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# Futurist Eschatologies in Africa and Europe: Pannenberg, Moltmann, Mbiti and Kato

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and in loving memory to my father and grandmother.

## **Declaration**

This dissertation, unless specifically indicated in the text is my original work. I therefore declare that I have not submitted this work to any other institution for examination apart from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Name of Student

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Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of the dissertation

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## Abstract

This dissertation deals with *Futurist Eschatologies in Africa and Europe: Pannenberg, Moltmann, Mbiti and Kato*. It therefore engages with intercultural hermeneutics and theologies of different contexts. It is set on the premise that Christianity as worldwide community of believers depends on the reasoning from different cultures and contexts.

The dissertation engages with the four theologians individually at first and then brings their positions into a dialogue. The individual engagement serves the purpose of determining the context of each of the theologians. The context is found in the biographies of Kato, Moltmann, Mbiti and Pannenberg. Even though the four theologians are born within a time-span of eleven years their life circumstances differ greatly. But the dissertation also engages with context referring to the way Mbiti, Kato, Pannenberg and Moltmann relate their eschatologies to the rest of their theology and how they determine the importance of eschatology for life in time.

The dissertation furthermore compares the writings of the four theologians. Therefore, special attention is given to Hermeneutics, the understanding of time and certain eschatological topics such as death, resurrection and judgement. Similarities and differences in different approaches of the four theologians are described and analysed.

In conclusion, the dissertation stresses the importance of theological context. The term *theological context* refers to the correlation between different perspectives of theology. The dissertation opts for an eschatology that is founded solidly in Christology.

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## Introduction

This study will illustrate two European models of futurist eschatology and deal with two conceptions of eschatology by African Theologians: John Mbiti and Byang Kato. The European models are the futurist eschatologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The crucial question asked in the study is, how do the four theologians deal with eschatology and how does their context influence their reasoning.

Futurist eschatology can be the core concern of Christian theology. For Moltmann and Pannenberg, Christianity is an eschatological faith. Even though both theologians state the relevance of eschatology for the present, they are convinced that eschatology also is concerned about the future. Pannenberg refers to the future fulfilment of the world which can be anticipated by human beings in their lives. Moltmann speaks of the hope of the coming kingdom of God. This hope is grounded in historic events and the expecting of its fulfilment empowers Christians to strive for the world's transformation. Mbiti states that African thinking "virtually has no concept for future"<sup>192</sup> and this statement is contested by Kato as heretical.<sup>193</sup> Yet, Mbiti refers to the biblical reasoning as being able to fill the void of teleology in the African worldview. The main disagreement between Kato and Mbiti evolves around the notion of future judgement and materialistic reasoning. Mbiti claims that he and Kato, shortly before Kato's death, had a conversation about their differing opinions. Mbiti claims that Kato acknowledged his *insufficient understanding* of Mbiti's and other African scholars' theology. Since Kato died ten days after this conversation, his promise to revise and republish his theology could not be fully kept.<sup>194</sup> This dissertation acknowledges Mbiti's statement but nevertheless deals with Kato's theology as it was and still is published. Kato's polemic attacks against Mbiti and others cannot be understood as deriving from insufficient understanding. Kato seems to understand Mbiti's writings quite well, however, his different theological background leads to the disagreement. Nevertheless, it is true that Kato sometimes misrepresents Mbiti's writings. But it is not to judge whether this evolves from insufficient understanding or whether it is merely done to derogate Mbiti's argumentation.

The question that arises from the four different perspectives is whether it is possible to say the eschatological perspectives depend solely on the context of the

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<sup>192</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 30.

<sup>193</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 82.

<sup>194</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1986, p 48-49.



person reflecting upon them; or if futurist eschatology is an element of Christian faith, which determines Christianity in such a way that Christianity would not be Christianity without futurist eschatology. The latter view is strongly emphasised by Kato and Pannenberg. Therefore, the diverse concepts of Moltmann, Mbiti, Pannenberg and Kato will be analysed in this dissertation. For that reason an outline of the four theologians' background will be given. This includes a biography, a brief outline of their main focus concerning eschatology and a description of the correlation between their eschatology and other topics of systematic theology. Furthermore, the theologians' depiction of the relevance of eschatology for life in time will be portrayed (I). The second part of the dissertation compares the opinion that the four theologians hold on certain eschatological topics like death, resurrection, judgement and the end of the world (II 3). But prior to that comparison their engagement with the sources they use and their depiction of time will be described and analysed (II 1 and 2).

Throughout the comparison the context of the four theologians' will be discussed. All four theologians are male and born within a time-span of only eleven years. Yet the distance between their birthplaces is more than five-thousand kilometres. However, being African or European are not the only issues of context. The context that will be looked at in this dissertation includes biographic details such as family background or upbringing, education, experiences of conversion to the Christian faith, nationality, culture and church-affiliation. Furthermore, the context of the writings itself will be looked at. This dissertation stresses the importance of the correlation between eschatology and theology as a whole. The reflection of the four theologians about their context will also be reviewed. The goal of this dissertation is to evaluate the similarities and differences of the four theologians' eschatology. This evaluation includes reasoning for the cause of these differences and will lead to a critical appraising of the four theologians' eschatology.

I, the writer of this dissertation, am a German student of Theology who is currently studying African Theology in South Africa. I am aware that the cultural background of Moltmann and Pannenberg is closer to me than Mbiti's and Kato's. However, I believe that it is possible for me to fruitfully engage the writings of all four theologians. The cultural differences do not only bring alienation but furthermore they lead to a deeper interest. It is the engagement with theologies from different contexts that helps me to reflect upon my own presuppositions and cultural,

religious, political and ethical dispositions. The theoretical framework of this dissertation is a systematic-theological approach.

Descriptive, analytical and comparative research is used. The first part of the thesis is rather descriptive, the second part comparative and both are analytical. The four themes which are introduced in the first part (biography, eschatological focus, correlation between eschatology and theology, relevance for eschatology for life in time) are chosen because they allow comparing and analysing the context of the four theologians. It is my personal conviction that the universal Church depends on its members around the world. Communication between the different members can enrich and broaden the life and theology of the Church. Consequently, I am convinced that the four theologians' reasoning is capable of criticising, improving and enhancing each other. The language in this dissertation used is English, which is not my native vernacular. Different expression for the same concept might be given in order to follow the four theologians' use of language (e.g. Eucharist and Lord's Supper are both used according to the theologians' own usage). I furthermore try to employ non-offensive language. This includes gender-just expression and cultural-sensitive termination. Wherever I see possible offensiveness in my usage of language I indicate the reason of choosing that particular terminology with a footnote.

# I 1 Pannenberg: In the Beginning was the End

*Auf dem Weg ihrer Geschichte in der Zeit existieren die Dinge und Menschen nur durch Antizipation dessen, was sie im Lichte ihrer letzten Zukunft, des Advents Gottes, sein werden.*<sup>195</sup>

This chapter deals with Wolfhart Pannenberg's approach to Eschatology. It will give a short description of his life and life-circumstances. Thereafter, the correlation between the end and the creation of the world will be focussed on. This correlation forms the core issue of his theology. Then, the connection between his eschatology and other fields of his theology will be examined. Finally, Pannenberg's depiction of the relevance of eschatology for life in time will be addressed.

## **a) Biography**

### **(α) Vita**

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in Stettin in 1928. He was not raised in a Christian environment. His father was employed as a state officer for tariffs. Therefore Pannenberg and his family lived in different cities at the German borders during his childhood. He became a soldier in 1944 and served a short time as prisoner of war in Great Britain.<sup>196</sup> He started his studies of philosophy and theology in 1947. He was taught by famous German-speaking teachers like Karl Barth and Gerhard von Rad. His teachers engaged with the topics of interdisciplinary dialogue, especially in the field of Natural Science. They also introduced Pannenberg to ecumenical theology.<sup>197</sup> He became a professor for Systematic Theology at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal in 1958. In 1961 he started lecturing at the University of Mainz and from 1968 until his retirement he was a professor for systematic theology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.<sup>198</sup> During his time as professor in Germany he lectured at different universities abroad. He was visiting scholar at the University of Chicago, at the Harvard Divinity School and at the Clermont School of Theology in California.<sup>199</sup> According to the Dean of the faculty of Protestant Theology in Tübingen, Pannenberg can be seen as an international scholar

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<sup>195</sup> Pannenberg 1993 573: The things and humans exist on their way through history in time only through anticipation of what they will be in the light of their last future, the advent of God.

<sup>196</sup> Cf.: [http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort\\_pannenb/index.html](http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort_pannenb/index.html) [accessed 5 June 2008].

<sup>197</sup> Cf.: <http://www.v-r.de/de/autoren/430384/> [accessed 5. June 2008].

<sup>198</sup> Cf.: [http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort\\_pannenb/index.html](http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort_pannenb/index.html) [accessed 5 June 2008].

<sup>199</sup> Cf.: <http://www.v-r.de/de/autoren/430384/> [accessed 5. June 2008].

since he frequently visited and still visits universities around the world.<sup>200</sup> Pannenberg's writings are translated into various languages and read in many parts of the world. Pannenberg sees his theological reflection as concerning the whole world, even though it is based on European history. That is possible according to Pannenberg since he engages with the truth of the Christian confession in total.<sup>201</sup>

Pannenberg is married to Christine Pannenberg. Several of his works are dedicated to his wife Christine. The Lutheran theologian also engages widely in ecumenical affairs. He founded the ecumenical institute in Tübingen. Furthermore, Pannenberg was a member of the Faith and Order commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC). He was a delegate to the WCC from 1975 to 1990.<sup>202</sup>

## **(β) Major Influences**

Ecumenical theology was and is important for Pannenberg. When he came as a professor to the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität in Munich in 1968 the Protestant faculty of theology had just been established. This establishment was favoured and supported by the staff of the Roman Catholic faculty of theology. Pannenberg taught in combined classes of the two faculties. That was something totally new in Germany of the 1970s. His engagement in the studies of condemnations of doctrine (Lehrverurteilungen) together with Karl Lehmann led to a rapidly growing dialogue between Roman Catholics and Lutherans in Germany.<sup>203</sup> Another influence is to be seen in interdisciplinary dialogue. Pannenberg engages widely with Natural Science in his theological reflections. In *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* he reflects broadly on this issue. In his *Systematic Theology* Pannenberg refers to Natural Science and Natural Laws (Naturgesetze) frequently, especially when he describes the doctrine of creation.<sup>204</sup> Therefore he finds connections between biblical reasoning and modern science. The greatest difference is seen by Pannenberg in the reasoning of modern natural science that traces everything back to something more elementary. This reasoning is alien to biblical reasoning. On the other hand evolutionary

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<sup>200</sup> Cf.: [http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort\\_pannenb/index.html](http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort_pannenb/index.html) [accessed 5 June 2008].

<sup>201</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1988, p 10 . . . sondern um die Wahrheit der christlichen Lehre und des christlichen Bekenntnisses schlechthin.

<sup>202</sup> Cf.: [http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort\\_pannenb/index.html](http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort_pannenb/index.html) [accessed 5 June 2008].

<sup>203</sup> Cf.: [http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort\\_pannenb/index.html](http://www.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/aktuelles/dokumente/grusswort_pannenb/index.html) [accessed 5 June 2008].

<sup>204</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 61; 81-96 and 103.

thinking and progress which is valued by modern science is described by Pannenberg as prevalent in biblical reasoning.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore as a scholar of philosophy and theology he broadly deals with philosophy. Within his systematic theological reflections it is apparent that Pannenberg is at home in European philosophy. He quotes Heidegger and frequently refers to Kant. He insists on the importance of philosophical reasoning. Pannenberg's quest for truth includes philosophic profundness. It is important for him that his reflections can be understood by *everyone*. Therefore he claims it is necessary that his argumentation is rational.<sup>206</sup>

### ***b) Core issue of Pannenberg's Eschatology: The End is the Beginning***

Pannenberg's Eschatology focuses on the end of the world. Pannenberg connects the beginning of the world with the end of the world (creation and eschaton). In this connection, Pannenberg finds a way to deal with the question of theodicy. The end of the world is described as the fulfilment of creation. In this world, it is possible to anticipate the glory of the fulfilment already, but only proleptical. Pannenberg outlines how the preaching of Christ and the Old Testament<sup>207</sup> prophets engage with the topic of the end of the world and shows what relevance this teaching has for contemporary Christians.

Even though the eschaton is a future event, it affects the life of Christians and the Church. Pannenberg does not understand God's eternity as prior or subsequent to time. Eternity is timeless and can, therefore, not be described with the categories of before and after. The question that arises from this is how the eternal God grasps/ encloses the beginning and the end of the world. Pannenberg neglects to answer the question that states that God has set the future of the world in its beginning, at the creation.<sup>208</sup> Pannenberg sees God's interference throughout history. The image of an eighth-day of creation, which is common in Jewish apocalyptic reasoning, is favoured by Pannenberg. The eighth day is the time after the

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<sup>205</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 147-160.

<sup>206</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1988, p 11-26.

<sup>207</sup> In this thesis I use the terminology Old Testament and New Testament. This terminology derives from the perspective of Christianity. The use of the terms Hebrew Bible or Tenan instead of Old Testament is influenced by a Western presupposition, which depicts *new* as more advanced than *old*. However, *old* can also refer to originality. Therefore, I do not see the term Old Testament as derogative but as acknowledging and highlighting that Christianity derives from Judaism.

<sup>208</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 166.

primordial creation. Even though the world is already in existence, God does not cease to be the creator. The theologian links that image with the message of Jesus Christ. According to Pannenberg, Christ's message consists of a new evaluation of all that is from the perspective of "eschatological coming of God."<sup>209</sup> In the preaching of Jesus Christ, God's coming Kingdom is the core theme. In this core theme, Pannenberg sees a shift in putting the emphasis into a future event. It is the future coming of God that will determine all reality. God is not merely the creator of time, but God also gets involved with time in God's actions concerning God's reign and sustenance of the world.<sup>210</sup>

So the eschaton —albeit being a future event— does affect the presence of human beings. Pannenberg outlines two ways in which the eschaton has an effect on the present time. The eschaton lies in God's eternity which embraces and interferes with time. Christians are able to anticipate the future coming of the Kingdom of God through proleptically anticipation. Through God's eternity, that is timeless and that covers all time, the eschaton is linked to all time. All living creatures long for the wholeness of their life which they do not possess fully. The wholeness of life is hidden from the human being because his or her future is still outstanding. Only the fulfilment of life can bring the fullness into realization. The fulfilment of life is different from death. Fulfilment occurs in a future after death. Only in the participation in the eternity of God can the human being find his or her unity and wholeness.<sup>211</sup> Therefore, each character (Wesen) of a human being is grounded in the eschatological future. At the same time the character already manifests itself throughout life. Pannenberg calls this the entry of eternity into time ("Eintritt der Ewigkeit in die Zeit"<sup>212</sup>). Pannenberg consequently argues that each human being is still on his or her way to become him- or herself. Nevertheless everyone is already the person that he or she will be in the light of his or her eschatological future.<sup>213</sup> In Jesus Christ, the eschatological future and, therefore, God's eternity entered history truly.<sup>214</sup> On the one side, God's eternity was the topic of Jesus' proclamation. On the other side, God's eternity began with Jesus' proclamation.<sup>215</sup> The eschatological future and the presence of the proclamation of Jesus coincide. But God's eternity

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p 171 „in ihr [ist] das eschatologische Kommen Gottes zum Ausgangspunkt einer Neubewertung alles Gegenwärtigen und Überlieferten geworden.“

<sup>210</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 165.

<sup>211</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 647.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, p 649.

<sup>213</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 650: „Jeder Mensch ist noch auf dem Weg, er oder sie selbst zu werden, und doch ein jeder schon gegenwärtig irgendwie die Person, die er oder sei im Lichte ihrer eschatologischen Zukunft sein werden.“

<sup>214</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 650.

<sup>215</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 417 and Pannenberg 1988, p 360.

does not dissolve itself in the presence.<sup>216</sup> Pannenberg links this to Paul's depiction of the *already* and *not yet* situation of the believer.<sup>217</sup> Pannenberg refers to further biblical texts which show the tension between the *already* and *not yet*. Even though Jesus is put to reign over heaven and earth (Phil 2:10), there is still conflict and fighting on earth (Phil 1:30). Pannenberg reasons that the presence of God's wholeness (Heilsgegenwart) is hidden in the present time, but it will be revealed in the eschaton. Furthermore, if the future is present (even though hidden) it does shape the present. The present life is a process, the essence of which will be revealed in the eschaton.<sup>218</sup>

### **c) Links between Eschatology and other Fields of Theology**

Pannenberg closely links eschatology with the doctrine of creation. For Pannenberg, the only possibility of calling God the Creator arises from the assurance that the world will be fulfilled by God at the end of time. Therefore, Pannenberg also finds a way of dealing with the problem of theodicy in his engagement with eschatology.

#### **(α) Creation and Eschatology**

According to Pannenberg, creation and eschaton belong together. The destiny of creation will only be fully realized in the eschaton.<sup>219</sup> The theology of creation is not merely concerned with the beginning of the world but with the whole of reality. God being the creator expresses God being concerned with everything. The biblical texts of creation in the book of Genesis apply a mythological worldview. Even though Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 (priesterschriftlicher Schöpfungsbericht) is not concerned with the beginning of the world but with the whole of reality, it grounds God's work in a far gone past tense. The prophetic and apocalyptic texts of later Judaism, on the other hand, depict God's action which determines the significance of history ("Sinn der Geschichte") as a future event.<sup>220</sup> The history of Judaism is described as a proof of God's existence (Gottesbeweis). However, this proof will only be given fully in the end of history.<sup>221</sup> This focus on the end has as consequence that the beginning of the world is not seen as an unchangeable foundation of the unity and wholeness of

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<sup>216</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1980, p 201.

<sup>217</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 650.

<sup>218</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 652.

<sup>219</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 164.

<sup>220</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 171-172.

<sup>221</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1988, p 269.

the world. The beginning of the world becomes the beginning of something that will be proven fully in the end. In the light of the eschatological fulfilment of the world, the significance of its beginning will be revealed.<sup>222</sup> Subsequently, Christian theology is not bound to the notion of a perfect beginning of the world. Praising God for the creation of the world is possible through anticipation of the future fulfilment. Pannenberg writes that it is only possible to praise God for the creation of the world on the premise that the current situation of the world is not the final situation of the world.<sup>223</sup> Therefore, Pannenberg can deal with the question of theodicy and accept that there is not a final answer to that question yet.

### **(β) Theodicy and Eschatology**

The question of theodicy classically arises in the context of the theology of creation. Christian theology needs to portray the world as created by God. Otherwise, the word God does not make sense.<sup>224</sup> At the same time, the existence of suffering seems to contradict the notion of a God being good and omnipotent. This problem was already seen by different authors of the Hebrew Bible. Pannenberg argues again that Christian theology is not bound to a perfect beginning of the world. Christian theology sees the beginning of the fulfilment of the world in the advent of Christ. Then the question remains why the world was not created without suffering. Pannenberg claims that evil is not the positive will of God (positiver Schöpfungswille Gottes) but is only allowed by God. Throughout history, Christians dealt with the question of theodicy. The neo-platonic explanation for human deficiency refers to the *creatio ex nihilo*; the weakness of not-being is portrayed as the source of evil and suffering. Pannenberg disagrees with this reasoning. To correct this approach, Pannenberg deals with Leibniz's argument that the deficiency of human beings is due to their status of being created as limited beings. Imperfection is an attribute of created beings just as being finite is. The ontological composition of human beings, as created beings, includes an ontological weakness (ontologische Schwäche) in comparison to God's perfectibility. Unlike God, human beings are marked by a deficiency of power to be (Mangel an Seinsmacht). The human being is ontologically limited. This deficiency also affects the will of human beings. The human being's ontological composition does not allow the human being to be omniscient. There-

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<sup>222</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 172: Erst im Lichte der eschatologischen Vollendung der Welt wird der Sinn ihres Anfangs verständlich.

<sup>223</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 201: Doch Gott dafür zu preisen, daß er [sic!] diese Welt geschaffen hat, das setzt voraus, daß es bei diesem Zustand nicht sein Bewenden haben wird.

<sup>224</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 188.



fore, the human being is capable of making mistakes. Limitation is necessary for creation. According to Leibniz, human beings that would not be limited would be gods themselves. Consequently, being created implies the possibility of doing evil. While Leibniz sees the reason for evil within such limitation, Pannenberg argues that the source of evil lies in the independence of the human being. Human beings are not only created as limited in knowledge and being but also as independent. The source for evil lies in the transition from the god-given independence to an independence in which the human being puts him/herself as absolute. This leads to a non-acceptance of the limitations of human beings. A human being that does not accept her/his ontological limitation of being finite experiences transience as painful not only for a moment but throughout the whole life. At the same time, created beings depend on each other. The created being who puts him/herself as absolute is willing to harm the rest of creation.<sup>225</sup> Consequently, Pannenberg sees the source for evil not primarily in the limitation of creation but in its independence.

Wenn der Schöpfer eine Welt endlicher Geschöpfe wollte und wenn er [sic] die Selbstständigkeit dieser Geschöpfe wollte, dann mußte er [sic] die Vergänglichkeit und das Leiden an ihr, aber auch die Möglichkeit des Bösen als Folge ihrer Verselbstständigung in Kauf nehmen. Er [sic] mußte damit auch die Verborgenheit seiner [sic] eigenen Gottheit in seiner [sic] Schöpfung . . . auf sich nehmen.<sup>226</sup>

However, the suffering of innocent people cannot be dealt with by merely naming its source. Christian theology teaches about a hope that overcomes suffering and destruction. For Pannenberg, it is important that a solution for real suffering can only be found in a real conquest. Therefore, a solid answer to the question of theodicy can only be given by God, and the fulfilment of the world in the eschaton has to prove God as being just and omnipotent. According to Pannenberg, there is no positive answer that can be given to the question of theodicy by a theology of creation which does not take the hope of eschatological fulfilment into consideration. The question of theodicy calls for eschatological reflection.<sup>227</sup> Consequently, Pannenberg again deals extensively with the question of theodicy in his reflection on eschatology. As he said before, he states again that it is the eschatological fulfilment of the world which gives the perspective of dealing with the question of theodicy.<sup>228</sup> The anticipation of the future fulfilment is possible as wholesome anticipation. Through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, all creatures are able to participate in the eternal life of God. Pannenberg repeats himself and states again that evil and injustice are

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<sup>225</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 196-200.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, p 200: If the Creator wanted a world of finite creatures, and if he [sic] wanted their independence, he [sic] had to accept the transience and suffering of creation and the possibility of evil as a consequence of their independence. He [sic] also had to accept that his [sic] being God will be hidden in his [sic] creation.

<sup>227</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 191-201.

<sup>228</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 684; 689; 691 and 693.

consequences of the freedom God gave to the human being.<sup>229</sup> In the small print, Pannenberg defends himself against Hick, who questions the concept of an eternal life that is identical with the present life. If the eternal life is only the coming together of all moments of the present life, Hick argues, there is no hope for those who are poor and marginalized. Pannenberg simply refers to the purification and transformation of the life in time during the final judgement. Within this transformation, he sees a “moment of compensation for suffering and failures of the present world”<sup>230</sup>

### **d) Relevance for Life in Time**

According to Pannenberg, the present reality is not only influenced by the eschaton, but it is also grounded in the eschatological events. Two ways of how the eschaton affects the present time are already mentioned above: the embracing and interfering with time of God’s eternity and the longing of all living creatures for wholeness. Pannenberg gives several examples throughout his *Systematische Theologie* of how Christians can anticipate the coming of the Kingdom of God in their lives. Two examples deserve special recognition: the sacraments and prayer.

### **(α) Sacraments**

Pannenberg refers to baptism and the Lord’s Supper as eschatological events. However, for the sacrament of baptism, Pannenberg does not extensively deal with its eschatological implications. He states that the act of baptism changes the one who is baptized permanently. He or she anticipates his or her future death in the baptism.<sup>231</sup> The Lord’s Supper, on the other hand, is Pannenberg’s prime example of how the church anticipates the future fellowship of the Kingdom of God.<sup>232</sup> Pannenberg interprets the call *maranatha* (1 Cor 16:22) not only as a plea for the future coming of Jesus to fulfil his Kingdom but also as a request and proclamation for and of Jesus Christ to be present in the supper. The presence is understood as an anticipation of the future Kingdom of God. Therefore, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is distinct from all other actions which are referred to as sacraments, including baptism. The distinction lies in its symbolic manifestation and anticipation

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<sup>229</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 689- 692.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*, p 686: Die eschatologische Umwandlung enthält also durchaus ein Moment der Kompensation für die Leiden und Versagungen der gegenwärtigen Welt.

<sup>231</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 284-286.

<sup>232</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 32.

of the eschatological fellowship between Christ and the Church. The anticipation has real consequences for the participants of the Lord's Supper. It does bring change into their lives. This change is a work of the Holy Spirit and should be noticeable in everyday-life circumstances.<sup>233</sup>

## **(β) Prayer**

While Pannenberg deals with Christian prayer, he distinguishes between anthropological and cultic prayers. The anthropological prayer expresses sorrow and need whereas the cultic prayer praises God, often in the form of a hymn. The Christian cultic prayer anticipates the future coming of the Kingdom of God. It not only gives thanks for Jesus Christ's coming but also expresses thanks for the coming fulfilment of the world. In the light of the dawn of the eschatological future of God, the prayer that addresses suffering and mourning also finds its place. Suffering and mourning are transcended in these prayers. These prayers are always put in a wider context. Not only will the individual receive uplifting, but she or he will also benefit in the coherence with God's will of salvation/ wholeness (Heilswille) for all of humanity.<sup>234</sup>

## **Summary**

Pannenberg's Eschatology deals with the end of the world as its beginning. God's creating actions are seen as future actions that are not yet fully revealed. Pannenberg is concerned with the question of theodicy. The existence of suffering in the world cannot be explained or understood. Only when the world comes to an end and the final fulfilment takes place will God's power be fully revealed. God's final fulfilment can be anticipated in this life. Pannenberg's argumentation derives from reasoning of different academic disciplines.

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<sup>233</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 352-399.

<sup>234</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 232-237.

## I 2 Moltmann: Hope Creates Possibilities and Sustains Life

*Eschatology is not a doctrine about history's happy end. . . No one can assure us that the worst will not happen. According to all the laws of experience: it will. We can only trust the God who calls into being the things that are not, and out of death creates new life.*<sup>235</sup>

This chapter deals with Jürgen Moltmann's approach to Eschatology. It will give a short description of his life during and after the Second World War. Then the core theme of Moltmann's theology will be looked at: hope that follows God's promise of life. God fulfilled this promise in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the correlation between Christology and eschatology will also be a topic of this chapter. Finally, Moltmann's depiction of the relevance of eschatology for life in time will be dealt with.

### **a) Biography**

#### **(α) Vita**

Jürgen Moltmann was born in 1926 in Germany. His father was a teacher. Moltmann grew up before and during the Second World War. According to himself, Moltmann did not undergo a "very profound Christian socialisation."<sup>236</sup> His upbringing in a middle-class home by a parent with German university education<sup>237</sup> had consequences for his life. One of them can be seen in what Moltmann says about himself becoming a soldier: "When I was forced to become a most unhappy soldier, in the end of 1944, I took with me Goethe's poems and his *Faust*, and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*."<sup>238</sup> Moltmann was one of probably very few soldiers who brought that kind of literature along when they had to go to war. On the other hand he claims that he did not take a Bible and never read the Bible before an US-American chaplain gave him one. That was when he was a prisoner-of-war in Belgium. During that time Moltmann came to faith. This faith Moltmann describes as *the* Christian faith. In the prisoner-of-war camps different denominations did not matter, the important question was whether someone is a Christian or not. Moltmann started studying theology in another prisoner-of-war camp in England. After his return to Germany he continued his studies in Göttingen. The theological

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<sup>235</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 234.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, p xiii.

<sup>237</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008]

<sup>238</sup> Moltmann 1996, p xiii.

faculty in Göttingen was and is a reformed faculty. From 1952 to 1958 Moltmann worked as an ordained minister. In 1958 he became a Professor of Systematic Theology at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal where he worked together with Wolfhart Pannenberg. Later he worked at the University of Göttingen at which he had been a student. In 1967 he became a Professor at the Eberhard-Karls-Universität in Tübingen. There he lectured until his retirement. Among Moltmann's most outstanding publications are *Theology of Hope* of 1964 and *The Coming of God* of 1995 which was translated into English in 1996. Both deal with the topic of eschatology which is crucial for Moltmann's theology. Moltmann received eight honorary doctorate degrees.<sup>239</sup> He is married to the feminist theologian Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and together they have four daughters.

### **(β) Major Influences**

A major influence in Moltmann's life was the Second World War and the terror regime of the National Socialists in Germany. Moltmann says that he came to faith during the war. He started his academic theological education as prisoner of war. Moltmann is aware of the killing of six million Jews and further destruction done by the National Socialists. Moltmann participated in the discussion about *Theology after Auschwitz*. This discussion took place mainly in Europe, especially Germany, and North America. Other famous theologians who participated in the discussion are Dorothe Sölle and Johan Baptist Metz.<sup>240</sup> Political Theology is Moltmann's solution for the failure of the churches during the so-called *Third Reich*, a term that Moltmann describes as caricature of millennial hope.<sup>241</sup> The injustices that have happened do not prevent him from believing in God. Furthermore he states that believing in the God of Israel is something that Hitler wanted to destroy. Therefore he depicts atheism that is based in the destruction of Auschwitz as a posthumous

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<sup>239</sup> Cf.: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/uni/qvo/pm/pm296.html> [accessed 4. June 2008].

<sup>240</sup> Recently there has been a discussion that the debate is rather Eurocentric and treats the Holocaust as a special incident of history, even though catastrophic events have happened throughout history. Abraham van der Beek of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and others hold this view. They fail to understand that the systematic destruction of six- million Jews and the harm done to other groups of society in the concentration camps and furthermore through the war itself had a tremendous impact. The National Socialists committed acts of cruelty and destruction that need to be dealt with by acknowledging their singularity. Other acts of destructions have happened during history. But a comparison of those acts fails to take the victims that died during the Holocaust seriously. For a German theologian the event of the Holocaust needs to be reflected upon, especially in the field of theodicy and eschatology when it comes to topics like judgement and compensation and also the notion of God. This engagement is not an over-emphasis of one historic event, but a necessity especially for those who lived in the time of National Socialism, like Moltmann.

<sup>241</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1966, p 169.

victory of Adolf Hitler.<sup>242</sup> The awareness of injustices which were done during the reign of National Socialism makes Moltmann sensitive for contemporary injustices. Therefore Moltmann engages theologically with problems of those suffering from unjust systems. This awareness is also enclosed in Moltmann's ecumenical framework. Moltmann engages theologically with liberation struggles in Europe and also in the Americas, Africa and Asia.<sup>243</sup>

Furthermore Moltmann largely engages himself with the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, a Jewish-German philosopher with certain Marxist ideas. Bloch seems to be Moltmann's favourite philosopher. He quotes him often and in an interview with Radio Vatican, Moltmann states that he is fascinated by Bloch's engagement with hope. Out of this fascination Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* arose.<sup>244</sup> Moltmann's engagement with Marx seems to derive from his engagement with Bloch as well. Bloch, being Marxist and atheist but valuing the biblical texts for their emphasis on hope, influenced Moltmann probably more than any other philosopher or theologian.

## **b) Core issue of Moltmann's Eschatology: Hope and Verheißung**

Hope is the theme and the motive of Moltmann's theology. His theology of hope is not a theology about hope but a theology that derives from hope. The foundation of the hope is the assured promise (Verheißung)<sup>245</sup> of the coming of God.<sup>246</sup> The Bible deals with the hi-story<sup>247</sup> of hope. It is the hi-story of Israel and Jesus Christ. The biblical authors connect their theologizing with hi-story: God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At the same time, the hi-story is told eschatologically: the God of Abraham is proclaimed as the God of the *Promise* for all people. The history of the people of God was and is a history of *Promise*. When Israel left Egypt, they left expecting God to be at the place where they were going.<sup>248</sup> Moltmann describes *Promise* as a promise, which announces a reality that is not there yet. A *Promise*

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<sup>242</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008].

<sup>243</sup> Cf.: Meeks 1975, p xvi.

<sup>244</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008].

<sup>245</sup> English translations translate Moltmann's word Verheißung with promise. But Verheißung is more than promise. Its meaning consists of promise and assurance at the same time. Therefore, I use the word Promise capitalized and in italics in order to emphasise the special meaning which Moltmann could express with the German word Verheißung.

<sup>246</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974a, p 65.

<sup>247</sup> Moltmann uses the German word Geschichte. He plays with its two meanings, history and story. By using the term hi-story, I try to imitate his intention.

<sup>248</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974a, p 68.

promises a new future, and within the *Promise*, this future is already present.<sup>249</sup> This *Promise* from God is special in so far as the implied future is not a future which results out of the present possibilities but is a future arising from the creational power of God.

God is a coming God. The *Promise* shows that God is not present as other things are present. God is coming, and as the coming God, God is present. The verb to come is very important in Moltmann's reflection about the future of God. It is not a future in the sense that it can be said that *God will be*, but it is a future of the coming of God: *God will come*. To support his argument Moltmann refers to Revelation 1:4: *Grace to you and peace from him [sic] who is and who was and who is to come*. God is not depicted as an eternal and always-present God in this verse but as a God who is to come. The future of God is not like God's past and God's present. It is not a dimension of God's eternity, but it is God's own movement. It is the direction from which God comes to us.<sup>250</sup> The significance of the presence and the past will be determined from the future.

Hope being the core theme, Moltmann's eschatology deals with death,<sup>251</sup> the resurrection of the body,<sup>252</sup> the New World and the end of the old world. The relationship between the topics can be seen as follows: The individual death is defeated by the Event of Easter which assures the promise of the resurrection of all the dead. This bodily resurrection has cosmic relevance and results in the creation of the New World. For the existence of the New World it is necessary that the old world will come to an end. The end of the old world is not an eschatological event of its own right but it is a necessity for the beginning of the New World.

### **c) Links between Eschatology and other Fields of Theology**

Moltmann deals with eschatology in relation to Christology. Therefore, he refers to the proclamation and actions of Jesus and interprets Jesus' death and resurrection as eschatological events. Moltmann especially pays attention to the image of the

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<sup>249</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 69: Eine Verheißung ist eine Zusage, die eine neue Wirklichkeit ankündigt, die noch nicht vorhanden ist. Eine Verheißung verspricht eine neue Zukunft, und in der Verheißung wird diese neue Zukunft schon wortpräsent.

<sup>250</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, 72.

<sup>251</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 47-54 and 77-95.

<sup>252</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 65-70.

kingdom of God which was proclaimed by Jesus and which was proclaimed as to be brought by Jesus.

The proclamation of Jesus is a proclamation of the future. In the New Testament the proclamation of Jesus is described as the message of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Moltmann understands the term Kingdom of God as “the future in which God is present finally and totally.”<sup>253</sup> The proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God has radical consequences. The proclamation anticipates the Eschaton. Jesus in his words and deeds anticipates what is still to come. Moltmann summarizes Jesus’ proclamation and actions as follows: “He already does today what shall come tomorrow.”<sup>254</sup> This culminates in his resurrection which, some Jews in the time of Jesus expected to happen in the end of days.<sup>255</sup> When Paul and other early Christians proclaimed Jesus’ resurrection from death, they said that the future of God already came to one person in history. The Christ event therefore is an eschatological event. It is the event from which Christians can draw their hope. In an interview with Radio Vatican, Moltmann refers to the resurrection as the starting point of his theology of hope.<sup>256</sup> Consequently, the first Christological titles which are given to Jesus are titles that refer to Jesus’ anticipation of the future event of the resurrection. “Erstling der Entschlafenen, der Erste aus der Totenaufstehung, der Anführer des Lebens.”<sup>257</sup>

The kingdom of God is according to the New Testament the core theme of the proclamation of Jesus Christ. But after Easter the church has identified the future of Jesus Christ with the kingdom of God: The church expects the fulfilment of the world through Jesus Christ. The church does so, because in the Easter event the kingdom of God proves itself to be Jesus future.<sup>258</sup> This has an effect on the kingdom of God itself. The connection between the kingdom of God and the resurrection implies a new creation. If it is linked with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death, the kingdom of God is not only a “historic transformation” but it consists of “calling into being the things that are not.”<sup>259</sup> Nevertheless, Moltmann finds the foundation for the expectation of the kingdom of God in two events in history. As it

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<sup>253</sup> Moltmann 1974a, p 74 „Mit dem ‚Reich‘ ist hier jene Zukunft gemeint, in der Gott endgültig und ganz gegenwärtig ist . . . “

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, p 75: „Er tut heute schon, was morgen kommen soll.“

<sup>255</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 77.

<sup>256</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008]

<sup>257</sup> Moltmann 1974a, p 78.

<sup>258</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974b, p 217-219.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, p 221.



is said above, the event of Easter which followed the crucifixion brought the defeat of death. The second -or rather first- event that assures the Promise of God to fulfil God's kingdom is the Exodus.<sup>260</sup> The Christological understanding of the kingdom of God also prevents the spiritualization of the concept of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is this-worldly. It is linked with the cross. The risen Lord is identical with the crucified Jesus. The coming of God takes place in the suffering of those whose hope leads them to fight for justice.

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<sup>260</sup> Cf.: Ibid, p 217 and Moltmann 1974a, p 66.

#### **d) Relevance for Life in Time**

Moltmann sees the fulfilment of the world in the eschaton as the source for Christians to engage themselves in this world. The expectation of the future Kingdom of God has consequences for the reality of life in time. The expectation is notably apparent in the sacraments. The consequences can be seen in the service of the Church in the world.

#### **(α) Sacraments**

The Christian Church exists in eschatological expectation. It is the Christ who “calls, sends, justifies and sanctifies men [sic], and in so doing gathers, calls and sends them into his eschatological future for the world.”<sup>261</sup> Christians expect the Kingdom of God, not merely for themselves but rather for the whole world. The future of God is present in the world but in the form of expectation. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are true eschatological sacraments. Moltmann describes baptism as being “ahead of itself.”<sup>262</sup> In the baptizing into the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians are sealed for the future of the Kingdom of God. Only a church that is open to the promise of God can do so. The same is true for the Lord’s Supper. It has to be understood eschatologically: “The congregation at the table is not in possession of the sacral presence of the Absolute, but is a waiting, expectant congregation seeking communion with the coming Lord.”<sup>263</sup>

#### **(β) The Church’s Service in the World**

According to Moltmann, the church does not serve in the world to secure the status quo. The purpose for the church’s service in the world is to enable the world for transformation and to become what God promised: the Kingdom of God.<sup>264</sup> The enablement of Christians to love the world lies in their future resurrection. The Christian does not have to cling to his or her life and secure it whatever it might cost. Moltmann depicts the future resurrection as a hope, that is vivid in the timely life. This hope liberates the Christian to live life fully. The fear of losing one’s life can be

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<sup>261</sup> Moltmann 1967, p 32.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, p 326.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 327-328.

overcome in this hope.<sup>265</sup> This hope is the basis for Christians to share their hope with the whole world. Moltmann calls this the missionary proclamation of the Promise of God of a New Creation “through the power of resurrection.”<sup>266</sup> The proclamation aims not at the individual salvation of a person’s soul. The goal is rather to promote hope and trust in the Promise.

## **Summary**

A strong Christological perspective marks the approach of Moltmann. When he talks about eschatology, he talks about hope. With this focus, Moltmann follows Bloch and his Marxist philosophy. For Moltmann, hope is real and powerful. God has fulfilled God’s promise before. Christians can live their lives being empowered by this hope, and in sharing this hope and living according to hope, Christians transform the world.

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<sup>265</sup>Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 66.

<sup>266</sup> Moltmann 1967, p 32.

### I 3 Mbiti: Jesus has a Future for Africa

*The eschaton must invade the African world, not to destroy or colonize but to fulfil, to inject into its cosmology Christian realities. Africa has an Eschatology, but it has no teleology, and this is an area where Christian Eschatology can make a radical contribution to God's natural revelation in Africa. Eschatology without teleology is as empty as a house without furniture.<sup>267</sup>*

This chapter deals with John Mbiti's approach to Eschatology. After a description of his upbringing and education, the core theme of his theology will be the centre of attention. Mbiti focuses on incarnation and fulfilment. Again it is a strong Christological eschatology that Mbiti presents and, therefore, the correlation between eschatology and Christology will be examined. Finally, Mbiti's depiction of the sacraments will be dealt with. For Mbiti, in the sacraments eschatology becomes relevant for life in time.

#### **a) Biography**

##### **(α) Vita**

John Samuel Mbiti was born in Kenya in 1931. He is the only one of the four theologians this thesis deals with, who was born into a family that practiced the Christian faith. He was the first child of his parents to survive. Therefore they gave him the name Mbiti which refers to "a child vowed unto God."<sup>268</sup> His family enrolled Mbiti in Western Education. He went to a school of the African Inland Church. This school's teachings on eschatology Mbiti later rejects as being concerned with unbiblical premillennialism.<sup>269</sup> Mbiti went thereafter to the Alliance High School close to Nairobi and started his tertiary education at the University College of Makerere in Uganda. This institution was part of the University of London. Mbiti not only studied in Uganda, but also in the United States of America and in England. He received a doctoral degree from Cambridge.<sup>270</sup> His doctoral dissertation had the title *Christian Eschatology in Relation to the Evangelisation of Tribal Africa* and was later published as *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*.<sup>271</sup> Mbiti is at home in the global North as well as in Africa. He studied and lectured in the North as well as in Africa. He conducted his research in various Sub-Saharan countries. He

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<sup>267</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 181.

<sup>268</sup> Wilson 2000, p 1.

<sup>269</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 51-55. For millennialism and premillennialism see II 2 a (δ).

<sup>270</sup> Cf.: <http://www.theol.unibe.ch/ist/mbiti.html> [accessed 25 May 2008].

<sup>271</sup> Cf.: Wilson 2001, p 1-2.

also focuses on the Akamba people to whom he belongs.<sup>272</sup> He is married to a Swiss woman, Verena Siegenthaler. Together they have four children.<sup>273</sup> In Switzerland Mbiti also spent a large part of his life. From 1974 to 1980 he was director of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute in Bossey Switzerland.<sup>274</sup> Even though being ordained as an Anglican Priest, Mbiti became a minister of a Reformed congregation in Switzerland in 1981.<sup>275</sup> In 1983 he accepted the position of a part-time Professor for Christianity and African Religion at Bern University.<sup>276</sup>

## (β) Major Influences

Mbiti's education in Western institutions and his upbringing in East Africa broadened his understanding of worldview and Christianity. Mbiti holds a balance between African Traditions, Christianity and Western thought. Being at home in all three he can clearly outline where Western Christianity is more Western than Christian. He also sees the African traditional worldview as *Praeparatio Evangelica*<sup>277</sup> and outlines that Christian concepts can often find preceding thoughts in the African traditional worldview. His Western education and his academic work in the West make his writings very understandable for Western people. One example is how he describes the Akamba region: "Ukambani [the land of the Akamba] has an area about one-fifth of Britain, or twice the size of Holland."<sup>278</sup> More critical it could be said that Mbiti is also a subject to unequal power relationships between the North and Africa. He is forced to make his writings understandable in the Western context. Mbiti is widely influenced by the ecumenical work of the World Council of Churches and by his own (former) church: the Church of England. Being an Anglican Priest, Mbiti worked in structures of a church that are colonial. Kato accuses Mbiti of being biased in his eschatological reflections. According to Kato Mbiti's Anglo-catholic persuasion is stronger than his biblical reasoning.<sup>279</sup> Kato also accuses Mbiti of being dependent on his African worldview which Kato describes as a pre-supposition.<sup>280</sup> However, Mbiti strongly reflects his connections with the African

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<sup>272</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1966, p v-vi and Mbiti 1978, p 4.

<sup>273</sup> <http://www.theol.unibe.ch/ist/mbiti.html> [accessed 25 May 2008] speaks of four daughters while Wilson 2000 2 knows about three daughters and a son.

<sup>274</sup> Cf.: <http://www.allbiographies.com/biography-JohnSamuelMbiti-20857.html> [accessed 24 May 2008].

<sup>275</sup> Cf.: Wilson 2001, p 3.

<sup>276</sup> Cf.: <http://www.theol.unibe.ch/ist/mbiti.html> [accessed 25 May 2008].

<sup>277</sup> Cf.: Bediako 1992, p 312.

<sup>278</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 4.

<sup>279</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 80.

<sup>280</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 86.

traditional worldview as well as his Western education.<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless his writings on eschatology show little reflection towards his church-affiliation.

### **b) Core issue of Mbiti's Eschatology: Incarnation and Fulfilment**

It is Mbiti's intention to establish a link between Christian Eschatology as it is described in the New Testament and the African worldview. The African worldview is depicted by him as a *Praeparatio Evangelica*.<sup>282</sup>

Mbiti has argued that Eschatological thinking in the sense of teleological thinking is foreign to most traditional African worldviews. Mbiti evaluates two phenomena to demonstrate this absence of teleological thinking. He refers to time as it can be expressed grammatically and evaluates myths which have the function of explaining how and why the world is. According to Mbiti, most African languages cannot express a distant future grammatically.<sup>283</sup> The reason for the non-existence of a distant future tense in African languages is seen in the perception of life. Life is lived in the present tense. For orientation, people look back. "Time has to be experienced to make sense."<sup>284</sup> Things and events do not belong to the realm of time before they have been realized. The mythological stories of African peoples explain why the world is as it is and how the world came into being. The myths deal in their explanations with the past. Concepts about the end of the world or a goal of history do not exist. Mbiti found broad evidence of telling creation myths amongst the various African people.<sup>285</sup> Except for one incident, Mbiti did not come across myths about the end of the world in his research. The Sonjo people of Tanzania tell a myth about the ending of the world. Cosmic disaster and natural catastrophe will lead to the end of the world. The sun will darken and two suns will appear from different directions, and when they meet the world comes to an end. The Sonjo people will be rescued by a God at this point of time.<sup>286</sup> Apart from this myth, Mbiti states that there is no further reflection on the end of the world to be found within the traditional African worldviews.

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<sup>281</sup> Cf.: e.g. Mbiti 1978, p 173.

<sup>282</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 180.

<sup>283</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 26-28 demonstrates the verbal tenses of the Kikamba language which Mbiti himself speaks. He also has evaluated other East African language and came to similar results: an absence of the possibility to express the distant future. Mbiti 1969, p 160 gives the example of the Swahili tenses *Zamani* and *Sasa* which describe the actualized time and the terminated time. For a broader reflection on time, see II 2 *Time and Eternity*.

<sup>284</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 159-160.

<sup>285</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 25.

<sup>286</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 163-164.

The Eschatology of the New Testament works on the background of the Jewish eschatology. Judaism, especially in its reflections during and after the Exile, divides history in two parts: this age and the age to come.<sup>287</sup> This age is depicted as evil and sorrowful<sup>288</sup>, a “period during which the chosen people are oppressed.”<sup>289</sup> The coming age is characterized by the opposite, because God’s reign will be instituted.<sup>290</sup> Compared with Judaism, the surplus or excess (Überschuss) of the New Testament Eschatology is the notion of Incarnation. Through Christ’s coming to earth, the age to come intercepts this time.<sup>291</sup> The interception can be seen in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ<sup>292</sup> and his cosmic proclamation.<sup>293</sup> It leads humans who meet Jesus Christ to encounter judgement and salvation in their lives.<sup>294</sup>

Mbiti also deals with the tension between the *already* and *not yet* in the New Testament. He describes the paradox by stating “the End has come and the End is yet to be.”<sup>295</sup> Continuously Mbiti emphasizes that the Kingdom of God does not find its consumption in this realm.<sup>296</sup> In the Gospel of John, Mbiti finds a distinction between eschatological fulfilment on an individual and cosmic level. When the Gospel of John speaks about the realization of eternal life, it refers to individuals, while the cosmic realization is still outstanding.<sup>297</sup> Mbiti employs the term to *exhaust* when he describes the tension between *already* and *not yet*. Disagreeing with Dodd’s interpretation of the parables of Jesus, Mbiti states that “the realization of the Kingdom of God is not *exhausted* in the present: it retains more futurity than Dodd allows.”<sup>298</sup> The reason for this futurity is the eschatological character of the Kingdom of God. Even though the Kingdom of God has come into time, time “does not *exhaust* it: it is an eternal reality. Men [sic] must enter the Kingdom now . . . The day of the Judgment is partly realized and partly to come.”<sup>299</sup> Christian eschatology therefore remains, according to Mbiti, teleological eschatology.

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<sup>287</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 171.

<sup>288</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 32.

<sup>289</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 170.

<sup>290</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 32.

<sup>291</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 171 and Mbiti 1978, p 32 and 165.

<sup>292</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p174.

<sup>293</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 40.

<sup>294</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 43.

<sup>295</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 174.

<sup>296</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 174; 179 and 181 and Mbiti 1978, p 45 and 57.

<sup>297</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 175.

<sup>298</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 42 (italics by Thorsten-Marco Kirschner).

<sup>299</sup> Mbiti 1969, p175 (italics by Thorsten-Marco Kirschner).

The problem Mbiti deals with is obvious: New Testament Eschatology is teleological, and the African worldviews do not reflect an end of the world. This would not be a problem if the African worldview and Christian theology<sup>300</sup> would be treated as two entities that do not meet. This position is held by those who claim to be African traditionalists and therefore do not want to be Christians. It is also held by those who deny the African worldview to be of value for Christianity. The first way is gone by a rather small group and cannot speak for the relatively larger group that wants to be Christians in Africa. The second way was and is gone by many American and European missionaries and a large number of their successors. As it is said above, Mbiti values the African worldview as *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Consequently, he needs to deal with differences within Christian theology and the African Worldview. Mbiti describes the Christian message of an end of the world and its fulfilment as a surplus to the African traditional worldview. However, the non-existence of reflection about the end of the world in African traditional worldview is not seen as a “loss of natural revelation”<sup>301</sup> by Mbiti. The scholar pleads for dealing with the absence of this kind of reflection as a void for the Christian teaching. In the New Testament, the end of the world is centred in Jesus Christ, “in whom all things find their meaningful End” and who is “the teleological meaning of all being.”<sup>302</sup> The New Testament therefore introduces something new to the African thinking,<sup>303</sup> which is also revolutionary<sup>304</sup> for the thinking. Here it is time to look again at the quote which introduced this section on Mbiti. The question resulting from that quote is: how is it possible for the eschaton to invade the African world without destruction and colonization? Mbiti warns about escapist teachings of a certain millennialism. It is not desirable to promise a Utopia Heaven, that cheapens the Gospel.<sup>305</sup> Mbiti suggests rather dealing with eschatology in a sacramental theology which addresses the worldview and concerns of people in Africa. The further implication of this theology of sacraments will be discussed in I 3 d (α) Sacraments.

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<sup>300</sup> Christian theology here mainly refers to the theology that is expressed by the authors of the New Testament. I use the broader term Christian theology versus New Testament Theology in order to do justice to the fact that Mbiti’s reasoning is not only based on the pure teachings of the New Testament but takes place before the background of academic Christian theology. For a broader reflection on this issue, see II 1 *Hermeneutics and Sources*.

<sup>301</sup> Mbiti 1969, p184.

<sup>302</sup> Both quotes from *ibid*, p 181.

<sup>303</sup> Cf.: *Ibid*, 181.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, p 182.

<sup>305</sup> See also II 1 a (d).



### **c) Links between Eschatology and other Fields of Theology**

Within Christian theology, eschatology needs, according to Mbiti, to be dealt with in the field of Christology. The reason for that is the incarnation of Jesus Christ which changed the meaning of eschatology for the early Christians. Mbiti outlines the correlation of eschatology and Christology by referring to the New Testament. He also deals with Jesus Christ in relation to time.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the source of the meaning of Christian eschatology. Mbiti emphasizes that Christian eschatology works with the image of Jewish eschatology and apocalypticism of the two ages, the present age and the age to come. The additional thought of Christian eschatology is the event of Jesus Christ's incarnation. Due to the incarnation of Jesus Christ these ages of which Jewish eschatology and apocalypticism speak are not strictly separate anymore.<sup>306</sup> The future of the Kingdom of God becomes a reality in this world and in this time. Actions of Jesus Christ, like healing and empowering people, have an eschatological character.<sup>307</sup> Mbiti uses the expression *precipitate* to express the connection between the eschaton and the present time: "The Incarnation *precipitates* 'the final event' –the determinative event which not only reveals the meaning of the whole but consummates the whole. The eschatological wheel is set into motion."<sup>308</sup> Jesus' life and message lead to his crucifixion. Mbiti interprets the cry of Jesus: *It is finished*, which is reported in the Gospel of John, as the proclamation of the realization of the Kingdom of God.<sup>309</sup>

Mbiti proves his connection between Christology and eschatology to be biblical by outlining how different biblical authors state the coming or beginning of the Kingdom of God in Christ's incarnation. The synoptic Gospels portray Jesus Christ as the bringer of the last days.<sup>310</sup> The Gospel of John speaks about realized eschatology on an individual level and portrays the eschatology on a communal level as still outstanding. Transformation of personal life occurs in the presence and through the meeting of Jesus Christ. The consummation of the world is still to come.<sup>311</sup> Acts, the Epistles of Paul and the Revelation's view on eschatology is

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<sup>306</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 171-175 and Mbiti 1978, p 32-40.

<sup>307</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 174.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, p 171.

<sup>309</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 40.

<sup>310</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 41.

<sup>311</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 174-175 and Mbiti 1978, p 43.

summarized by Mbiti as follows: The “Age to come has dawned in the life and ministry of Jesus.”<sup>312</sup> Mbiti indicates that Paul’s eschatology is congruent with the eschatology of the Gospels. Within the writings of Paul, Mbiti finds a shift in his eschatological reflection. Paul once was expecting the immediate return of Christ in his lifetime and later on became a realized eschatologist. The expectance of Christ within Paul’s lifetime is expressed by *Paul* in *his letter(s)*<sup>313</sup> to the congregation in Thessalonica.<sup>314</sup> In *Paul’s* later writings to the congregations in Ephesus and Colossi, Mbiti sees a difference in the depiction of the Parousia, which is seen as coinciding with the future event of the “reconciliation of all things in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20, cf. Eph. 1:9-10).”<sup>315</sup> The congregation is, according to Mbiti, not living in the expectance of immediate coming of Christ but arranges for living a life on earth. Just like *Paul*,<sup>316</sup> the author of the letter to the Hebrews depicts the Cross as the “once-and-for-all event [that] marks the end of the evil age and the beginning of the age to come.”<sup>317</sup> The author contrasts the difference between *already* and *not yet* quite sharply: what is to come is fundamentally different from what is. This distinction does not hinder the author to portray the experience of Jesus Christ as so real that the Christian community is seen as the one who already worships on the Mount Zion or in the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>318</sup> Hence, it can be said that the common denominator for the eschatological reflection in the New Testament is Jesus Christ. It is his incarnation, but also his life, his crucifixion, resurrection and his future coming that, bring upon the Kingdom of God.

Mbiti reflects upon time christologically. *Jesus is the Christ of Time*. Nevertheless, he is also the Christ of *ultra-Time*. Jesus is the Beginning and the end at the same time. So Mbiti concludes that time is an *intensely christological phenomenon* in the New Testament.<sup>319</sup> The end of the world is incorporated in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Mbiti refers to Jesus Christ as the “teleological meaning of all being”<sup>320</sup> Herein lies a chance for the link between contemporary African worldviews and eschatology. While the far distant future still might not play an important role in the

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<sup>312</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1969, p 175.

<sup>313</sup> Unlike Mbiti, I am not convinced of the authorship of Paul for II Thess, Eph or Col. Therefore, when I refer to *Paul* in this paragraph, *Paul* stands for the authors of the letters which are ascribed to Paul because of them naming Paul in their address. However, the authentic authorship of New Testament epistles should not determine the value of their content in a systematic theological reflection.

<sup>314</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 44: I Thes. 1:10; 2: 19, 3: 13; 4: 13-18, 5: 23; II Thes. 1: 7-10; 2: 1-4.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid, p 44.

<sup>316</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 44.

<sup>317</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 177.

<sup>318</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 177.

<sup>319</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 28.

<sup>320</sup> Mbiti 1969, p181.

thinking of Africa, Jesus does. Mbiti does not reflect on the issue explicitly, but by linking his eschatological reflection constantly to the Christ event, Mbiti implies that there is an importance for the connection between New Testament eschatology and African worldview in the Incarnation of Christ. Therefore, the Incarnation is not only crucial for Christian eschatology in general, but it is especially essential for African Christians. A further reflection on this issue and my point of view will be given in the Conclusion.

#### **d) Relevance for Life in Time**

Christian worship is most real in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.<sup>321</sup> The sacraments have eschatological character in their origin as well as in the way they are celebrated. In the Sacraments, the spiritual and the physical world converge, as do time and eternity. Mbiti sees a great chance in employing the sacraments to broaden the understanding of eschatology among Christians, especially in Africa.<sup>322</sup>

#### **(α) The Sacraments of Baptism**

The sacrament of baptism derived from a background of eschatological expectation, is celebrated by an eschatological community and anticipates the world to come. Christian baptism originates in the baptism of John the Baptist, who preached about the near end of the world. He was probably influenced by baptism cults of the Essenes in Qumran, a community that also expected the near end of the world.<sup>323</sup> The baptism of John the Baptist and by the community in Qumran was meant as a cleaning ritual to prepare for the coming end of the world. When Jesus Christ is baptized by John the Baptist, he authorizes the baptism. From then on, it is not only Christ's instruction in Mt. 28:19 (*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*) but the whole life of Jesus Christ that authorizes baptism.<sup>324</sup> Mbiti describes baptism as the human's acceptance of God's deathly punishment for sin. The human being is not destroyed in baptism, however, but is resurrected into New Life. Baptism therefore

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<sup>321</sup> While I previously referred to the Lord's Supper I now refer to the Eucharist. The reason for that is that I follow the word usage of the individual theologians.

<sup>322</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 91 and 120.

<sup>323</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 96. For further information on the relationship between Jesus Christ, John the Baptist and the Essenes see H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg u.a. 1993.

<sup>324</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 107.

contains both judgement and salvation.<sup>325</sup> The human being who is baptized anticipates those eschatological events. The community that celebrates baptism is the Church. Mbiti refers to the Church as an “eschatological community,”<sup>326</sup> in which the baptized person is integrated through the transformation which occurs in his or her baptism. The baptized person anticipates the “powers of the age to come.”<sup>327</sup> Nevertheless, the act of baptism does not eradicate the dimension of time but rather neutralizes it. The baptized Christian is thrown “into the eschatological fusion of ‘already’ and ‘not yet.’”<sup>328</sup> Baptism as a sacrament marks the New Covenant and introduces the Christian into the heavenly commonwealth.<sup>329</sup> At the same time it prepares the Christian for his or her life on earth. This connection is especially visible in the suggested connection of baptism and African rituals concerning child-birth. The African rituals, often name-giving ceremonies, imply the transformation of a thing into a person.<sup>330</sup> This corresponds with the context of the New Testament in which “Baptism makes ‘no-people’ . . . in the sight of God, into the true ‘my people’ of God.”<sup>331</sup> In the African context, it can be fruitful to reflect on the *rite of access* aspect of Christian baptism. In Heb. 10:19-22 this theme is prominent. It relates to the Traditional African worldview in so far as rites, such as circumcision, are also dealing with access to the community.<sup>332</sup>

## (β) The Sacraments of the Eucharist

The sacrament of the Eucharist is also eschatological in all its dimensions. It is instituted in an eschatological setting and “marked by a dual polarity: Cross and Parousia.”<sup>333</sup> The Eucharistic cry *μαρναθα* (I Cor. 16:22) is “simultaneously the sigh of fulfilment and expectation.”<sup>334</sup> The Eucharist embraces the tension of *already* and *not yet* by its celebration as Christ having come and still coming.<sup>335</sup> The Eucharist also embraces the past, the present and the future. It remembers the historic event of the crucifixion which transcends history. It is celebrated in the present, remembering the past and anticipating the future, and changing the present

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<sup>325</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 98-100.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*, p 99.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, p 98.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid*, p 99.

<sup>329</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 100.

<sup>330</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p117.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*. p 177, also see p 94.

<sup>332</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 122-124.

<sup>333</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 102.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, p 102.

<sup>335</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 43.

by being in the presence of Jesus who is to come.<sup>336</sup> In the celebration of the Eucharist the intimate communication between Jesus Christ and his Church takes place. This communication neutralizes limitations of time. Mbiti goes so far as saying that any “disappointment over the delay of the Parousia is neutralised by the Eucharist; for in the experience of the Eucharist the Church penetrates proleptically . . . into the very hour of the Parousia.”<sup>337</sup> In bread and wine, Mbiti sees a foreshadowing of the cosmic relevance of the eschaton. Bread and wine as material elements assure the promise of God to transform everything there is (Rom. 8:18-22, Col 1:20).<sup>338</sup> The Eucharist is also seen as a preparation for the resurrection. Here Mbiti quotes John 6:54 for his argumentation.<sup>339</sup> In John 6: 54 Jesus says, *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* Nevertheless, the Eucharist is not the fulfilment of Christian eschatology. It remains “staged in time”<sup>340</sup> and underlies the overall eschatological tension of *already* and *not yet*. For the context of Africa, Mbiti makes a very practical suggestion. The Eucharist should be celebrated in circles since the majority of people are used to life in circular houses and take their meals in circles. Mbiti pleads for a celebration of the Eucharist that becomes more meaningful to Christians especially in Africa. He values the Eucharist as an anticipation of the heavenly feast which strengthens the Christian community. The Eucharist is seen as nourishment from the world to come in preparation for the transformation of this world.<sup>341</sup>

## **Summary**

Mbiti's eschatology draws on three major sources: the New Testament, African worldview and European theology. Mbiti proves himself not only to be an expert on African worldview, but furthermore, he is very knowledgeable about European Theology. However, he is able to be critical towards both the African and the European context. His strong Christological focus leads to an emphasis on incarnation theology and the sacraments. The presence of Christ in this world has changed this world. In Christ's presence in the sacraments, this change is constantly embraced.

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<sup>336</sup> Cf.: *ibid* p 103-105.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, p 102.

<sup>338</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 107.

<sup>339</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 165.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid*, p 105.

<sup>341</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 123-126.

## I 4 Kato: Christ will Physically come to Africa

*One common denominator among orthodox Christians is the belief in the future, visible, personal second coming of Jesus Christ. It is agreed by all who take the Bible as the infallible Word of God seriously, that the second coming is the hope of the church.<sup>342</sup>*

This chapter deals with the eschatology of Byang Kato. First attention will be given to his upbringing in Nigeria and his education that was widely influenced by North-American missionaries and later a theological seminary in the United States of America (a). Then his eschatological perspective of Christ's physical return will be examined (b). Thereafter, Kato's eschatological perspective will be dealt with in regard to his theology as a whole (c). Finally a section on Kato's depiction of relevance of eschatology for life in time will be given (d).

### **a) Biography**

#### **(α) Vita**

Byang Kato was born in Nigeria in 1936. His parents were traditional Jabas. His father served as fetish priest and the young Byang was instructed in traditional religious practices and went through rites of initiation. Byang Kato first had contact with teachings of Christianity when he met Mary Haas, an evangelical missionary and Sunday school teacher from North America. Byang wanted to go to school after his encounter with Mary Haas. At first his father rejected the idea of Byang going to a missionary school. It was Byang's grandfather who convinced the father to allow the son to visit the school. In the missionary school Kato was educated in Christianity. It is reported that Kato decided to ask "Jesus to come into his heart"<sup>343</sup> after the story of Noah was taught. The teacher seems to have stressed that Noah was able to live since he made the right choice while his neighbours perished and died.<sup>344</sup> Byang's father did not accept his decision at first and punished him. He wanted his son to become a priest like him.<sup>345</sup> Kato continued with his schooling and became a successful student. In 1955 he got accepted into Igbaja Bible College. In 1963 he entered London Bible College from which he received a Bachelor of Di-

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<sup>342</sup> Kato 1975, p 82.

<sup>343</sup> LaHaye 1986, p 19.

<sup>344</sup> The biography by LaHaye is quite biased and stresses salvation and evangelical morals. Kato is glorified. Therefore a critical reading is necessary.

<sup>345</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976 back-cover and LaHaye 1986, p 19-20.

vinity in 1966. 1970 Kato studied at the Dallas Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1971 with a Masters Degree and a Doctoral Degree in 1973. He also taught at that Seminary.<sup>346</sup> Students and Staff have to sign a faith statement which consists of several doctrines including those concerned about eschatology.<sup>347</sup>

Kato also taught and worked in several African countries including his home country Nigeria but also Nairobi in Kenya. In 1974 Kato presented two papers at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne. This Conference concluded the inerrancy of the Bible in all “that it affirms”<sup>348</sup> and advocated a hermeneutic that follows the grammatico-historical method. Kato was also a member of several evangelical committees. His most important post was the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM).<sup>349</sup> This position included travel activities throughout Africa and to North-America.<sup>350</sup> Kato had also planned for an Evangelical school of Theology, which was opened in 1977 after his death.<sup>351</sup> In 1975 Kato died leaving behind his wife Jummai and their two sons Paul and Jonathan.

## **(β) Major Influences**

Kato’s life was influenced by his upbringing in a traditional African context. This context he experienced as hostile to his Christian faith. The form of Christianity that he was introduced by Western Missionaries and local teachers, who had been educated by Western missionaries, can be described as evangelical and focusing on atonement theology. A major influence on his theology had his time of studying and research at the Dallas Theological Seminary, which was then and is today a stronghold of millennialist teachings on eschatology. The Dallas Theological Seminary has a doctrinal statement that consists of 21 Articles. These Articles summarize what members of the faculty believe. All members of the faculty confirm their belief according to the statement regularly. Interestingly the first article which deals with the inspiration of all biblical scripture refers to Christ’s incarnation and second coming as the centre of all scripture. The first article states: “We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first

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<sup>346</sup> Cf.: LaHaye 1986, p 65-70.

<sup>347</sup> Cf.: <http://www.dts.edu/about/doctrinalstatement> [accessed 10. August 2008].

<sup>348</sup> <http://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-covenant.html> [accessed 17. August 2008]

<sup>349</sup> Cf.: Tienu 1982, p 15.

<sup>350</sup> Cf.: LaHaye 1986, p 73-90.

<sup>351</sup> Cf.: Tienu 1982, p 16.

and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him.”<sup>352</sup> The further articles outline a theology of dispensations, which describe different ages in the history of the world in which God interacts with humanity accordingly to God’s dispensations.<sup>353</sup> A clear distinction between those dispensation leads to a depiction of the world that is *not yet* saved. The eschatological *already* is only true for the church. For that reason the focus of the church needs to be on missionary activities that promote salvation. Therefore it is not surprisingly, that Kato links the preaching of the second coming of Christ with the personal acceptance of Christ as saviour.<sup>354</sup>

### ***b) Core Issue of Kato’s Eschatology: Visibility of the Personal Second Coming***

The eschatology of Byang Kato can be described as millennialistic. Kato reasons that there will be a visible second coming of Christ. He goes even further and calls all who do not believe in the physical and visible return of Christ heretics. His eschatology consists mainly in a repetition of what US-American scholars have said in order to oppose the teachings of John Mbiti. A literal understanding of heaven and especially hell is crucial to Kato’s writings. Even though Kato does not outline his own millennial eschatology in his writings, he shows that he agrees with the teaching. This can be seen when he compares Mbiti’s universalism<sup>355</sup> with the negative example of Origen, who was “averse to the doctrine of a millennium and . . . had a tendency to spiritualize the resurrection.”<sup>356</sup> When Kato goes on to talk about the controversial views which are held about eschatology he names the groups of post-millennialists, amillennialists and premillennialists. The categorization is from a millennialist point of view.<sup>357</sup>

Kato perceives the teaching of the second coming of Christ as crucial for Christianity. The Nigerian scholar goes as far as using the belief in the visible sec-

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<sup>352</sup> <http://www.dts.edu/about/doctrinalstatement> [accessed 10. August 2008].

<sup>353</sup> A common distinction which can also be found in Scofield’s Reference Bible (cf. II 1 a (δ)) is: The Age/ Dispensation of Innocence (from Creation to the Fall of Man –4000BC), Conscience (till the Flood 2350BC) Human Government, Promise (starting with the call of Abraham 2000BC) Law (starting with the law of Moses 1500BC), Grace (starting with Paul 37AD) and finally there will come the Age/ Dispensation of the Kingdom of 1000 years (after Christ’s return).

<sup>354</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 77.

<sup>355</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 79-80 and Kato 1985b, p 29.

<sup>356</sup> Kato 1975, p 80.

<sup>357</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 79-82.



ond coming of Christ as a measurement for orthodoxy.<sup>358</sup> Kato points out that the early church was full of eschatological hope. Christians in the first centuries expected the return of their Lord at any moment. He strongly disagrees with Mbiti's depiction of the African worldview. Kato does not regard Africans as not being concerned about the future. He quotes the US-American pastor John Wiebe who visited Africa and found people singing hymns about the return of Christ. Furthermore, Kato himself conducted a survey among college students in Nigeria which supports his argument. According to Kato, ninety percent of the students participating "found Christ through a message concerning the second coming of Christ."<sup>359</sup>

The biblical images of heaven and hell need to be taken seriously. Kato constantly stresses the importance of the literal understanding of hell. Even though his writings do not provide an outline of how hell is to be understood theologically, Kato emphasizes existence of hell. Kato accuses Mbiti of spiritualizing hell,<sup>360</sup> and while he deals with Black Theology and Ecumenical Theology,<sup>361</sup> he points out that one of their deficiencies is that they deny the existence of hell. The reality of hell is grounded in the prediction of hell by the biblical Jesus,<sup>362</sup> who "affirms eternal suffering in hell."<sup>363</sup> While Kato deals with resistance towards cultural practices that are incompatible with the Christian's faith, he also refers to eternal punishment in hell. Therefore, he gives the example of Polycarp of Smyrna, who was killed in 155 CE for denouncing to honour Caesar as God. In Kato's recapitulation of Polycarp's trial and assassination, it also seems to be the fear of eternal punishment that led Polycarp to be a martyr. Kato quotes Polycarp courageously saying to the governor, "You threaten the fire that burns for an hour and in a little while is quenched; for you do not know of the fire of the judgement to come, and the fire of the eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly."<sup>364</sup>

The strong focus on hell and condemnation in Kato's eschatology is prevalent in Kato's writings for two reasons. It derives from a so-called literal interpretation of biblical images used to describe the eschaton or eschatological events. Secondly it goes along with a theology that centres on atonement. Both topics will be dealt with in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>358</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 82.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid*, p 77.

<sup>360</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 78.

<sup>361</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985c, p 44 and 50.

<sup>362</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 86 and Kato 1985c, p 50.

<sup>363</sup> Kato 1998, p 196.

<sup>364</sup> Kato 1976, p 21.

### **c) Links between Eschatology and other Fields of Theology**

In Kato's theology, two concerns are dominant: a hermeneutic that is based on the so-called literal interpretation of the Bible and the theology of atonement.

Atonement theology is prevalent throughout Kato's writings. He constantly reminds his readers that ecumenical dialogue is mistaken when it searches for or accepts actions of salvation in other religions.<sup>365</sup> Kato refers to sin as the "fundamental dilemma of the human race."<sup>366</sup> Therefore, it is more important to deal with sin than with political or economical injustice. Sin is the root of all evil. According to Kato, ecumenical theology is not strong enough in condemning sin, but it is in dealing with the consequences. Nevertheless, Kato sees it as the foremost task of the Church and of all Christians to warn people about future condemnation and suffering in hell. The only way to escape condemnation and suffering in hell is to accept salvation through Jesus Christ in this lifetime.<sup>367</sup> Kato's perception of atonement and salvation is individualistic. According to Kato, the Incarnation of Jesus was "necessary in view of the work He was going to do. He could be crucified in time and history only as a particular man. He died and rose as an individual to save each individual sinner."<sup>368</sup> Heaven and hell are both far future realities in Kato's writings. Nevertheless, in this life, it is the individual who either accepts or rejects salvation. The acceptance or rejection is what determines where the individual will be in eternity.

Kato gives his essay on eschatology the title "Eschatology in Africa: Problems of Hermeneutics."<sup>369</sup> In his article and elsewhere, he refers to the Bible as the inspired word of God that remains unchanged throughout the ages and cultures.<sup>370</sup> Only if the "Bible is taken as the absolute Word of God it can have an authoritative and relevant message."<sup>371</sup> The absoluteness of the Bible is for Kato what ensures Christianity's being Christianity. Because the Bible remains the same throughout history and in all cultures,<sup>372</sup> there are not major changes in Christianity.<sup>373</sup> To en-

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<sup>365</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 54 or Kato 1985b, p 30.

<sup>366</sup> Kato 1975, p 161.

<sup>367</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 44.

<sup>368</sup> Kato 1998, p 21 and 197.

<sup>369</sup> Kato 1975, p 77.

<sup>370</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 49.

<sup>371</sup> Kato 1985c, p 43.

<sup>372</sup> The difficulties of this position (translation into different languages, changing text-material throughout the ages) will be discussed in *II 1 a) The Bible and the Context*.

sure the further intangibility of Christianity, Kato pleads for the precedence of the Bible over cultural values.<sup>374</sup> Having that kind of doctrine of the Bible, it is surprising that Kato hardly reflects on his own hermeneutic. In his paragraph on hermeneutic, he quotes US-American scholars' opinions with which he agrees. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline Kato's major concern about biblical hermeneutic. To do so it, is necessary to look at the short remarks he gives while dealing with hermeneutic and, furthermore, to engage with Kato's own usage of the bible.<sup>375</sup> Kato uses the so-called literal interpretation to which he also refers as *grammatico-historical interpretation*. The basic concept of this method is to interpret biblical texts and their words in their *normal, usual, customary, proper designation*. According to Kato, this is the only method of interpretation that is free of extreme subjectivism. The interpretation of biblical texts, applying the so-called literal method, leads Kato to the teaching of the dual end of history. The second coming of Christ will bring judgement over all people. The judgment will lead to punishment or reward, which is heaven or hell, respectively. Kato underscores that the teaching of heaven and hell as real places is a major biblical doctrine and is fundamental to Christianity. Kato strongly disagrees with Mbiti's interpretation of hell as representing a status of being outside of Christ, which does not only refer to the future judgement. In Mbiti's rejection of a heavenly utopia in favour of an understanding that focuses on companionship with Christ in and beyond time Kato sees a further element of spiritualization of biblical truth. The so-called literal interpretation leads Kato to an understanding of heaven, hell, the New Jerusalem or the Future Country as real places of the future.<sup>376</sup>

#### **d) Relevance for Life in Time**

It is difficult to outline which relevance Kato postulates the eschatological events have for the present life. As it was shown above, the eschatological events are described to be far future events by Kato. He focuses on heaven and hell. However the biblical references of hell are more widely discussed within Kato's writings than any other eschatological topic. Kato does not deal with the sacraments extensively. The main concern of Kato's theology is salvation. In the field of eschatology salvation is discussed as necessary to avoid eternal judgement.

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<sup>373</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 49-50.

<sup>374</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 182.

<sup>375</sup> A broader reflection on this will be given *II 1 a) The Bible and the Context*. Here just a short summary of Kato's approach can be given in order to show its relevance for his eschatology.

<sup>376</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 78-85.

## (α) Sacraments

Kato declines to link the celebration of the sacraments closely with the eschaton. In this respect he refers to Mbiti as *Anglo-Catholic persuaded* and warns about spiritualization. It is the spiritualization, which stands in opposition to a literal interpretation of the Bible, that leads Mbiti to his wrong beliefs. These wrong beliefs manifest themselves in Mbiti's dealing with the sacraments. Kato refers to Mbiti ending up "with a belief of baptismal regeneration"<sup>377</sup> and quotes Mbiti's interpretation of the Eucharist as the appropriation of the Messianic Banquet of Luke 22:17. For Kato, the Messianic Banquet that is described in Luke 22:17 is more than the Eucharist.<sup>378</sup>

## (β) Salvation from Hell

The individual acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Saviour in this life leads to being with God in heaven in the future life. However, if this acceptance does not occur within the lifetime of a human being, he or she will be condemned to spend eternity in hell. Throughout his writings, Kato refers several times to the theme of the World Council of Church's conference in Bangkok in 1973, *Salvation Today*. Kato opposes this theme because it leads to an encouragement of inter-religious worship<sup>379</sup> and secularizes<sup>380</sup> or humanizes<sup>381</sup> Christian theology. According to Kato, it is a shortcoming of Black Theology to fall for a theology of *Salvation Today*. Consequently, Black Theology's primary concern became the here and now. Instead of employing a Christian theology of salvation, ecumenicals look for salvation in the book of Exodus. Herein Kato sees the secularization of Christianity.<sup>382</sup> Salvation for Kato seems to be a future reality. Nevertheless, in this lifetime it is the responsibility of every individual to accept Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Whoever does not partake in the salvation by putting his or her faith in Christ will be condemned to hell in the end.<sup>383</sup> Consequently, it can be said that Kato sees the relevance of eschatological events for the life in time mainly in the necessity to respond to God in order not to be condemned. Kato's point of view comes out clearly in his rejection of

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<sup>377</sup> Kato 1975, p 79.

<sup>378</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 78-81.

<sup>379</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985c, p 44.

<sup>380</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 40.

<sup>381</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985c, p 44.

<sup>382</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 40-43.

<sup>383</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 87-89.

the possibility of salvation after death, which was put forward by Mbiti: “If God expects a response from individuals, yet at the end, both the responsive and the rebellious souls are courted and hemmed in by the omnipotent and all-loving God, what sense does the call make?”

## **Summary**

Kato’s eschatology is largely a response to Mbiti’s eschatology. Mostly this response is a rejection of Mbiti’s reasoning. However, Kato’s theology has a strong eschatological perspective. This perspective combines eschatology and atonement theology. The basic concern for Kato is salvation from damnation. Damnation is depicted as a transcendent and eternal reality. Furthermore, Kato ascribes to millennialist ideas and holds the view that the world will come to an end after the physical return of Christ. Kato combines the physical return of Christ with the notion of judgement.

## **II 1 Hermeneutics and Sources**

### a) The Bible and the Context

*A continuing effort should be made to relate Christian theology to the changing situations in Africa, but only as the Bible taken as the absolute Word of God can it have an authoritative and relevant message for Africa.<sup>384</sup>*

Whenever a person reads the Bible, he or she brings his or her own context to the book. And the Bible itself also derives from a specific context. The following paragraphs will show how the context of Pannenberg, Mbiti, Kato and Moltmann shape their exegesis ( $\alpha$ ). Some attention will be given to the theologian’s reflection on the Bible’s context ( $\beta$ ). The literal method of Kato will be given special consideration. This method claims to be objective.<sup>385</sup> It opposes contextual exegesis as leading to syncretism.<sup>386</sup> Therefore it is necessary to deal with the method in detail. The method itself will be described ( $\gamma$ ). And one example will be given to outline that the context may overshadow the text. For this example an analysis of Kato’s context will be given that shows that context is not only the obvious surrounding of a person. The context in which Kato’s eschatology has to be understood has its roots in British theology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE ( $\delta$ ).

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<sup>384</sup> Kato 1985c, p 42.

<sup>385</sup> Kato 1975, p 78.

<sup>386</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985b, p 23-31.

## (α) Progress or Originality?

Mbiti, Moltmann and Pannenberg deal with death in the Bible. Their reasoning shows that they, like everybody, approach biblical texts bringing their own context to them. This can be seen in the way they analyze the Old Testament's approach to death. Moltmann argues that the Old Testament is intolerant towards death. Death separates the human being from God, and the dead are unclean, and so is everything that has to do with them.<sup>387</sup> Pannenberg agrees with Moltmann. He explains the New Testament interpretation of death as the wage of sin (Rom. 6: 23) as deriving from the Old Testament's insight that death separates human beings from God.<sup>388</sup> Mbiti, on the other hand, sees the Old Testament as describing death as a transformation of the human being. A dead person goes from the physical to the spiritual world.<sup>389</sup> For both positions one can find biblical reference. A historic-critical scholar might align with Moltmann or Pannenberg and declare Mbiti's reference as early forms of Judaism whereas the German scholars can refer to later and therefore more advanced thoughts.<sup>390</sup> This determination in itself is highly dependant on a worldview that employs the paradigm of progress over originality: Not what has been thought already a long time ago is true, but truth advances with time's passing.

A similar phenomenon can be seen when the New Testament is given a preference over the Old Testament. This preference can be given by neglecting the Old Testament or more theologically by reasoning that verses from Old Testament need to be interpreted by verses from the New Testament. Christian Theology centres on Christ. Therefore it is right that Christology is the core theme of Moltmann's and Mbiti's theology. But there is a difference between interpreting the Old Testament in relation to Christ and interpreting individual Old Testament verses on the foundation of individual New Testament verses. At the first glance Mbiti's works seem to neglect the Old Testament. A unit in his essay on eschatology is titled *Christian eschatology*. The four parts of that unit are titled *Theories of New Testament Eschatology*, *The Eschatology of the Gospels*, *The Eschatology of the Acts, Epistles and Revelation*, *Conclusions for New Testament [!] Eschatology*.<sup>391</sup> But further engagement

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<sup>387</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 79 and 208-210.

<sup>388</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 304-305 and Pannenberg 1993, p 601 and 607.

<sup>389</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 127.

<sup>390</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 78-80.

<sup>391</sup> Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p170; 173; 175 and 179.

with Mbiti's writings shows that he takes the Old Testament seriously. Mbiti even refers to Old Testament theology to correct notions within the New Testament. He counters the idea of a second death in Revelation 20 with Isaiah's promise that God will destroy death (25: 8). Moltmann, throughout his writings, refers to the Old Testament frequently. He mentions the prophets and apocalyptic thinking<sup>392</sup> and engages widely with the Exodus tradition.<sup>393</sup> Kato has 57 biblical references in his article *Eschatology in Africa: Problems of Hermeneutic*. Thirty occur in quotes of other authors and 27 in Kato's comments. Of the 27 in Kato's comments, none refers to the Old Testament, and twelve refer to hell or judgement. The only reference to the Old Testament is given in a quote of Mbiti.<sup>394</sup> The connection between Old Testament and New Testament eschatology is reflected by Mbiti, Pannenberg and Moltmann. Pannenberg calls the Old Testament eschatology or Jewish eschatology a framework in which Christian eschatology operates. The main difference between the two concepts is seen in the opening for all human beings by the latter.<sup>395</sup> Moltmann and Mbiti both describe Jewish eschatology as the preparation of Christian eschatology. Since they relate their eschatological reflections more to Christology than Pannenberg, they see a greater difference between Jewish and Christian eschatology: Christian eschatology supersedes the separation of this age and the age to come partially through the incarnation and resurrection of Christ.<sup>396</sup>

### (β) The Context of the Bible

Moltmann, Mbiti and Pannenberg acknowledge that the Bible was written by people who were subject to certain cultures, beliefs and worldviews. The life circumstances of people changed during the thousand years in which the texts of the Bible were written. This had an impact on the texts and their messages. Kato refers to the Bible as the absolute word of God. There is not enough room here to engage with the understanding of biblical inspiration of the different authors. But a few examples of interpretation should be sufficient to outline the differences in approach.

Moltmann sees Christian eschatology as influenced by oriental and Egyptian<sup>397</sup> thinking, which was adopted and adapted by Judaism. When Christianity

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<sup>392</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 124-138.

<sup>393</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974, p 81.

<sup>394</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 85-89.

<sup>395</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 588-595.

<sup>396</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 32-34; Moltmann 1965, p 218 and Moltmann 1996, p 232-235.

<sup>397</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 67.

arose out of Judaism, traditions of thinking were adopted and adapted again. This is the reason why Moltmann refers to the Jewish paradigm of intolerance towards death as one factor which led to the formation of the hope for resurrection.<sup>398</sup> Even though Mbiti disagrees with Moltmann on the interpretation of death in Old Testament, he, like Moltmann, depicts Christian eschatology as a result and further development of Jewish eschatology.<sup>399</sup> As can be seen above, it is apparent that Pannenberg also agrees on the dependence of Christian eschatology on Jewish thinking.

A development within the biblical books is presumed by Pannenberg. The example above shows that he considers texts of later Judaism to be more developed. The same interpretation is given in his analysis of different depictions of the judgement in the Gospel of John. Pannenberg reasons that Jesus was at first confused with the judge who judges at the end of times (Joh. 5:22-23), but later when the church had a more advanced Christology, Christ was not seen as the judge anymore. Therefore a redaction of the Johannean text (Joh. 3:17; 12:47) was done by the church.<sup>400</sup>

Mbiti carefully describes the differences in the eschatology of the synoptic Gospels, John's Gospel and within the Pauline epistles. Within the Pauline epistles Mbiti finds a different emphasis on the Parousia. Mbiti shows that Paul's expectation to experience the Parousia changes. The content and engagement with the Parousia depends on circumstances in the lives of Paul and the congregations, Mbiti argues.<sup>401</sup> The approaches of Mbiti, Pannenberg and Moltmann are entirely different from Kato's approach. Kato's depiction of the Bible as the absolute word of God, above every culture, makes it impossible for him to conclude that the biblical texts derive from particular contexts. Kato's reflection on Bible and culture, consequently, merely focus on how the Bible judges and purifies other cultures.<sup>402</sup>

#### (γ) Literal Method: Finding Verses for my Assumption

Kato refers to the grammatico-historical interpretation as the only valid method for interpreting biblical texts concerning eschatology. Since he clearly states that es-

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<sup>398</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 79 and 208-210.

<sup>399</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 171 and Mbiti 1978, p 32.

<sup>400</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 660.

<sup>401</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, 175-177.

<sup>402</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 25-28; 49 and Kato 1985c, p 4.



chatology in Africa is to be dealt with in the context of hermeneutics, it is necessary to analyse this hermeneutic. Its basic argument is that the Bible is the absolute word of God and can be understood by everyone everywhere at every time. Context and culture, even though they are given by God, need to be purified by the Bible. The biblical message itself derives from God, not from various contexts. Furthermore, the context of the reader is neglected since the method claims to be objective. The following analysis will show that this method with its double denial of context lacks consideration and critical self-reflection.

Using the grammatico-historical method, Kato follows Dwight Pentecost, a lecturer at the Dallas Theological Seminar during Kato's period of studying there. Pentecost's most important work is his book *Things to come*, which deals with eschatology. In this book he ascribes to the grammatico-historical interpretation of the bible. This method aims to understand every word, as it is used in normal, ordinary, customary<sup>403</sup> circumstances. The positive aspect from a Protestant point of view of this message is that it takes every Bible reader seriously. Pentecost says:

One does not depend upon intellectual training or abilities, nor upon the development of mystical perception, but rather upon the understanding of what is written in its generally accepted sense. Only on such a basis can the average individual understand or interpret the Scriptures for himself [sic].<sup>404</sup>

In his reflection on the method Pentecost claims like Kato<sup>405</sup> that God is the author of the Bible and that the method is God's method:

In the field of fulfilled prophecy it is not possible to point to any prophecy that has been fulfilled in any way other than literally...The conclusion must be that the New Testament literal method of fulfillment establishes the literal method as God's method...<sup>406</sup>

Unfortunately, Pentecost does not give examples to support his statement. To demonstrate the real nature of the method it is useful to look at the teaching of the rapture. This teaching deals with the sudden disappearance of all true Christians from this earth. It is caused by the so-called second coming of Christ. It is believed to take place before a period of *tribulation*. A problem for the grammatico-historical arises because direct biblical evidence for the occurrence of the rapture cannot be found. Nevertheless, Pentecost is convinced of the future immanent occurrence of the rapture of all true believers. To back up his argument, Pentecost does two things. At first he refers to biblical verses that seem to suggest that the church is not on earth during the tribulation period. Second, he tries to find evidence in the bible for the occurrence of the rapture.

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<sup>403</sup> Pentecost 1966<sup>3</sup>, p 9; cf. Kato 1975, p 78: Kato uses "normal, usual, customary".

<sup>404</sup> Pentecost 1966<sup>3</sup>, p12.

<sup>405</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985, p 48; Kato 1976, p 49 and Kato 1975, p 78.

<sup>406</sup> Pentecost 1966<sup>3</sup>, p 61.

Pentecost finds biblical evidence that proves to him that the church cannot be on earth during the time of tribulation. The argument is based on negative evidence. Revelation 3: 14-22 only refers to those who will be spit out from the mouth of God. Pentecost reasons that if the church, which is the body of true believers, still were on earth during that time, it would be mentioned in that passage.<sup>407</sup> He also refers to Revelation 12, which deals with the dragon attacking a woman and her child. Pentecost identifies the woman with Israel and the Child with Jesus. Then he goes on and argues that Satan would not attack Israel if the church were still on earth.<sup>408</sup> Both arguments are little convincing. But Pentecost can even go so far as interpreting the total absence of a reference to the period of tribulation in the epistles as proof for his theology. He simply states that the occurrence of the rapture is presupposed in the epistles. Otherwise the epistles would give instructions for the believers about how to live during the period of tribulation.<sup>409</sup>

Furthermore, Pentecost tries to strengthen his argument with a peculiar translation of Revelation 3: 10. 3: 10 reads in the Revised Standard Version of 1952 as follows: "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth." Now, Pentecost argues that one should translate the Greek verb  $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omega$  with "to lead out" since it is used together with  $\epsilon\kappa$ .<sup>410</sup> This translation contradicts all meanings for the verb  $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omega$  that can be found in appropriate dictionaries.<sup>411</sup> John 17:15 also uses the verb  $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omega$  with  $\epsilon\kappa$ . A translation of John 17: 16 using Pentecost's suggestion would ridicule the meaning of the verse which reads: I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep ( $\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omega$ ) them from ( $\epsilon\kappa$ ) the evil one. Therefore Pentecost's emphasis on the rapture cannot be proven by his own standards of exegesis. Rather, it shows that Pentecost is willing to compromise the meaning of biblical texts so that they fit into his theology. Pentecost and Kato argue that their theology as biblical theology is free from extreme subjectivism.<sup>412</sup> This example shows that a literal interpretation does not protect from subjectivism.

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<sup>407</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 212-213.

<sup>408</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 215.

<sup>409</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 210-211.

<sup>410</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 216.

<sup>411</sup> Cf.: Bauer/Aland 1624-1625

<sup>412</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 78 and Pentecost 1966<sup>3</sup>, p11.

## (δ) The Greek Bible, the Scottish Priest, the American Evangelizer and the African Theologian

Kato's references to the millennium<sup>413</sup> and millennial eschatology have to be understood in a historical context. While European theologians usually do not engage with millennial eschatology, it is an important theme in North American theology. Kato, educated in North America at the Dallas Theological Seminary, is convinced that biblical eschatology is millennial. Pannenberg does not refer to millennial theology but simply ignores its existence. Moltmann discusses the North-American millennial eschatology and comes to the conclusion that millennialism is right in so far that it does not depict a sudden end of the world but a period of transformation.<sup>414</sup> Moltmann therefore engages with postmillennialism, which only plays a minor role in North American theology.

The difference between the development in eschatological thinking in North America and Europe has theological and historical reasons. So-called radical movements of the Reformation were often marked by the view that the kingdom of God could be established on this earth. Earthly authorities were seen as preventing this from happening. Members of these movements were persecuted in Europe, like the puritans from England after the death of Cromwell.<sup>415</sup> Numerous Christians left Europe to go to North-America. After they arrived there, they referred to themselves and America as the *New Israel*. Just like the Israelites had escaped from Egypt, they had escaped from Europe.<sup>416</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE leading theologians like John Edwards taught in North America that the kingdom of God can be erected by human efforts. The formation of a millennial kingdom of God seemed possible for many Christians in that time. It was a time of manifold evangelization and conversion. Social problems were minimized through evangelical institutions.<sup>417</sup> Existing violence was excused as necessary for a greater goal. The expansion towards the West in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was compared to the conquest of the *Promised Land* by the Israelites. Just like the Canaanites and Amalecites were driven away in the biblical story, many of the so-called Indians<sup>418</sup> were exterminated. The settlers saw it

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<sup>413</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 81-82 and 158.

<sup>414</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 196.

<sup>415</sup> Cf.: Moeller 2000<sup>7</sup>, p 274-276 and Boyer, p 140.

<sup>416</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 168-171.

<sup>417</sup> Cf.: Weber 1979, p 13-14.

<sup>418</sup> The term Indians is often seen as derogative. However, unless the tribes are named individually there is no better term in naming the groups I am referring to. The expression Native Americans is also difficult since the peoples I am referring to had lived on the land even before the Europeans arrived and named it America. Fur-

as a godly command to conquer the land. Soldiers were willing to die in war so that the nation might live. After the battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln interpreted the death of soldiers as leading to a new birth of freedom for the nation.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom...<sup>419</sup>

Moltmann analyzes the Gettysburg Address and outlines its millennialistic elements. The combination of martyrdom and millennialism is striking. The death of soldiers may not be an unnecessary death. Lincoln's interpretation of the death as leading to a new birth of the nation of freedom is a compelling picture. The Memorial Day serves as an ongoing symbol for the sacrifice of the soldiers. Moltmann concludes: "The public ritual of America's Memorial Day then also binds together Protestants, Catholics, Jews and atheists in a national religious community."<sup>420</sup> The goal of this community is to bring peace and democracy to all the earth. Their mission is only fulfilled when the whole world has become a (millennial) kingdom of peace.<sup>421</sup> This postmillennial striving for a better world is rejected by the staff of the Dallas Theological Seminary and other premillennialists who claim that only a major interference of God can turn this world into a better place.<sup>422</sup> This view is also to be understood out of its historical context.

John Nelson Darby, who lived from 1800 to 1882, is the founder of the most widespread millennial eschatology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE. He was originally from England and studied in Ireland, where he later on served as an Anglican Priest. In 1828 he became a member of the Plymouth Brethren, a loose organization of people within the Anglican Church that were unsatisfied with the mainline spirituality. Darby was convinced that the Holy Spirit revealed to him a future sudden rapture of true believers prior to a period of tribulation. The rapture for Darby is a logical consequence of a strict separation between the Church and the World. The Church is the community of all true believers, the body of Christ. Therefore it is not an earthly entity, it is in heaven. Nevertheless, Christians are physically still on earth. That problem will be solved with the rapture. The rapture is a different event from the glorious appearing of Christ for the millennium and judgement. Darby writes:

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thermore the term Native is hampered with notions of inferiority and primitivism. Therefore, I use the term so-called Indians, which implies a critique of the ignorance of the Europeans, who did not know where they had arrived.

<sup>419</sup> Lincoln 2005, p 31.

<sup>420</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 172.

<sup>421</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 175-178.

<sup>422</sup> Cf.: Pentecost 1966<sup>3</sup>, 155.

The church's place... is elsewhere. She sits in Him already in heavenly places. She has to be brought there as to bodily presence.<sup>423</sup>  
He who confounds the day of Christ with His coming to receive the church knows neither what His day is, nor His coming, nor the church.<sup>424</sup>

For some time Darby's premillennialist teachings only circulated in the circles of the Plymouth Brethren.<sup>425</sup> But Darby also travelled frequently<sup>426</sup> to North America, there he lectured about his revelation. So he managed to meet influential leaders of evangelical movements in North America.<sup>427</sup> The teaching could spread rapidly in North America through the work of Cyrus Scofield. He edited a Reference Bible in which he included the teachings of Darby. The Scofield Reference Bible was used widely among conservative Christians in North America. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE the evangelical movement stood close together in opposition to historical criticism of the biblical texts. This strengthened the unity of the movement, and its theological reflection became more cohesive. In 1875 evangelical conservative Christians founded the Niagara Bible Conference<sup>428</sup>. Right from the beginning, representatives of Darby's teachings participated in that conference. Over the years these people took leading positions in the evangelical movements. A participant of the Niagara Bible Conference was Lewis S. Chafer. He became a dispensationalist millennialist through the personal influence of Scofield. It was Chafer who founded the Dallas Theological Seminary, the institution from which Kato received both his master and doctorate degree.<sup>429</sup> These are the structural reasons for the increased spread of premillennialism in North America. Socio-historically it has to be said that the two world wars in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century CE and the economic depression discouraged people to hope for a future kingdom of God on earth without a major interference of God himself. The connection between the literal interpretation of the bible and the millennial teaching is to be seen in the Niagara Conference. There supporters of both teachings came together and influenced each other. Therefore it can be said that millennial theology does not arise necessarily from a literal interpretation of the Bible. But those who defend the literal interpretation of the Bible also defend millennial eschatology. Ironically, these people deny the impor-

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<sup>423</sup> Darby 1972, p 118.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. p 118.

<sup>425</sup> Cf.: Ahlstorm 1972, p 808-810 and Weber 1979, p 17.

<sup>426</sup> Bowman refers to six lectures in North America while Sandeen and Gelbach mention seven. But Geldbach states that Darby resides in Australia between his sixth and seventh journey. Therefore it is most likely that Bowman counts the last two journeys as one since Darby did not go back to Europe in between them (cf.: Bowman, p 2; Sandeen 1970, p 71 and Geldbach 1972, p 52-53).

<sup>427</sup> Cf.: Ahlstorm 1972, p 809 and Sandeen 1970, p 70-80.

<sup>428</sup> In 1875 the conference was called *Believers' Meeting for Bible Studies*. That name was changed into *Niagara Bible Conference* in the following year. Niagara was the common place where the conference took place.

<sup>429</sup> Cf.: Weber 1979, p 24-33 and Ahlstorm 1972, p 808-810.

tance of contextual theology, but their example shows that theology always derives from a context and is done for a context.

## b) Other Sources

*My comments are based on the assumption than many items in African traditional life, ideas and practices can and have to be taken as praeparatio evangelica.<sup>430</sup>*

The Bible is not the only source of theology. All four theologians agree that the Bible is important for Christian theology. At the same time, all four theologians employ other sources. These sources and the reflection of Kato, Mbiti, Moltmann and Pannenberg shall be evaluated in this chapter. Therefore this chapter looks at philosophers and theologians that are quoted within the works of Pannenberg, Mbiti, Moltmann and Kato ( $\alpha$ ). Then the focus will be on the engagement with myths and tales ( $\beta$ ). And finally the references that the theologians make towards their own cultural contexts will be evaluated ( $\gamma$ ).

### ( $\alpha$ ) Philosophers and Theologians

Looking at the theologians and philosophers whom Kato, Moltmann, Mbiti and Pannenberg deal with does not only reveal something about their education and focus, it also gives a picture of unequal power-relations between the Western and the two-thirds world. It is not a surprise that the Eurocentric German theologian Pannenberg does not engage with any contemporary African, Latin-American or Asian theologian or philosopher in his eschatological reflection. However, it is a serious lack of comprehensiveness within his systematic theology which was published between 1988 and 1993 and claims to be useful in any context.<sup>431</sup> Within his eschatology, Pannenberg refers continually to Thomas Aquinas and Plato. He mentions Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Moltmann often. With the first he mostly agrees while he disagrees more often than not with the second. Hegel and Kant are also repeatedly quoted and referred to in Pannenberg's writings. As I stated above, Bloch seems to be Moltmann's favourite philosopher. Moltmann's reference to the two-third world are mostly references out of responsibly and sympathy. Moltmann

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<sup>430</sup> 1972<sup>3</sup>, p180.

<sup>431</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1988, p 10.

reflects thoroughly on the unequal power-relations between the North and the South.<sup>432</sup> But his further engagement with thoughts of people outside Europe and North America remains superficial. His short quote of the Bhagavad-Gita and his reference to a Korean prayer chain<sup>433</sup> cannot be seen as more than a decoration of his writing. Moltmann here falls short of engaging with theological and philosophical sources from the two-third world, with whom he had engaged vividly in the 1970s over the issue of Liberation Theology.

Kato and Mbiti, on the other hand, transcend their cultural context throughout their writings. This goes so far that Kato quotes more US-American positions than African. It seems that whenever he quotes an African theologian, a quote from an US-American theologian follows correcting the first quote.<sup>434</sup> This also shows that context does not only depend on nationality or culture but also on denominational preference. Kato sees himself as evangelical and therefore engages with evangelical theology. Nevertheless he engages widely with US-American theology. Both preferences derive partly from his studying at the US-American evangelical Dallas Theological Seminary. Most surprising is the analysis of Mbiti's philosophical and theological sources. On the one hand he engages widely with African traditional philosophy, while on the other hand he extensively refers to Western scholars. His engagement with African philosophy includes early approaches as well as current studies.<sup>435</sup> His engagement with Western theologians can be described as knowledgeable and critical. However, when it comes to the exegesis of texts concerned with New Testament eschatology, Mbiti refers to sixteen scholars of whom none is African or Asian. Nine of these scholars are German theologians.<sup>436</sup>

## (β) Myths and Tales

Mbiti refers to many myths to describe the African worldview. It is apparent that Mbiti values the stories and myths he refers to as a source of wisdom. He differentiates between *ukewa* and *wano*. An *ukewa* deals with personal experience, while a

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<sup>432</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 93-95.

<sup>433</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p13.

<sup>434</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 79-80: Kato quotes Mbiti and then "corrects" him Louis Berkhof. Also see Kato 1985c, p 42-43: Referring to Philip Turner's depiction of African theology, Kato shows disapprove of Mbiti's and J. Agbeti's concern; furthermore see Kato 1998, p 195: Bolaji Idowu's reasoning that "divinities are derivates from Deity" is opposed with G. Berkouwer's depiction of general revelation as being subject to the "the fall of man [sic]."

<sup>435</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1971<sup>R</sup>, 6-14.

<sup>436</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 170-180.

*wano* tells something that is remote or fictitious.<sup>437</sup> Myths in Africa deal with the past and have educational value. They are passed on orally. A strong connection between myth and history exist in the African worldview. History is covered in myths. While some myths are based purely on imagination, others have historical events as their sources.<sup>438</sup> Kato does not disregard myths as such. He explains them to be prevalent in every society. According to Kato myths simply arise out of philosophical concepts.<sup>439</sup> The Bible, on the other hand, is the “absolute Word of God”<sup>440</sup> and therefore *judges* every culture and its myths.<sup>441</sup> Kato does not reflect on mythological texts within the Bible. Moltmann and Pannenberg refer primarily to those texts when they engage with myths. But whenever they refer to texts as mythological it can be seen that they employ Western prejudices towards myths. The Western worldview disregards myths as being untrue and primitive. Moltmann and Pannenberg seem to share that perception of myths. When Moltmann deals with death, he refers to Genesis 6. His intention in doing so will be discussed later in II 3 a  $\alpha$ . For now only his reference to the term *myth* is of interest. Moltmann claims, that the ancient story “uses mythical language, but its intention is political.”<sup>442</sup> It is obvious that Moltmann values the second more than the first. Even though he acknowledges that people might disagree with his high perception of the political, he does not seem to even consider that people might differ with him in regard to his derogation of mythical worldview.<sup>443</sup> Pannenberg refers to the accounts of creation in Genesis as being mythological.<sup>444</sup> Pannenberg suggests seeing the creation not as something that has happened but as something that is happening. The depiction of a creation in a long past period of time is therefore referred to as mythological by Pannenberg. With this reference he disvalues this depiction. Then he can go on and refer to the prophets and their non-mythological worldview. Finally he asks the important question of whether his position of connecting eschatology and creation can withstand the critique of natural science.<sup>445</sup> Pannenberg’s reasoning about the creation shows that he values natural science very highly and prophetic texts are higher in his hierarchy than mythical texts.

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<sup>437</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1966, p vi.

<sup>438</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 25.

<sup>439</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 18.

<sup>440</sup> Kato 1985c, p 43.

<sup>441</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 182; Kato 1976, p 49 and Kato 1985c, p 42.

<sup>442</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 94.

<sup>443</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 95.

<sup>444</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 142-143; 155 and 172.

<sup>445</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 162-172.



## (γ) Culture

Only Kato and Mbiti reflect on the relevance that culture has for their theological reasoning. It is apparent that the cultures of Moltmann, Pannenberg, Kato and Mbiti influence their reasoning. Culture includes language, traditions, worldview and religion. Mbiti engages with the African worldview as *Praeparatio Evangelica* and engages with myths and languages. He shows that ideas and notions of biblical theology find correlating concepts of thought within the African worldview. The African worldview itself is regarded as including revelations of God. Kato agrees with Mbiti that there is such general revelation. But this revelation does not lead to salvation on which Kato's atonement theology focuses. Only biblical theology can bring salvation. Therefore Kato's depiction of culture is not as positive as Mbiti's. Nevertheless, Kato values traditions and beliefs as long as they are in agreement with the Bible.<sup>446</sup> Otherwise the principle that the Bible is above culture<sup>447</sup> remains, and therefore he can say that the Bible judges every culture. This does not refer merely to African traditions but also includes Western culture.<sup>448</sup>

The three eschatological topics of death, resurrection and the end of the world are also reflected in the light of cultural reasoning. Interestingly, only Mbiti widely reflects on the depiction of death in his culture.<sup>449</sup> Kato refers to African depictions of death only briefly and to emphasize that they are to a large extent incompatible with Christianity.<sup>450</sup> Pannenberg merely deals with academic reflection and historical depictions of death. Moltmann does not reflect on the depiction of death in his culture directly, but he engages broadly with the modern society's relation to death, which consists widely of unawareness. This unawareness is caused by people dying in hospitals or institutions rather than in their families. Many people in Western societies never see a dead person. Moltmann starts his chapter on personal eschatology with a quote of Epicurus, and then he refers to Wittgenstein and finally to Paul Klee. When he talks about modern human beings' depiction of death it is evident that he is referring to a Western context. Moltmann gives a broad, short, but profound analysis of modern suppression of death. This suppression can be seen in the common wish of a sudden death. Denying death to be a part

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<sup>446</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 18-31.

<sup>447</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985c, p 42-43.

<sup>448</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 27.

<sup>449</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p164-166; Mbiti 1978, p 127-155; Mbiti 1971<sup>R</sup>, p 25-27 and Mbiti 1970, p 85-90.

<sup>450</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 19-21.

of life and growing individualization lead to a concentration on one's own life. The end of this life is feared. Moltmann goes on and says:

That is why modern people, individualized as they are, no longer perceive the presence of the dead, which in pre-modern and non-modern (or more properly extra-modern) cultures was [sic] experienced as a matter of course, in ancestor cults and family celebrations at the burial places of the dead. Because individualized men and women know no life before birth in their ancestors, they know no life after death in their children either.<sup>451</sup>

According to Moltmann, only communal societies in which people accept their own death and in which people are present when other people die can deal with death in an appropriate manner.<sup>452</sup> Like Moltmann, Pannenberg starts his description of eschatology with individual eschatology. There he reflects on *general* anthropological concepts. He quickly summarizes the depiction of death from the Stone Age till the Twentieth century CE. For the later part of history he focuses on the occident. However, he only evaluates positions of educated people, especially theologians and philosophers. Pannenberg falls short of describing how death is depicted in his society outside of academia.<sup>453</sup> There he differs from Mbiti, who widely engages with the Akamba's and other African people's depiction of death. Mbiti refers therefore not to academic discussions but outlines what the myths that are prevalent among various people have to say about death.

A similar difference in approach can be seen for the topic of resurrection. It is again only Mbiti who deals with his culture explicitly. He argues that in his culture the notion of resurrection is difficult since death is not seen as annihilation of life.<sup>454</sup> However, the notion of the end of the world and its relationship to the African or European culture is dealt with by Mbiti, Moltmann and Pannenberg. Mbiti reasons that the African worldview lacks teleology, and therefore, biblical images should be implemented.<sup>455</sup> Pannenberg does again not explicitly deal with his culture but refers to the possibility of an end of the world according to natural science. He refers to black holes in which all material things might disappear. He concludes that natural science and theological reasoning have different perspectives. But he finds it important to show that his theological reasoning is not contradicted by results of natural science. An end of the world is possible in the reasoning natural science but not necessary.<sup>456</sup> The reference to natural science can be seen as evolving from his specific cultural background. However, Pannenberg fails to reflect upon

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<sup>451</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 51.

<sup>452</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 49-52.

<sup>453</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 598-607.

<sup>454</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 157.

<sup>455</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p181.

<sup>456</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 634-636.

the influence his culture has on his theology. Moltmann, in regard to the end of the world, deals with secular and religious depictions of the end of the world which are not biblical themselves: Nuclear destruction or ecological catastrophes are among his examples.<sup>457</sup>

Within Pannenberg's and Kato's writings it is difficult to find direct references to their culture as source of theology. Both mainly refer to other theologians, and Pannenberg also refers to other academic people like philosophers or natural scientists. Moltmann engages with one cultural element throughout his writings. Frequently Moltmann quotes German literature. He refers to Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, who "apprehended [sadness] so wonderfully"<sup>458</sup> in a poem that Moltmann quotes. He also talks about novels of Theodor Fontane<sup>459</sup> and Hermann Hesse,<sup>460</sup> a saying of Hölderlin<sup>461</sup> and frequently quotes Johann Wolfgang Goethe<sup>462</sup> or Friedrich Schiller.<sup>463</sup> However, Moltmann's usage of these quotes from novels and poems differs from Mbiti's engagement with myths and tales. The quotes borrowed from German authors underline what Moltmann is saying while Mbiti analyses myths as source of worldview. Moltmann does not look at a well known novel and then try to connect its reasoning with Christian eschatology; rather, he argues theologically and then finds literature to decorate his thoughts.

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<sup>457</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 202-210.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid, p 92.

<sup>459</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 23.

<sup>460</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 225.

<sup>461</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 263.

<sup>462</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 24; 27; 74; 247-248 and 264 and Moltmann 1996, p 111; 186 284 and 291.

<sup>463</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 231; 234 and 262.

## II 2 Time and Eternity

*Time Moves Fast*

*(A poem by John Mbiti)*

*Behind that cornered point where air is still and fire is cold*

*I feel the pain that pricks my flesh . . .*

*Time moves fast, bitterly fast and soon, too soon, we disperse from loved ones*

*To a house without a door beyond the eternal horizon*

*Round turns the earth.*

*Time sways between the stars ending like a tailless meteorite*

*Fading beyond our atomic clock till time invades eternity*

*And makes us immortal victims that wander between the first and last.*

*Round turns the earth*

*Round itself round.<sup>464</sup>*

This chapter on time and eternity only briefly outlines the differences and similarities in Kato's, Moltmann's, Mbiti's and Pannenberg's depiction of time. It is meant to provide background information that is valid to understand their eschatological reasoning. It does not provide extensive engagement with the understanding of time in Africa and the North, nor does it depict eternity as an eschatological topic. Numerous articles and monographs deal with the understanding of time in the African or European context. Often they refer to Mbiti, Pannenberg and Moltmann. Eternity as a topic of eschatology will be dealt with in II 3, especially in the paragraphs on resurrection and the end of the world. Therefore here merely an outline will be given to show the four theologians' depiction of time (a), eternity (b) and the eschatological tension of already and not yet (c).

### a) Time

#### (α) Time in Africa and the Bible- a Move from the Centre to the Background

Mbiti is often depicted as putting the focus of his theological reasoning in concepts of time. Frequently Mbiti's reasoning about time is quoted; monographs about his concept of time also exist. Ernst Conradie calls eschatology in Africa controversial<sup>465</sup> since Mbiti's reflection of time concluded that an African worldview has "virtually no

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<sup>464</sup> Mbiti 1969, p 16.

<sup>465</sup> Cf.: Conradie 1999, p 312 (Footnote 35).

concept of future.”<sup>466</sup> However, even though Mbiti engages with the notion of time he does not do so for the sake of discussing time. In his eschatological writings he either refers to time to point out cultural differences between Western and African reasoning;<sup>467</sup> or to show that time the New Testament depicts time as centred in Christ.<sup>468</sup> Mbiti states, that for an African person time has to be experienced in order to make sense. This leads to a depiction of time that is twofold and anthropologically oriented rather than mathematically oriented. The concept of a far future is not common within African concepts of thought. A long past and the present determine the life of people in Africa. Mbiti proves this by referring to the language of the Akamba, which does not provide a tense to express far future events. Furthermore, he analyses African myths, which do not deal with far future events but rather focus on the past.<sup>469</sup>

Mbiti also challenges the Western depiction of time as linear and moving from somewhere to somewhere. According to Mbiti the Old and New Testament employ several understandings of time: circular understanding is present as well as linear understanding.<sup>470</sup> An eschatology that only deals with a linear understanding of time therefore falls short of engaging with the biblical texts in their plurality. Nevertheless, Mbiti argues that biblical eschatology speaks about teleological events such as the end of the world, which is depicted as requiring a linear concept of time. However, the African worldview is not prepared for that kind of reasoning. Therefore special attention must be given to those teachings within the African context. Mbiti finds teleology necessary for Christian eschatology and states that the New Testament teachings are able to fill that void in the African worldview.<sup>471</sup>

Mbiti’s main argument summarizes his position: in the New Testament time is subject to eschatology and not vice versa.<sup>472</sup> Mbiti’s reasoning is not unique, Moltmann also engages with the problem of a linear depiction of time. He reasons that eschatology cannot be dealt with in that perspective. History cannot be seen as moving towards a final date which could be marked in a calendar, as the notion of the Last Day may suggest.<sup>473</sup> However, Mbiti’s notion of time is often discussed and

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<sup>466</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 30.

<sup>467</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 180-184 and Mbiti 1978, p 31-33.

<sup>468</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 60 and Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 181.

<sup>469</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 24-29; Mbiti 1969, p 16-19 and 27-18 and Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p160-167.

<sup>470</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 172-174.

<sup>471</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p181.

<sup>472</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 60.

<sup>473</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 6-13.

rejected. Kato's major work on *biblical time concepts* consists in opposing Mbiti's writings. It is apparent that Kato misunderstands Mbiti's intention. Kato's claim that "Mbiti builds his theology almost entirely around what he claims to be the African concept of time"<sup>474</sup> has to be seen as a drastic exaggeration. Furthermore, it is apparent that Kato misrepresents Mbiti's writings by claiming that Mbiti suggests that the West has invented a threefold and linear concept of time. According to Kato, Mbiti denies the existence of this kind of time concept in the Bible.<sup>475</sup> But the truth is that Mbiti simply names different concepts of understanding time, which are represented in the Bible. Among those the threefold and linear concept can be found as well.<sup>476</sup>

A later evangelical voice is Scott Moreau who continues Kato's concern to disregard Mbiti's conception of time. Employing better arguments and less polemic than Kato, Moreau also disagrees with Mbiti in that regard that Africans do not have a concept of a far future. However, Moreau acknowledges that Mbiti's research concerning understanding of time in Africa is more comprehensive than his own and concludes that further research is necessary. Moreau also claims that the concept of a solid African worldview declines in a globalised world. The contemporary African's understanding of time is also influenced by international concepts as any other part of the African worldview.<sup>477</sup> However, Mbiti's reflections on time are best understood as the background of his reasoning. Kwame Bediako is right to point out that Mbiti engages with time to show differences in the African worldview and the New Testament eschatology. For Mbiti time "belongs to the background, rather than the foreground of his thinking."<sup>478</sup>

### (β) Correlation of Eschatology and Time

An interesting observation can be made in the way the four theologians depict the correlation between eschatology and time. Kato simply holds the view that the future is determined by present actions. Within his atonement theology the following concept is apparent: what a person does during his or her life time affects his or her future or eternal well being. His eschatology consists mainly of the notion of salva-

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<sup>474</sup> Kato 1975, p 57.

<sup>475</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 59.

<sup>476</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 41-49 and Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p172-174.

<sup>477</sup> Cf.: Moreau 1998, p 306-319.

<sup>478</sup> Bediako 1992, p 324.

tion and condemnation, which are referred to as future events.<sup>479</sup> Salvation and condemnation are caused by previous actions.<sup>480</sup> Here Kato and Moltmann's depiction differ strongly. Moltmann pleads for a change of the Christian understanding of future. Future is not *what will be* but future is *what is to come*. If future is seen as *what will be*, future can be predicted from the present. Calculations and reasoning can give a picture of what will be. Then the present determines the future. The future consequently is extrapolated from the present. If one follows Moltmann's suggestion and depicts future as *what is to come*, the situation changes and the future is able to determine the present. The future will be anticipated in the present, and the present is affected by the future. To stress his argument Moltmann distinguishes between the Latin words *futurum* and *adventus*. The future Moltmann talks about can be described as *adventus* which is equivalent to the Greek term *παρουσία*. Only by employing this depiction of future it is possible to call Moltmann eschatology futuristic.

The anticipation of the future is also Pannenberg's prime concern. The individual human being anticipates what he or she will be in the end of his or her life. Before the human's life is over, it is not the whole human life. Nevertheless, the human being anticipates the wholeness of the fulfilled, and therefore ended, life throughout the life.<sup>481</sup> Future is described by Pannenberg as the *field of the possible* ("Feld des Möglichen"<sup>482</sup>). This idea arises within Pannenberg's reasoning about creation. Pannenberg holds the view that the act of creation happens in God's eternity and time is part of creation.<sup>483</sup> But the human being experiences God's eternity as a future reality. With the future fulfilment eternity will enter time.<sup>484</sup> Therefore, Pannenberg can describe the creation as an ongoing process which will be understood by human beings only in the end. This reasoning is apparent in his engagement with the question of theodicy, where Pannenberg argues that the reason for suffering will only be understood in the end of this world when God reveals Godself fully.<sup>485</sup> The distinction between the present and the future is less strong for Mbiti and Moltmann. Like Pannenberg they speak about anticipation. It can be seen that Moltmann and Mbiti argue from a perspective of Christology while Pannenberg employs an anthropological view (wholeness of life) and engages with the doctrine of

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<sup>479</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 89 and Kato 1985, p 21 and 44.

<sup>480</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 80.

<sup>481</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 599-605.

<sup>482</sup> Pannenberg 1991, p 119.

<sup>483</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 165.

<sup>484</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 649: „Die Zukunft der Vollendung ist der Eintritt der Ewigkeit in die Zeit.“

<sup>485</sup> See also II 3 b and c

creation. Consequently the present anticipation of the *eschata* is more vivid for Mbiti and Moltmann. Mbiti argues that in the sacraments the future fulfilment already occurs,<sup>486</sup> while Pannenberg refers to the celebration of the sacraments as anticipatory acts.<sup>487</sup> And Moltmann refers to the notion of the Promise in his reflection on anticipation: God already fulfilled God's Promise at the Exodus and at the resurrection of Christ.<sup>488</sup> Both these events are crucial to Moltmann, while Pannenberg again claims these events to be anticipatory.<sup>489</sup>

## b) Eternity

The difference of the depiction of eternity by the four theologians can again be understood from their different theological foci. Mbiti describes eternity as a meaningful end in Christ.<sup>490</sup> He uses the terms eternity and eternal frequently but does not reflect explicitly on the meaning of the term. His reasoning concerning the Eucharist, where eternal and temporal realities meet<sup>491</sup> and also his distinction between eternal and eschatological allow the assumption that he depicts eternity as separate from time but he allows for moments in which eternal realities coincide with temporal ones. The reason for little emphasis on reflections about the nature of eternity lies within Mbiti's focus on Christology. Jesus Christ's incarnation as a human being is crucial to all theological reflections of Mbiti. Since Jesus Christ died and rose in history, Mbiti claims that "what happens beyond the historical plane of human existence are neither for you nor for me to be dogmatized about."<sup>492</sup> Moltmann and Mbiti share the christological focus in their theologizing. Both centre their theology on the death and resurrection of Christ. It is little surprising that Moltmann therefore also restrains from lengthy discussion about the nature of eternity. His reasoning basically states that only God is eternal. The quality of eternity is only inhabited by God. Whatever becomes eternal can only do so in being in God.<sup>493</sup> Eternity therefore is not characterized by a temporal aspect of being everlasting but by a theological aspect of providing fullness and wholeness.<sup>494</sup> Even though Pannenberg understands eternity as God's eternity<sup>495</sup> he describes it using temporal aspects. Eternity

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<sup>486</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 96-105.

<sup>487</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, 32 and 284-286.

<sup>488</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974, 66-72; also see Ross 1995, p 60 and Ross 1980, p 211.

<sup>489</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 393.

<sup>490</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 181.

<sup>491</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1971, p 96-104.

<sup>492</sup> Mbiti 1975, p 180.

<sup>493</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 242; also see Reinke 2006, p 78-79.

<sup>494</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008].

<sup>495</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 652.



is the coinciding of all moments of time according to Pannenberg.<sup>496</sup> Both German theologians stress that eternity is not endlessness but fullness.<sup>497</sup> The Platonic concept of eternity as everlasting is given up in favour of a model that depicts eternity as a wholesome moment in which everything comes together. Here Moltmann and Pannenberg follow Karl Barth's later critique of his early dialectical opposition of time and eternity.<sup>498</sup> For Pannenberg God's eternity is depicted by the human as future. Since this is the realm from which created and creates the world, Pannenberg engages with the notion of eternity widely. A valid and solid depiction of Pannenberg's reasoning can be found in Christaan Mostert's *God and the Future- Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God*.<sup>499</sup>

### c) Already and Not Yet

The tension between *already* and *not yet* is portrayed differently by the four theologians. Again this difference mainly arises from their positioning of eschatology within theology. The atonement theology of Kato comes to a different conclusion than Moltmann and Mbiti's christological reasoning and Pannenberg also differs from the three other theologians since his emphasis is on the creation.

Kato evaluates all present humanitarian problems as rooted in sin. For him it is not the question how eternity and present interfere. The tension of *already* and *not yet* is not his concern. Kato rather states a tension between the sinful world and the redeemed people.<sup>500</sup> Therefore all evil that is experienced in the world is caused by sin. Only the abolition of sin is capable to bring a better life. Sin however is merely understood individualistic and moralistic. Kato disregards the notion of structural sin. Political liberation is not a way of overcoming sin but only personal salvation.<sup>501</sup> That Kato does not reflect on the correlation between the future salvation which he emphasises and its consequences for life in time can be seen in his depiction of the exodus. God's deliverance in time as it is expressed in the idea of the exodus is not seen as salvation by Kato.<sup>502</sup> Here he differs strongly from Moltmann. Moltmann engages with the tension of *already* and *not yet* when he re-

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<sup>496</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 656-658.

<sup>497</sup> Cf.: <http://www.radiovaticana.org/ted/Articolo.asp?c=73612> [accessed: 3.June 2008] and Pannenberg 1993, p 639-641.

<sup>498</sup> Cf.: Barth 1940, 716 (KD II/1).

<sup>499</sup> See bibliography (Mostert 2002).

<sup>500</sup> Cf.: Kato 1998, p 192-196.

<sup>501</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 41; Kato 1985, p 44 and Kato 1998, p 193.

<sup>502</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 41.

fers to the kingdom of God which is *not yet* fulfilled. Even though the new world is *already* present since the event of Easter the end of the old world is still to come. Consequently, the New World's presence is not the fulfilment of the kingdom of God *yet*.<sup>503</sup> The early church therefore lived in the expectance of the fulfilment of the kingdom of God.<sup>504</sup> Moltmann reflects on the Reformers depiction of the paradoxical nature of the kingdom of God. The paradox lies in the connection between the cross and Easter. The lordship of Christ is seen by the world in the cross. Consequently John can refer to the crucifixion as the uplifting of the Son of Man (e.g. John 12:34). For Moltmann it is important to state that the paradoxical nature of the kingdom of God is temporary. It will not be eternal. The paradoxical nature of the kingdom of God is also a result of the *Promise*. The person who is open for the *Promise* is willing to accept to find God's glory in the opposite: "He [sic] becomes homeless with the homeless, for the sake of the home of the reconciliation. He [sic] becomes restless with the restless, for the sake of peace of God."<sup>505</sup> Expecting the coming of God, Moltmann can restrain from referring to eschatology as something that is realized in the world. At the same time Moltmann is also free from binding his eschatology to future events. With the category of advent Moltmann overcomes an eschatology that is subject to time but his reasoning is subjected to Christ.

The kingdom of God for Mbiti is both realized in the resurrection of Christ and a future reality. Mbiti uses the term kingdom of God mainly when he refers to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, which bring the kingdom of God. Jesus preached about the kingdom of God and in Jesus the last days began and the prophecy of the prophets was fulfilled.<sup>506</sup> Through Jesus' actions of preaching, healing and raising the dead the kingdom of God manifests itself *already* in this time.<sup>507</sup> But *yet* the kingdom of God has not been fulfilled. Pannenberg refers to Paul's differentiation of *already* and *not yet*.<sup>508</sup> Even though Christians are freed from sin and have died to death they are facing death in their earthly life. The only way of talking about the tension between *already* and *not yet* in a reasonable manner arises for Pannenberg by referring to anticipation: "Erst im Rahmen einer allgemeinen Ontologie der gegenwärtigen Realität des Seienden als konstituiert aus seiner eschatologischen Wesenszukunft gewinnen die Aussagen der Theologie über

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<sup>503</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 232.

<sup>504</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1974, p 222 and Moltmann 1996, p 233.

<sup>505</sup> Moltmann 1974, p 224.

<sup>506</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 41.

<sup>507</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p173-174.

<sup>508</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 650-651.

die eschatologische Heilsgegenwart ihre volle Plausibilität.“<sup>509</sup> The difference between Pannenberg and Moltmann mainly arises from their perspective. Moltmann refers to the coming of God which God promised to God’s people. Therefore God’s people await God’s coming. Pannenberg refers to a fulfilment that presupposes an end of the life. The human being can in his or her relation to God already anticipate this future fulfilment. Mbiti’s focus on the sacraments is able to combine both perspectives: The participants anticipate in the celebration of the heavenly banquet and God comes to the participant in the symbols of bread and wine.

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid, p 651 (A framework of a general ontology of the present reality of the being as constituted out of its eschatological future of its characteristics is necessary. It is necessary to gain plausible theological statements about the eschatological presence of Wholeness).

## II 3 Topics of Eschatology

Three topics of eschatology will be looked at in this chapter: death (a), resurrection (b) and judgement (c). Short introductions to the relevance of each topic and the notions focussed on will be given at the beginning of each section. The specific order of the three topics evolves from the following reasoning: death makes people think about the end of their lives and therefore about eschatology. The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of humanity are two core themes of Christianity and can be seen as the heart of not only eschatology, but of theology in general. Judgement then becomes a subordinate topic that is not central to Christian theology, but nevertheless remains relevant and is therefore dealt with in this thesis.

### a) Death

*The death of all the living is neither due to sin nor is it natural. It is a fact that evokes grief and longing for the future world and eternal life.<sup>510</sup>*

What happens when a human being dies is a mystery. Speculation and reflection about death are prevalent in all existing cultures. These considerations may focus on what is the cause of death and the deeper reason for it, what happens at the moment of death, where the dead person is after death, whether everything dies or just the body, and what relationship continues between the deceased and the remaining. Different cultures emphasize different questions and come to miscellaneous answers. Due to globalization, within one culture different answers are known, believed in and life is lived according to them. The Bible brings reflections from the Jewish and Greek culture to various cultures around the world. Some of the Jewish reasoning was adopted from other cultures. Speaking about death in Christian theology is therefore challenging and complex. This chapter will deal with two questions. Why does death happen ( $\alpha$ ) and what happens when a person dies ( $\beta$ )?

#### ( $\alpha$ ) Sin, Nature and the Chameleon: Why do People Die?

That people are dying is evident. But is death inevitable and part of life or a senseless happening that needs explanation? Mbiti, Moltmann and Pannenberg do reflect on the cause of death. Mbiti therefore refers to the Akamba culture which knows

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<sup>510</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 92.

myths about death. These myths seem to suggest that death was not an original occurrence to humanity. Moltmann and Pannenberg deal with death as a result of sin and the notion of the natural death. Kato neglects the necessity of engagement with mortality or immortality. Christians only need to talk about eternal life and how that can be given.<sup>511</sup>

Mbiti states that the Akamba culture depicts death as punishment. Death is unnatural and inevitable at the same time.<sup>512</sup> Mbiti mentions metaphysical explanations for both the original cause of death and for the death of the individual. In his introduction to a book on Akamba stories, Mbiti summarizes the Akamba's beliefs about death. Originally, human beings were created as immortal. Mulungu (God) sent a chameleon to the people to let them know that they will not die. But the chameleon did not go directly to the people. So Mulungu sent a waver bird to the people with the message that they would die from now on. This is how death originated among humans.<sup>513</sup> Similar myths of two messengers being sent to the people are widespread among various African people.<sup>514</sup> The acceptance of death "as part of the natural rhythm of life"<sup>515</sup> is seen as a later development by Mbiti. At first there were myths explaining death, but then it was accepted as inevitable. Nevertheless, death never merely occurs. Every human death is believed to have external causes like witchcraft, sorcery or interference of spirits or God. The violation of customs or prohibitions can be a reason why God or spirits cause a person to die. But God can also give a natural death to an old person.<sup>516</sup> Two expressions used by the Akamba people to describe death illustrate that death is depicted as caused by external forces. One expression referring to death is *Tw'ika wa Ngai* or *Tw'ika wa Mulungu* which is translated by Mbiti "to become God's property." Mbiti argues that a person in this life belongs to humans but after death he or she belongs to God. Another expression for dying is *Isiwa* which means to be fetched. The fetching might be done by God or a spirit.<sup>517</sup>

Pannenberg and Moltmann agree in that regard that death is not constitutive for the nature of a finite creature. Therefore they differentiate between finitude (Endlichkeit) and mortality (Sterblichkeit) of human beings. Moltmann points out

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<sup>511</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 19.

<sup>512</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 164.

<sup>513</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1966, p 14-15.

<sup>514</sup> Cf.: Opoku 1987, p 9 and Kato 1976, p 18-19 (Kato, however, describes the chameleon as the messenger of death)

<sup>515</sup> Mbiti 1971<sup>R</sup>, p 99.

<sup>516</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1971<sup>R</sup>, p 155-157.

<sup>517</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 127-129.

that angels on the one hand and stones on the other are created and therefore finite creatures but both are immortal.<sup>518</sup> The resurrected Christ stays distinguished from God, Pannenberg argues. And therefore the resurrected Christ remains finite but immortal. This will also happen to all believers in the resurrection.<sup>519</sup> Consequently Pannenberg depicts modern theologies reasoning that death is natural and only inherits the quality of judgement because of sin as a reduction to a psychology of death.<sup>520</sup> Moltmann's critique of the notion of natural death is stronger than Pannenberg's. Death is seen as something Christians cannot come to terms with by Moltmann. Nature in theology, so goes Moltmann's argument, describes a condition that is no longer the original and not yet the final condition.<sup>521</sup> The final condition of no death can be anticipated in the act of baptism, Mbiti argues. Death is a consequence of sin in Mbiti's reflection and the sinner acknowledges this in the act of baptism. The sinner also accepts God's deathly punishment for sin but does not experience annihilation because Christ died and rose from the death.<sup>522</sup>

That the end of life becomes death is due to sin, Pannenberg writes. The sinning human being denies the finitude of his or her life because he or she wants to be like God. The life in time is experienced from an egoistic point of view. But this egoistic point of view does not correlate with the whole of the life of the human being. The whole of the life of the human being will only be established in the fulfilment. The presence of the human being, therefore, is threatened by the breaking away of moments. *What just is* disappears to be past and *what will be* is not there yet. According to Pannenberg, it is the egoism of the human being that separates the moments from each other. If the human being would anticipate its wholeness, this dilemma would not occur. This also has consequences for the experience of the end of the life in time. For those who want to be like God and hold on to their infinity, the end of life in time becomes death. For those who accept that they are finite and who find their identity in the reality of God which transcends time, the end of their life in time becomes fulfilment.<sup>523</sup> Moltmann puts a different emphasis on the connection between death and sin than Pannenberg. While Pannenberg deals with the individual's sin of not accepting mortality, Moltmann focuses on death as the source of sin: People who realize their immortality want more life and try to gain it

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<sup>518</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 90.

<sup>519</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 603 and Pannenberg 1980, p 152-153.

<sup>520</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 603.

<sup>521</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 91.

<sup>522</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 96-101.

<sup>523</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 599-607.

against others. The origin of sin is “not being willing to be what one is.”<sup>524</sup> And one is mortal. So far Moltmann still agrees with Pannenberg. But Moltmann’s reasoning then does not remain individualistic but refers to the broader context of death and dying. Moltmann depicts death as affecting larger groups and bringing unbearable suffering especially to those who are poor and marginalized. Therefore he refers to Gen. 6 and Dan. 7 which describe, using mythical language, political structures of exploitation and destruction. Contemporary theology employs the term structural sin to name these systems of oppression.<sup>525</sup> Pannenberg’s reasoning that the finitude of life only becomes death to those who cannot accept their mortality because they want to be like God<sup>526</sup> seems cynical compared to Moltmann’s argument:

Death is not a consequence of these [those who are killed in wars, through administrative methods and by hunger and disease in the two-third world] people’s sin. A ‘natural death’ is rare among them: most of them cannot afford it. There, death through the indirect violence issuing from the wealthy countries is an everyday affair, just as everyday as hunger and disease. Because in the wealthy countries and richer classes of society personal possessions are of more value than shared life, violent death in Africa, Latin America and India is going to claim more and more victims. What were for ancient Israel the ‘tyrants of the earth’ [Gen 6], are for the poor today the wealthy countries with their brutal structures.<sup>527</sup>

Moltmann consequently argues that death is neither due to sin nor natural. Death creates suffering and a hope for a life without death. Moltmann, however, also refers to a truth that is included in the notion of the natural death. Death unites human beings with nature. Probably referring to burial traditions, Moltmann claims that death brings humans *into the earth*. Humanity and the rest of creation belong together, and physical redemption includes humans (the body) and the nature.<sup>528</sup>

A solid answer to why people die is not given by the three scholars. But their depictions of death are prevalent in their reasoning. Pannenberg depicts the end of life in time as its fulfilment, and it only becomes death if the sinner rejects the notion of being created and therefore being finite. Mbiti can claim that death in an African worldview is caused externally as punishment. This punishment is overcome by the death of Jesus Christ, and the Christian individual can anticipate the defeat of death in the Sacraments. Christianity, therefore, provides a comfort that is not found in the African worldview to which future redemption is not known. Mbiti claims that it is “such ‘redemption’ [that] involves rescue from the monster of death, regaining immortality and attaining the gift of resurrection.”<sup>529</sup> Moltmann also sees death as destructive and refuses to accept death as permanent. Quoting Hildegard

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<sup>524</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 93.

<sup>525</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 93-95.

<sup>526</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 606.

<sup>527</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 95.

<sup>528</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 87-95.

<sup>529</sup> Mbiti 1971<sup>R</sup>, p 99.

of Bingen, Moltmann describes death as prevalent in only one season of creation, which is winter, but there is hope that spring will come.<sup>530</sup>

### (β) The Immortality of the Soul - Or What Happens when a Person Dies?

Moltmann, Mbiti and Pannenberg discuss depictions of the afterlife in different traditions or worldviews in order to support their own reasoning of death either by acceptance or differentiation. The ways Mbiti, Pannenberg and Moltmann introduce the notion of an immortal soul or the realm of a spirit world vary greatly. Pannenberg's and Moltmann's reflections occur in the context of their thoughts about death and what they call individual eschatology. Pannenberg broadly engages with the history of the notion of an immortal soul and then refers to contemporary discussions on the topic. Both European theologians refer to the idea of an immortal soul as incompatible with the Christian concept of the resurrection. Mbiti goes a slightly different way. The African scholar turns to the living dead who are important in the African worldview in the past and present. He omits that the notion of an immortal soul in Africa can presuppose an understanding of a spirit world after death. Even though it is apparent that Mbiti knows about the European discussion of the two notions of an immortal soul and resurrection being contradictory, he does not discuss it and proposes a theology of an immortal soul for which he finds biblical evidence.

Mbiti describes the depiction of death in the African worldview. Kato therefore accuses him of being presupposed in his theological reflections.<sup>531</sup> The true meaning of afterlife can only be found in the Bible. A reference to the cloud of witnesses (Hebr. 12:1) can be used to gain attention from African listeners who believe in a continuing existence. "But the reality of conscious existence and the future resurrection for judgement and retribution can be found in the Bible,"<sup>532</sup> Kato argues. However, it is apparent that Mbiti explains how he sees the African worldview as *Praeparatio Evangelica*<sup>533</sup> and at the same time he engages thoroughly with the Bible. Describing the African worldview, Mbiti says that death does not do away with immortality fully.<sup>534</sup> Humans who die enter another world, the spirit world. This world is not different from the world of human beings. The Spirits (Aimu, sin-

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<sup>530</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 91.

<sup>531</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 86.

<sup>532</sup> Kato 1976, p 19.

<sup>533</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 189.

<sup>534</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p 164.



gular limu) do not experience any form of transformation or enlightenment. Mbiti describes the afterlife as follows: "The hereafter is, for African people, devoid of hope or promise."<sup>535</sup> The dead person is removed from the present (Sasa or Mituki-period) and disappears in a distant past (Zamani or Tene-period). The immortality of the person is secured for a few generations because he or she is remembered. Thereafter the spirit continues to be immortal in the collective immortality.<sup>536</sup> The notion of an immortal soul is presupposed by Mbiti. But nevertheless he brings a wide variety of biblical evidence to support his position. He refers to the perfection of the soul before the Parousia for which he uses the examples of Lazarus, who is comforted by Abraham, and the thief who dies next to Jesus on the cross.<sup>537</sup> The notion of the immortality of the soul is used very differently in Mbiti's reasoning compared with Pannenberg and Moltmann. Both depict it as an insufficient warrant of identity and continuity between this life and the life to come.

Pannenberg starts his reflection with a look at changes between early societies and the worldview in the Greek polis. In early societies the individual was such an integrated part of society that death was not experienced as a crisis. The society continued to exist. The development of the concept of an immortal soul, which according to Pannenberg arose in the fifth and sixth century BCE, had a strong influence on the whole Occident. It was Plato's reflection on the immortal soul which was dealt with in Christianity. Some of the Apologetics of the second century CE rejected Plato's notion and emphasised the mortality of the soul. In this rejection, Pannenberg sees a rejection of the notion that the soul itself is divine as Plato suggests. Pannenberg furthermore rejects Plato's conception since it refers to uncountable re-embodiments of the soul. Christianity, on the other hand, proclaims eternal wholeness/ salvation for the individual life. Nevertheless, throughout the history of the church, the notion of an immortal soul and the resurrection of the body were combined. The reason for this combination lies, according to Pannenberg, within the notion of resurrection itself. The problematic question is whether there is continuity between the earthly life and the life after the resurrection. A question that arises in this discussion is the question of the identity of the contemporary life and the future life. This identity is crucial for Pannenberg's eschatological reflection. He argues that a new life which loses its identity with the contemporary life does not liberate the contemporary life and its experiences but leaves it behind. The immor-

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid, p 166.

<sup>536</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 29-30.

<sup>537</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 175.

tality of the soul functions as a guarantee for this continuity. This leads to a further problem: where is the soul between the individual's death and the communal resurrection? A contemporary position quoted by Pannenberg combines these two moments. When a human being dies, he or she enters God's eternity. Pannenberg finds biblical evidence for this reasoning in Paul's longing to be with Christ (Phil 1: 23) and also employs the example used by Mbiti of the promise Jesus gives to the thief on the cross next to him.<sup>538</sup> However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE the immortality of the soul was questioned. The theory of *Ganztod* (full death) of the human being reasons from then on that the human being dies fully. Body and soul cease to be after death. Pannenberg suggests looking for continuity between the life on earth and the life to come not in the soul, which is created, but in God, who is the creator. And in God everything that ever was is present: „Die Identität der Geschöpfe bedarf . . . keiner Kontinuität ihres Seins auf der Zeitlinie, sondern ist hinlänglich dadurch gesichert, daß ihr Dasein in der ewigen Gegenwart Gottes nicht verloren ist.“<sup>539</sup> In agreement with Mbiti's sacramental theology,<sup>540</sup> Pannenberg refers to the Christian baptism. Therein the individual is enclosed in God's eternal life. This enclosure guarantees continuity between earthly life and life beyond.<sup>541</sup>

Moltmann also engages with the question of an immortal soul in reference to continuity. He asks “is there nothing in this life . . . that endures and sustains, and makes human beings invulnerable and immortal?”<sup>542</sup> Those who defend the immortality of the soul can refer to the soul as granting the unity between the life in time and the eternal life. But even though the immortality of the soul is a common belief among Christians, it is not biblical. Just like Pannenberg, Moltmann points out that it derives from the reasoning of Plato. For those who advocate the concept currently he names Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a Kantian philosopher, and Ernst Bloch, a materialist philosopher. Moltmann offers two reasons against the notion of an immortal soul. First, and here he agrees with Pannenberg, Moltmann reasons that the concept of an immortal soul locates the trust in immortality within the human being while the belief in the resurrection of the body puts it within God. And second, he states that the idea of the soul being immortal accepts and even welcomes death. The hope for resurrection of the body, on the other hand, is a hope that death will

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<sup>538</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 617-622.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid, 652: Consequently, the identity of creatures does not depend on a continuity of its being in time. It is fully given because the being of the creature cannot be lost since it is secured in the eternal presence of God.

<sup>540</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 96-105.

<sup>541</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 691.

<sup>542</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 71.

be defeated.<sup>543</sup> It is a hope that enables people to live their lives in love and therefore fully: “In expectation of the resurrection of the dead, the person who hopes casts away the soul’s protective cloak . . . We throw ourselves into this life and empty ourselves into the deadly realm of non-identity by virtue of the hope that God will find us in death . . .”<sup>544</sup> The hoping person is hungry for justice. The *promise* of the resurrection leads to the mission of the Church, to struggle for a better society.<sup>545</sup> The resurrection of the body ensures the importance of this world. It will be this life that will be immortalized-- even though there will be transformation, “healing, reconciliation and completion.”<sup>546</sup> Moltmann finds an answer to the question of continuity in the Old Testament’s reflection on the spirit as the source of life. The spirit is neither the soul nor the body. The spirit comes from God and goes to God. Hence the spirit stands for the reciprocal relationship between human beings and God. The resurrection is not merely a new creation but a new creation of the mortal life’s spirit. When God raises human beings from the death, the Whole (*das Ganze*) is raised. If it is God who raises the human being, God raises what is before God. The human being’s identity therefore lies before God. Lying before God means: being whole.<sup>547</sup> God raises human beings as they are in God’s “loving and healing remembrance.”<sup>548</sup> Here Moltmann and Pannenberg agree. Both emphasise that the continuity between life on earth and life beyond lies within God.<sup>549</sup> This agreement is criticized by Mbiti. Identity and continuity are not Christian or biblical motives but derive from Western materialism.<sup>550</sup> The African theologian who argues in favour of an immortal soul does not do so to secure continuity or identity. Mbiti frankly states that the identity between the previous life and the life after resurrection will be compromised: there will be a New Name given to the individual, which is only known by God (Rev. 2:17). The new name has the effect of a new personality.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 58-65.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid, p 66.

<sup>545</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 225.

<sup>546</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 70,

<sup>547</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 72-76.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid, p 73.

<sup>549</sup> Pannenberg 1993, p 652 and 691.

<sup>550</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 173.

<sup>551</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 177.

## b) Resurrection

*The immortality of the soul is an opinion- the resurrection of the body is a hope.*<sup>552</sup>

The resurrection of Jesus Christ and resurrection of all believers are central topics of the Christian faith. Christian eschatology needs to refer to the resurrection. The notion of resurrection is not common in all worldviews. Therefore, this chapter will start with an analysis of the theologian's engagement with their own worldview ( $\alpha$ ). The idea of a physical resurrection was already discussed in II 3 a ( $\beta$ ) as opposition to the immortality of the soul. This discussion will be broadened here ( $\beta$ ). Finally, the correlation between the individual and general eschatology will be examined. This will be done exemplarily by an analysis of the correlation between individual and communal or corporate resurrection as it is depicted by the four theologians ( $\gamma$ ).

### ( $\alpha$ ) Resurrection and Worldview

Mbiti discusses the African worldview. And since death does “not immediately annihilate life”<sup>553</sup>, the ideas of resurrection are not highly developed among the Akamba and other African peoples. Mbiti summarizes a myth of the Akamba that deals with resurrection. Resurrection in that myth is granted to the ancestors of one specific man who won a fight against an Iimu. When he killed the Iimu, the Iimu told him to make a powder from the Iimu's finger. With this powder the man could make his ancestors return to this world. The ancestors returned as they used to be. The only changes were insignificant. Children were older and certain blemishes people had at the point of their death did not appear anymore. However, no other changes were noticeable and death occurred to all those resurrected people again. A further image of resurrection is the resurrection of an individual whose dead body was touched by an Iimu. That person turns into an Iimu. Both examples show that resurrection is only dealt with according to events in the past. This is also true for other African myths about immortality or rejuvenation. They deal with past realities. Unlike the Bible, African myths do not, according to Mbiti, promote a future hope.<sup>554</sup> Resurrection is portrayed materialistically. Those who are in the spirit world are brought back to the world of human beings. Kato therefore reasons that this reflection is a

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<sup>552</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 65.

<sup>553</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 157.

<sup>554</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 157- 159 and Mbiti 1991<sup>R</sup>, p 97-99.

presupposition for Mbiti which makes him incompetent in interpreting biblical scriptures concerning the resurrection.<sup>555</sup> But the opposite is true. Mbiti reflects on his background and rejects its materialistic view on eschatology. This rejection he also implies to theological reasoning by Western theologians. That leads to a refusal of the idea of a physical resurrection. Just like Pannenberg and Moltmann named dominant concepts of the afterlife in their culture and contradicted them by references to biblical texts, so does Mbiti. But he goes further and also critiques other contexts. He outlines the general consensus on the question of continuity as Western. His bewilderment about scholars who even reason that human beings can maintain their individuality in a way that they are able to recognize friends and family members comes out in his writings. Herein he sees a problem that arises from a materialistic depiction of eschatology.<sup>556</sup>

### (β) Physical Resurrection

According to Moltmann and Pannenberg, death annihilates the body and the soul of a human being. Only his or her relationship to God secures identity and continuity. And identity between the present life and the future life is of fundamental importance to both theologians. Therefore, for Moltmann the physical resurrection becomes the moment in which life will be restored, compensated and fulfilled. Mbiti does not portray the resurrection in the same way. For Mbiti the resurrection does not restore individuality. He regards resurrection as unification with God. Mbiti rejects materialistic language and pleads for a non-physical resurrection. This is the reason why Kato criticises Mbiti. Pannenberg also seems to align with Mbiti and favours a non-materialistic resurrection, but nevertheless he talks about a physical resurrection.

According to Mbiti, the corporate resurrection may not be understood as a physical resurrection. The New Testament does employ materialistic language that can lead to a materialistic understanding of eschatology but the symbols and images used in the New Testament are meant to point to reality beyond their literal meanings.<sup>557</sup> For this argument Kato criticises Mbiti harshly. Kato accuses Mbiti of spiritualization and compares him to therefore with Origen. The spiritualization of

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<sup>555</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 86-88.

<sup>556</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 170-175 (biblical texts quoted especially on page 172).

<sup>557</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 62-64.

Origen led him to neglect millennial thinking.<sup>558</sup> Kato does not outline his own position more widely but suggests that millennial thinking is orthodox while Origen and Mbiti are leaving the Christian tradition. For Mbiti, material thinking causes the problematic striving for an identity and continuity between this life and the life in the world to come.<sup>559</sup> When Mbiti discusses physical resurrection, he makes clear that the concept of a materialistic or physical resurrection was strongly favoured by Augustine and therefore made its way into church doctrine. After Augustine, the fourth Lateran Council and Luther promoted the principle of a physical resurrection. Nevertheless, according to Mbiti, no biblical evidence is given for a physical resurrection. Since all resurrection is inaugurated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Mbiti goes back to Christ's resurrection. In the reports of those who have seen the resurrected Lord, it is clear that they did not recognize him at first. His body was also not a physical body. Jesus could go through walls, yet he was able to consume food. Mbiti looks at the spiritual body, which became the new body of Jesus Christ. The spiritual body is a body no longer affected by time. It is a body that has a place in the spiritual world unlike the physical body. Nevertheless, the spiritual body can also enter the physical world, but there it does not experience limitations.<sup>560</sup>

In Kato's reasoning, a physical, individual body is necessary. The reason for this can be found not only in biblical texts but also in Kato's focus on atonement. Kato argues that salvation is not for everybody but only for those who accepted Christ during their lifetime. Those who are not saved will suffer physically in a hell of fire.<sup>561</sup> A denial of hell is not to be combined with Christianity since it does not derive from the Bible<sup>562</sup>, which is the only relevant source of information about the afterlife.<sup>563</sup> Kato's focus on physical resurrection is mainly to be explained with his interest in hell, a major theme in his writings. Here, Kato differs from Moltmann, who also promotes a physical resurrection. Moltmann argues that the resurrection of the body is the Jewish and Christian concept of dealing with the defeat of death. God is God of life. God promises life for everyone. And in the resurrection God fulfils God's promise.<sup>564</sup> Since the identity of those who will be raised lay before God, they have to be depicted as whole identities. Referring to the Sh'ma Israel, Moltmann

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<sup>558</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 80.

<sup>559</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 173.

<sup>560</sup> Cf. *ibid*, p 169-173.

<sup>561</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 84 and 87.

<sup>562</sup> Cf.: Kato 1985c, p 50.

<sup>563</sup> Cf.: Kato 1976, p 19.

<sup>564</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 209.

points out that God always deals with the whole person. That is seen in the command “that those who pray should love God, with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and with all their might.”<sup>565</sup> And the resurrection of the body and the soul stresses this unity. Moltmann sees herein the foundation for a theology of embodiment.<sup>566</sup> At the same time the “hope of the redemption of the body and the hope of the redemption of all creation from vanity are one.”<sup>567</sup> Therefore he pleads to defend the notion of resurrection against the concept of an immortal soul. Like Mbiti, Moltmann sees the source for all reflection about resurrection in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But unlike Mbiti, he does not draw the conclusion that Jesus was not resurrected physically. Moltmann argues that the resurrection of Christ implies a change of the physicality of the body. This change will also occur to all human beings in their resurrections. Moltmann speaks of *transfiguration* and *metamorphosis*. But it will be this mortal life with its mortal body and soul that will be transfigured and metamorphosed.<sup>568</sup>

Pannenberg does not explicitly address the question of a physical resurrection, but in his references to the resurrection a position of his can be outlined. Unlike Kato and Moltmann, Pannenberg does not favour an individual physical resurrection. His reasoning is closer to Mbiti’s understanding of a corporate resurrection that is not materialistic but still somehow physical. Pannenberg’s reasoning concerning the physical resurrection evolves around the question of identity, in the field of theodicy and when he deals with eschatological implications of Paul’s notion of the church as the Body of Christ. In his reflection on continuity, Pannenberg distinguishes between physical identity and material identity. A material identity was promoted in certain apocalyptic reflections of Judaism. The earth was believed to give back the dead bodies at the day of resurrection. By early Christian Apologetics this question was discussed concerning martyrs who had been eaten by animals. An answer that favoured a materialistic approach to resurrection reasoned that animals and cannibals who eat human beings cannot digest them properly. Therefore, the original material of the human being does not become a part of the animal but remains saved for the resurrection. Pannenberg says that this illogical reasoning led Origen to complain about Christians who did not understand Paul’s conception of a transfiguration into a pneumatic body at the resurrection. Pannenberg shares Origen’s concern. But it is important to see that Pannenberg emphasises

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<sup>565</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 76.

<sup>566</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 66.

<sup>567</sup> Moltmann 1965, p 214.

<sup>568</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 71-77.

that Origen's position arose before a background of this unreasonable discussion.<sup>569</sup> Therefore, Pannenberg's position on a physical resurrection cannot be determined fully from this passage. Another passage in which Pannenberg refers to the fulfillment of the world and the resurrection also fails to lead to a clear resolution. Discussing theodicy, Pannenberg argues that the suffering in this life needs a real compensation in the life to come.<sup>570</sup> This seems to include that physical suffering needs physical compensation. However, the word Pannenberg uses is *real* compensation and not physical. More revealing seems to be depiction of connection between the individual's resurrection and the body of Christ. The individual physicality is overcome in the resurrection to one body.<sup>571</sup> Here the European scholar agrees with Mbiti. Mbiti also reasons that there will be oneness after the resurrection. He uses the term *many-in-one*<sup>572</sup> According to Pannenberg, this identity eradicates the separation between individual human beings. But at the same time it does not eliminate individual special features or peculiarities of human beings as it does in Mbiti's reflection.<sup>573</sup> For Pannenberg the individuality or peculiarity comes out in the biblical image of the different parts of the one body. Individual physicality is consequently neglected by Pannenberg. But the European scholar refers to a New Life of the resurrected that has a physical form of being that is not to be separated from others. This also applies to Jesus Christ who is the head of this body. Consequently, Pannenberg criticizes the biblical reports of Christ's revelation in an individual body to people after Easter as one-sided. The future coming of Christ can also not be seen as the coming of an individual. But Pannenberg portrays it with the cryptic notion of the *revelation of a life-connection*.<sup>574</sup> In summary, it can be said that Pannenberg does not argue in favour of an individual and physical resurrection but that he portrays the resurrection as uniting all who are resurrected to *one* body that is physical but neither materialistic nor individually separated from other bodies.

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<sup>569</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 618-620.

<sup>570</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 190-192.

<sup>571</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 674-677.

<sup>572</sup> Mbiti 1971, p 178.

<sup>573</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p179 and Mbiti 1971, p 177(!)-197.

<sup>574</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 674-677. Quote on p 677: Die „Erwartung der Wiederkunft Christi richtet sich dabei nicht . . . auf das Erscheinen eines vereinzelt Individuums, sondern auf das Offenbarwerden eines Lebenszusammenhanges, der von dem gekreuzigten Jesus von Nazareth im Lichte der Herrlichkeit Gottes ausgeht.“



## (γ) Correlation between Individual and Communal Resurrection

Moltmann, Pannenberg and Mbiti speak about a corporate resurrection. This resurrection includes the whole of humanity. Therefore, a question arises about the correlation between the individual's resurrection and the corporate resurrection. All three theologians agree on the cosmic relevance for the final consummation and resurrection. Kato, however, does not reflect on this issue. Moltmann and Pannenberg depict the individual's resurrection and the communal resurrection as coinciding. Mbiti does so also, but his resurrection differs since it does not include the resurrection of the immortal soul.

While Pannenberg and Moltmann depict the *particula veri* of the notion of an immortal soul within its perseverance of the human's identity, Mbiti neglects that and sees the prime function of the immortal soul as worshipping God while it waits for the Parousia. The interim between death and resurrection or Parousia is consequently filled with time.<sup>575</sup> Here Mbiti disagrees with contemporary European Roman Catholic theologians like Gisbert Greshake whom Pannenberg quotes and defends.<sup>576</sup> Greshake depicts the moment of death as transference from time to eternity.<sup>577</sup> Moltmann also disagrees with that notion but for different reasons: Moltmann restrains from identifying the moment of the personal death with the moment of the general resurrection because human beings and earth belong together. Therefore, they will be redeemed together. The New Earth offers new possibilities for new embodiment.<sup>578</sup> "The hope of redemption of the body and the hope of the redemption of all creation from vanity are one."<sup>579</sup> The Christian Hope has a cosmic dimension. In his exegesis of Rom. 8: 19-23, Moltmann states that the expectation of the resurrection of the body includes hope for all creatures that are living and dying.<sup>580</sup> Moltmann traces this cosmic dimension of the Christian Hope back to the cosmic dimension of Jesus Christ's death. He refers to Col. 1:20 which deals with the reconciliation (*αποκαταλλάσσω*) of all things (*τα παντα* → *ο πας* everything, totality).<sup>581</sup> The image that is used by the biblical Jesus for the New Earth and the cosmic dimension of his message is the kingdom of God (*βασιλεια του θεου*). Moltmann sees a correlation between the coming of the kingdom of God and the

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<sup>575</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 161.

<sup>576</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg, p 1993.

<sup>577</sup> Cf.: Greshake 1969, p 387.

<sup>578</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 104.

<sup>579</sup> Moltmann 1956, p 214.

<sup>580</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 91.

<sup>581</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 93.

personal and general resurrection from the death. The resurrection of the dead and the coming of the new world belong together- the first is the personal side and the second is the cosmic side of the same event.<sup>582</sup> Pannenberg almost uses the same words to describe the correlation of individual and general eschatology. According to him, Christian theology deals with individual fulfilment of the personal life after death and with the general cosmic fulfilment of the world. The salvation/ wholeness (*Heil*) for which human beings are created comes into full existence with the resurrection of the dead. The *Heil* consist of indissoluble unity with God. Pannenberg is eager to show that both individual and general eschatology belong together. It is not the moment of the individual death of one person that can be linked to the resurrection. The resurrection is an occurrence that happens to all individuals at the end of time. According to Pannenberg, otherwise the physical bodily (*leibliche*) resurrection cannot be imagined.<sup>583</sup> And more important the separation of individual fulfilment from the general fulfilment of humankind contradicts the biblical eschatological hope. The New Testament joins individual and general eschatology in the one event of the future resurrection of all human beings.<sup>584</sup>

Moltmann refers to a “social resurrection into a new community.”<sup>585</sup> And Mbiti calls this the corporate resurrection in which all will be resurrected to oneness. No mutual recognition will be possible thereafter. “The individual will relinquish his [sic] individuality but gain his [sic] perfect and corporate oneness.”<sup>586</sup> In this oneness God can be seen face to face. It is only God to whom the individual will be known after the resurrection. And God will know the individual by his or her new name. The corporate existence will bring a new and true form of intimacy going beyond all intimacy that can be experienced in this life. As scriptural basis for the oneness Mbiti quotes I Cor. 15:28 and refers to Eph. 1:10. God’s being all in all and the recapitulation of all things in God serve as the foundation for Mbiti’s further reflection on biblical texts that either promote the oneness or which demonstrate the nature of the oneness. The sharing of one name (Rev. 22: 4) is seen as further evidence for the oneness. The nature of the oneness is to be a royal priesthood (I Pet. 2: 5; Rev. 1: 6; 5: 10, 21: 5) that constantly praises and worships God (Rev. 4: 8). In this oneness everybody will enter the sabbatical rest. This is the ultimate goal of human life. In the sabbatical rest dimensions of time and space will be elimi-

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<sup>582</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 69.

<sup>583</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 623.

<sup>584</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 624.

<sup>585</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 71.

<sup>586</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 176.

nated. Everything will be new and God will be praised eternally.<sup>587</sup> The final or corporate resurrection is linked to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a corporate phenomenon and is shaped by the tension of already and not yet. For Mbiti the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the future resurrection. He refers to Easter as inaugurating or realizing the eschatological resurrection.<sup>588</sup> Human beings are drawn into the resurrection and participate in the experience of Jesus Christ. The incorporation at baptism of Christians into Jesus Christ can only be understood as a corporate phenomenon. Not the individual is resurrected but the whole body of Christ. The Easter-event inaugurates and realizes the eschatological resurrection. However, the paradox of *already* and *not yet* remains. The Parousia or consummation of time is still outstanding.<sup>589</sup> The final resurrection coincides with the Parousia.

### c) Judgement and End of the World

*The Lord who spoke of future judgement is the One who predicted a future hell.*<sup>590</sup>

The End of the World and the judgement is dealt with after the resurrection in this thesis. This is not a chronological subsequence but a logical. And it is influenced by the reasoning of Moltmann and Pannenberg. Moltmann argues explicitly and Pannenberg implicitly that the end of the old world is not an eschatological event of its own right but it is a necessity for the beginning of the New World. Mbiti does not broadly engage with this topic. Kato's perspective is again to be understood from his focus on atonement theology. The questions that arise concerning the end of the world are the relationship between the end of the world and history ( $\alpha$ ). Furthermore it is necessary to look at the correlation between the end of the world and the resurrection of Christ ( $\beta$ ). Concerning judgement, three topics will be dealt with: the necessity of judgement, the content of the judgement and the outcome of the judgement ( $\gamma$ ).

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<sup>587</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 176-178.

<sup>588</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 167.

<sup>589</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p164-170.

<sup>590</sup> Kato 1975, p 86.

## (α) End in History or End of History?

Pannenberg and Moltmann strongly point out that the fulfilment of the world is also the end of the world. According to Pannenberg, even though an end of the world without fulfilment can be imagined (total destruction) a fulfilment of the world without it coming to an end is not to be imagined. The kingdom of God as the Bible describes it requires conversion of nature and transformation of society. The biblical image is the New Heaven and the New Earth. Pannenberg takes these images seriously and states that the final praise of God which will be given by all people calls for a cosmic renewal. This cosmic renewal consists of reconciliation between the individual and society and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>591</sup> Moltmann reasons that there cannot be a beginning of the new world “without the end of this old one,”<sup>592</sup> because “this world cannot bear the resurrection and the new world created by resurrection.”<sup>593</sup> Eschatological reflection that does not consider this cosmic renewal does not take the fulfilment of humankind seriously. According to Pannenberg this applies to every eschatological reflection that stays in the paradigms of inner-worldly expectations. This he proves by referring to the concepts of Marx and Kant which call for classless society or eternal peace. Both conditions would only benefit those who are alive when they come into existence. Compared with Christian hope of a future cosmic renewal, these concepts appear imperfect and incomplete.<sup>594</sup> The Christian eschatology presumes that every individual of the whole of humanity participates in his or her fulfilment. The biblical image Pannenberg refers to is the image of the resurrection of the dead.

For Pannenberg, the end of the world needs to be an event in history. Otherwise, human existence as an existence of beings in history would not make sense.<sup>595</sup> Here it seems that Pannenberg contradicts Moltmann’s rejection of dealing with the end of the world within the framework of history (e.g. through nuclear destruction<sup>596</sup>). Moltmann argues if the end of the world is dealt with in the framework of history, the apocalypse becomes the end of life and creation. Therefore, he suggests a reflection about the apocalypse in the framework of eschatology. In the framework of eschatology apocalypticism expresses the end of the old world which

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<sup>591</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 630-632.

<sup>592</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 227.

<sup>593</sup> Moltmann 1974, p 226.

<sup>594</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 631.

<sup>595</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 632-634.

<sup>596</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 204-208.

goes along with the beginning of the new world: “The end with terror makes an end of the terror without end.”<sup>597</sup> But does Pannenberg really contradict Moltmann in this point? Pannenberg refers to an end in history which is also the end of history. But he also asserts that historical events do not cause this end but God does.<sup>598</sup> Here Pannenberg and Moltmann agree with Kato’s<sup>599</sup> premillennial critique on postmillennialism. While postmillennialism hopes for a millennial kingdom erected by Christians, premillennialists insist on God being the one who establishes the kingdom.<sup>600</sup>

## (β) Golgotha or Armageddon

There is a crucial difference between Pannenberg’s and Moltmann’s positions. This difference also derives from Moltmann’s christological perspective. It is important to notice that Moltmann depicts the origin of the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in *Golgotha* and not in *Armageddon*. Therefore, the end of the world is not the origin of the kingdom of God but only a necessity for its fulfilment.<sup>601</sup> Moltmann compares the beginning of the New World with child birth and with the death of Jesus Christ. Just as the pain of labour leads to new life, the rebirth of the cosmos is a process in which pain is prevalent. The death of Jesus Christ was a real death. But in the death of Jesus Christ something new and great began: “his real end was his true beginning.”<sup>602</sup> Pannenberg, on the other hand, refers to the future as the field of God’s power.<sup>603</sup> The resurrection of Christ is referred to as an act of *anticipation* of the future resurrection.<sup>604</sup> It is interesting to observe that Mbiti uses the term *precipitate* to describe the relationship between the Christ event in history and the future Christ event.<sup>605</sup> This can be seen as a correcting reference to Pannenberg’s writings. Moltmann also discusses the difference between his own reflections and those of Pannenberg on this matter: “The resurrection of Jesus *from* the dead is more than just the prolepsis of the general resurrection of the dead.”<sup>606</sup> It is apparent that Mbiti knows Moltmann’s and Pannenberg’s writings.<sup>607</sup> Mbiti also argues

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<sup>597</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 229.

<sup>598</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg, p 632-641 (see especially Footnote 183 on page 632).

<sup>599</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 81-82 and 158.

<sup>600</sup> Cf.: Weber 1979, p 9-12.

<sup>601</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 233.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid*, p 227.

<sup>603</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1991, p 119.

<sup>604</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 624.

<sup>605</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 33.

<sup>606</sup> Moltmann 1996, p 195 (italics by Moltmann).

<sup>607</sup> Mbiti refers to Moltmann frequently (e.g. Mbiti 1978, p 32; 40 and 45).

that the African worldview does not know about an end of the world. Then he states that in the New Testament the end of the world plays an important role. And he regards the New Testament eschatology as capable of adding the notion of teleology to the African worldview.<sup>608</sup> Therefore, Mbiti argues eschatology and teleology have to derive from the New Testament itself. The New Testament does speak about a final consummation, but this is always linked to the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>609</sup> Here Mbiti's exegesis strongly agrees with Moltmann's theologizing. Even though their methodological approach slightly differs, they can agree on the christological centre of eschatology. Consequently, it must be said that Moltmann and Pannenberg do not differ in their depictions of the end of the world concerning it being an historical event. There they only differ with Mbiti and agree with Kato. But when it comes to the correlation between the Incarnation and the Parousia, Mbiti and Moltmann are in agreement with each other but opposed to Pannenberg, while Kato is silent on the issue.

These differences between Moltmann, Pannenberg and Mbiti can be explained from the context of their eschatology. Both Mbiti and Moltmann emphasize that eschatology must arise in the context of Christology. Pannenberg, on the other hand, deals with eschatology in regards to the doctrine of creation. Consequently, the tension between already and not yet is a necessary tension for Pannenberg. Before the fulfilment God does not prove being God fully. Transferring this to resurrection of Christ, it can be said that while Pannenberg depicts the resurrection as anticipation of the future fulfilment, Moltmann and Mbiti see the future fulfilment as arising from the Easter event. The Easter event fulfils the *Promise*, assures that the Promise will be fulfilled in the future,<sup>610</sup> and links past, present and future in the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>611</sup>

### (γ) Judgement

None of the four scholars question the reality of judgement. But they differ in the depiction of judgement and give divergent reasons for the existence of judgement. They vary in their opinions on when and how the judgement takes place. And finally, they disagree on the outcome of the judgment.

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<sup>608</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1972<sup>3</sup>, p181.

<sup>609</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, 177.

<sup>610</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1965, p 209-210.

<sup>611</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, 104.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Kato's main focus in his eschatological reflection is on the notion of judgement. His biblical justification reads as follows: "The Lord who spoke of future judgement is the One who predicted a future hell."<sup>612</sup> It is also interesting to notice that the phrase *who spoke of future judgment* is used almost like a christological title by Kato. Again, this must be understood from Kato's foundation within atonement theology. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are seen as necessities to save from punishment. Christ's death as an individual man in history calls for individuals' decisions in history.<sup>613</sup> Nevertheless, Kato outlines the reality of judgement from biblical words of Christ. This is enough reason for Kato to speak of judgement. A further reflection on the necessity of judgement is not needed by the evangelical scholar. Moltmann, on the other hand, argues that judgement is not what Christian apocalypticism is about. Christian apocalypticism, rather, knows about the necessity of *judgement on godlessness* for the sake of the kingdom of God.<sup>614</sup>

Mbiti speculates on the transformation of souls during the interim between death and the resurrection. He admits that he does not have clear biblical evidence for this teaching, but he argues that the being with Jesus which is promised to the thief on the cross next to Jesus probably indicates a betterment of the thief's character in the presence of Christ. Jesus' engagement with the spirits in prison (I Pet. 3: 19-20 and 4: 6) also only makes sense if betterment and transformation is possible at this stage.<sup>615</sup> He also refers to judgement and salvation within sacraments. In the act of baptism, the believer is inaugurated in Christ's death and resurrection.<sup>616</sup> Participation in the Eucharist brings the Christian into the presence of Jesus Christ. In the Eucharist the sinner experiences correction and redemption. The sinner receives, and here Mbiti uses the words of Ignatius of Antioch,<sup>617</sup> the *antidote against death* and the *medicine of immortality* in the Eucharist.<sup>618</sup> Pannenberg also reflects on judgment, which according to him, happens in time and beyond. The final judgement corresponds with the judgement in time: God does not imply outer punishment.<sup>619</sup> Nevertheless, Pannenberg's focus is on the final judgment which

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<sup>612</sup> Kato 1975, p 86.

<sup>613</sup> Cf.: Kato 1998, p 197.

<sup>614</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 227.

<sup>615</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 175.

<sup>616</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 96-101 and 156.

<sup>617</sup> Cf.: Lindemann 192, p 188.

<sup>618</sup> Cf.: Mbiti 1978, p 102.

<sup>619</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 656-658.

takes place in eternity. Then he reasons all moments of life come together. And therein lays the judgement. The judgement of God consists of God allowing the one who is judged to suffer the consequences of his or her own deeds. Human beings live their lives in contradiction to themselves or to others. During the earthly life it is possible to suppress those contradictions and to use masks to cover it up. But in eternity in which all time is present at once, this is not possible. The coming together of all moments of life in one point is a rather shocking scenario. The contradictions endanger the human being. Therefore Pannenberg describes eternity itself as the judgement. God wants reconciliation between God and human beings. That does not change the confrontation with the judgement of eternity. But God gives the chance of purification. The judgement can become like a purifying fire that cleanses human beings from their contradictions. Here Pannenberg refers to I Cor. 3:12-15: *Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw- each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he [sic] will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he [sic] will suffer loss, though he himself [sic] will be saved, but only as through fire.* Pannenberg interprets this fire as a fire of cleansing and purification. The fire coincides with the Parousia of Christ. In his further reflection Pannenberg identifies the light of God's majesty with the fire of purification.<sup>620</sup> Kato shares the futuristic focus of Pannenberg. He strongly neglects Mbiti's emphasis on the sacraments.<sup>621</sup> When it comes to judgement, Kato reiterates over and over a judgement after death that includes hell.<sup>622</sup>

In Christian theology two outcomes for the judgement have been discussed widely: a dual end of history that leads to heaven or hell or a universal salvation. Kato declares the dual end as the only possibility and accuses Mbiti of being universalistic.<sup>623</sup> Pannenberg sees the dual end as possible but not necessary. And Moltmann neglects the possibility of a dual end of the world. According to Pannenberg, the possibility of total destruction in the fire is given in the New Testament. Pannenberg claims that for isolated cases there is a possibility that nothing is left after the fire has burned everything that contradicts the presence of God. This possibility is not constitutive. The faithful connection with Jesus Christ prevents this from happening. Human beings of all cultures who are close to the kingdom of God

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<sup>620</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, p 654-677.

<sup>621</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, p 79.

<sup>622</sup> Cf.: *ibid*, 86 and 88-89 and Kato 1985c, p 50.

<sup>623</sup> Cf.: Kato 1975, 87.



even without knowing it are also saved from that consequence.<sup>624</sup> Mbiti also refers to those parts of the Bible that mention the possibility of exclusion and perishing. These biblical references are interpreted by Mbiti as not concerning eternity. Eternity is only an attribute of God and can therefore not refer to punishment that consists of God's absence. "One finds it almost impossible to imagine that . . . punishment will last for all eternity in the same way that Redemption is for eternity. For only the presence of God has the quality of eternity."<sup>625</sup>

Mbiti also finds further biblical evidence for the inclusion of everybody in salvation. He refers to the prodigal son who only returns in the evening and reasons that the love of God will reach all human beings. Nobody can escape from this love. This Mbiti also finds ensured in Psalm 139. Mbiti gives two further arguments supporting the teaching of universal salvation. The "harmony of the heavenly worship would be impaired, if . . . there is one soul which continues in Sheol."<sup>626</sup> And it is the universal salvation that depicts God's love as stronger than the soul's unwillingness of repentance. Mbiti's reflection again finds its foundation in the field of Christology. Christ's victory over death in his resurrection has implications for the future salvation of everybody: it brings being to the non-being and even defeats the so-called second death. That is the eternal death of the soul in the last judgement.<sup>627</sup> Moltmann, who also grounds his eschatology in christological reflection, agrees with Mbiti. Moltmann makes the point that salvation and damnation are asymmetrical. Unlike damnation, salvation has been prepared from the foundation of the world (Mt. 25). Damnation might be described as long-lasting in the Bible but not as eternal. Like Mbiti, Moltmann also stresses that only God is eternal.<sup>628</sup> Nevertheless, the biblical texts refer to damnation. Moltmann shows that the notion of damnation has to be understood in the original context of the reflection on the last judgement. Originally this reflection was victim oriented. The last judgement expressed the hope of triumph over oppressors. Only after Constantine was the last judgement depicted as a punishment for wrong deeds.<sup>629</sup> As a theological question, the reflection on universal salvation and the double outcome becomes the question of whether God decides finally or human beings. Is it the free choice of the human

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<sup>624</sup> Cf.: Pannenberg 1993, p 654-667.

<sup>625</sup> Mbiti 1978, p 179.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid, p 179.

<sup>627</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 179-181.

<sup>628</sup> Cf.: Moltmann 1996, p 242.

<sup>629</sup> Cf.: ibid, p 235.

being for either damnation or salvation that determines eternity or is it the love of God who wants salvation for all creation?

## Conclusion

The dissertation shows that all four theologians differ in their depiction of Christian eschatology. While they disagree about certain notions, Mbiti, Kato, Moltmann and Pannenberg are also in agreement with one another on other topics. Sometimes one theologian's argument is opposed by the three others, sometimes two of them align over against the other two and sometimes everybody holds a slightly different opinion. The coalitions between the four theologians are diverse in origin and do not primarily derive from their cultural context. Three different facets which contribute to individual context have been taken into consideration in this dissertation: the direct and wider cultural and national context and the theological context. The direct cultural and national context refers to the theologians' surrounding, their biography and education. The reflection on the wider cultural and national context has a chronological and spatial component. It refers to the theologians' history and to the history of the ideas they are employing, and engages with non-local theology. The correlation of the four theologians' depiction of eschatology and theology as a whole is referred to as theological context in this dissertation.

The **direct cultural or national context** of the four theologians is visible in their writings. Both German theologians employ a Eurocentric paradigm. Moltmann tries to break this preoccupation but he does not deal with non-Western theology thoroughly. For instance, he does not show engagement with non-Western scholars. His engagement with problems of the two-third world has to be understood from his socio-historical context. Moltmann is aware of injustice, and political theology is his answer for the question of how theology can be practiced after Auschwitz. Therefore, it is this very German question that leads to Moltmann's engagement with injustices around the world. Even though he acknowledges their problems, Moltmann stays short of engaging with the people of the two-third world. Pannenberg claims to have written a universal Systematic Theology. He states that even though it is based on European history and social realities it relates universally since it searches for the general truth. Unfortunately Pannenberg's quest for the general truth does not take into consideration that even concepts of truth are rather contextual. His positivistic approach has to be criticised for this deficiency. Nevertheless, Pannenberg's eschatology has an advantage over the other theologians' eschatology. Pannenberg engages widely with non-theological concepts. More than the three other theologians, he puts effort in a broader reflection of eschatology that

does not only take theological reasoning into consideration. His knowledge of natural science and philosophy is remarkable. The emphasis on natural science obviously also arises from his cultural context. Pannenberg wrote and published his systematic theology in a time in which natural science in Germany and throughout Western-Europe received far more attention and respect than the so-called human-science (*Geistesgeschichte*). A theology that wants to be accepted and recognized within German universities needs theologians like Pannenberg who are knowledgeable in the field of natural science and are able to argue profoundly. A critical question concerning Pannenberg's depiction of anticipation could be, if the notion of anticipation allows for theology to be less critical towards the European context. God is depicted as working in the future. This work can be anticipated by human beings but direct divine interference does not occur. The life in this time and world is determined by the laws of natural science. God's realm is distant and can merely be anticipated. Therefore, Pannenberg's theology can be seen as a theology that subscribes to the dominant European worldview of scientific reasoning.

Both African theologians acknowledge and transcend their cultural or national context. Mbiti and Kato have been trained in Western institutions both during their secondary and tertiary education. This education on the one side broadened their thinking. However, it forced them to deal with the differences between the reasoning of their culture and the Western culture. The educational system and its adherents often were not sensitive to cultural needs of the pupils. Mbiti describes the teachings of his schoolteachers as playing down the culture of the Akamba to whom he belongs. However, Mbiti was able to reconcile parts of his African worldview with parts of his Western teachings. Mbiti, who was comfortable in different cultures and having a great understanding of African worldview as well as Western reasoning, is able to analyse and criticise both. He is able to show where Western Christian theology is more Western than Christian. He can also point out how the Christian message brings something new to the African worldview. The African worldview is understood as *Praeparatio Evangelica* by him. Just like Pannenberg is able to build bridges between the reasoning of natural science and Christian theology, Mbiti can build them between the African worldview and Christian theology. Mbiti is very knowledgeable. In his writings he refers to theologians of different nationalities and denominations. Kato is not able to reconcile the African worldview with Christian theology with the same impact as Mbiti. However, Kato does acknowledge culture as given by God and depicts it as having positive elements. In spite of this, Kato's hermeneutic approach sees the Bible as free from cultural bi-

ases and claims that the Bible is the absolute word of God. This approach does not allow him to value culture as source of theology. Only the Bible is relevant for theologizing and the Bible judges every culture. This depiction of the Bible and culture has to be seen as a consequence of Kato's cultural and educational background. His father was a traditional priest and Kato experienced him as hostile towards Christianity. Christianity was taught to Kato by evangelical missionaries with little cultural sensitivity. Their depiction of Christianity was also hostile to his culture. Therefore Kato had to choose between one and the other. When he chose to be a Christian he broke with many of his cultural habits. His education in North-America at the Dallas Theological Seminary further widened the gap between the traditional worldview of his people and his own so-called biblical perspective on life. Finally Kato employed a reasoning that focuses solidly on individual decisions. This reasoning is not only foreign to his culture it can also hardly claim to be purely biblical. The possibility of assuming different presuppositions as biblical is given, especially with the grammatico-historical method of hermeneutics. This method does not acknowledge subjectivity on the side of the biblical author or the reader who is employing it. Therefore it is highly endangered to be over-subjective without realizing it.

The **wider cultural and national context** refers to the history from which certain ideas derive but also to non-local theology. Non-local theology can be Western theology for an African scholar; it can be Korean theology for a European. Non-local theology can also become part of the direct context; this can be seen in the example of Mbiti's being at home in two cultures. Non-local theology might even substitute the original local context as Kato's example shows. The historical context of their theology is reflected upon by Mbiti, Pannenberg and Moltmann. Kato however neglects the reflection. His ideas nevertheless derive from a wider cultural and national context as well. The dissertation gives one example of the formation of Kato's wider context in the historical description of the rise of millennialism. It is apparent that Kato who neglects reflecting upon influences in his theology that do not derive from the Bible is most vulnerable to those influences. This vulnerability exists because Kato is not even aware of what influences his reasoning. Pannenberg's lengthy discussion of historical theology is brilliant for its precise depiction. However, little reflection occurs on how this history influences Pannenberg's own line of thought. He seems to be not affected by anything around him. Pannenberg gives the impression that his reasoning is above every-day realities and derives solidly from science, revelation and logic. Moltmann discusses both, the direct and the

wider context of his theology. He reflects upon his theology as a derivative of a specific history and social circumstances. Mbiti strongly reflects upon his history as well. At the same time he also knows about the Western history and therefore about the history of the theologians he engages with. Both African theologians widely refer to Western scholars whereas the German theologians almost only refer to discussions which take place in the Northern World. Moltmann refers to a discussion about the South frequently but neglects the discussion that takes place in the South. The engagement with theology from other context is prevalent in the African theologian's writing. But their reasoning is quite different. Kato seems to prefer what he has learned in North America over what theologians in Africa have to say. His prime concern in engagement with African theologians seems to be the correction of their view by referring to North American evangelical theology. Mbiti on the other hand can be critical towards both his context's the African and the European context. His well-argued theology often precisely points out why a Western position is as it is. Mbiti understands theological ideas in and from their context.

Not only has the cultural and national context played an important role within theological reasoning of Kato, Mbiti, Moltmann and Pannenberg, but also the **theological context** can hardly be overestimated. This dissertation focuses on the theological context and points out that the conclusions drawn by Moltmann, Pannenberg, Mbiti and Kato mostly derive from the theological context. Mbiti and Moltmann often agree in their conclusions because both centre their whole theology on Christology. Even though their reasoning is often different and at times it can be seen that Moltmann's reflecting derives from the same philosophical sources as Pannenberg's writing, Moltmann's and Mbiti's conclusions are often alike. The importance of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection as occurrences in this world therefore lead to Moltmann's and Mbiti's eschatology being concerned with this world as it is now. The future which is hoped for is hoped for because the *Promise* is already given. It is not only given but is also fulfilled in the event of the Exodus, the resurrection and fulfils itself again and again in the celebration of the sacraments. This fulfilment is seen as mere anticipation by Pannenberg. Not the Christ event is the centre of his theology but the creation which will be fulfilled by God in the end. Therefore, it can be said that Pannenberg's futuristic eschatology differs strongly from Mbiti's eschatology. Moltmann's theology, which is also futuristic, does not differ in this regard from Mbiti. Moltmann refers to the future as the advent and the Parousia. Therefore the future Moltmann talks about is an *experienced future*. Through Christ and in the Exodus people have experienced God's future and they

still experience it in the celebration of the sacraments. For a traditional African worldview which only ascribes meaning to experienced time this reasoning is a possible bridge between Christian eschatology and African reasoning. Therefore it is not surprising that Mbiti centres his eschatology on the sacraments. Kato's claim of Mbiti's "Anglo-Catholic" persuasion is not false but nevertheless misses the point. Mbiti is trained as an Anglican priest and church affiliation has a major impact on one's theological reasoning. However, Mbiti uses his denominational background and his African worldview to ground a theology that is biblical, well reasoned and concerned about its recipients, who are the people in Africa. Mbiti's strong focus on experience is a major strength of his theological reasoning. Within his solid academic theologizing about the sacraments in correlation to eschatology, Mbiti does not forget to include the suggestion, that since people in Africa are often used to sit in circles rather than in rows they should do so also during the Eucharist.

Finally the question of whether eschatology is the core concern of Christian theology can be modified. Jesus Christ is the centre of the Christian faith. Christian eschatology is therefore founded and grounded in Jesus Christ. Moltmann and Mbiti who centre their theology on Jesus Christ can be largely in agreement with one another even though their depiction of time, hermeneutics and the eschatological events slightly differ. Pannenberg's and Kato's reasoning can also be related to Moltmann's and Mbiti's theologizing when it focuses on Jesus Christ. Even though Pannenberg's and Kato's theology lacks a strong christological perspective it cannot be said that it does not engage with Christ. The very strong engagement with anthropology and creation or atonement deprive Christology to be central. Nevertheless, both theologians engage with Jesus Christ as well and therefore can be linked with Mbiti and Moltmann.

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