

Architects of Hope

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

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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.

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