

One is therefore left to wonder whether he sees association of the 144,000 with Jesus as implying discipleship in the future (since they follow him wherever he goes and he views them as actual sacrificial offerings to God and the exalted Jesus) and as being paradigmatic for Christian disciples.

All in all, this is a stimulating work. It is a valuable resource for discipleship studies, especially with the significant bibliography at each chapter's end. A final chapter summarizing the patterns detected or giving a conclusion would have strengthened it. Nevertheless, it will prove valuable to its targeted audience. It is a good introduction to the series. It can be recommended to students, pastors, scholars, and laypeople who need help as they follow on the path to discipleship.

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Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. Trans. Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. 390 pp. Paper. \$29.00.

Eschatology is usually perceived as spelling disaster for history. Yet as human beings, we live and imagine the future from within the world of history. *The Coming of God* continues Moltmann's scholarly and personal quest to understand Christian hope as neither the end nor the mere continuation of human history.

If eschatology is viewed as the final solution of all insoluble problems, then, Moltmann contends, we would do better to turn our backs on it altogether, for the end of history calls into question the meaning of our daily lives. "The person who presses forward to the end of life misses life itself" (x-xi). On the other hand, to identify the eschaton within history calls into question the hope of the poor, the oppressed, and the murdered that someday righteousness will flourish in the earth. "The dumb suffering of those who have been defeated and subjected finds no place in the annals of the ruling nations" (43). Clearly, the interests of both liberation and feminist theologies underlie Moltmann's theology, yet his real conversation partners are Jewish writers such as Ernst Bloch and Franz Rosenzweig.

What is perhaps clearer in *The Coming of God* than in any of his earlier work is the thoroughly Jewish underpinning of Moltmann's entire theological journey—which far transcends even Karl Barth's post-Holocaust sermon on "Jesus the Jew." In a truly remarkable expression of the transformative power of the cross, Moltmann, who came to his eschatological interest as a captured Nazi soldier, configures eschatology as the Easter Event refracted through Jewish images of bodily resurrection, Sabbath, and the Shekinah glory of temple worship. It is in light of these images that Moltmann pursues the very practical questions of What happens to a person in death? What is the political and ecological history of the world? And what are the future conditions of the cosmos?

Belief in the immortality of the soul, Moltmann contends, is an option. The resurrection of the dead is a hope. "Whereas the one puts its trust in the self-transcendence of the human being, the other relies on God's transcendence over death" (58). Belief in the resurrection seeks hope for history, not in the depths of our selves, but in the coming power of God. Furthermore, since there is no soul detached from the body, and no body that is not a part of nature, there can be no

redemption of human beings without a redemption of nature. Redemption of the body must include redemption of the earth and cosmos, as well. All things sigh and wait for their redemption. As a result, "deep respect for the 'good earth' does not mean that we have to give ourselves up for burial with the consolation that we shall live on in worms and plants. It means waiting for the day when the earth will open, and the dead will rise, and the earth together with these dead will 'be raised' for its new creation" (277).

Certainly the resurrection speaks of a future righting of wrongs, but what becomes of the dead between the present *NOW* of continuing oppression and death, and the future *THEN* of the resurrection? Has not Moltmann reintroduced the divide between history and eschaton, between time and eternity, between suffering and redemption that has plagued eschatological thinking in the past? It is at this point that Moltmann makes perhaps his most important contribution to Christian theology. Drawing on biblical images of the Sabbath, Moltmann suggests that God's Sabbath links this world with the world to come. In the sanctity of Sabbath *time* creation holds within itself an opening in the *space* of created beings. "The eschatological Shekinah is the perfected Sabbath in the spaces of the world. Sabbath and Shekinah are related to each other as promise and fulfillment, beginning and completion. . . . Creation begins in time and is completed in space" (266). It is in light of the Sabbath and Shekinah glory that the incarnational life of Christ must be understood. As Sabbath presence speaks of both God's present and future, universal Shekinah glory; so life in Christ speaks of both present and future fellowship with Christ—even for the dead!

Moltmann rejects both the doctrine of soul sleep and the immortality of the soul. Because all of creation is already redeemed in Christ, creation must be viewed from the standpoint of God's incarnational presence. Yet even now creation groans as it awaits its completion in the universal Shekinah glory. At the very least, it means that the dead are members of the community of faith, so that the past cannot be forgotten or ignored, but must be remembered and transformed in the living presence of Christ and the living saints. In our solidarity with Christ, we are reminded that the dead cannot rest as long as they have not received justice. At the very least, then, the resurrection of the dead "means preserving community with the dead and deepening it in recollecting solidarity" (108). But even more so, from the standpoint of the dead (or better, the standpoint of God and eternity), there is no gap between the unfinished and broken nature of human life and the space God makes for further living. From the standpoint of eternity, the dead are not forsaken at the moment of death, but enter into the promised completion of their lives. It is only on such a basis that the brokenness and unfulfilled promises of life ever find satisfaction and completion. Without the resurrection, history is ultimately devoid of meaning.

Still, questions remain regarding the cosmos itself. Does the broken line of history continue indefinitely, so that the murderer triumphs forever over the victim, or does time come to a final end? Again Moltmann follows his pattern of answering questions by viewing the promise of the Easter Event through the lens of Jewish hope. In the book of Revelation, the image of the New Jerusalem symbolizes the hope that all of creation someday "becomes the *house of God*, the

temple in which God can dwell, the *home country* in which God can find rest.” (321). At this point Christian faith transcends the hope of Israel. Whereas in the hope of Israel, the sanctuary was a determinate location of God within the city of Jerusalem, the Revelator sees no temple in the city of God, “because the whole city is filled with the immediate presence of God and Christ” (315). Even more startling, in the New Jerusalem the saints sit upon thrones and rule with God. In the end, the hope of Christians is neither that God dissolves into the world, as pantheism and atheism suggest, but that God and creation will someday mutually inter dwell within each other. It is in this communion that God’s Shekinah glory finally comes to rest. In contrast to the counterimage of the rulers of Babylon and Rome, who subjugate through violence, God and the saints will rule together someday through the mutual give-and-take of power. In this way history does not so much end, as it is completed in the Sabbath rest designated already at creation.

Jeffrey Stout, in his book *Ethics after Babel*, has challenged theologians to offer a political proof of divine providence that goes beyond the this-worldly, messianic, political vision of Bloch, Rosenzweig, Horkeimer, Benjamin, and other seminal Jewish writers. Although Moltmann gives no indication that *The Coming of God* was written to address Stout’s challenge, Stout’s challenge is a profound one. Certainly, Moltmann has not produced the kind of political proof of God that Stout demands. Moltmann does not fully deliver even on his own promise to fill in the content of the vista of eschatological hope already sketched in earlier works. Plenty of ambiguity yet remains in Moltmann’s vision. Do the dead now experience redemption from the viewpoint of our time, or do they wait with creation for their redemption? If the answer is the former, what becomes of Moltmann’s holistic understanding of human beings? If the answer is the latter, then, Moltmann’s view appears close to soul sleep. Secondly, when Moltmann speaks of future transformation of history, does he suppose a clear day will exist when the kingdom of God is established for all time, or does the kingdom come gradually? If the latter is the case, as implied by the idea of transformation, what becomes of the people who live in the transition? At what point do those who die participate in the kingdom of the New Earth? And finally, is the highest love one that finally, redemptively transforms all creation, as Moltmann suggests, or is the highest love one that allows creatures to respond to divine love with what Karl Rahner has called an “incomprehensible no” to God?

Still, a proof seems a rather feeble offering in comparison to what Moltmann succeeds in producing; namely, a profoundly “rich *fantasy of God*,” meaning that eschatological thinking follows the contours of God’s own creative imagination (338). For if creation is open to transfiguration and glorification, as Moltmann claims, then indeed, creation “is like a great song or a splendid poem or a wonderful dance of his fantasy, for the communication of his divine plentitude” (338). The evocative power of this vision is its own truth. To enter this vision and share it as one’s own is already to lay open the boundaries of political philosophy to something that lies beyond propositions and proofs.