



Jürgen Moltmann (1926-2024)

Jürgen Moltmann, a pastor in the Reformed tradition who belonged to the union that is the Evangelical Church in Germany, and also one of Europe's most significant theologians of the last hundred years, died on 3 June aged 98.

Born on 8 April 1926, Moltmann found himself conscripted to fight for the Nazis in 1943 at the tender age of 16. Surrendering at the first opportunity, he spent 1945-1948 in various prisoner of war camps, many in the UK. There he descended into hopelessness having been confronted by the atrocities committed in the concentration camps. Nevertheless, the kindness of Christians at this time led him to a conversion experience. He confessed: 'I didn't find Christ, he found me'.

Five years as a pastor were followed by a career as an academic theologian first at the University of Bonn and then at the University of Tübingen. His theology highlights God's suffering alongside the suffering creation and human pain in particular, but declares a hope inspired by the resurrection. Eschatology regulates this, where God's ultimate triumph influences and transforms the present and requires the Christian's political engagement in the world. His own experience is clearly formational, but Moltmann was never parochial in outlook. His horizon was international, and he drew on global insights. He was influenced by liberation theologies, and orthopraxis was significant. But he drew ultimate inspiration from the history defying resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because history is reset at that point, then nothing is inevitable and all things can be changed for the better. His was a theological clarion call, and there were many who were profoundly inspired by his writing.

In 1999, at the inaugural Cheshunt Centre for Reformed Studies Conference on the theme 'The Future of Reformed Theology', Westminster College was honoured to welcome many distinguished theologians to Cambridge and Moltmann was among them. Those present will remember the sense that something noteworthy, if not deeply significant, was occurring in the life of the Cheshunt Foundation, Westminster College and the United Reformed Church. It would be good if we could recover a similar source of excitement for the present.

Today, we remember a pastor and theologian who helped post-war European Christians to rediscover hope for the future: hope in Christ's resurrection, but hope which requires engagement in the burning issues of the day with a view to their transformation not by our strength alone but by the power of the Spirit. We give thanks for a life well lived and say 'well done, good and faithful servant'.



Moltmann in 2016

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