



By Faith Alone: A Review of the Forde Festschrift

STEVEN D. PAULSON

Gerhard Forde, professor of history and theology at Luther Seminary for almost forty years until his retirement in 1998, died a year ago (August 9, 2005), in the year following the publication of the book of essays on justification in his honor:

By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde, edited by Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004. Pp. 350.

The editors of this Festschrift for Professor Forde selected notable theologians from a variety of confessions who reflect on the chief doctrine, justification by faith alone. This makes for a very lively mix and shows what happens in the church when justification by faith alone comes too near for comfort. In other words, we have the main matter of theology being engaged here, and so the text did honor to him while living and now carries on his legacy in important ways.

The two introductory articles describe Forde's theology itself. His longtime colleague James Arne Nestingen examines Forde's theological influences from Haikola and Iwand, making clear that neither Barth nor Ebeling had the impact that some have tried to attribute to Forde in order to dismiss him as neoorthodox or existentialist ("Examining Sources: Influences on Gerhard Forde's Theology"). Marc Kolden, in "Background Comments on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone," put Forde's eschatology front and center for the volume and in that way

These essays, in honor of Gerhard Forde, show us how the world's best theologians are at this very moment clashing over the central matter of our time—how Christ's death and resurrection relate to the assembly of saints, the church.

sets the reading of the whole on a proper footing. One of Forde's central arguments is that the Reformation is a clear *break* from the several traditions of "justification by grace." What's wrong with grace? Nothing—nothing, that is, if grace is not used as a way to escape the death of the sinner prior to the resurrection of the saint. But that misuse of grace has been common fare in the church. Without death there is no new creation, in which case one would be left with God's grace as a set of hapless repairs offered to the old sinner.

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Just so, Roy Harrisville's article on "The Eschatological Significance of Justification for Preaching" is a genuine contribution to Forde's work. It does this simply by exegeting one sentence from Gal 5:5: "For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness." Harrisville writes: "There is no telling what might occur if preachers were to abandon the practice of 'calling' individual selves to faith, hope, and love, and declaring instead that whatever notion their hearers possessed of the self, that notion needed abandoning since it was only an illusion; that all talk of 'personality,' 'identity,' or 'individuality'...needed jettisoning, crucifying, its place taken by a 'public exhibition of Jesus Christ as crucified'..." (298). It must be said that Harrisville's final argument against "reducing" proclamation to the forgiveness of sins strikes the target for Ritschl and Bultmann, but not Forde. Among his friends Forde would sometimes be called "so narrow" about forgiveness of sins that he could only be seen in profile! But of course Forde never did understand the death of Christ as something without a resurrection, or forgiveness as something without the future "hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). True eschatology always looks too narrow in the old world, and Harrisville showed just what Forde always taught, that theology is for preaching Christ and him crucified to bound wills.

The remainder of the volume can be read as an extended argument about the Lutheran proposal for ecumenism as Forde employed it. Does the gospel really set an eschatological limit in this old world (as Oswald Bayer argues in "Justification: Basis and Boundary of Theology"), even for the church? Or can we understand the catholic church as a sacred institution that continues through history by avoiding the total ravages of sin on its way to future perfection? Is Christ the end of the old and beginning of the new, or is the continuity of being (and the duty of doing) preserved by the visible church? In a handful of articles this argument about the gospel's eschatology addresses current ecumenical proposals like the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* or attempts at lifting formal condemnations among churches. Three articles give some of the background of these discussions (George H. Tavard, "Overcoming the Anathemas: A Catholic View"; Avery Cardinal Dulles,

“A Roman Catholic View of Justification in Light of the Dialogues”; John H. Rodgers Jr., “Justification and the Historic Episcopate”), but these should be read in light of Inge Lønning’s recounting of the steps among Lutherans and the Lutheran World Federation in particular that led to such agreements. Lønning’s argument in “Lifting the Condemnations: Does It Make Sense?” concludes with the simple, trenchant, and ecumenical assertion that “it is not Eucharistic fellowship that is in need of theological justification, but refusing it” (182). If that were taken seriously, we could suddenly find a very different relationship among churches than the one that currently flounders on the issue of ministry and ordination.

John H. Rodger’s attempt to link the human tradition of bishops in historic succession to justification as something unnecessary but nevertheless “uniquely appropriate” (266) is a rather wild weed in this garden, but a related article by George Lindbeck (“Justification and Atonement: An Ecumenical Trajectory”) is a substantial argument for ecumenism that takes interest in Forde’s own theological concerns while departing significantly from its conclusions. Lindbeck was Forde’s fellow participant in the American Roman Catholic/Lutheran dialogues for many years, and it is Lindbeck’s advice that the next Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue should be about atonement. One might have assumed that if there is some kind of agreement between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on justification, Christ’s atonement would already have been settled, but Lindbeck knows that the real problem with the proposed agreement between Lutherans and Roman Catholics lies in the fact that Lutherans have simply dropped the ball. Present-day Lutherans, especially those who learned their theology from the likes of Paul Tillich, do not understand justification because they have lost faith’s object (who is Jesus Christ). For this reason they really no longer have any core or substance to their doctrine of justification. The very Lutherans who should be tending this article in ecumenical discussion have simply made justification into anthropology.

The church cannot live on that, as Lindbeck knows, and his way of describing the current Lutheran assumptions is very helpful. Reginald H. Fuller’s article on the interpretation of Paul (“Here We Stand”) is of great benefit here. He asks the modern question whether or not Martin Luther’s interpretation of Paul and justification has been proven false, especially by modern “Lutheran” exegetes. Fuller’s answer is that the key parts of Luther’s teaching of justification stand the test of modern critical analysis, and in a short few pages Fuller identifies why those who seek some other center to Paul’s proclamation fail: “What Paul received as a gift was eschatological righteousness” (90). But here we return to Lindbeck’s next argument. He believes that the remedy for a bad reading of Scripture and a false interpretation of justification is to get Christ back in the picture somehow. How does one do that? Well, for Lindbeck at least, one simply has to start speaking again of Christ, and that kind of Christ-speech is only learned from those who already believe Jesus is raised from the dead—however they may have gotten that strange belief. Church people need to tell the story of the *resurrected* Jesus Christ. Now, it just

so happens that part of the resurrected Christ's story is that he "died." Furthermore, Christ's death somehow "saves" certain people. So, according to Lindbeck, church people don't have to understand very much about Christ's death (a gracious condescension on God's part); they only need to know "that" the cross was necessary, not "how or why" it was (212). Nevertheless, for some eggheads the symbol gives rise to thought (Ricoeur), and so the result in theology is a series of different teachings about the cross that are variations on a theme of atonement.

The variety of teachings about Christ's death that exists in the church is no problem for Lindbeck; in fact, the more the merrier. Problems come not from variety, but only when some theologians try to limit atonement to one particular theory or another and so exclude the others. One need not get caught up much in details and focus too narrowly on how the cross works; one simply needs to learn that "there is no more powerfully love-evoking conviction" than that one so good as Christ gave up his life for others (213). The cross must produce a love-evoking conviction if it is to do its work. At this point we finally come to the central matter for Lindbeck. The only way that we can get a desirable church—one of conviction and deep intensity of commitment (and not a rabble of notorious sinners who don't really believe much in their hearts)—is to have Jesus preached as *lovable* precisely because of his self-sacrifice for others. Only this kind of message creates a church of "our Bonhoeffers and our Mother Teresas" (214). The church needs a properly atoning Christ (objectively, one could say), in contrast to current Lutheran teaching. An objectively atoning Christ is not sufficient to get the kind of church that is needed. The kind of church we need, for Lindbeck, is the kind made up of people who are really united and committed to the same goal: "If we are not to be disappointed, however, we must remember that the atonement message is not a sufficient condition for overflowing fruits of faith and works of love" (214).

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to complete Christ's atonement beyond the cross"*

According to this argument, something is needed to complete Christ's atonement beyond the cross. What is that? Lindbeck thinks it is churchly worship and practices that "are in order" (214). We can be sure we have proper order only by looking at the fruits that are borne in a church worthy of the name. Such fruits are realized only when the requisite conviction is created in enough people to matter. That is to say, the atonement is completed where enough properly committed Christians have properly ordered worship and use practices to sustain themselves over time. Then, and only then, has the church completed what the atonement in and of itself could not. Christ's cross must become a transformative *experience*, according to Lindbeck, lived out with requisite conviction. No wonder Trent's description of justification causes him no concern other than to translate it into terms

that modern, Tillich-inspired Protestants can accept. If that is the kind of church we want, then some kind of divine and human Christ that atones for us in the most attractive manner possible (giving his life) is necessary, even though he is not sufficient in himself.

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What we get in this kind of argument (and this is the very best of several similar ones in this collection) does not quite do justice even to Anselm—though perhaps it does enough to agree with Abelard’s theory. What is really needed, however, is to take Forde seriously in the matter of atonement, and for that one would need to take up Robert Kolb’s article, “Human Performance and the Righteousness of Faith: Martin Chemnitz’s Anti-Roman Polemic in Formula of Concord III.” Kolb saw that in the sixteenth century, Martin Chemnitz used Anselm, along with Luther, to recognize that any half-truths that try to make atonement into simple anthropology must end. *All* must be given to Christ—everything. That meant that Christ’s effect on humans as a model for their works comes in a very distant and distinguishable second to what the cross does to atone. The Lutherans in the third article of the *Formula of Concord* proceeded with that distinction in mind—Christ’s merit is all that ever matters, before, during, and after the crucifixion. No work other than Christ’s ever counts for anything regarding our justification before God, even in a really committed and motivated church with good religious practices. To say that is the necessary consequence of the *solus Christus*. For this reason, justification is by faith *alone*. But even coming that far theologically is not enough to get the gospel preached in its purity. Herein lies one of Forde’s great contributions. True preachers not only give all to Christ, but in doing so do not limit Christ’s atonement even to *Christ’s own human works* that fulfill the law! Even Christ’s *own* human works are not sufficient for understanding atonement. The human being is passive before God, so much so as to be put to death, and only then to be raised unto new life beyond the law. This is the real reason for the offense at the incarnation of Jesus Christ, since it leaves no more work for the completion of atonement to individual or communal willpower. As it is for Christ, for whom the law is ended, so it is for faith, since it so pleases God. First comes death, then resurrection.

In other words, Kolb recognized that for Lutherans, or at least for this impulse from Luther himself, the atonement will never be understood merely by getting Christ back as object of faith. The *law* of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, must enter the theological discussion that leads to preaching, or we end up repeating the same old theological mistakes. The fact that many theologians will not address this matter of the law in regard to Christ’s cross leaves a path littered with

“theories” of atonement. Such theories exist not because the church has failed to canonize one theory or another, nor is it a result of a providential ambiguity and diversity of “metaphors” that we can put to our own use. The many atonement theories result because churches and the sinners in them *will* not the gospel. They oppose what the cross says about God, themselves, and the cosmos. About Anselm, Abelard, and the Patristic synthesis, we not only take what we can get with the hope of adding a finishing touch, but we look beneath them to what burr remains in the saddle for each—what trouble remains in the church’s own teaching of Christ’s death?

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This leads to Timothy Wengert’s essay on “Philip Melanchthon’s Contribution to Luther’s Debate with Erasmus over the Bondage of the Will,” where he argues that Melanchthon joined Luther (at least at some point) in asserting the complete and final bondage of human will before almighty God, and to those equally impressive writings from Oswald Bayer, Klaus Schwarzwäller (“The Bondage of the Free Human”), and Leif Grane (“Justification by Faith? An Unguarded Essay”). What Kolb does with atonement, Schwarzwäller does with the teaching of creation and Creator, Bayer does with justification’s eschatological limit, and Grane does with the current ecumenical discussions. Each of these scholars ends up with a proclamation ready to pour out to people who actually have bound wills: “Precisely the offensive element in justification by faith requires our most energetic efforts so that we do not lose the correct understanding of justification by faith” (Grane, 43). Grane’s is a remarkable essay—not least because it is his final one in English. He operates so freely that it is frightening. He assumes that preaching will always confront human self-righteousness, and so it will assert that the Christian is at the same time justified and a sinner. Thereby the forgiveness of sins *alone* is life and blessedness because it speaks only and rightly of Christ—his cross and resurrection for us. The relation of justification and church—which concerns so many of the essays here—is then put this way by Grane: “[The only purpose of church order is to] let the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments happen” (45). The essay by Scott Hendrix on church and justification (“Open Community: The Ecclesial Reality of Justification”) can be read in this light, as for that matter those that consider the relation of justification and earthly justice in the important arguments by Marc Kolden, Vitor Westhelle (“The Dark Room, the Labyrinth, and the Mirror: On Interpreting Luther’s Thought on Justification and Justice”), and Robert Bertram (“Faithful Teaching, but Religious?”). But one can really sense why Grane calls his an “unguarded essay,” when he concludes thus: “Those who want to add any special dignity to the external church as something es-

sential to being Christian ought to be ashamed of themselves. It is the gospel they are obscuring” (45). I wish we had even more such unguarded moments.

This is a great collection and a worthy tribute to one of our most notable theologians, Gerhard Forde. In addition to the articles discussed here, the volume includes Jane E. Strohl’s “God’s Self-Revelation in the Sacrament of the Altar” and C. FitzSimmons Allison’s “Pastoral Care in the Light of Justification by Faith Alone.” It is certainly worthwhile to learn how it is that the world’s best theologians are this very moment clashing over the central matter of our time (or any time)—how Christ’s death and resurrection relate to the assembly of saints, the church. ⊕

STEVEN D. PAULSON is professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota. He is the author of Luther for Armchair Theologians (Westminster John Knox, 2004).

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GOD AND WORLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: A RELATIONAL THEOLOGY OF CREATION, by Terence E. Fretheim. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005. Pp. 398. \$29.00 (paper).

This remarkable book hopefully will be read by many biblical scholars, professional theologians, parish pastors, and advocates of what can be called “the ecology movement.” Clearly written, with an engaging, nontechnical style, this is the *magnum opus* of the distinguished Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, Terence E. Fretheim.

Notwithstanding the book’s particular focus on the theology of creation, *God and World* can easily and instructively be read, more generally, as an introduction to Old Testament theology. This is signaled right at the start, when Fretheim explores and lucidly delineates the critical theological themes—creation, redemption, and salvation—and, all the more so, when he forcefully establishes his fundamental thesis: that the God of the Old Testament is a “relational Creator” engaged with, and immanent within, “a relational world.”

Then follow scintillating discussions of the creation accounts in Genesis, whose creational themes, Fretheim shows, continue through chapter 50 of Genesis! Creation is a critical theme, he argues persuasively, not only for Gen 1 and 2, but also in the chapters of Genesis that deal with “creation at risk,” beginning with “the originating sin” in chapter 3 and that sin’s snowballing aftermath in chapters 4–6, proceeding on to the flood story and its promise of a new world order, chapters 6–11, and then shaping the foundational narratives of Israel itself, chapters 12–50. Fretheim continues his exegetical explorations beyond Genesis with insightful discussions of the creation theology of Israel’s legal writings, the prophets, and the wisdom literature, including Job, and concludes with a nuanced and highly suggestive discussion of “nature’s praise of God,” particularly as that theme is given voice in the Psalms. Students of all these biblical materials should be pre-

pared for many exciting exegetical surprises along the way. This book’s impressive argument is founded on careful and often fresh exegetical studies (and for those who care to attend to Fretheim’s comprehensive endnotes, helpful connections with a vast world of scholarship will be their reward).

What is the larger significance of this exegetically rich study? *God and World* is a radical departure in Old Testament theology: it represents a *figure-ground reversal* that builds upon the work of many other scholars and that advances the discussion with its own creative insights in the process. Can we say that the hermeneutic of “the history of redemption” (*Heilsgeschichte*) school, which reigned supreme in Old Testament studies in the second half of the last century and beyond, from Gerhard von Rad to Brevard Childs, has hereby been dethroned? Can we say that the approach to Old Testament theology that has broadened the discussion to include creation themes in their own right, whose earliest and most effective champion was H. H. Schmid, who projected the thesis that the theology of creation is the “broad horizon” of Old Testament thinking, has hereby been firmly established?

Fretheim has made a compelling case, if not yet the definitive argument, that the Old Testament is best interpreted, both historically and theologically, when creation is *the* major theme, and when redemption, essential as it is, is the secondary theme. In this respect, *God and World* is indeed a milestone in Old Testament studies. That Fretheim’s book merits this kind of high praise is signaled not only by the enthusiastic back-cover endorsement by Walter Brueggeman, but also by the strikingly large group of scholars that flocked to discuss Fretheim’s book at the 2005 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Whether professional theologians will flock to read this book, however, and, if they do, whether they will take it seriously, is another matter, particularly in our Western context, where an anthropocentric theology of grace has so often and so profoundly shaped theological discussions. To begin

with, Western theology is heir of a pronounced, although not congenital, tendency to depreciate, if not totally to reject, the witness of the Old Testament, from Marcion to Adolph von Harnack and Rudolf Bultmann and beyond. Of perhaps more importance, the Western accent on grace, anthropocentrically construed, has led, often unthinkingly, but sometimes deliberately, to a thoroughgoing subordination of creation to redemption and frequently, in effect, to the devaluation of creation itself. This approach to theology was dramatically evident in the *Heilsgeschichte* theologies of Emil Brunner and Karl Barth in the last century, according to which creation is envisioned as merely the stage for redemption.

Many theologians and their pastoral followers in the Lutheran tradition have been particularly shaped by this kind of theological vision. In this context, there has been a pronounced tendency to collapse what, in the modern Reformation tradition, came to be called the material and formal principles of the Reformation, grace and faith (*sola gratia, sola fide*), on the one hand, and Scripture (*sola scriptura*), on the other. Justification by grace through faith alone came to be viewed in many Lutheran circles, whether by sophisticated “theologians of the Cross” or by impassioned, grassroots pietists, not only as the “article by which the church stands or falls,” that is, not only as the chief *norm* of theology, but also as the chief *content* of theology. The grand canonical narrative of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, from creation to consummation, tended to be eclipsed. As a result, the theology of creation increasingly fell by the wayside in this tradition. Sometimes it seemed to have totally disappeared. Anecdotal evidence suggests, moreover, that while the typical Lutheran preacher today is well equipped to preach about the forgiveness of sins, he or she is fundamentally ill equipped to preach about the salvation of the whole creation.

What becomes, then, of the compelling argument of an Old Testament theology like *God and World*, which exegetically

shows that *creation* is the broad horizon of Old Testament thought and practice? All is not necessarily lost, to be sure, even in Lutheran circles. Luther himself had a rich theology of creation, a fact not unrelated to the fact that his scholarly specialization was Old Testament studies. And the grand vision of Joseph Sittler in the last century, who projected a theology of grace of cosmic scope, is still attracting and inspiring a number of theologians. Some Lutheran thinkers, like Ted Peters and Philip Hefner, have also explored the dimensions of a biblically informed theological cosmology, in the context of the “religion and science” dialogue. Still, one can wonder whether Fretheim’s major biblical study will even be read by the theologians in the West—in particular by those Lutherans—who most need to be exposed to its findings.

The best hope, in this respect, may well be the pastors, for *God and World* will serve preachers well, both as they think about the biblical witness as a whole and as they ponder a range of particular Old Testament texts. Word will hopefully get around the pastoral networks that this book will preach! *God and World* could serve well as one of those three or four biblical studies that a preacher would want to return to during his or her sabbatical reading time and also reach for every week back in the parish, to see whether Fretheim discusses the particular Old Testament lectionary text of the day. Fretheim, whatever else he may be, is a biblical scholar who wants to hear what Old Testament texts are saying to the church today. Witness his consistent concern in this book for current questions such as those posed by evolutionary science and ecology and also his almost stubborn attention to perennial challenges such as the human encounter with suffering and the human search for a viable and humane ethic in a world where the spirit of violence lurks so deeply in the human heart.

For all its foundational import for Old Testament studies, however, and for all its profound implications for theologians and pastors of the church, *God and World* could well have its most significant impact in the

ranks of those who consider themselves to be advocates of “the ecology movement,” both within the walls of the church and beyond. Not for nothing is the now classical “ecological critique” of biblical faith by historian Lynn White Jr., in which he more or less blames our current global ecojustice crisis on what he reads as the Old Testament accent on divine transcendence and human dominion over nature (understood as “domination”), one of the most frequently assigned readings in college and university courses on ecology and environmental ethics throughout North America. Now, however: Lynn White Jr., meet Terence E. Fretheim! *God and World* basically exorcizes all the demons that White imagined himself to have discovered in the Old Testament and its exegetical heritage in the West. Fretheim shows convincingly and with great exegetical precision that the Creator envisioned in the Old Testament cares for all the creatures of the earth and is present with all of them, and that humans, created in the image of that Creator, are called to go and do likewise, in their own appropriate creaturely ways. In a word, for Fretheim, the fundamental insight of ecological thought is true, from the perspective of Old Testament theology: everything is essentially related to everything else. And that, Fretheim wants us all to hear anew, is very good.

H. Paul Santmire
Watertown, Massachusetts

PAUL AND THE GENTILE WOMEN: REFRAMING GALATIANS, by Tatha Wiley. New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2005. Pp. 168. \$24.95 (paper).

Tatha Wiley puts the issue of gender at the forefront of the Galatians controversy. What was at stake for women in the controversy over circumcision in the Galatian assemblies? How were the relationships between women and men affected by the missionaries who advocated Torah adherence for Gentile converts? She contends that these are not peripheral issues but are at

the heart of the controversy behind Paul’s letter.

Wiley argues that the missionaries who preached circumcision for initiation into full membership in the messianic assemblies threatened the egalitarian nature of relationships among the Gentiles in the churches Paul founded in Galatia. Initiation into full membership by baptism was blind to distinctions of gender; women and men were initiated into full membership as equals (see Gal 3:28). Circumcision, on the other hand, necessarily involved gender differentiation and male privilege. If circumcision became a condition for membership then relationships between men and women would inevitably be hierarchical. The *ekklesia* would be characterized by “separate and unequal gender spheres,” status difference, restricted leadership roles, and “the absence of redemptive and charismatic equality” (99). Baptism eliminates male privilege (111); circumcision endorses male privilege and gender differentiation. By rejecting circumcision as a rite of initiation into membership, Paul rejected male privilege (120).

Much of the book reconstructs the historical context of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Wiley departs from scholarship that has dominated Pauline studies and stands with current scholars who in recent decades have placed Paul, and the nascent messianic movement he spread, within Judaism rather than opposing it. She observes the diversity of first-century Judaism and locates both Paul and his opposition in Galatia within the Jewish messianist movement, also diverse, that originated with the followers of Jesus. The observation is not original but one that must be made, because the centuries-old view that Paul converted to Christianity and that the Galatians controversy was between Christianity and a misguided Judaism still influences Christian interpretations of the Pauline epistles, Galatians and Romans in particular.

The identity of the missionaries who preached circumcision to the Gentile assemblies in Galatia is not certain. Possibilities include: representatives from the

Jerusalem churches, Gentiles from other messianic communities who had adopted Torah observance including circumcision, Gentiles from among the Galatians themselves, or proselytes affiliated with forms of Judaism other than the followers of Jesus Christ. Wiley believes that the first option is most likely, and the identification of the missionaries with Palestinian Judaism is fundamental to her argument. She frames the Galatian controversy as one between theologically conservative Palestinian Judaism and theologically liberal Diaspora Judaism, the former maintaining strict adherence to the law for Gentile initiates and the latter allowing for leniency.

Pharisaic Judaism defines Palestinian Judaism. According to the author (and her sources) the Pharisees represented strict fidelity to the law. The Pharisees required proselytes “to do the works of the law” which meant “to abide by everything in the book of the law” (76). Strict obedience to the law restricted women’s participation in social and religious spheres. Diaspora Judaism was not so strict, and there were opportunities for women to participate more fully. Wiley cites evidence of women in leadership roles in Diaspora synagogues; women in Hellenistic Jewish communities functioned more independently than was possible in Jewish life in Palestine. The more liberal Diaspora Judaism sets the stage for Paul’s missionary work. The assemblies he founded were in continuity with the Judaism in Hellenistic society, in which relationships between women and men were less restricted than in Palestinian Judaism. At stake in the Galatians controversy is not the relationship between Jew and Gentile but between women and men. The author maintains that adopting the conservative theological view of Pharisaic Judaism inevitably meant separate gender spheres and male privilege.

I find the sharp contrast between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism disconcerting for two reasons. First, it fails to consider the ambiguity of Jewish life as it was actually lived. Secondly, it echoes the old “Palestinian Judaism vs. Hellenistic Judaism” di-

chotomy that aligned Palestinian Judaism with what became rabbinic Judaism, with all its deficiencies, and Hellenistic Judaism with what was replaced by Christianity.

Wiley depends on widely accepted scholarship on the Pharisees, especially among Christians, but neglects well-known differences within Pharisaism and scholarship that defines the historical Pharisees differently. For example, Hillel and Shammai represented, respectively, lenient and strict interpretations of observance. Some scholars are persuaded by Ellis Rivkin’s definition of the Pharisees as proponents of Oral Torah and a liberal Jewish reform movement (See Rivkin’s *A Hidden Revolution*, Abingdon, 1978). Anthony Saldarini’s construction of first-century Palestinian groups from a social perspective also captures the diversity and ambiguity of Jewish life (*Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, Michael Glazier, 1988) The author cites Shaye Cohen’s distinction between Judaism as legislated and Judaism as practiced (89) under the heading “Jewish Women in the Diaspora.” But this distinction applies to Palestinian Judaism also.

According to Wiley’s construction, the diversity of Judaism is little more than two types, strictly conservative Palestinian and liberal Diaspora Judaism. By requiring circumcision, the conservative missionaries instate the accompanying gender differentiation and male privilege. By insisting on baptism into full membership in the messianic assemblies, Paul advocates gender equality. While the author allows for the legitimacy of the opponents’ position, she gives no indication it might be compelling for positive reasons. The logic of the argument that circumcision enforces gender discrimination is clear, as is the logic that baptism creates an egalitarian community. But logic notwithstanding, there was and is a distinction between practice and religious legislation. Circumcision continues as the most recognized rite of initiation into modern Jewish communities, many led by female rabbis and cantors, and obviously baptism does not assure gender equality in Christian communities. Wiley expresses

concern for Christian anti-Semitism, but her argument for the superiority of baptism over circumcision as an initiation rite into religious community reinforces a negative view of Judaism.

Nevertheless, this book is an important contribution to the study of Galatians. Wiley poses critical questions about the place of gender in the Galatians controversy. What is at stake for women and men in this controversy? What difference does it make today to be baptized into full membership in a Christian church? Wiley has given us the questions and an entry into a conversation that must continue.

Marilyn Salmon
United Theological Seminary
New Brighton, Minnesota

VOCATION: DISCERNING OUR CALLINGS IN LIFE, by Douglas J. Schuurman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. Pp. 190. \$20.00 (paper).

The concept of vocation, which once seemed almost lost to the church, now has become one of its hottest topics. Now more than ever, Christians are delving into questions of the relationship between faith and life and finding answers in vocation. Yet with all this discussion of vocation and all the new resources available, little attention has been given to its theological foundations. In his latest book, however, Douglas Schuurman ably addresses this need as he develops “a contemporary articulation of the classic doctrine of vocation” (xi).

Schuurman begins by reviewing some modern developments that may stand in the way of reclaiming the classic doctrine. He points especially to “the forces of secularization and capitalism” (8), but also to certain aspects of contemporary egalitarian society (15). Despite these obstacles, he believes the classic Protestant doctrine of vocation still has much to say to today’s Christians.

In explaining the doctrine itself, Schuurman shows its biblical roots before provid-

ing a well-articulated theological description of vocation. He skillfully presents the multiple facets of the doctrine, including its foundation in the relationships of life as well as its possible uses and abuses. Schuurman draws particularly from Lutheran and Calvinist theological traditions, blending them nicely into a unified whole. While this unified picture provides a good general view of these traditions, at times it also neglects essential nuances where the traditions significantly diverge.

The book concludes by addressing the application of the doctrine of vocation to everyday life. Schuurman states, “Vocation is not mainly about guiding individual choice of spouse or paid work; it is about interpreting these and other relational settings, in faith as divinely assigned places to serve God and neighbor” (117). This approach allows for a kind of free thinking and expansive discussion about the callings of life that would not be possible if Schuurman had tried to give detailed prescriptions about vocation’s application.

Overall, this work is quite accessible to a variety of audiences. Individuals certainly can benefit from its insights, but given the focus on the relational quality of vocation, the book is ideal for group study. It can be used as a college or seminary textbook just as easily as a resource for church study groups. Those interested in the topic of vocation owe a debt of gratitude to Douglas Schuurman for this work.

Mary Elizabeth Anderson
Luther Seminary
Saint Paul, Minnesota

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS: AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM, by John Macquarrie. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005. Pp. 287. \$20.00 (paper).

John Macquarrie readily acknowledges that he is not a mystic. Furthermore, the subject of Christian mysticism has not been a focus for his long and impressive scholarly

career in theology. However, sparked by a genuine curiosity and a deep appreciation for the faithful lives of mystics and their contributions to Christianity and the church, Macquarrie undertakes this wide-ranging study of notable mystics that spans two millennia of Christian tradition.

Macquarrie structures his examination of the lives and writings of these mystics chronologically. As a historical survey of mysticism the arrangement of material provides a helpful framework for readers seeking to understand mysticism within the broader development of Christian history. In providing brief but useful background information, the author locates each mystic within her or his particular historical context and points out how the spiritual life is never immune from the affairs of this world.

Before embarking upon this historical survey, Macquarrie opens with a chapter in which he develops a working definition of mysticism by exploring ten core characteristics of mysticism, such as unmediated knowledge of God, ecstatic experiences, and the apophatic nature of such encounters with God. This chapter provides readers with a helpful orientation as they begin their historical trek through Christian mysticism.

Macquarrie brings a critically observant yet appreciative eye to his examination of Christian mysticism and is well aware of its potential pitfalls. In particular, he targets three concerns: the danger of pantheism, in which the distinction between Creator and creature is blurred; the tendency to denigrate reason and intellectual pursuits; and the inclination toward an individualistic spiritual hedonism. While quick to criticize such tendencies when exhibited by individual mystics, Macquarrie also offers an important corrective to certain assumptions and unfair stereotypes perpetuated by more strident critics of mysticism. For example, Macquarrie refuses to place the mystical and prophetic forms of religion at odds with each other. He points out that many faithful mystics unite the ethical life with the devotional life so that love of God and

love of neighbor are harmoniously related. Evidence for this claim is offered by his recounting stories such as Catherine of Siena's significant role in overcoming ecclesiastical schism as well as the Quaker John Woolman's campaign for the abolition of slavery in the United States more than a century before the Civil War. These are but two examples of mystics whose dedicated contemplative lives clearly led to social action.

Intended as a general introduction on the subject of Christian mysticism, this work is accessible, particularly given the conversational tone employed by the author. At times readers may be distracted by a few obscure references (e.g., the Anglo-Hegelian tradition) that are not explained carefully, and random asides such as the wildly speculative comment that perhaps the deaths of Egyptian firstborn males were the result of an early form of AIDS. Overall, though, this work is quite straightforward. Of great benefit for readers less familiar with classical Greek philosophy is Macquarrie's lucid and succinct descriptions of Platonic and neo-Platonic thought and their collective influence upon Christian theology and mysticism in particular. Macquarrie presents this complex body of literature with remarkable precision as he explores how these philosophical foundations profoundly shaped Christian mysticism throughout the early and medieval church.

This work's major shortcoming is its failure to examine one of the fundamental issues regarding mysticism: namely, how one is to understand the relationship of Christian mysticism to mystical experiences found in other religious traditions. While Macquarrie makes the claim in his introductory chapter that "Christian mysticism is normally a Christ-mysticism" (9), he also acknowledges rightly that mysticism is not unique to Christianity. Particularly in his final chapter on mysticism in the twentieth century, he notes with approval that mysticism has emerged as a common ground among various religions. Readers may then wonder about the value of restricting this historical survey of mysti-

cism to its Christian expressions. With regard to his claim identified above, exactly what difference does Christ make for a Christian mystic? In a cultural milieu where people are increasingly identifying themselves as “spiritual but not religious,” such critical questions need to be raised by all those concerned with the mission and ministry of the church.

Macquarrie is to be commended for treating evenhandedly both the biblical and philosophical foundations of Christian mysticism as well as for his selection of representative mystics from the patristic and medieval periods. By engaging figures such as Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Julian of Norwich, among many others, Macquarrie has chosen an appropriate and standard cast of characters. However, as this survey continues, his selection of representative mystics becomes increasingly haphazard. As the author works his way through to the modern period, his focus upon mysticism is not always clear. One wonders what exactly his set of criteria is when he selects figures such as John Keble of the Oxford Movement, Søren Kierkegaard, and the twentieth-century French philosophers Henri Berg-

son and Jacques Maritain as mystics. Even if Macquarrie found himself committed to completing this survey of Christian mysticism up through the twentieth century, surely he could have chosen more representative figures for the modern period.

As an introductory work, it is unfortunate that Macquarrie does not provide a bibliography of primary readings and important secondary works to guide readers in their own further study of mysticism. While a passing reference is made to Evelyn Underhill’s well-known book on mysticism and William James’s phenomenological study of religious experience, no mention is made of Bernard McGinn’s seminal work on the history of Christian mysticism (presently the first three volumes in a projected five-volume series have been published). In spite of these shortcomings, this book provides a very readable introduction to this subject with Macquarrie serving as a helpful and engaging guide for navigating the vast and complex landscape of Christian mysticism.

Laura J. Thelander
Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, New Jersey