

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Monday, June 27, 2022

Early in this spring, I took up the systematic theology of the German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann. Moltmann produced several volumes of theology from the 1960' into the early 1990's and he covered all the expected doctrines.

I've reached the final book of his systematics, the one on eschatology. That fancy theological term is defined by an online dictionary as: **the part of theology concerned with death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.**

Such theological discussions might cause anxiety to rise in folks, just as readings from the Book of Daniel and the notorious Book of Revelation may cause a bit of nervous shifting in the pews on a Sunday morning. But we need not be concerned; overall the biblical witness of eschatology is ultimately about hope and restoration – hope in the faithfulness of God and God's willingness to bring about restoration to that which has been corrupted by human sin.

Moltmann's point is that fear and hope are not exactly direct opposites, but somewhat complementary and links that relationship to the feelings that folks get in hearing such biblical readings and thinking such eschatological thoughts:

There is no hope without fear. Fear is the instinct for threatening danger. ... If we were not sensitized by fear we should not notice dangers and should be waylaid by the catastrophes. Fear wakes us up and keeps us alert. Fear is the reverse side of hope, though hope is not the reverse side of fear. Hope for someone can make us afraid for them, but we do not derive any hope from mere anxiety. Fear lends hope foresight, in the literal sense. Courage without foresight makes people stupid. Foresight without courage makes them cowardly. Anxiety makes hope wise.

Here, Moltmann shows himself to be an astute interpreter of human emotions and concerns. Ultimately, however, the good German theologian does not find any sense of hope lodged in human abilities to respond healthily to their fears or courageously to their anxieties. Like scripture, he finds that hope is lodged not in ourselves, in our ability to 'read the times,' or divine 'the tea leaves.' He finds our hope only in the God who prevails in unexpected reversals:

We can only trust that even the end of the world hides a new beginning if we trust the God who calls into being the things that are not, and out of death creates new life.

I think it he is exactly right about that as well.

Prayer for the Day: (From *The Common Book of Worship*)

Loving God, protect us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties. Amen.



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