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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE THEOLOGICAL SIDE OF THE SCHOOL OF HOPE

It is difficult now to know how influential the school of hope will be. It is never an easy matter to assess the potential strength of a reflective movement of this kind, for that assessment always depends upon what one regards the movement to be. If it is simply another movement, a new trend, but like all new trends in their innovative stages, then one can expect the phenomenon to run the anticipated course. Its novelty will attract attention; its affirmations will evoke more rigorous appraisal; finally, if its tenets bear up under disciplined criticism, the movement will be sustained within a circumscribed area—at least by those who have become representatives of it—until such time as its provocation is replaced by a successor innovation. Styles of reflection, like styles of dress, come and go. Their waxings and wanings often have little to do with the possibility of rigorously verifying their truth claims, but are more a matter of shifting enthusiasms. As Jacques Barzun has noted: “There comes a time for all systems when the ideas, and more especially the lingo, cease bubbling and taste flat.”¹ In addition, the novelty and innovative recommendations of the school of hope seem to be more typical, for example, of a modern harmonics than of a classical key. Hence, as modern and current, the school will be subjected to the criticisms which accrue to currency and modernity. As the histories of other art forms make apparent, it is in that currency that the traffic is heavy, losses high, and longevity rare.

At the same time, this means of assessment does not strictly apply to the theological side of the school of hope. For one reason, as I have argued elsewhere,² hope-theology is not simply a new phenomenon. Rather, it is a reconstitution of a classical theological pattern. Not without irony, the theology which places its stress on the reality of the *novum* is not altogether new. It has antecedents in the writings of the ante-Nicene church fathers, particularly in the horizontally conceived “recapitulation” theology of St. Irenaeus of Lyons. And, on the more strictly philosophical side, its formal schematism has roots in the process-orientation of Heraclitus.³ To a certain extent it is self-conscious regarding the extent of its history. But even apart from such self-consciousness that

This is Professor Capps' concluding comment on this symposium.

history is there. Its theological and philosophical antecedents prevent the school of hope from succumbing to the threats of mere currency.

More important than that, however, is the realization that hope-theology does not derive from the set of circumstances which is usually responsible for the founding of new positions. When one analyzes the births of theological tendencies, for example, he discovers that they are ordinarily one of three kinds. In the first place, new theological positions are often modifications of older positions. The position of Joseph Marechal, for example, is a rerooting of Thomistic theology by benefit of some of the epistemological sensitivities manifested (and, as Marechal also points out, sometimes overlooked) in Kant's first *Critique*.⁴ The position of Karl Barth is another case in point. Certainly elements of novelty are present; yet such novelty qualifies an earlier position which, by means of necessary improvements, is also being sustained.⁵ A second kind of theological tendency is illustrated in the recent "God-is-dead" theology. Here the motivation is not modification of something prior, but, instead, a judgment that the prior is no longer supportable. In effect, this amounts to a recognition that an earlier dynamism has suffered foreclosure, or that a once vibrant tendency has run through to its inevitable conclusion. In this situation two responses are possible. The erstwhile devotee can endeavor to pick up the pieces, and salvage whatever broken resources have not already been consumed. Or, if he chooses, he can try to create a new position out of the negations of the old. On this basis, I suggest, the theology of no-theology has taken its place beside the music of no-music, the art of no-art, and in the day of the absurd hero. Each of these denotes a death of a familiar or traditional pattern, as well as a recuperative attempt which sustains the reality of that death. A third kind of theological tendency is one which so thoroughly reconditions the sources of theological affirmation that it cannot be regarded as a modification of anything else nor as the product of a thoroughgoing negation. This, it appears, characterizes the theology of hope. It is not simply a neo-theology, nor even an alternative which can be included with other instances as kinds within a class. It is not just a modification of a familiar pattern, or a re-tailoring of a previous style. Rather, the theology of hope denotes a new form of consciousness. Its direction indicates that theological reflection will be constituted by materials which have not been used before. Perhaps, eventually, it will depend upon a mode of affirmation which can only be dimly sensed now.

One can see the beginnings of this tendency in George A. Lindbeck's masterful essay on "The New Framework of Protestant-Catholic Discussion" which was part of the first St. Xavier symposium (John XGIII Institute) in 1966.⁶ Lindbeck's argument is that many of the questions which were fundamental at one time to the differences between Catholics

and Protestants are no longer paramount. The issues which were divisive at one time are often dissolved before they are settled. The reason is that the two communions understand themselves to be engaged in a process of re-settlement. That re-founding does not occur on the same basis as that from which the traditional divisions between the two communions arose. In the theology of hope are ingredients of a reconstitution. That reconstitution is a theological expression, but its deeper roots are in the newly formed consciousnesses of contemporary Christians. And, as Lindbeck's article illustrates, as a result of the birth of a basis for reconstitution, the theoretical side of the ecumenical situation has been shifted to new ground.

What the theologians of hope seem to be pushing toward is a contention that theological reflection can be undertaken under auspices which have not been explored before. What their stress on the future seems to require, I suggest, is a theology by design, and not merely by reaction. The distinction is a significant one. For almost all of the lifetime of his profession the theologian has felt called upon to articulate "the faith of the fathers" in language which was both systematically accurate and relevant to the interests of the times in which he lived. The concern for relevancy has always been a large one. Never could the theologian claim to have succeeded in his task until his articulation of the faith bore some currency to the reflective concerns of his age. Some theologians sought rapport with reigning philosophical positions. Others aligned themselves with prevalent and influential individual thinkers. On occasion the theologian felt compelled to contest the tenets of a particular theoretical orientation. On other occasions he crowned particular theoretical orientations with his blessing. But, in each instance the task was the same, i.e., to specify differences and similarities so that the state of rapport between the "faith" and the "school" could be measured. One can see the products of this exercise throughout the history of Christian theological reflection—in the contentions of the post-apostolic fathers against the Gnostics, St. Augustine vs. the Neoplatonists, St. Thomas vis-à-vis the newly refounded Aristotelian philosophy, to mention only paradigmatic cases. The frequency of the endeavor makes it feasible to depict the entire history of theology as a series of attempts to specify rapport with a succession of philosophical styles. And, when one looks at the theological methodology of the late Paul Tillich, for example, he becomes aware that the sought-for rapport is useful not only as a category of historical description. In Tillich's version, the reaction of the faith to the historical, cultural, and intellectual milieu is not only basic; it is also to be made conscious. The theologian is called upon to isolate the questions being raised in a particular culture so as to be able, if possible, to correlate them with the resources of a kerygmatic faith. In Tillich it is clear: reaction to a given

cultural and intellectual situation is the fundamental mode of the theological endeavor.

The theology of hope seems to be operating somewhat differently. (And, if it has not yet been definite in this regard, it has at least incorporated these innovations into its anticipated programmatic.) In the first place, it does not understand its origin to be a reaction to a given cultural complex. In the same way, it does not place itself in series in the succession of styles which have come and gone in the history of theology. Strictly speaking, it is not an outgrowth of an earlier school. Its roots do not lie in a previous *ism*. It has no formal association with the insights of any one thinker. It is not intrigued with the philosophy of Ernst Bloch because of the latter's current popularity. It is not speaking about the future because it is fashionable to do so. It has not sought rapport with Marxists because of the latter's statistical impressiveness. It is not situational in any of these respects. Its source is not reaction to any of the reigning modes of currency. On the contrary, the theologians of hope seem to be suggesting that the apparent ceaseless succession of theological systems can be transcended. It is not that the succession has come to its end. It is rather that that series constitutes but one mode of affirmation in addition to which there is at least one other. That entire series represents theology by reaction. But the theologians of hope are moving toward a theology by design.

To support this observation I cite one of the distinguishing marks of hope theology, i.e., its tendency to supplant theoretical with actional categories. While there are precedents for that distinction which reach back into the nineteenth century, especially in the writings of Maurice Blondel,⁷ its full flowering does not appear until after Dietrich Bonhoeffer's inaugural study, *Act and Being*.⁸ From Bonhoeffer's placing of *Daseins-für-andere* under actional rather than ontological categories to some of the recent writings of Johannes Metz, the tendency has been gaining momentum. Metz has convincingly argued, I think, that theoretical categories do not provide access to the future. The range of applicability of such categories is over what *is* and not what *ought* to be. Access to the future does not come through one or another form of theoretical categorization, according to Metz, but through the categories of creative, militant action. He writes that "the future is essentially a reality which does not yet exist, which has never been: the 'new' in the proper sense of the word." Because it is depicted in the *novum*, "the relationship to such a future cannot be purely contemplative and cannot remain in the order of representations, since representations and pure contemplation both refer to what has already come into existence or what still is." By contrast to the contemplative or theoretical stance, according to Metz, "the relationship to the future is an operative one."⁹

To this reviewer Metz's negative case is more impressive than his accompanying proposal. His thesis that the future is inaccessible by forms of thought or representations which are suited for depicting "what is the case" can be supported. It is on this basis that he insists that the interest in the future does not give the Christian a peculiar clairvoyance regarding the events which are yet to be. As a Christian, one's perceptive abilities are neither greater nor keener, in principle, than those which others possess. As Metz observes:

Christian hope is not the attempt of reason to pierce through the future and so to rob it of mystery. The man who hopes is not making the irritating claim to know more about the future than others. Christian eschatology therefore is not an ideology of the future. Rather, it honors the poverty of its knowledge about the future. What distinguishes it from the ideas of the future both in East and West is not that it knows more but rather that it knows less about the hoped-for future of mankind, and that it stands by the poverty of this knowledge.¹⁰

Metz's fundamental conviction, then, is easily placed: what the Christian knows about the future he glimpses only through the awarenesses which accompany "being for others." The contemplative or theoretical attitude is inappropriate in the face of the future. If the future is to be mediated, that attitude must be replaced by a consciousness which stems from a creatively actional stance. That stance, in turn, is styled by the lineaments of the "suffering servant" or of Bonhoeffer's "being for others." Metz finds this implicit in the New Testament observation: "We know that we have passed over from death to life because we love the brethren."¹¹ All of this—because of what it negates—seems both consistent and in order.

Yet, one has the right to ask whether the alternative to theoretical representation must be a non-cognitive activity. It would seem appropriate to suggest that the contemplative (or representational) attitude can be replaced by another mode of depiction. It is not necessarily the only attitude in which depiction can occur. Its alternative need not be different in kind. Metz is right in suggesting, I think, that knowledge of the future is not acquired by the same devices which result in knowledge of the present. He is also correct in observing that an orientation toward the *ought* requires a different instrumentation from that utilized in orientation toward what *is*. In each instance the cognitive content is different because the stance from which the content registers is different. But Metz has not sufficiently probed the range of depictive modes before concluding that the shift from present to future requires a transition from *representation* to *action*. The future, too, is a candidate for representation. As Immanuel Kant knew, the shift in time tenses accompanies a shift in mode of apprehension. But there is a mode which applies to the future. Whereas the first *Critique* tends to point to action com-

pleted, and hence action now measurable or made reflexive, the second *Critique* seems to refer to present decision. The question of the future is reserved, however, for the third *Critique*, i.e., the study of the mode of apprehension called aesthetic judgment.¹² On this basis one can judge that if the theology of hope is really oriented toward the future—and not simply an assessment of *ought*—it will require a modal shift from reaction to design. Metz seems to be aware that a shift is necessary. To make his case consistent that shift must be more thorough-going.

The same point can be approached from another side. We have already observed that one of the distinguishing marks of hope-theology is its political tone. There are conscious ties between the proposals of the hope position and programs of previous revolutionaries such as Thomas Münzer.¹³ Johannes Metz is willing to link his “political theology” to a militant eschatology. And Jürgen Moltmann makes it clear that the *novum* is a revolutionary principle. The political cast is pervasive. Indeed, an element which all of the representatives of the school of hope seem to share is the fundamental seriousness with which they take Karl Marx’s famous commentary-statement on Ludwig Feuerbach, i.e., that the philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways, and that what is necessary is to change it.¹⁴ From top to bottom, from beginning to end, hope-theology is a theology of change. Its inherence in “this world” demands that it give regulative status to change. Were it otherwise there would be no realism in associating it with political stratagems.

To tie theology to this world, however, is to imply that a new status has been accorded to change. Instead of building out of a posited permanence, hope-theology seems to be coveting an opportunity to emerge out of the ingredients of change. Moltmann’s criticism of the Parmenidean precedent for most of western theological reflection, for example, makes it clear that the author of the *Theology of Hope* is seeking some basis other than the thesis “Being is, not-being cannot be” for the position he espouses.¹⁵ One should be aware that the shift away from permanence is not one which can be taken lightly. For centuries the Christian understanding of God, for example, has been bolstered by what Immanuel Kant referred to as “the natural tendency of the human mind to unify its experience.” The propriety of God has received support from the demand by reflection for some unifying basis of order or synthesizing principle of orientation. Beyond that, the conception of God has derived strength from the apparent necessity that the ultimate values—truth, goodness, beauty, etc.—exhibit some locus of containment. We cite, for example, the familiar Platonic tendency to regard the eternal forms as thoughts in the mind of God. Without the containment which “mind of God” implies, the ultimate values do not cohere. And without the centering and stabilizing effect of the “being of God,” a locus of permanence seems to dissipate.

But when the tendency is reversed—when change rather than permanence is regarded as the source or context of theological affirmations—then a radical restructuring also occurs. God becomes the one “who will be what I will be.” The world becomes the basis of affirmations and not a mere derivative reality. The subordinationisms in previous *God*-world polarities are reversed. The stresses in such dichotomies change. And, in addition, the mode of affirmation also shifts. To base theological understanding on the world of change rather than rooting it in the world of permanence is to lose the opportunity to utilize systems of thought as means of avowal. The reason for the loss is the following: systems of thought *ex hypothesi* are not calculated for the novel, the ever-changing, or the *novum*. Instead, systems of thought are established to disclose the rule, the law, the principle, or the core element. Systems of thought do not direct themselves toward that which defies the norm, but, instead, to that by which the instance, the case, the particular, or the occurrence can be understood. Thus, systems of thought tend to be sensitive to the essential quality of a phenomenon: its underlying structure, or its fundamental form. Such systems are generally not disposed toward the surprise. They are not geared for the once-in-a-lifetime. They are not suited for the perpetually spontaneous. Hence, theological access to the rudiments of the world of change cannot occur by dependence upon established thought patterns. Penetration is not available to existing theoretical models. Rather, access requires another mode of affirmation in which the style is always being created.

One can point to the shift implicit in changing the world rather than merely interpreting it by referring to the ongoing warfare—sometimes overt, sometimes only assumed—between the proponents of science and religion. As is well known, the emergence of the sciences has had a debilitating influence upon traditional patterns of religious ideation. In the recent past, many “religious truths” have fallen by the wayside because of the appearance of more reliable scientific explanation. Even contentions which occasionally carried doctrinal force have succumbed, at times, to the more expert explanations of the empirical investigators. One could cite the effect of the theory of evolution as a case in point, or even the frequent discrediting of “religious experience” which often followed more rigorous psychoanalytic inquiry. Often, the scientific ability to provide a demonstrable explanation of phenomena for which only religious interpretations had previously existed has served to upset the mentality of those who were obligated to faith. Over and over again, a more reliable scientific account has been applied to occurrences for which there had been some religious apprehension. In each instance explanation and interpretation have become more dependable when science has supplanted religion.

What the clash demonstrates, however, is that the proponents of both

science and religion have presumed that each was offering categories of explanation. We are aware, of course, of the frequent attempts to distinguish the respective purviews of the two disciplines, so that each is operative only within its own sphere of competence. When measured by the general tendency, such attempts to segregate the two domains are only minor innovations. Indeed, restricting science to "its own domain" merely indicates that there are aspects of the world over which scientific explanation is not competent. These sorts of "bracketings" do not destroy the fact that explanation is the fundamental goal. And the way explanation is approached illustrates that the interest in logistics, is getting one's bearings, or in being able to do the mapwork is the fundamental concern. The dominance of the interest in "why?" is further testimony that explanation and interpretation represent the fundamental modal key.

But the situation changes rapidly when the focus is not interpretation but change. When the concern is to change the world (rather than simply to explain or interpret it), the question is no longer "why?" nor "how does it happen that?" but "which?"—which form shall change take? By virtue of all that is possible, what shall the future be? And with the shift from the "why?" to the "which?" comes a change in mode of grammar: it is no longer indicative nor even imperative, but subjunctive. In addition, the time tense is no longer restricted to the past or to the present, but is future oriented. And, once again, the language frame is not description by reaction to a given state of affairs, but design. If the world is to change, it will need to be formed. For change can be negotiated only by a shift in question, linguistic context, time-tense, and mode. In sum, under the drive for explanation, the sciences have searched for the ingredients necessary to an exhaustive account of a given state of affairs. As a result, some of the components of human experience—especially human aspiration—have never been registered. In the same way, many features of religion have been discredited because they were applied to issues for which they were not suited. Mistakenly, they were called upon to give an explanation of the world. In many instances explanation was both easier and more plausible by means of other frames of reference. But when the shift away from the "why?" to the *novum* occurs, then a new world of interest is born. Elements of human experience which have frequently not been drawn upon suddenly re-emerge in new light. In this new context religion is not understood to be one of the more or less reliable ways of explaining the nature of things. Religion need not suffer under the expectation of having to provide an account of why things are the way they are. Rather, religion is tied to change instead of to interpretation. It functions as a supportive and catalytic instrument to effect and stabilize the new. It gives inspiration to a new set of images toward whose realization change tends. In this new context, under auspices of change, religion need not vie with any of the other sciences—or with science in general—

as an authoritative source of dependable description of the way things are.¹⁶ It need not compete in that context not because it has already defaulted by virtue of its deficiencies, but because that context no longer pertains. It has been superseded in the transition from interpretation to change.

The theologians of hope are very much aware that the shift from permanence to change disposes them to *revolution*. They also know that revolution, by definition, is anti-establishment. They are cognizant of this because of the manifest configurations of past revolutionary movements. At times the hope-theologians consciously align themselves with such historical precedents. The historical chronicles on which Jürgen Moltmann frequently draws, for example, are recited to illustrate the inevitable struggle the *novum* principle experiences in its drive to break free from established theoretical and institutional patterns.¹⁷ Indeed, in this light, the entire story of the so-called Judaeo-Christian tradition can be told in terms of the opposition between those whose aspirations were fostered by a glimpse of the *novum* and those who on behalf of permanence became champions of the status quo. The *novum* has always had its devotees, but their temperament has been antagonistic to the kinds of religious conviction which yield to easy institutionalization. For that reason the champions of the *novum* frequently have been the sectarians, the left-wingers—the Waldensians, the Albigensians, the Anabaptists, the left-wing Reformers, etc.—the cults with strong messianic strains, or underground movements to which officialdom has not always been sympathetic. But the advocates of the *novum* have appeared this way because their inspiration comes from change and revolution rather than out of permanence. As the hope-theologians see it, the institution depends upon permanence while the future-orientation is committed to change. Anyone obligated to the future-orientation cannot be content with what is permanent or already established; he would be denying his own fundamental disposition were he to certify that which is. The *novum* points perpetually to a reality which has not yet been. It stands in contrast to that which already is. Its commitment to the future places it in conflict with all instrumentations which are designed to maintain the established or the permanent. The *novum* is a revolutionary principle. It is designed to change the world and not to interpret it. Its interest is in the God who is depicted as still seeking his rest, not in the God who gives certification to the eternal values. Because of the revolutionary character of the *novum* the disciple-of-hope is dependent upon a world whose configuration has not yet been determined.

Almost ironically, it may seem, there is a way in which this theology of revolution can be understood to have been spawned out of ecumenical progress.¹⁸ In the strictest sense, perhaps, this may not be true. The theology of hope is not a direct product of ecumenical discussion. Its funda-

mental drive is not toward the unity of the Church. Its dependence upon ecumenism is not as close, for example, as those of comparative ecclesiology, theological pluralism, or discussions of innovations in the development of dogma. Nor has hope-theology resulted from the growing rapport between the several churches and branches of Christendom. Nevertheless, despite the fact that hope-theology is fundamentally critical of the institution while ecumenical theology has been utilized to reinforce the institution, the latter has influenced the former. But that influence has been subtle.

For example, the key word in the Vatican Council was *aggiornamento* (which, in English, is something more than a combination of renewal and reform). Not only was renewal of the Church called for, but also a reforming of theological contentions. And, if one is permitted sweeping generalizations, the renewal in both instances was supported by heightened sensitivities regarding obligations to freedom. Renewal was called for because of the reality of freedom: freedom in the Church, freedom in matters of worship and theology, and freedom in the styling of personal and corporate religious conduct. Linking freedom to *aggiornamento*, however, meant that change would be internalized. It would apply to the Church first, and then it could be felt in wider dimensions. Within the Church it could serve to refresh already established structures. Naturally, new patterns and tendencies could be recommended, but it was likely that such innovations would be honored only if they were able also to maintain living continuity with traditions which had already been tested.

As we have already observed, the changes requested by hope-theology, unlike the proposals in the documents of Vatican II, do not fall under the rubric *aggiornamento*. They belong instead to "revolution." And there are large differences between the two terms. *Aggiornamento* refers to the revitalization of a long-standing reality. Revolution, on the contrary, is something other than reanimation, and it is something more than an embellishment or a retailoring of something which already is. Revolution implies not simply the kinds of shifts which can occur within an existing institution, but rather a mechanism which accelerates the death of an existing system. Both *aggiornamento* and revolution are movements of change. But the latter, unlike the former, does not pretend to be able to comprehend the *novum*. Its function instead is to isolate the *novum* and to contrast it to all that has come before. We return to the question: given these fundamental dispositional differences between hope-theology and ecumenical theology, how can the former be understood to have been spawned from the latter?

Without the occasion for renewal there would probably have been no opportunity for revolution. Had the former not been realized the latter would have remained under cover. Had the institution not subjected itself to the self-criticism implicit in *aggiornamento* the revolutionary impulse

might have been sublimated to worlds outside of the institution's influence. More precisely, had the Church not fitted itself for renewal it would probably not have been party to the disposition toward the future. The tie between religion and revolution might still have occurred, but probably in contrast to the forms of innovation which the Church could sanction. The effects of revolution upon social endeavors might still have been felt, but probably without conscious ties to the interests of the institutional Church. The interest in pursuing the *novum* might still have been expressed, but probably not by those who simultaneously were exercising stewardship over long-standing religious traditions. Revolution might still have acquired high religious motivation—it always does, regardless of its specific auspices. But, if unable to feed upon the fruits of *aggiornamento*, revolution would have been motivated without churchly influence or influence upon the Church. It might still have produced effective cultural change, but without implying that the Church be affected or become a sponsor of change. In short, in the succession of hope-theology to ecumenical progress lies a prospect that the Church will be reconstituted by the force of a reality which has often been submerged, banished, discredited, or simply overlooked in previous ecclesiastical history. But that prospect raises many questions: Can the Church foster an impulse which will temporalize the Church? Can it lend support to a cause which carries the threat of manifesting the Church's own perpetual tentativeness? Can it suffer engagement with a reality whose formative principle casts suspicion upon all that which already is? Can the Church enter the world of the *novum* if that means sacrificing the status and position it has enjoyed in worlds past? Perhaps such questions cannot yet be answered. Yet the Vatican II era has established the conditions for taking them seriously. And any theological assessment of the potential influence of the hope-orientation will come eventually to raise them.

Finally, and probably most significantly, the theology of hope is not simply a new theological configuration. It is that only secondarily. More fundamentally, it is the expression of a new consciousness regarding the nature and dynamics of religion.¹⁹ Or, looked at from another side, it is a current expression of themes and structures which belong to religion. It is not merely a representation of recent developments in Christian theology. To be sure, developments in theology have made it sensitive to the realities of some of the ingredients of religion. Without such developments it would not have been able to draw upon the precise themes and structures of religion which it reflects. In a larger way, such developments in theology have also given the hope-orientation a schematic apparatus for incorporating those themes and structures in its own language. But, first of all, the orientation is a manifestation of religion.

It is not surprising that this should be the case. In many respects, the parallel modal shift from theory to design, and from interpretation to

change, has demanded the transition from theology to religion. Theory cannot account for the future, nor can an interpretative or explanatory conceptual scheme adequately take note of it. The future, as we have already observed, cannot be reduced to a component within an already established systematic description. The *novum*, because it is that which is not yet, cannot be registered within schemes which are calculated for that which is. Theology seems to be theory. It functions to bring coherence to affirmations which, without the benefit of such conceptual schematisms, might have remained disparate. But the theological form of theoretical coherence cannot give due place to that which is not yet. Even a theology which builds upon eschatology cannot merely include eschatology as one of a number of constitutive motifs. Apprehension of the *novum* requires that systems be recast. When they are recast they are not simply modified or refined, but are re-established out of resources which supplant the mood, intention, and mode of conditions which pertained before.

One can see a telling mark of this dependence upon the dynamics of religion in the style of language which the school of hope employs. There is a decided reoccurrence of interest in the *myth*. With that is a definite preoccupation with images, dreams, utopian projections, and mytho-poetic realities. There are also intriguing evidences of a sensitivity to the rudiments of aesthetic consciousness. And, if our hunch is correct, there are anticipations of an eventual disposition toward design. All of this seems to imply that the mytho-poetic element is just as much a part of the orientation to the future as it is a component of the past. Just as schemes which develop out of the past give an originative function to the story, for example, so also does the future orientation come to give fundamental formative place to the myth. The mythological element is just as much a part of that to which the courses of history tend as it is regarded as the source out of which those same courses have come. One eventually reaches the story in the beginning and/or in the end. The future is disposed by it as well as the past.

Heretofore, it has been customary to look to *mythos* for the origins of religion. Conveniently, formalized Christianity was placed somewhere within the transition from *mythos* to *logos*. Indeed, as we have already noted, this *mythos-logos* sequence has provided an occasion for diagnosing the theological ills of present forms of Christian belief.²⁰ The recommendation is that the *logos* element should be supplanted by whatever preceded it chronologically. The "hellenization" (or logicizing) of the kerygma needs to be reversed so that the original, primary features of Christianity can be restored. The inference seems to be that the dominant eschatological tendency of early Christianity was violated when the *logos* element was imposed upon *mythos*.

Hope-theology follows a similar pattern. It also recommends a movement from *logos* to *mythos*. But, because its primary intention is not a

recovery of that which has been lost, but the establishing of a reality which has not yet been, its treatment of the *mythos-logos* dichotomy is distinctive. Its preoccupation with eschatology, for example, is not simply an interest of a restorative nature. The concern is not with what eschatology was, but rather with what it now must be. Eschatology, then, is something other than the key which might unlock "das Wesen des Christentums," or which might disclose the fundamental, irreducible core of early Christian affirmation. Once again the primary interest—even in eschatology—is not a theoretical one. As a result, the transition requested by hope-theology is not a movement from *logos* back to *mythos*, but a movement ahead, to *mythos*. This, in turn, is in keeping with Ernst Bloch's suggestion that the future is present only in anticipations, in images and dreams. Such images have always been a part of the *mythos* consciousness, but now they are looked to not as recoverers of the past but as means through which the future is accessible. One can expect that an image-disposed perspective will call into new relevance the figure whose cultic function has all but been abandoned, i.e. the teller of stories.²¹ And, in the same way, one can anticipate that the long-standing concern for "de-mythologizing" will be replaced by an interest which pushes ahead, i.e., "re-mythologizing" or, more precisely, "pro-mythologizing." In the future tense, the task is to find the story which is disclosive, the image which is inciteful, or the myth which is able to constitute the order of a world which the myth envisions. This is "pro-mythologizing" rather than "re-mythologizing" because it is creative rather than restorative. It must be the former rather than the latter if the regulative principle is the *novum*.

In at least two ways, then, the theology of hope comes to depend upon and reflect the dynamics of religion. First, it is conscious that theology must eventually give way to myth and ritual. It is aware that theology is not an end in itself. Heretofore, one has had a relatively easy time distinguishing religion from theology by referring to an implicit chronological sequence: because religion occurred first theology could be regarded as second-order elucidation which refined and recast given affirmations by means of various conceptual structures. But, because of the future direction of hope-theology, the distinction must be reformed. Theology is second-order elucidation not because it refers to something prior to itself simply, but because it also refers to something beyond itself—access to which it cannot claim. Myth and ritual, then, are not regarded as though they were mere components of some earlier but now transcended childhood. Instead, taken together, they are looked to as means of access to the future. In a certain sense, Ernst Bloch's dreams and Johannes Metz's creative, militant political action go hand in hand: the twin elements of myth and ritual are dependent upon each other.

Secondly, hope-theology is an articulation of a precise form of mythology, and depicts a style of religious consciousness which has far wider

representation than that which can be restricted to either Judaism or Christianity.²² What the myth tells to those who are under its cultic influence is that the future is the product of an accomplished sacred purpose, that the end reconstitutes the beginning, and that the God who creates at the beginning also brings his work to consummation by conquering at the end. What the myth indicates is that an apprehension of the world in its most fundamental depth belongs to a vision which comes from the *eschaton*. In the cult, the myth sanctions a rite of passage which will bring the participants in the sacred story into the new creation—or, in this case, into the accomplished world which the *novum* has ordered. All threatening forces will have been overcome, and the oppressed pilgrim people will be delivered to enjoy the freedom of a promised future. The myth, then, is a variation on the traditional theme of the return to a primordial and paradisiacal age. Both its distinctiveness and its structural dynamism are created by a projection of the *primordia* into the future. This restricts the norm to a time tense which is deliberately reserved for that which has not yet been.

Yet, even after this sort of report has been filed—after the contentions of the future-orientation have been mapped—it is still difficult to know how influential the school of hope will be. It is never an easy matter to assess the potential strength of a reflective movement of this kind, for that assessment always depends upon what one regards the movement to be. And this has not been fully determined yet. Furthermore, at the moment, the school is suffering under frequent false classification by means of criteria which are inexact. Despite its occasional protest, it is being received as an additional instance (in series and in kind) of earlier and familiar ideational and theological formulations, or as an embellishment and modification of more recent ways of doing things. Part of this is due to the tentativeness of its own self-consciousness. Some of its representatives are not as aware as they will be of its distinctiveness. But this is an inevitable accompaniment of recent origination.

If the school can inspire a new style of consciousness, then it will be useful. If it can cultivate a sensitivity to the presence of religion, then it will serve a purpose and maintain its promise. If it can show the pervasiveness of myth and ritual, then it will help to correct an increasing impoverishment and long-standing myopia. If it can demonstrate that the theologies of the future will be planned theologies and not simply reactionary stances, then it can be portentous. And, if it can find ways to reconstruct given religious patterns in light of revolutionary impulses, then its achievement will be monumental. But it will need to decide first whether it is willing to be determined and carried forward by its own novelty. For, ultimately, the school of hope will probably not be assessed on grounds of internal consistency or even according to the measure of its capacity to represent Christian theological affirmations adequately. It will

be judged on the basis of its larger resourcefulness: its resourcefulness in giving clarity and substance to men who face the problems of the future. Already, the religious and theological traditions which the school has incorporated have undergone reconstitution in the light of that larger issue. Somewhat surprised to be where they are, they have sensed the necessity for change if they are going to be looked to with seriousness. One need not call attention to the irony, i.e., that those same traditions are responsible for first raising the future expectations.

Thus, the school of hope, like the God some of its theological representatives depict, has not yet achieved its place. But in its early pilgrimage it has learned that norms like homes are not stable until one reaches the end. As Ernst Bloch has noted, it is in the end that the genesis occurs, and not in the beginning.

CITATIONS:

¹ Jacques Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (New York: Anchor, 1958), p. xii.

² Cf. Walter H. Capps, "Vertical v. Horizontal Theology: Bloch-Dewart-Irenaeus," in *Continuum*. Vol. V, No. 4 (1968), pp. 616-633.

³ Jürgen Moltmann knows that he is opposed to Parmenides. See, for example, the many references to "the god of Parmenides" in the "Introduction" to *Theology of Hope*. But Moltmann does not go on to align himself with Parmenides' opponent in the classical argument regarding the status of being and non-being, i.e., with Heraclitus.

⁴ Cf. Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*. Vols. I-V (Paris: 1922-1926).

⁵ For this reason Karl Barth's position is rightly referred to as "neo-orthodox."

⁶ George A. Lindbeck, "The Framework of Catholic-Protestant Disagreement," in *The Word in History* (The St. Xavier Symposium), ed. T. Patrick Burke (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 102-119.

⁷ Maurice Blondel, *L'Action: Essai d'une Critique de la Vie et d'une Science de la Pratique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), re-edition. See also Blondel's "The Unity of the Christian Spirit" (a translation of portions of his *Exigences Philosophiques du Christianisme*), in *Cross Currents*. Vol. I, No. 3 (1951), pp. 1-12; "The Theory and Practice of Action" (a translation of the introduction to *L'Action*), in *Cross Currents*. Vol. IV, No. 3 (1954), pp. 251-261; *The "Letter on Apologetics" and "History and Dogma,"* trans. Alexander Dru and Illyd Trethowan (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966); and the study of Blondel's concept of action in J. J. McNeill, *The Blondelian Synthesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), chap 5, pp. 76-105. Some of the most useful secondary materials on Blondel are the following: Louis Dupre, "Reflections on Blondel's Religious Philosophy," in *The New Scholasticism*. Vol. XL, No. 1 (1966), pp. 3-22; Henri Bouillard, "L'Intention Fondamentale de Maurice Blondel et la Théologie," in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*. Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (1949), pp. 321-402; Bouillard, "Maurice Blondel et la Philosophie de la Religion," in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*. Vol. XLVIII, Nos. 1,2 (1960), pp. 291-330; and Bouillard, "Maurice Blondel et la Théologie," in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*. Vol. XXXVII, No. 1 (1950), pp. 98-112. Ladislaus Boros compares Blondel and Bloch in "Begriffene Hoffnung," *Orientierung*. Vo. XXV (1961), pp. 40-44.

⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

⁹ Johannes B. Metz, "Creative Hope," in *Cross Currents*, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹¹ I John 3, 14.

¹² Cf. Robert S. Brumbaugh, "Applied Metaphysics: Truth and Passing Time," in *The Review of Metaphysics*, *op. cit.*

¹³ Note that Ernst Bloch's second book, following *Geist der Utopie* in 1918, was *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* in 1921.

¹⁴ This is the famous eleventh thesis of Karl Marx on Feuerbach, one of the notes, as Engels writes, which was "hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication, but invaluable as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook." A translation of the Theses appears, among many other places, in the C. P. Dutt edition of Marx's *Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, and reprinted as an appendix to *The German Ideology* (of Marx and Engels), ed. R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1947), pp. 197-199. See Ernst Bloch's commentary on Marx's theses on Feuerbach, in Bloch's "Keim und Grundlinie," in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*. Vol. I, No. 2 (1953), pp. 239-261.

¹⁵ Moltmann writes: "The God of the exodus and of the resurrection 'is' not eternal presence, but he promises his presence and nearness to him who follows the path on which he is sent into the future. YHWH, as the name of the God who first of all promises his presence and his kingdom and makes them prospects for the future, is a God 'with future as his essential nature,' a God of promise and of leaving the present to face the future. . . . His name is a wayfaring name, a name of promise that discloses a new future, a name whose truth is experienced in history inasmuch as his promise discloses its future possibilities." *Theology of Hope*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁶ As a process thinker, Alfred North Whitehead's comments on the relation between science and religion are not only instructive; they may also be exemplary. He writes, for instance, that "religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science," and enjoins: "let both grow together until the harvest." *Science and the Modern World* (1925) (New York: Mentor, 1958), pp. 188, and 186.

¹⁷ Such chronicles are especially prominent in two of Moltmann's American lectures (1967-68): "The Revolutions of Freedom: A Christian-Marxist Dialogue," and "The Category of the New in Christian Theology."

¹⁸ There is something of this tendency, for example, in Francois Houtart, *The Eleventh Hour: Explosion of a Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), and a depth analysis of the conditions of the tendency in Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Catholic Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

¹⁹ One can make this claim despite the fact that Johannes Metz has frequently gone on record as favoring a "de-ritualization" of the Church.

²⁰ Leslie Dewart, *The Future of Belief*, *op. cit.*

²¹ Perhaps this vacancy has occurred in the Christian cult because of an unwillingness, a fear, or a prejudice against maintaining and/or reconstituting the office and function of the rabbi. Vis-a-vis the priestly and prophetic, the rabbinic tradition—the cultic occasion for story-telling—has all but been abandoned in the Gentile form of biblical religion.

²² The way in which the theology of hope depends upon basic religious themes and structures is a subject both provocative and large enough to warrant detailed, self-sufficient study. Vittorio Lanternari's works have convinced me, for example, that hope-theology is a repristination of messianism—a messianism latent in the thought of Ernst Bloch—and a manifestation of some of the characteristics of the "religion of return." Lanternari describes the revolutionary tendency of religions which derive from prophetic efforts at renewal and reform. ". . . every prophetic movement has a revolutionary program meant to renew and reform things: in brief, an antic cosmic program against the established order. In it is expressed not only a mythical need or a mere nostalgia

for a past mythical age; there is also a historical dynamism in the prophetic movements which should not be forgotten. The patterns of the age of origins and perfection, proposed in the messianic myths, have value inasmuch as they are as many programs of transformation, and inasmuch as they are capable of nourishing the hope for renewal, and still more, they are in themselves a beginning of rebirth. In conclusion, the most important fact in the prophetic movements is that they contain in themselves a renewal of the religious as well as cultural, social, and political life, and that this renewal takes place as an answer to existential needs which through history have grown within the developing culture. For the followers of these movements the creative future is more important than the nostalgic past, because such movements are in reality new syntheses and in any case in disagreement with the actual tradition. Thus the religion of return appears in history as a creative religion of renewal." (p. 68) Vittorio Lanternari, "Messianism; Its Historical Origin and Morphology," in *History of Religions*. Vol. II, No. 1 (1962), pp. 52-72. An elaboration of the above appears in Lanternari's *Religious of the Oppressed* (New York: Mentor, 1965). But this one example serves only to indicate what clarity might result from a thoroughgoing analysis of hope-theology through the categories of interpretation and description of the phenomenology and history of religions.