

but I could wish that Griffin had been able to show in precisely what sense we may speak of the "Jesus of history" and the "historical Jesus"—a distinction very tellingly made by the author, but (as it seems to me) not sufficiently applied in respect to this "vision of reality" which our Lord presumably entertained as central to his very existence.

The second comment has to do with what used to be called the relationship of "special revelation" to "general revelation." Griffin is intent, and rightly so, on emphasizing what I prefer to style "the speciality" of that which in Jesus God did; and I accept his criticism of some of my own earlier discussion of "degree" and "kind," although I attempted to clarify (and modify) those earlier views in *Christology Reconsidered*, to which Griffin refers but whose import he does not quite grasp. However, I fail to see in his own discussion any *essential* difference from my own (and Peter Hamilton's, Schubert Ogden's, and others') conviction that Jesus did in concrete act make fully real or "actualize a potential open to all men." *Of course*, that "actualization" was through *God's* special purpose (the "initial aim" given to the man Jesus) and through Jesus' own obedience to this aim, made into his own "subjective aim." But does not this also require us to see man, as such, in his potentiality thus to be the decisive and special agency for a divine act determinative of what human nature essentially is meant to become? And how otherwise could there be accomplished what we know as "atonement"?

## THE FUTURE OF THE THEOLOGY OF HOPE

*Origins of the Theology of Hope*, by M. DOUGLAS MEEKS. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974. 178 pp. \$8.50. Reviewed by WALTER H. CAPPS, Institute of Religious Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara.

MEEKS'S VALUABLE WORK is less an inquiry into the origins of the theology of hope as it is a full, perceptive, and sympathetic account of Jürgen Moltmann's systematic theology. Approached from either of these twin expectations, the book pays rich dividends. The theology of hope has been in existence long enough to invite an assessment of its place in history. And Jürgen Moltmann has established himself as a premier Christian theologian whose thought merits careful exposition and extended application.

Meeks was a student of Moltmann's in Tübingen. The book, in earlier draft, was a doctoral dissertation. Such circumstances dictate likemindedness between mentor and student as well as an attitude of advocacy on the student's part, perhaps, in lieu of a critical tone. Meeks is aware of the hazards, and does not always escape recourse to repetitions of the master's language when the going gets tough. At the

same time, the reader is given confidence that this is the “authorized version” of interpretation, so closely has Meeks worked with Moltmann.

The organizing principle—both for the contents of the book as well as for the theological program that Meeks describes and interprets—is the thesis that “the ultimately distinguishing characteristic of Moltmann’s theology is the dialectic of reconciliation.” At one level this implies that Moltmann was aiming for relevancy between the contentions of the Christian religion and the situation of the contemporary world. Thus, the theology of hope is an expression of the “relevance of the Christian tradition to elements of the contemporary consciousness that apologetic and secular theology simply overlooked.” Meeks contends that Moltmann discovered the contemporary salience of the biblical emphases of hope, the future, the new, and the yearning for the transformation of the present world. Somewhat ironically, Moltmann detected that contemporary consciousness was more eschatological and thus more biblical in temper than previous academic theologians were willing to admit. Making use of this situation, the theology of hope was an attempt to rethink the dynamics of the Christian faith in a critical social and cultural dialectical way.

In Meeks’s view, dialectics also regulates the intrinsic dynamics of Moltmann’s thought pattern. Sensing that most previous Christian theological orientations have been adversely affected by a deep subject-object split, the theology of hope seeks reconciliation through dialectical means. The hope-mode makes dialectics inevitable, for it includes “both the hoped-for object and the hope that is engendered by it in the subject.” The dialectical relationship prevents theology from being satisfied with some pure, timeless, transcendent realm beyond, and it also forces a “break-up” of the one-dimensional temporal world through the introduction of eschatological poly-dimensionality.

Given this starting point, Meeks takes his reader through Moltmann’s merging of the insights of Karl Barth and Ernst Bloch—whom Meeks calls “an odd couple.” He devotes a chapter to Moltmann’s teachers at Göttingen, chiefly Otto Weber (from whom Moltmann learned about Dutch Apostolate Theology as represented chiefly by Arnold A. van Ruler and J. C. Hoekendijk, and by whom his missionary sensitivities were fashioned), Hans Joachim Iwand, and Ernst Wolf. Reference is also made to the place of Hegel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and even Heinz-Dietrich Wendland and Walter Dirks in the evolution of Moltmann’s position.

Background factors having been neatly accounted for, Meeks devotes the remainder of his study to the exposition of key theological themes. The reader suspects that had Moltmann chosen to write a book of comprehensive systematic theology rather than a treatise of a politically-and-theologically reconstructive nature, he might have followed Meeks’s catechetical outline. The necessary components are present, and the progression of thought moves from Moltmann’s conception of God to his interpretation of the church’s mission. The latter portions of this sequence contain many perceptive paragraphs on Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach, and the potential significances of a “political hermeneutic.”

There are no large surprises in Meeks's exposition nor secrets unveiled. About the most that Meeks can claim is that he has perceived Moltmann's uniqueness (which uniqueness derives from Moltmann's use of a "dialectic of reconciliation" to overcome the dreaded subject-object split). The conclusions are no more profound than this. And yet this is to Meeks's credit, for it testifies to the balance of his presentation, its judiciousness, and circumspection.

There are some very choice elements, the most valuable of which is Moltmann's own autobiographical "foreword" to the book. For the first time, at least in English, Moltmann recalls what it was like to return to a war-shattered northern Germany after having spent years in an English prisoner-of-war camp. I was moved by his account. A second choice passage is Meeks's recollection of an afternoon's conversation with Ernst Bloch. Meeks reveals that Bloch gently chided him for not paying more attention to the fact that Heraclitus is the true originator of both the philosophy and theology of hope. In this reviewer's perception, that fact has not registered as forcefully as it must in interpretations of the sense of "the hope school." Hope-thought is process-thought, but Heraclitean rather than Whiteheadian, Hartshornian, Teilhardian.

Meeks's useful book invites speculation on the future. More precisely, one cannot help but wonder about the future of the theology of hope. Has it any future any longer, or must it too—like so much else—go the way of "positive disengagement"? Perhaps a book on the origins and history of the theology of hope indicates that the "ecstatic stage"—the period of initial insight and large creativity—has passed. Indeed, this would pose a dilemma, for it was of the nature of the hope-thrust to resist periodization and routinization. But what does one do—what does he think and what does he read—when the eschaton fails or is delayed or is thwarted? Has hope any recourse then except illusion or play? Is play, like jokes, much more than a hedge against human hurt? And how does one place that "subject-object dialectic" that makes all theological stances obsolescent, even those that are motivated by a *novum*?

Such questions belong to another study, but Meeks's background work forces their occurrence. Because of the nature of the subject, an inquiry into the origins of the theology of hope is really a statement about its future.