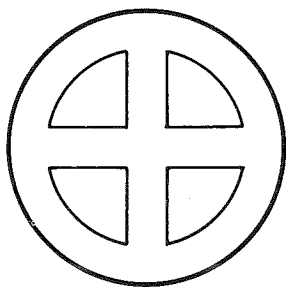


"Theological Perspectives on the Future"

Jürgen Moltmann

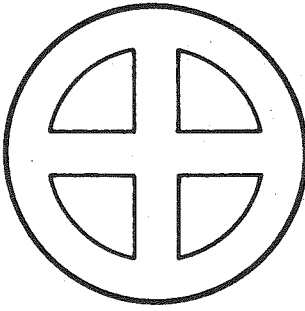


Lutheran Brotherhood
Colloquium on the Church
in Future Society

The Woodlands Inn, Houston Texas • January 29 - February 2, 1979

 LUTHERAN BROTHERHOOD

Concordia Seminary Library
Fort Wayne, IN.
Concordia Seminary Library
Fort Wayne, IN.



Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society

The Woodlands Inn, Houston Texas • January 29 - February 2, 1979

The Lutheran Brotherhood Colloquium on the Church in Future Society was a conference of 250 Lutheran leaders and ten nationally-known futurists. It was the first such event ever held by Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal benefit society serving Lutherans nationally, and was the result of consultations with several U.S. Lutheran church bodies. Among the concerns which were expressed by the church bodies in these consultations was the need for more disciplined emphasis on anticipated future changes as they influence congregational life.

The purpose of the Colloquium was to increase awareness of anticipated future change so that appropriate planning can be effected to strengthen the Lutheran church, especially at the congregational level.

All U.S. Lutheran church bodies were invited to take part in the planning, and nine participated by sending representatives, including six national presidents. Ten Lutheran church bodies were represented among the participants in the Colloquium.

The Colloquium was organized around five themes:

	Theme	Presentors
Monday	The Reality of Change	Alvin Toffler
Tuesday	Problems of the Future	John Platt Theodore Gordon Jürgen Moltmann
Wednesday	Human Values & Potential	Willis Harman Jean Houston
Thursday	Defining the Task	Warren Bennis Hazel Henderson Robert Jungk
Friday	The Role of Leadership	Harlan Cleveland



Jürgen Moltmann

Theologian and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Tübingen, Germany.

Dr. Moltmann, author and lecturer, is noted as one of the leading systematic theologians of the world. In 1944 he was inducted into the German army; a year later he became a prisoner of war and served three years of forced labor in a concentration camp. It was during this period that he began his study of theology and continued it after his return to Gottingen in 1948. After Vicariat duty in Berlin and in Westfalen, he began as minister in the community of Bremer-Wasserhorst. He later taught at the Ecclesiastical high school in Wuppertal and in 1963 became Professor of Systematic Theology and Social Ethics at the University of Bonn.

In 1967 he assumed his present position; during the academic year 1967-68 he was a visiting professor at Duke University in North Carolina and the University of California at Santa Barbara. During his visit to Duke University, he co-authored a book entitled *The Future of Hope* which was the result of a Duke consultation on "The Task of Theology Today;" he is considered the founder of the "theology of hope" school of thought. In his book, *The Passion for Life: A Messianic Lifestyle*, he writes: "It is my expectation that theology will increasingly enter into the practice and experience of the people and that the congregation will more and more come to express its pains and joys in theology. ... (Therefore) let us make the congregation strong. The large supra-congregational organizations of the churches often relieve the congregations of independence and responsibility. But in the last analysis, in the times of contempt and persecution, the Church stands or falls with the gathered congregation and with no one else."

Dr. Moltmann is a member of the Synod EKC (Evangelical Church of Germany), the board of directors of the Ecumenical High School at Bossey and the Paulus Society. He is a frequent contributor to numerous theological journals and also publisher of *Evangelical Theology*, *Evangelical Commentary*, *Proclamation and Inquiry*, *New Forum* and *Public Forum*. Dr. Moltmann has completed two works on the study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and has published numerous articles and books, many of which have been translated into English. Some of his more recent books include: *Theology of Play*; *The Gospel of Liberation*; *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present*; *The Crucified God*; *Religion and Political Science* (several authors); *The Experiment Hope*; *The Theology of Hope*; *Hope and Planning*; *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*; *Origins of the Theology of Hope* by M. Douglas Meeks (an analysis of Moltmann's theological background) with a forward by Moltmann.

Dr. Jürgen Moltmann: "Theological Perspectives on the Future"

Theologian & Professor of Systematic Theology,
University of Tübingen, West Germany

Delivered on January 30, 1979 at the Lutheran Brotherhood
Colloquium on the Church in Future Society

I.

The Unknown Quantity: The Church

Thank you very much for your kind introduction. I was prepared to start with "Ladies and Gentlemen" but now let me start with "Dear Friends." I've been invited to speak on theological perspectives on the future. The special subject in these perspectives is the role of the church in future society. Each part of this topic is critical. Society seems to be a determined factor; future society a not-yet-wholly-determined factor; but the church is a rather undetermined factor. An exchange recorded on the Russian Radio Eriwan illustrates the point. To the question, "Will religion die out soon?" the answer shot back, "Theoretically -- yes. But you can't depend on the Holy Spirit."

Indeed one can exhaustively analyze past and present roles of the church, in past and present societies, out of trends and tendencies, trying to predict the future role of the church in future society. But it could all happen quite differently. And it will happen differently when the church determines the role she plays in society, rather than letting society determine the role the church then has to play. Society's concept of the church and the church's concept of herself are two quite different conceptions. Innovation grows out of faith and this innovation out of faith is something that sociological analysis and social planning, fortunately or unfortunately, ignore.

One small example: the University of Tübingen drew up a project for development and growth. In terms of this plan, the theological faculty should have grown 2% by the year 1980. Accordingly, the allotments of classrooms, library space, academic positions and financial resources were divided up. That was in 1970. At that time there was a student body of around 500. Already in 1974 there were 1,000 students in the theological faculty and in 1978 more than 1,500. Our faculty grew not by 2% but by more than 200%. Consequently we sadly lack the necessary classrooms, library space, academic positions and financial resources today. I do not wish to suggest that this is solely the work of the Holy Spirit, though this can't be ruled out. I

need only caution that if we now wished to extrapolate from the development of the past eight years, it is quite possible that by 1990, our classrooms would be empty and the professors unemployed. The Spirit blows where the Spirit wills.

In no other area are projections so uncertain as in the area of religion -- particularly the Christian religion. This is due to the fact that in the Christian faith, religion is in its essence motivated by hope and therefore oriented toward the future. Change, renewal, rebirth, reformation and the future are inherent in it as in no other religion. There are eschatological and non-eschatological religions. Christianity is clearly an eschatological, that is a messianic, religion. And there are eschatological and non-eschatological cultures. The Western culture of modern society is clearly an eschatological culture. For this reason, it creates "future shock." Anyone who has ever been to India notices the difference from the Western culture immediately. In Western society it is essential to inquire into the future in order to understand the present and to come to self-understanding. This is a truly eschatologically-oriented society. And therefore Christianity is essential to such a society because Christianity and its mother, Judaism, are nothing less than the messianic unrest in the mechanics of this future-oriented society.

Whether we like it or not, our culture is infected with the virus of messianic hope. I compare it to disease because the infection is ambiguous. On the one hand, this hope leads us into the movement of history, of change, of development, of progress, and innovation. It brings us closer to the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, hope disrupts any and all equilibria. Our heart is a cor inquietum, a restless heart. The heart cannot find rest and the ecological systems of nature cannot be restored. So we are brought closer to the end, the final judgment.

Anyone who views the future with messianic hope cannot content himself with analytical forecasts of the future. Simple extrapolations about possible future developments simply don't interest him very much. Why not? Because he has a particular preconception of a particular future which he seeks. Because he awaits the Coming One -- the God of promise and covenant. He has opened himself up to the unknown of this future. With this preconception he judges every possible development and chance. Therefore his judgment about the future is not an analytical but more a synthetic judgment. In his messianic hope he compares every possible future with the awaited future of Christ and then

he finds analogies which prepare the way for the coming of Christ and contradictions which hinder this way. The Christian church is in the world for the future of Christ and it is this that determines her interest also in future society.

Two apparently contradictory expectations determine Christianity today and through it also society: apocalyptic fear on the one side and messianic hope on the other side. And this is understandable. A society which can no longer orient its social order to the cycles of nature lives in the changes of history. It must orient its history to the end or the goal of this history in order to find meaning in the changes of history.

Therefore religious and secular prophets interpret the signs of the time from the perspective of the end or the goal of history. Their books are best-sellers precisely because people who have left nature behind and live in the time now need such an orientation in time.

The apocalyptic world view first appeared as relevant social and political criticism in the time of the struggle of the Holy Alliance against Napoleon and the achievements of the French Revolution. Democracy, scientific reason, liberal economics and finally the political revolution of the people were interpreted as signs of the approaching end. The emancipation of slaves, women's liberation, and the emancipation of Jews were later on regarded as signs of anarchy and atheism. Democracy and socialism itself, and more recently communism, have been regarded as the beast from the bottomless pit. Then the Church appears as the sole salvific refuge in this contemporary vision of the end of the world. This is the message of Julius Friedrich Stahl, Abraham Kuyper and Vladimir Solovyev in Europe. This is, from my impression, also the message of some religious apocalypticists today -- saying, "The world is coming to an end very soon. The signs of the end are at hand already. Save your soul." And whoever would like to improve the world before this end is branded then as a communist or an antichrist. In this view of history the last judgment is the dominant preconception of the future. Whoever interprets the sign of the times with such negative expectation naturally finds crises, catastrophes, and terror everywhere.

Now countering this apocalyptic fear, messianic hope has also had a strong influence in social and political history of advanced societies in Europe and here. The messianic world view arose out of the same period in Europe, and interpreted the same events, but in a totally different

fashion. For Kant, Hegel, Fichte and many others, the American and then the French Revolutions were not signs of the end, but signs of hope. The emancipation of slaves, of women, of Jews and workers were miracles of God. These men interpreted world history as the "history of freedom." For them the dominant preconception of the future was the Kingdom of God. And it stood as a culmination of the history of liberations. Whoever interprets the signs of the time with such a positive expectation naturally finds the signs and wonders that have paved the road to freedom since Moses everywhere.

Apocalyptic fear and messianic hope are still models of Christian orientation to time. The liberation of African nations are hailed by one group as signs and wonders from God and bewailed by another group as terrorist uprisings and catastrophes preceding the end of time. Today the tension between apocalyptic fear and apocalyptic interpretation of history and future, and messianic interpretation of history and future has only intensified. The dispute over the anti-racism program of the Ecumenical [World] Council of Churches has become much more important than debates over the divinity of Christ.

Now before we come to a coherent theological perspective on the future, we must first come to a Christian understanding of these preconceptions: final judgment and the Kingdom of God with which and through which we experience and interpret history and future in such a contradictory way. And a Christian understanding is only possible through the representation of the message and the history of Christ himself. I can only summarize these three elements central to this representation. First, Jesus' preaching of the coming Kingdom of God to the poor called for conversion toward this future. Second, Jesus' suffering on the cross was a vicarious suffering for the lost people and therefore the sign of hope for all those who are lost. And third, Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a focal point of God's future for all.

Now, in view of these essential elements of the Christian representation of the future, how does the Church understand herself? Then the Church understands herself as a messianic phenomenon. The Church understands herself as a people of God. Why? Because when the Kingdom of God arrives, then the people of God will gather. In view of these elements, too, the Church understands herself as a fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because when the Kingdom of God arrives, then the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. The Church which understands itself as

the people of God and the community of the Holy Spirit understands itself as a messianic phenomenon. And both designations are important, and together they protect the tension between hope and fear, between the expectation of the Kingdom and the expectation of the final judgment.

Christian perspectives on the future, then, must begin I believe with the expectation of the Kingdom of God and then move toward judgment. Those that the Spirit leads start with hope because they are reborn to a living hope, and then they come through this hope into fear and trembling of the judgment. So evangelical apocalypticists on the one hand need to be reminded of Jesus' liberating message -- the Gospel is good news not bad news. And messianic activists need to be reminded of the cross -- it is the cross of Christ which is the foundation of immortal hope.

II.

Theological Perspectives on the Future

In the second part I would like to develop some theological perspectives on the future and in the third part, then, I would like to discuss future possibilities and responsibilities for the Church in future society.

Now, let's go through some theological perspectives on the future. First question, what do we mean by the future? In most European languages, we have two ways of speaking about the future. We speak of "what will be," in Latin we speak of the futurum -- and we speak of "what is coming," in Latin we speak of the adventus. (In French we have the two words futur et avenir, in German die Zukunft. It is in German and in English we have only one word for the future, in German Zukunft and in English future. But many other languages have two words for the future: the one word, which goes back to the Latin word futurum, designates "what will be," "what may be"; and the other word adventus, the advent, the Zukunft, means "what is coming toward us.")

Now the futurum arises out of the present. It has a potential of becoming. It also has the potential of passing, and this is sometimes overlooked. Whatever has not yet come to be, may be someday. And whatever will come to be someday, will also pass and will no longer be. Thus futurum has reverse meanings. On the one hand it is future, but also future past, because everything that comes to be will also pass. On the other hand the futurum is past future,

because everything that once was, had at some earlier time not yet been. Now if we use futurum to describe only that which will be, then nothing truly new can come into existence. Everything has potentially already been established in the present and in the past. If with futurum we only mean that which will be, then we have already included death in that which will be, even though the thought of death never crossed our mind, because that which will be, will one day be no more.

In contrast to this understanding of future in terms of what will be, the term adventus, (avenir, Zukunft) describes the future that is approaching the present. This future does not arise out of the present, rather it encounters the present. The word encounter is important here. It describes the surprising, the novel, the discontinuity in history. If the future is that which approaches and encounters us then the future determines the present, and not the other way around. It is significant that the words Zukunft and avenir are not a translation of futurum, but of adventus in Latin. And adventus in Latin is a translation of a Greek word parousia. This term from secular Greek describes the arrival of persons, the occurrence of events, the presence of something or someone. Because the prophets and the apostles employed this term to describe God as the coming one, the expected presence of God's Messiah, parousia has come to mean an advent hope. In speaking of the parousia we speak of the future of Christ, of the coming of Christ. And therefore the translations of parousia, adventus and our modern words avenir and Zukunft are surrounded by a messianic aura, which is powerfully illustrated for example in Revelation 1:4. In contrast to the eternity of Zeus, which Hesiod described in the words, "Zeus was and Zeus is and Zeus will be," Revelation says, "Peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come." In place of the expected future tense of einai, the Greek word "to be," we find the future tense of erchesthai, the Greek verb "to come." So God's being is not in the becoming, it is in the coming itself. God is not a becoming God, he is a coming God. Thus the hopeful see in everything that encounters them, the coming of God himself. They see in everything that encounters them the novel, the surprising, the wholly other. The hopeful then see in the historical future, signs and anticipations of the final future. His grace is new every morning because in the end he will speak, "Behold I make everything new." In these terms, I believe that I am not so much a futurist, I am more an adventist.

Second question, how do we recognize the future? The futurum is extrapolated out of the factors and tendencies of the past and the present. This extrapolation as a method is

easiest with recurring experiences: hunger and eating, waking and sleeping, birth and death. Broader extrapolations can only achieve varying degrees of probability because first not all the factors are known, second the realm of the possible is also the realm of the indeterminate, and third, the realm of the indeterminate is also the realm of freedom of choice. The more these extrapolations are removed from immediate experience, the more imprecise and inexact they become. Therefore, extrapolations which advance beyond experience are said to be speculative. Extrapolations need not necessarily lead in a linear way to a single direction in the future. New models could also be formed out of present possibilities and offered then as alternative choices.

Extrapolations then are employed in prognosis and planning, and this brings us to an often overlooked fact. Planning can only be done by the one who has the power to accomplish his goals. Therefore, extrapolations of the future presuppose the existing power structure, and present usually nothing less than the desires of the present rulers. The extrapolated future is seldom more than the expansion of the present on the basis of the existing power structure. The allegedly "progressive planning" mentality is actually in this respect conservative, in that it adopts a vision of the future that presupposes and protects the present power structure. In contrast, the future regarded as adventus is awaited and anticipated, not extrapolated. Whether in fear or in hope, we await the unknown future in anticipation.

Now what is an anticipation? Anticipations are pre-conceptions and "quest images" with which we try to open ourselves to the unknown future, new experiences, and to translate the unknown future into our own experience. Since the Greek philosopher Epicurus' notion of prolepsis, anticipatio, praenotio, anticipation has been regarded as an essential element in every perception of time. All living beings exist through anticipation of future behavioral patterns. Human beings live by projects they have made for the future. And they unconsciously or consciously describe themselves in the present as they would like to be or like to be seen in the future. A human being is not just a subject or an object, a human being is at best a project. Doesn't this openness to the future come to full fruition in the Christian faith, which finds its essence in the future and not in the past? We read in I John 3:2 an affirmation of this openness to the future: "Beloved, ...it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him."

Now anticipation as a state of emotion and imagination has little to do with futurum, with extrapolation, but has everything to do with adventus. We don't anticipate what will be, we anticipate what will encounter us. Therefore rather than encountering the future, rather than developing an active relationship to the future, we should let the future encounter us, developing an openness and readiness to the future. Our attitudes toward the future are different. There is the technocratic attitude always asking the question, what can we make out of the future? And there is the more ecological attitude with the question, what will the future bring? The first one seems to be a typical male attitude toward the future, "What can we make out of it?" The second is a rather female attitude toward the future, we expect the future bringing something, new possibilities brought to us, and we ask ourselves, "How can I receive the future, how can I meet the future?" At least we need a balance between these two attitudes toward the future in order to experience the future fully.

Third question, how do we imagine the future? The faculty to explore the realm of the possible and therefore the future is imagination. Imagination is the power to project images of reality into the realm of the possible. One who exercises imagination is not necessarily a dreamer or an escapist. "Any ethic that addresses the will in order to demand a decision, must be subject to a poetry that opens up new dimensions for the imagination," said Paul Ricoeur once, and he is right. The question, "What must I do?" cannot be answered without an answer to the other question, "What may I hope for?"

Now if we examine the images of the future and the writings of prophets and apostles, we discover two very significant stylistic principles. One principle is the negation of the negative, and the other is the consummation of the positive. There can be no concept of a promised and anticipated future as such, because it has not yet been experienced. This future is as promised, however, related to the past and to the present experience in two ways: first by the victory over present experience of evil, and second by consummation of the present experience of good. Now how will it be in "the new heaven and the new earth," what is your image about it? The negation of the negative will be as it was depicted in Revelation 21:4, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore." This speaks to us because we know what tears are and death is, we know what mourning and crying and pain are, so the negation of the negative is a stylistic principle of imaging this future of God.

Now what does the consummation of the positive look like? We read, "Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be His people." Now what Israel and Christianity have experienced as partial liberation, as obscure, broken communion with God, will then be consummated and last forever.

Both these stylistic principles, the negation of the negative and the consummation of the positive, are inter-related and inseparable. If only the principle of the negation of the negative existed, there would be no criterion to evaluate the negative things as negative, and evil things as evil. The conservative argument to orient politics to the evil to be overcome, rather than to utopias to be constructed or dreams to be lived out sounds good, but begs the question, "Who determines what is evil?" On the other hand, if only the principle of consummation of the positive existed, there would only be an extension of the present state of affairs, but nothing new in the future. So as we speak about the future, let us relate these two principles, the negation of presently experienced negative things, and the consummation of the positive, to each other.

Last question, whose future do we mean? The last question is a realistic question, "cui bono?", whose future are we speaking of, whom does hope help? Are we speaking of the future of the rich societies, or also of the future of the poor societies at whose expense the advanced societies live? The rich and the poor have different images of the future, and among the oppressed peoples today, we find strong hope, hope for liberation, and among the rich and powerful nations we find rather a strong sense of fear and discouragement. The rich have no real hope. For them the future is at best a continuation of the present, or a threat to what they have and enjoy. The poor, however, who own nothing in the present, live on hope for the future. And they hope for a future which will overcome their present suffering. For them the future offers something really new.

Assuredly the distinctions I have made here between rich and poor, powerful and oppressed, are simple. The social reality is more complex, of course, yet as long as the riches, the freedom and development of some exist at the expense of the poverty, the oppression and the neglect of others, we must see at least both sides. The hope of the one is too often the despair of the other. This was a saying at the Bangalore conference of the Faith and Order meeting last year, "The hope of the one is too often the despair of the other. The future life of the one is too

often the death of the other." Now for Christianity, which hopes for the Kingdom of God through the resurrection of the crucified Christ, the question about the future of the hopeless is a vital question. It is in order to answer this question of the future of those who are without hope that the church exists, even in future society.

III.

The Church in Future Society

The social form of Christianity is always influenced by the interests and possibilities of society on the one hand, and by the spiritual strength of Christians on the other hand. Church history is a history of the recurring reformations in Christianity. Why is this so?

How do these reformations in Christianity come about? I believe tensions arise because the church is constantly reminded and confronted with her origins through the Bible. If its source is the crucified Christ, then the church can never make herself quite at home in any society. She always remains to some degree a stranger until the Kingdom of God comes. In calling Christ her Lord, the church is constantly called to criticize her own form in society. Ecclesia reformata, et semper reformanda: the reformed church is an always-new to-be-reformed church, or reformation is an ongoing process of vitality in this church.

Now first I must speak about the condition and the future of state churches. My perspective is limited; I come from Europe (from Germany), and the situation of our church with a tradition behind us is different from this country. So let me first talk about the condition and the future of the former state churches. In Europe and the former European colonies, particularly those in Latin America, the church is still stamped by the Constantinian Era. This is the source of her inner conflict. Her future lies in her liberation from this symbiosis of church, society and state.

Now what do I mean? When Constantine legalized Christianity and his successors Theodosius and Justinian raised it to a public state religion, they opened up the whole of the Roman Empire to the spread of the Christian mission. But the church had to pay dearly for this potential. She had to give up the structure of independent congregations and take on that of a state religion, which was necessary at that

time to integrate various peoples into the one Holy Roman Empire. As a state religion, the church was able to reach all people, but what had she become in the meantime? She had become an arm of the political order, sanctioning the existing social and political structures. The dissidents and the Jews, who threatened the uniformity of these structures, were then oppressed.

With the coming of the Constantinian Era, the church lost the visible form of the congregation. Instead the Christian and the civil parish became identical. Thus the church was no longer made up of voluntary, autonomous congregations, but of parishes, dioceses, that is of districts, regions and territories. The districts corresponded to the residence of the population. Church functions then became a part of the civil order, and church hierarchy joined herself with the feudal hierarchy in society. Clergy and laity were finally separated. And then fellowship in the church was replaced by fellowship with the church. The church gained unprecedented public influence, but lost its congregational structure in the process. The Christian faith was represented everywhere, but as an involuntary requirement for citizenship.

Christians have always noticed a certain inner contradiction in the development of the church into such a state church. It is not surprising that the arrival of the Constantinian Era coincided with the development of Christian monastic orders. In these communities it was possible to experience and to practice what the state church could no longer offer: voluntary community, radical obedience to Christ, and an alternative lifestyle. Without the numerous monastic communities, the church would probably have been transformed into the "political religion" of the Christian Caesars, leaving behind the crucified Christ and messianic hope. The monastic orders were a thorn in the flesh of the established church. Christianity could not become the state church without the protest of these monastic orders within her ranks.

Since that time we have had in Europe a two-fold form of Christianity: the church for everyone and the commune; cosmopolitanism and radical discipleship. These forms represent the two faces of the Constantinian church, and in the Roman Catholic countries, the visages still remain as evidenced by the rise of "basic communities" in the colonial Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The Reformation focused on the congregation as central to the church, but dared not think of "congregation" in terms of voluntary community in central Europe. The result was a kind of Protestant Constantinianism, cujus regio, ejus religio.

Now oddly enough, the church remained an established religion even as the state secularized itself. Religion in Germany today reflects this paradox: 95%, I believe, of the German population belong to the church, be it Protestant or Catholic, but only 10 or 15% actively participate in church life, and only 20% occasionally participate. The established churches in the whole of Europe guarantee everyone the freedom not to go to church, but they don't guarantee anyone the freedom to go to the church of his own choice. That is a strange paradox. Christianity remains an involuntary religion, the fate, the destiny of all people through tradition, publicity and infant baptism. Looking at this picture of the church, it is easy to explain the rise of atheism in Europe.

I do not believe that the established church, open to everyone and without specific Christian meaning for anyone, has any sort of a future. The number of infant baptisms in major European cities is sinking beneath the 50% mark, and increasing numbers of people are seeking voluntary and responsible forms of Christian community inside and outside the established churches. There is a correlation between the inner and outer contradictions of the church. Therefore the authenticity of Christianity from within, and the increasing autonomy of the people from without, demand that the way into the future is a way from an established church, a state church or a Volkskirche, to a community church -- the way from involuntary religion to voluntary religion. And perhaps also a careful way from infant baptism as a law, to baptism of those who are called. The voluntary community can be the confessing community. The autonomous congregation, I believe, is the form of the church in future society in Europe.

Now the condition and the future of free churches. I can speak only with great hesitation of the future of free churches, and by free churches I mean the form of the church found in the social system of voluntary religion, specifically that in the U.S. Here the "congregational ideal" of the German Reformation has been realized. The early separation of church and state demanded that the church become a voluntary association, regardless of denomination, thus escaping a struggle between the denominations for title of a state religion, a privileged religion. The struggle between the church and the so-called sects was also avoided. Different lifestyles could live peacefully side by side and every church could be precisely what its members made of it. Churches were not privileged corporations, but more voluntary associations. Certainly the familiar and the social

milieu pressure the faith, whether it be Baptist, Lutheran, or Catholic, but the respect for the freedom of the individual promotes voluntary and conscious membership in a religious community.

You will forgive me, but a European visitor to the U.S. is however struck by the resemblance between the rich variety of religious options on one street and the rich variety in the department stores and supermarkets. This variety makes it difficult for example to stick with a particular community in the case of conflict. You can just leave and go to another church of your choice. The free church as an association also encourages divisions based on class and rank. For example, birds of a feather flock together, and those with different markings are ousted from the nest. If the church adopts the voluntary association model offered in the U.S., then there are three future possibilities and responsibilities.

(1) If the church understands herself as a free association, who then fashions the common bond of these disparate denominations or organized religions in the society? Pluralism, especially religious pluralism, demands a common bond binding the various religious associations together. Otherwise pluralism will not promote freedom, but destroy it. Now is this common bond the American flag seen in churches and synagogues throughout the U.S.? Is it the civil religion of American presidents which Robert Bellah so powerfully discussed? Is there a common religion of the Republic? Christian denominations I believe must involve themselves in the res publica, not only in their own interests, but in the interest of the general welfare of the people for whom they also are responsible. So will the civil religion of America be the "religion of the citizen" or the "religion of humankind" (Rousseau)? Are President Carter's human rights the rights of human beings everywhere (Nicaragua, Korea, etc.), or only the rights of Americans?

(2) A voluntary association of people only becomes a church of Christ when it forms a covenant. The great promise of the reformed tradition, the Reformation tradition, is that it sees the church as a covenant community. That is, it understands the church fundamentally as a community in which promises are given and received. The church is not a leisure-time space in which everything is just voluntary, but rather it is called to be the free space which is urgently requisite for God's mission in the world and the most important institution in the lives of the believers. In it nothing is just voluntary, everything and everyone is promised and thus obligated. The church is

called to be a covenant community whose freedom and mission are radically prior to and formative in the institution. The covenant is forged in freedom, but this freedom is retained and preserved only through a covenantal relationship.

(3) If these covenantal communities understand themselves as the church of Christ, they will concern themselves not only with members of their own particular religious association, but first of all with the Kingdom of God, with the future of Christ, and with the poor to whom the Kingdom was preached and is to be preached. They will seek not only the future of the privileged in society, but first of all the future of the underprivileged. Without this concern, I believe, the church loses sight of the future of Christ. The future of the church lies therefore in a diaconial congregation, a congregation which is not only covenanted or brought together by common interests, but also by diaconial work. This is not meant to be a substitute for public welfare, but rather a means of building up solidarity with the weak, the handicapped, the rejected, and all those who cannot take part in the dynamics of an industrial or a superindustrial society. What these people lack is not so much welfare, but it is human community and there is a chance for the church to bring hope to those who are cut off from the future of this society.

Now let me bring together, at the end, some visions and directions. We may hope for and work towards the following developments of the church in future society:

(1) For the established churches in advanced societies, the future lies in the voluntary, conscious Christian congregation, a community which is socially recognizable as a community. In this form the church can be an institution of personal and communal freedom. In this form the hope of the Kingdom of God can be realized. Only in this form can we overcome the dependency and the apathy of the people.

(2) For the established colonial churches in dependent societies, the future of the church lies in the personal and collective liberation of the oppressed. The church will establish solidarity with the poor and the oppressed in active and serious criticism of the rich and the dictators. This solidarity can best be established through "basic communities" (Basisgemeinden) among the people. For both the established churches in advanced societies (the churches in Europe) and the established colonial churches (the churches in Latin America), the way is the way from a "church for the people" to (now let me use one of your

presidents) a "church of the people and with the people and by the people." The great discrepancy between the church and the representation of the church and the people, is felt nowhere more than in Europe and in Latin America.

(3) For the voluntary associations in advanced societies, the church must resist the temptation to become a mere piece of merchandise in the religious supermarket. She must, so to speak, get involved in the management of this supermarket, demanding information about the victims and the alienated. I will summarize this only briefly: she will become a covenantal community, she will become a diaconial congregation in which the members care for each other and for those who are handicapped and out of the dynamics of the society. Then the church will cast the civil religion of the nation in a universal and not just a national mode.

(4) Increasing individualism in superindustrial societies demands that the church aid the inner stability of people. It can achieve this spiritual nurture through the resources of its own spiritual tradition: meditation, spiritual experiences and prayer. When the church becomes a diaconial, liberating and covenantal community, spiritual growth will come to be particularly important. (David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd and Individualism Reconsidered are to be noted on this topic.) The future does not lie with the politically or religiously manipulated masses, but much more with the sovereign person. But a person is sovereign when he or she perceives his or her own identity and when he or she further perceives the presence of God behind that identity. Then he or she is only sovereign as long as they can endure loneliness and change. So I believe that we will witness a new and very worldly Christian mysticism because the church lives within mature Christian people.

(5) Finally, the church of the future must pay more attention to the workings of the Holy Spirit outside her own walls and outside the walls of established Christendom. The church does not control the Spirit, the Spirit controls the church. The Holy Spirit as the life-giving spirit, is the Spirit of the new creation, the power of the new creation, and this Spirit is active wherever there are life-creating innovations. This Spirit is active wherever there is resistance to the powers of death and apathy. In the image of the crucified Christ, the church has a criterion for recognizing the Spirit. She can thereby discover and open herself to the spirit of her Spirit and to the flesh of her Flesh, in new forms of religious meditation, in new forms of citizens' initiatives and liberation movements. Not uncritical of

course, critical, but in solidarity with them. These will all become increasingly important for the churches of the future. We may say that the Spirit leads the church into the future and that the church cannot simply sink into anachronism behind it.

(6) Now if we summarize these visions and directions, the following image emerges. The future of the church lies in the covenanted congregation, in the liberation of oppressed people, the sovereignty of persons and in the diaconial work for justice in society as a whole. If we look at these points, we can clearly see that these are the stipulations of discipleship of Christ. The future of the church will come when the church becomes the people of that Kingdom Christ promised and embodied.

Since you are a Lutheran Brotherhood, and most of you are Lutheran, let me end with a very famous saying of Martin Luther. We don't know whether we have time enough to reshape the church in future society. We don't know how much time future society at all has. Luther said once, "If the world would come to an end tomorrow, I would nevertheless plant an apple tree today, and pay my debts." Let us just do that with the courage of hope. Thank you.