Architects of Hope

Constructions and constructiveness
in the theological worldviews
of Jürgen Moltmann and Sergei Bulgakov

Kerry George
BA (English) Murdoch University
BTheol (Hons) Murdoch University

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University, March, 2009
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.
Abstract

The thesis evaluates the Christian worldviews of two theologians, Jürgen Moltmann and Sergei Bulgakov, with the purpose of constructing a relevant theology of hope for the 21st century. The working definition of hope used in this thesis is that hope arises because there is some correspondence between the human will to live and the world that sustains and supports humanity. It follows that if humans can find no correspondence between the world and themselves then hopelessness arises. Increasing signs of alienation in society may stem from viewing the world as a meaningless place, or from viewing human life as meaningless, or both. Within these parameters of meaning, a theology of hope needs to encompass a purpose for both human life and the world. Jürgen Moltmann, a western Protestant theologian of the second half of the twentieth century, has based his life work on the theme of hope. Hope is to be found in God’s promise to humanity of a future in which God will be all in all. God, and only God, may be relied upon to save sinful humanity come what may. In contrast, Sergei Bulgakov, an eastern Orthodox theologian of the first half of the twentieth century, rarely speaks of hope. Yet Bulgakov offers a worldview in which humanity has an ontological place in the world, which he calls God’s divine Wisdom (Sophia). God’s relationship to the world is based on providential interaction, not omnipotence, because God has created the world with its own being. Humanity’s actions as co-workers with God have significance in the world’s future. Because of the foundation of goodness in the world, these cumulative actions may be relied upon to contribute to the positive future of the world when God will, indeed, be all in all. I present Bulgakov’s sophiology as a more relevant theology of hope in the world today because there is an intimate correspondence between the human will to live, and therefore hope, and the world which is created to support and sustain humanity.
# Table of Contents

*Introduction* .......................................................................................................................... 1  
Jürgen Moltmann .......................................................................................................................... 11  
Sergei Bulgakov .......................................................................................................................... 23  
Comparison and Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 40  

**Part 1: Jürgen Moltmann and Hope** .................................................................................. 43  

Chapter 1: *A Theology of Hope: the importance of hope* ...................................................... 43  
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 43  
   ‘Theology of Hope’ .................................................................................................................. 44  
   The Praxis of Hope ................................................................................................................... 62  
   Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 67  

Chapter 2 *The Crucified God: suffering in the world* ............................................................... 73  
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 73  
   The Historical Jesus and his Cross ........................................................................................ 75  
   God and the cross ..................................................................................................................... 83  
   Humanity and Praxis in light of the Cross ............................................................................. 91  
   Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 100  

Chapter 3 *God in creation: humanity and ecology* ................................................................. 105  
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 105  
   A theology of creation: God’s relationship to the world ...................................................... 109  
   Anthropology: Humanity as the image of God and the world. ....................................... 117  
   A theology of hope revisited. The relationship between humanity, the world and God. .... 131  
   Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 139  

**Part 2: An Eastern Perspective: Sergei Bulgakov and Sophia** ............................................. 142  

Chapter 4 *God in creation: Sophia and humanity* ................................................................. 142  
   Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 142  
   A sophiology of creation: God’s relationship to the world .............................................. 146  
   Creaturely Sophia .................................................................................................................... 169  
   Humanity .................................................................................................................................. 175  
   Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 180
Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Alex Jensen, my greatest thanks for your supervision and for your unwavering optimism and faith that I would complete my thesis. Your positive guidance and cheerful disposition were of enormous importance to me. I would like to thank Murdoch University for giving me this opportunity and for providing wonderful on-campus facilities. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Theresia Johnston for the many life-coaching sessions that kept me going. Many thanks to Cecily Scutt for getting me through the first writer’s block and many others thereafter. Thank you very much to Lloyd Porter and Hans-Georg Stork for help with translation. I could not have finished this thesis without the love and support of many friends and family members and I would particularly like to thank the following people. To my long time friend Maggie White, thank you for proof reading the thesis and providing many “brain food” dinners. I am grateful to the two who led the way, Carmel Posa and Liz Boase, both for their example, their valued friendship and for the unforgettable champagne picnics. Thank you to all my fellow postgraduate students, especially my good friends Alisoun Nicol and Kathryn Imray. Thank you also to my thesis writing group—Heather Conroy, Chris Klisc, Tracey Jones and Keren Geddes—for three years of practical support and friendship. Above all, I wish to thank my parents, Rosemary and Tony George, who gave me everything, and to thank my children, Lawrence and Tess and my daughter-in-law Jade, for their love and support.