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Life in the Spirit

THE SOURCE OF LIFE

The Holy Spirit

and the Theology of Life

By Jürgen Moltmann

Fortress. Pp. 148. \$14 paper

The Spirit is the life-giver whose gift is to be known and shared in the here and now of everyday existence.

Jürgen Moltmann introduces this theology of the Spirit in terms of his own darkest hours in and after World War II. A bomb blast killed a nearby soldier, but left him unharmed. Moltmann was held for years as a prisoner of war, and wrestled with the meaning of his life and survival. Out of these and other experiences, he discovered new life and hope in the Spirit who is active in our world and intimately present in our lives.

For Moltmann, the mission of the Christ and the mission of the Spirit are closely intertwined. In Easter faith we are "seized" by the life-giving Spirit. The Spirit comes to us when we are deadened by grief and our senses have been "extinguished." In the Spirit, we can experience God's unconditional love for life, so that "the divine joy in living stirs in us anew."

The Spirit does not take us out of our everyday lives or world to a detached supernatural realm. Spirituality and religion are not to be split off from the rest of our lives. Instead, the Spirit comes to us and takes us as we are, so that the specifics of our life become our charisma through the divine calling. Instead of being dominated by the fear of death, we may be moved gracefully to the exuberant dance of life.

In the Spirit we are invited into the divine fellowship of the Trinity. This new life, he says, involves an ethic for living. Our shared intercession leads to social, political and economic prayer. We are called to participate in the Spirit's new creation of all things, which includes our concern for all people, all creatures and the earth.

Moltmann's theology of the Spirit is rooted in his own experience and a lifetime of reflection. He points convincingly to the new life, hope and meaning that we may discover in the Spirit.

*(The Rev.) Robert B. Slocum
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