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Review of *A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, and the Christian Self* edited by Miroslav Volf

Robert B. Slocum
Marquette University

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A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, and the Christian Self. Edited by Miroslav Volf. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. viii + 112 pp. \$12.00 (paper).

This volume includes three essays by Jürgen Moltmann concerning the relationship of Christian theology to the modern world, and essays in response to Moltmann by Nicholas Wolterstorff and Ellen T. Charry. All but the first of Moltmann's chapters and the responses were presented at a conference on "Christianity and Western Values" that was hosted by Fuller Theological Seminary in 1996, and subsidized by the publisher.

Moltmann emphasizes that theology must concern itself with the kingdom of God, and that theology therefore must be a public enterprise. Theology is therefore for him a "passion for God's kingdom," which is a messianic passion because it is moved by the crucified Christ (2). With respect to modernity, Moltmann seeks to draw out connections between various modern ills in the modern world and Christianity, especially Protestantism. He is deeply concerned by the "extraction of human culture from its correspondences and concordances with nature" (25-26), resulting in an ecological crisis that can mean the death of earthly life. He notes that progress characterizes modern culture as equilibrium characterized premodern cultures, and he calls for a balance between the two in the making of an "ecological culture" for survival (27). Moltmann's emphasis on the importance of nature in the kingdom of God is also articulated in his recently published *The Source of Life* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997), in which he states that "in the end the whole world will become the temple into which God's glory can enter and rest" (117). For Moltmann, the meaning of ecology is rooted in the kingdom of God, and ecology is far more than mere protection of the human environment for our continued use and exploitation.

Moltmann also critiques modernity relative to its tendency to individualism rather than community. He links this individualism to our heritage as children of Abraham, who was "called out of the world by the transcendent God" (31). He also connects modern individualism with the restless soul and "reflexive inwardness" of Augustine, who erred in considering the likeness of God to inhere "only in the soul of the individual human being" (32-33). Moltmann strongly affirms a relational context for knowing God, finding no biblical warrant for giving priority to the self-reflective individual soul. He urges that "one does not find God by going into oneself, but rather by going out of oneself" (33). In this regard, Moltmann does not seem to allow that perhaps finding God can happen in both ways. He likewise calls for a balance of the values of personalism and communitarianism, and up-

holds a relational context for personal identity relative to making and keeping promises (37).

Moltmann defends the place of Christian theology in the modern state university, stating that theology is properly done in the public arena and that religion must not be relegated to the private sphere where it is marginalized and merchandised as another consumer option. Theology, as a function of the kingdom of God in the world, is not just a function of the Church, and it needs institutional independence from the Church in light of its political, cultural, economic, and ecological mandates (51-52).

The responses to Moltmann are substantive, engaging, and quite distinct from each other. Wolterstorff shares Moltmann's dedication to the kingdom of God, but Wolterstorff calls for "learning in all the disciplines that is kingdom of God learning," instead of constricting Christian learning to Christian theology (77). For example, Christian economists should work out the meaning of the gospel of the kingdom for the economic dimension of society. Wolterstorff believes that Moltmann tacitly accepts this limitation of Christian learning. Charry notes that Moltmann's association of individualism "as an outgrowth of biblical and patristic themes" with the crisis of modernity does not identify other Christian themes that counteract the harmful effects of modern individualism (91). Indeed, Moltmann does tend to view darkly both the modern era and the historic impact of Christianity on modernity. Charry questions Moltmann's association of modern individualism with Abraham and Moses, pointing out that Abraham, Moses, and Augustine seem to have been "submitting to the will of God, not seeking their fortune" (94). She urges that an "independent place to stand" is necessary for Christians to address the crisis of modernity, which is the crisis of the modern self. For the Christian self, dignity is found in God, and community is found in the body of Christ (110).

The essays by Wolterstorff and Charry provide appreciative and challenging responses to Moltmann's positions. All in all, this slender volume is rich in creative theological insights. It offers many points for reflection and discussion. This collection of essays is quite readable and it will prove stimulating for undergraduate students, seminarians, and others who have not completed advanced studies in theology. The questions raised need to be considered seriously by those who care about living faith and its theological expression.

ROBERT B. SLOCUM

*Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*