christian Church, a temptation to which the Church has often succumbed, is to give in to the urge to disassociate language about God from the deterioration and disturbing dissonance of the created order. This kind of segregation between the disjointed quality of the reality of Creation and the perfection of God—a perfection that does not allow for association with the created order—was expressed paradigmatically through the Marcionite heresy of the post-apostolic Church.

The heresy of Marcionism lies in the denial of God's involvement in history, the stage of God's involvement with the created order; it is an attempt to eliminate the often discordant and less-than-harmonious narrative of this involvement.[3] It seems to me, however, that in spite of the Church's condemnation of Marcion (and I perceive in this condemnation a sign of the persistently messianic orientation of the early Church) the spirit of Marcionism has continued to haunt the Church, and even had a certain detrimental affect on the Church's trinitarian discourse about God. The legacy of Marcionism may be one of the reasons that Christian trinitarian discourse remains to the average believer nothing more than mere verbiage, an expression of the ontological chasm that separates the eternal reign of the Son from the temporality of the created order in decay. Such neglect of the context of the Trinity's involvement in history, achieved through a certain reification of the narrative, is but a perpetuation of the Marcionite illusion. The force and allure of this il-

lusion, however, was once and for all shattered by the catastrophe of the Shoah. The Shoah may be perceived, and here my language is tentative so as to avoid reducing the Shoah to a mere utilitarian role in my argument, as a messianic event within the history of the Christian Church, which continually disrupts the discourse of European Christianity with the imperative to re-messianize itself and its language about God.

My work has proposed that it is through fulfilling this imperative for re-messianization that Christianity, which defines itself through its naming God as the Trinity, can overcome the fateful legacy of supersessionism, a hermeneutical scheme that treated the perseverance of Jewish hope for the restoration of the world as an anomaly. Realizing that my proposal represents one of many possible trajectories to tackle the question of supersessionism—this major issue for post-Shoah Christian theology—it is beneficial to take a quick look at a couple of other, competing options.[4] Paul van Buren, and more recently, Bruce Marshall both offered alluring reconceptualizations of the Christian discourse about the trinitarian God in light of the challenge of supersessionism. A cursory look at these models may serve to better situate my own efforts to retrieve the messianic dimension of the language of the Christian community.

Bruce Marshall, in his tightly argued and influential work *Trinity and Truth*, unleashed a sophisticated argument for the epistemically preeminent role of the trinitarian identification of God and for a trinitarian conceptualization of truth. He essentially makes a case for the adherence to a kind of total trinitarian logic that "absorbs the world." Marshall's trinitarian vision represents an important resurgence in postmodern strategies to secure the identity of the Christian community through the Church's canonical narrative. This narrative necessarily includes the story of God's election of the people of Israel, an election that remains permanent and one that is not superseded by the Christian Church's fundamental belief in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, Marshall's approach, with all its self-confessed conservative ramifications, ultimately ignores the fundamental messianic orientation of the Christian community and its naming of the trinitarian God. Marshall works out a tidy trinitarian epistemology and a corresponding linguistic framework that identifies the Christian God, a construct that remains unaffected by the trauma of history, virtually disregarding the interruption of the Shoah and the latter's reminder to the Christian community to re-messianize its discourse of God. The community in this scheme remains undisturbed, being preoccupied with assessing exterior beliefs through its trinitarian conception of truth. This, however, bears little resemblance to the messianic community within which the narrative of the trinitarian God originally found its inception.

That the Shoah does not have to be an exterior issue for Christian trinitarianism is demonstrated in Paul van Buren's constructive multivolume work, *Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality*.[5] Van Buren, similar to Marshall, unequivocally affirms the primary status of the Christian community's doctrine of the Trinity. Van Buren, however, qualifies the Church's "immediate apprehension of God" as trinitarian as the particular identification of the God of Israel by the Gentile Church. This identification uniquely expresses the meaning of "the Way" for the Christian community, a Way initiated by Israel's election and a Way always and already shared by the people of Israel. The God the Christian community identifies as triune is the God the Jews know immediately as Father.[6] The trinitarian name of God expresses the self-revelation of God through the Jewish Jesus to the Gentiles.[7]

Although he embraces the centrality of the trinitarian designation of God within the Christian community, understanding this naming as a particular apprehension of the God of Israel within the Gentile Church, van Buren calls for the elimination of the identification of Jesus as the Messiah.[8] The messianic idea was fraught with ambiguities, and the unambiguous messianic identification of Jesus by the post-apostolic Christian community was the main cause of the supersessionist hermeneutic of the Christian Church.

While both Marshall and van Buren address the question of supersessionist discourse within the history of the Christian tradition, I find both of their approaches lacking in certain respects. Marshall's almost fetishistic fascination with the narrative totality of the community ends up encaging the identification of God within a narrative that remains unaffected by the temporality of the trauma of history. Van Buren, who offers an equally alluring strategy to retain the demands of the biblical narrative along with the Church's trinitarian designation of God, calls for the elimination of the messianic reference regarding the identity of Jesus, a messianic designation that has an uncontestable presence within the canonical writings of the New Testament.[9]

That there is a problem with a particular tradition of identifying Jesus as the Messiah of Israel is unquestionable. The problem lies however with the mode of identification, not with the linguistic performance of naming Jesus Messiah. Supersessionism is a strategy to identify Jesus as Messiah in a purely functional sense, where Jesus fulfills, in an absolute manner, the so-called messianic expectations of the Jews. This mode of identification thus makes not only further expectations futile, but also abrogates God's covenant with the people of Israel.

Ultimately, there is a double dispossession that takes place with supersessionism. On the one hand, the people of Israel are dispossessed of their covenant with God. The people of Israel, the Jews, are viewed as wholly ir-

relevant to the people of the New Covenant, the Christian Church, who irrevocably replaced them; the people of Israel turn into a sign of warning regarding the price of disobedience; or they play a mere symbolic function in the Church's self-understanding. On the other hand, when the Church conceives Israel to be dispossessed of its covenant with God, the Church herself dispossesses itself of the linguistic possibilities offered by its own canon. This double dispossession is the result of identifying Jesus as the Messiah in an absolute sense, in a manner that ultimately abstracts this identification from its Jewish context and from the creative tensions of both Jesus' self-identification and the early Christian community's understanding of this identification.

The supersessionist mode of identifying Jesus as the Messiah overcomes the ambiguities latent within the concept of the messianic and leads to a discourse of trinitarian triumphalism, a discourse that is both cut off from God's covenant with Israel and insulated from the unredeemed nature of reality, from damaged life, using the evocative term of Adorno.

Going beyond supersessionism is a complex enterprise: It must take into consideration the trinitarian naming of God within the Christian community in tandem with naming Jesus Messiah, Jesus having been identified by the Christian community as the incarnate Son of God, "one of" the Trinity. Finally, the naming of God performed within the Christian community is a naming through remembrance, which recalls a name in the collective memory of the Christian community, a collective memory irrevocably affected by the Shoah, the murderous attempt to eliminate Jews and Jewish memory.

The paradox of the time of remembrance, messianic time, is that here one remembers the Messiah who is to come in glory from the glory that he enjoys eternally as one of the Trinity. But what is the shape of language that names God within the time that is a time in between? How does the time of remembrance affect language?

The Christian community's identification of God as the Trinity takes place through the Eucharistic remembrance of the messianic Son. Christian discourse of God is a discourse the logic of which is determined by the memory of Jesus. The Christian faith is nurtured in the messianic community of those who participate in the narrative memory of the messianic promises of Jesus: "In living community with the Messiah Jesus, the small, incomplete human life becomes the messianic sign of the coming fulfillment in history."[10]

It is the messianic language of remembrances of Jesus that defines the identity of the Christian community. The inclusive nature of the Christian community lies in the quality of its discourse to "absorb the world" through the capacity of messianic discourse to give voice to all cries for redemption. The trinitarian faith of the Christian community is a faith that creates the linguistic

possibility to give voice to the forgotten. Marshall's argument for the epistemic force and primacy of a trinitarian construal of truth thus makes sense only if trinitarianism is not divorced from the messianic language of the Christian community.

The importance of narrative memory is not merely to provide a language game within which the Christian God is identified. The narrative offers a picture of the life world within which lies the basic determination of the identity of Jesus. In spite of the uncertainties of his own identity as the messianic herald of the kingdom of God, Jesus was unwavering in his fundamental identification with those deprived of language. It is in light of this basic identification that the discourse of remembrance can be adequately understood.

Christian theological discourse's essentially anamnetic nature is reflected in the celebration of the Eucharist. The function of the Eucharist is to celebrate the mystery of the redemptive work of Christ, the kenosis of God who dispossessed himself, identifying himself with not just humanity, a vacuous idea, but with the concrete plight of the dehumanized. Thus the Eucharist is not removed from the brutalities of existence but incorporates and addresses them. The Eucharist offers no shelter from the messiness of life, but, through the act of remembrance, it offers the hope of language to the silenced ones.

The anamnetic orientation of the Eucharist is organically connected to the praise of God who is present through the memory of the Crucified One. The trinitarian identification of God is the naming of God in the language of praise. Trinitarian discourse is ultimately the language of doxology.[11]

In praise the community does not name God as a passive recipient of the revelation of the name of God. Doxology cannot be removed from the sphere of suffering, from the reality of exclusion. Doxology is praise born of suffering and not of triumph. It is squarely grounded within the reality of decay because the expectation of the redeemed order can only be found where earthly hope has been shattered. Messianic hope is founded on the total negativity of godless hopelessness.

Trinitarian doxology finds its expression as a practice in messianic discourse in language understood as lament. Lamentation is the language of the forsaken who address God from a position of utter hopelessness. Lamentation is the praise of the marginal, and as such it is a powerful form of doxology. Catherine LaCugna writes:

> Lamentation is not the opposite of praise but a form of praise in which God is rightfully held accountable to God's promises: to comfort the widow, heal the afflicted. Giving praise in the pattern of lament is hardly naïve or passive or complacent; indeed, doxology provides the context within which one might make the most trenchant and most solemn and insistent protest against every

form of inequity or inequality, whether this is experienced as coming from the hands of God or from the hands of someone else.[12]

Lamentation is therefore the language of the marginal. This language disrupts language conceived as the totality of the "said" and points to the tenuous nature of language to name things.[13] The messianic philosophy of Walter Benjamin and his theory of language and naming illuminates the force of lamentation as doxology.[14]

Perhaps paradoxically, the thought of Walter Benjamin, with all its apparent negativity and pessimism, may be construed as a practice in doxology. His messianic philosophy is characterized by a concerted determination to give voice to the marginal, attributing voice even to silent stones. The same lament of creation, its lament for language also figures prominently in the thought of the apostle Paul. In his letter to the Romans the apostle defines doxology as a lament, as the expression of messianic expectation of the marginal.[15] The marginal is understood to be that non-phenomenon that does not figure into the determination of the time of the world, being condemned to silence in order not to disturb the grand narrative of history.

The realization that trinitarian discourse is simultaneously messianic discourse signals the interruption of the time of historical continuity and of the discourse of totality embedded within this time. The Christian Church's narrative situates the community's naming of God within the time of interruption, within the temporality of interrupted time, where the messianic Son is named by the marginal, the poor, and the weak. The Trinitarian name of God is uttered within the time of remembering the suffering Messiah, the suffering of the resurrected Son.

In the linguistic desert of post-Shoah theology doxology, the praise of God remains an impossible possibility. Language is scarred, and it is within these scars of language where God is named. In the post-Shoah context, theology turns into theodicy in the sense expressed through the lamentations of Job: theodicy understood not as a futile apologetic defense of the righteousness and omnipotence of God in the face of the suffering of the innocent, but theodicy as a contesting with God, a questioning of God in facing the horror of history. The meaning of theodicy does not lie in rational defense of the ways of God. Rather, it is found in vehement protest against the history of suffering and God's apparent inactivity in the midst of the violence committed against the innocent.

Theology as theodicy means an agon for language, a search for the name of God on the lips of the suffering of the nameless. The re-messianization of Christian trinitarian discourse is the realization of the fragility of language to name God. Praise, the vehicle of the naming of God, is not the language of

self-absorption that fortifies the identity of the Christian community. Instead of being a preoccupation with confessional identity, doxology is the language in which the wholly other comes to utterance.

Doxology gives language to those who are otherwise powerless to speak. It is not only the language of the weak. It is weak language, the utterance of language forsaken in forgetfulness. God is named in this weak language. It is in the weakness of the language of praise where the name of God is saved, is safe, and saves. Commenting on Jacques Derrida's religion sans religion, Caputo writes:

> The name of God tends to disappear, to efface itself, to make itself meaningless, to void and avoid itself, a name sans name. But it does so precisely in order to point to the possibility of something wholly other, tout autre, the advent of the impossible, of what is never present, what never collapses into presence, never falls into the gross idolatry of the present.[16]

The trinitarian name is the result of praise, the language of which is beyond either affirmation or negation.[17] The name is beyond the control of the subject who controls language. The subject who pronounces the name of God is consumed by death. The name is the gift of language to those who can receive this gift, who do not have language, who praise God in the language received.

The Christian community's naming of God as Trinity therefore does not have the primary function to provide identity for the Christian community. What happens in trinitarian discourse is that all stable identities dissolve in the polyphony of voices of the weak ones.

> God's glory is especially manifested in "the little ones," those broken by pain and rejection, those considered unattractive and undesirable, the lepers, defined differently in each society, the public sinners, the ritually impure.[18]

The voice of Israel, its lament for remembrance, is not only not superseded by the Christian community's naming of God as the Trinity, but the lament of the suffering Servant of Yahweh has a position of canonicity in the trinitarian discourse of the Church, a discourse that is the discourse of the one Messiah of Israel.

This recognition leads us to a simple but far-reaching proposal to reconfigure the trinitarian naming of God, the linguistic site of which for the Christian Church, as Bruce Marshall so astutely pointed out, is the Eucharistic liturgy.

By drawing on Giorgio Agamben's recent rereading of Paul's letter to the Romans, one can envision a possible re-messianization of the trinitarian lan-

guage of the Eucharistic liturgy, which, paradoxically, leaves intact its linguistic surface.[19] The original Pauline naming of Jesus as Jesus Messiah, a naming of the resurrected Jesus who is concurrently named as Lord Jesus Messiah, is to replace the use of the proper name, Jesus Christ, within the language of the Eucharist.

If the canonical narrative has the kind of identificatory linguistic force that names God as the Trinity, as Marshall rightly claims it does, then the naming of the Son of the trinitarian God with the proper name Christ is an improper naming. The proper name, Christ, takes leave of the linguistic force of the narrative that functions as the revealed, divine, linguistic means for the identification of the Son.

The identification of the Son by the proper name, Jesus Christ, is a reified name, an objectifiable sign, under which the Emperor Constantine conquered. The proper name of the Son, *Dominus Iesus Christus*, was the linguistic sign that gave legitimation to the slaughter of the Jewish or Muslim Other by the Christian warrior. The proper name, Jesus Christ or Lord Jesus Christ, is a name used in a utilitarian manner to conquer, to subjugate, to exploit or, and this is perhaps the greatest misuse of the name, to maintain and perpetuate the status quo of the time of history.

The language of the biblical narrative, the language of revelation is a language with its own messianic, temporal index, and as such it resists the purposive rationality inherent in the language of the world. Jesus Messiah is a name that is pronounced in messianic time, and it deconstructs the utilitarian functionality of the proper name, Jesus Christ. This seemingly simplistic return to the messianic origins of the name brings an end to the symbolic manipulability of the proper name Jesus Christ, which, with the addition of the title Lord, was turned into a source of legitimation for totalitarian rule. Jesus Messiah is one of the Trinity whose kingdom is not of this world but whose kingdom is coming, being compelled by the messianic force of his own name.

NOTES

1. Among contemporary philosophers Gianni Vattimo offers a phenomenology of the weak structures of belief in his *Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

2. See Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 345.

3. Jaroslav Pelikan gives a nuanced exposition of the issues surrounding the teachings of Marcion. See his *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100–600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 72–80.

4. See Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

5. Van Buren's work is a revisionary rethinking of the Christian tradition based on a particular rereading of the Apostolic writings ultimately leading him to adopt a quasi-Arian Christology.

6. An obvious allusion to Franz Rosenzweig's famous riposte to the challenge of converting to Christianity.

7. Problems with van Buren's method are delineated by Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Christology and Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Messianism Through History*, edited by Wim Beuken, Seán Freyne, and Anton Weiler (London: SCM Press, 1993), 125–135.

8. One is puzzled over van Buren's call for the elimination of the naming of Jesus as the Messiah since he himself explicitly admits that "he [Jesus] was for his Jewish disciples Israel's Messiah." See *Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality* Part One (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 79.

9. For a recent discussion of the incontestable presence of the messianic designation of Jesus, by himself, by his disciples, and by the early Christian community, one should turn to the writings of N. T. Wright, especially his *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 477–539.

10. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 40.

11. LaCugna grounds trinitarian naming in the liturgy of the community. See Catherine LaCugna, "The Trinitarian Mystery of God," in *Systematic Theology Roman Catholic Perspectives Volume I*, edited by Francis Schlusser Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 162–163.

12. See LaCugna, *God For Us*, 341.

13. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being Or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

14. See Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Reflections*, edited by Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

15. Romans 8:22.

16. See John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 87. Also, see Jacques Derrida, "Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)," in *On the Name*, edited by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

17. On the position of praise in theological language see Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

18. See LaCugna, *God For Us*, 344.

19. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains. A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

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