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Book Reviews

***The Missiological Implications of the Theology of Gerhard Forde.* By Mark Lewellyn Nygard. Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2011. 260 pages. Softcover.**

Writing a book on a well-loved mentor is a hazardous undertaking, since the writer might be tempted to produce something of a hagiography. While his deep admiration of the late Gerhard Forde is evident, Nygard has, for the most part, avoided the temptation to canonize his teacher. Nygard, an ELCA missionary serving at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt, has combined his appreciation for Forde's theological project with his passion for evangelical outreach. While the manner in which these themes are brought together is not always even, Nygard has succeeded in demonstrating that there is a missional thrust inherent in Forde's take on Lutheran theology, even though that thrust is more latent or implicit than fully developed within the corpus of Forde's writings.

Nygard confesses that he was not always a Forde fan. He admits to making a concerted effort to avoid taking him for any classes during his first two years as a student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. When he finally enrolled in one of Forde's classes, the author attests to how he was both attracted to and irritated by Forde's staunchly Gnesio-Lutheran insistence on the singular activity of God in salvation. As a student interested in overseas mission, Nygard could see nothing in Forde that would drive and sustain such mission. Yet Forde's theological approach exercised a magnetic power on Nygard, ultimately prompting him to devote his doctoral research to the missiological implications of Forde's theology. This book is the dissertation that resulted. While it could have been more carefully edited for a less dissertation-like style, the book is a comprehensive study of Forde's theology, including a good amount of material that may be found nowhere else. In addition to a lucid biography of Forde, Nygard has carefully catalogued Forde's sermons, both published and unpublished, paving the way for further research into his preaching.

After rehearsing his methodological assumptions in a dissertation-like manner, the author provides a biographical overview of Forde's life from his early days in the parsonage in Starbuck, Minnesota, where he was deeply steeped in the theology and piety of the Norwegian Synod, through his educational career culminating in a Th.D. from Harvard. Nygard reviews theological influences that shaped Forde, including the orthodox confessional stance of Herman Preus in his seminary days, Karl Barth, Hans Joachim Iwand, Lauri Haikola, Gerhard Ebeling, Gustav Wingren, and, to a lesser extent, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

A substantial section of the book is a descriptive overview of Forde's theological proposal centering in his understanding of the law/gospel dis-

tion, the eschatological character of revelation, Christology, justification by faith, proclamation, and freedom. Here controversial aspects of Forde's theology (e.g., atonement and the third use of the law) are brought up but not critically engaged. One would expect a more robust and comprehensive treatment of Forde's work on the captivation of the will and the theology of the cross, as these aspects carry substantial potential for a Lutheran approach to missions.

Nygard draws heavily (though not exclusively) on Timothy Yates' *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1994) to provide a survey of contemporary missiological themes and their connection with Luther studies. This survey is offered as a frame of reference for his investigation of the potency of Forde's theology for the evangelical enterprise of outreach. Observing that Forde seldom speaks of mission as an isolated theme, Nygard is suggestive of ways in which Forde's understanding of proclamation might enrich and strengthen contemporary mission paradigms.

Nygard's book includes a complete bibliography of Forde's published works. It will serve as a helpful resource for those interested in Forde's theology and especially his take on preaching, which is after all at the heart of evangelical mission. A more careful proof-reading and attention to factual errors (e.g., Wilhelm Löhe died in 1872, not 1875, as stated on page 135) would enhance the volume.

John T. Pless

***The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate.* By John H. Walton. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009. 192 pages. Softcover. \$16.00.**

The debate between theologians and scientists about the origins of the cosmos is over. By reading Genesis 1 as an account of functional origins and cosmic temple inauguration, armistice is achieved between Scripture and science. This is what John H. Walton proposes in 18 sequential propositions in *The Lost World of Genesis One*.

In Propositions 1-11, Walton proffers a new "face-value" reading of Genesis 1. Walton begins by arguing for a comparative method that relies on similarities with the ancient near-east (ANE). Because Genesis 1 is ancient cosmogony, it needs to be read in light of its ANE context to be interpreted properly. The purpose of ANE cosmogonies is to explain the origin of functions and the ordering of the cosmos from a non-functional state. ANE cosmogonies presume matter as part of existence, but are not interested in material origins like modern science. They espouse a functional ontology where "something exist[s] not by virtue of its material properties, but by virtue of its

having a function in an ordered system" (26). To create, then, "is to assign something its functioning role in the ordered system" (27).

Taking this cue from the ANE, Walton argues that Genesis 1 is about God creating functions and installing functionaries in six days and resting in his cosmic temple on seventh day. The verb "to create" (ברא) is used to support this reading. It has often been noted that the material from which something is created is never mentioned with ברא. This absence is traditionally taken to indicate that God creates matter *ex nihilo*. Walton takes this silence to mean that ברא refers only to God's creation of functions (see, e.g., Isa 45:7). After examining every instance of ברא in the Old Testament, Walton concludes that there is "no clear example . . . that demands a material perspective for the verb, though many are ambiguous. In contrast, a large percentage of the contexts require a functional understanding" (43).

Walton further contends that God creates the primary foundations for life in days one through three and principal functionaries on days four through six. With pre-existent earth in a non-functional state (תהו ובהו), God begins to create by assigning light as the basis for time, sky for weather, and land and seed-bearing vegetation as the bases for food. In assigning the sun, moon, and stars to mark day, night, signs, seasons, days, and years, God installs functionaries for time. In creating birds and fish on the fifth day, God installs functionaries that multiply in the sky and sea. On the sixth day, God creates land animals and mankind as functionaries on the land. Mankind's creation likewise focuses on their functions to proliferate and rule, not the material out of which they were created (ברא).

The seventh day is interpreted as a cosmic temple inauguration. This reading is based on analogies with ANE texts wherein the creation of the cosmos is sometimes concluded with the building of a temple in which a god dwells to take up administrative tasks over the cosmos. It further rests on an argument that God ceasing (בת) from the work of creation in Genesis 2:2 leads to God resting (נוח) in Exodus 20:11. This rest alludes to God's rest (מנוחה) in his temple in Zion (Ps 132:7-8, 13-14), and implies that God rested in his cosmic temple on the seventh day after ceasing from his creative work on days one through six (cf. Isa 66:1-2).

In all of this, Walton maintains that God is not creating material objects. God is establishing functions and assigning functionaries in his cosmic temple where he takes up residence and from whence he runs the cosmos. God's creation of material objects is not recounted in Genesis 1. When and how God made material objects—before and/or after Genesis 1—is "left to [us] to figure out as best we can with the intellectual capacity and other tools that God gave us" (169).

With this fresh—but purportedly ancient “face-value”—interpretation established, Walton turns his attention in Propositions 12–18 to an assessment of the modern scene. Young Earth Creationism, Old Earth Creationism, Framework Hypothesis, and other modern theories of Genesis 1 all mistakenly treat the text as an account of material origins. As a result, they needlessly try to bring Scripture and science into harmony.

Instead of pursuing concordism, Walton argues, theologians and scientists should recognize the limits of their data and methods. Genesis 1 is only about functional origins. It reveals teleology, i.e., who created the cosmic functions and what they are. Contrary to some proponents of Intelligent Design and Neo-Darwinists, science can neither prove nor deny teleology, since that is a metaphysical issue and science is bound methodologically to naturalism. Science can, however, detect and trace how the material cosmos came to be. These boundaries allow Scripture and science to co-exist as non-overlapping magisteria.

Walton offers a provocative and corrective interpretation of Genesis 1. In our modern scientific context, where material ontology is a dominant paradigm, it is important to place ourselves—as best we can—in the ancient Israelite context to read Scripture more accurately. When we do this, we see that function is a crucial component of ANE and ancient Israelite ontology. To exist is to have a function. This is seen at the start of the Babylonian *Enuma elish* when it says, “When no gods whatever had been brought into being, uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined” (*ANET*, 61). It is also seen in Genesis 1:6–8 where God made the firmament, which God named “sky,” to separate the waters below and above it. Walton also rightly cautions that Scripture and science have their own dominions and limitations.

Nevertheless, Walton’s view of Genesis 1 and the ANE goes too far. ANE cosmogony was concerned with material and functional (and nominal) origins. *Enuma elish* does not just read, “When destinies were undetermined”; rather, it binds separated matter (no gods), name (no names), and function (no destinies) together in its ontological description of the pre-creation cosmic state. Marduk’s creation of the cosmos in *Enuma elish* reflects this ontological mixture: Marduk made the firmament from half of Tiamat’s corpse to cover the deep waters below and hold back the heavenly waters above; he made the earth out of the other half to uphold heaven. So also the Egyptian Papyrus Insinger, which Walton quotes, shows the same ontological elements in its cosmogony: “He created sinews and bones out of the same semen He created sleep to end weariness, waking for looking after food” (33).

It is equally dubious that the verb ברא shows ancient Israel’s ontology and cosmogony to be purely functional. In Isaiah 4:5, God will create (ברא) cloud, smoke, and a flaming fire, which will be seen day and night and signify God’s presence. In Isaiah 40:26, God created (ברא) the celestial host, which God brings

out, names, everyone can see, and indicates God's power. In Isaiah 41:17-20, God will create (ברא) by opening rivers upon heights and fountains in valleys; making wilderness into pools of water and dry land into springs of water; placing cedars, acacia, myrtle, and olive trees in the wilderness; and putting cypress, plane, and pine trees in the desert. God will create this water and these trees for the poor who thirst. In Isaiah 42:5 God created (ברא) the heavens and stretched them out. In Sirach 38:4 "God created spices from the earth" (אל מארץ ברא שמים). In each instance, God creates a material object—often from another material object—that can be sensed, used, or altered; has a name; and usually has a function.

The last major issue addressed here is the cosmic temple inauguration view. While this is an interesting idea, it is difficult to sustain. First, the verb "rest" (נוח) in Exodus 20:11 is in a context of work (vv. 9-10) and connects back to God's ceasing (שבת) from work in Genesis 2:2. The same two verbs occur later in Exodus 23:12, again in the context of ceasing from work (cf. Deut 5:12-14). Given this, נוח in Exod 20:11 is best understood as *reposing from* work—not resting *in* a cosmic temple. Second, if Genesis 1 intends to convey God's cosmic temple inauguration, then it is woefully opaque. Compared to *Enuma elish*, which is replete with explicit statements about Marduk's kingship and rule from his temple in Babylon, Genesis 1 contains no overt reference to God's kingship or rule in a temple. Third, if Genesis 1 intends to inaugurate anyone's rule, the best candidate is mankind's dominion over the earth. This is the only rulership explicitly proclaimed in this chapter (vv. 26, 28).

Despite these problems, *The Lost World of Genesis One* still makes an important contribution toward a functional understanding of ANE and biblical ontology and cosmogony. The novelty and implications of Walton's book will undoubtedly influence discussions of ontology and cosmogony in Genesis 1 and the ANE as well as the relationship between Scripture and science. The book and its arguments are well laid-out and accessible to scholars, pastors, and laypeople alike. Those who read it will be provoked to profitable thought.

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***Two Wars We Must Not Lose.* By Bill Hecht. Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012. 544 pages. Softcover. \$14.95.**

This is a book that is unique in many respects. It bears the subtitle, "What Christians Need to Know about Radical Islamists, Radical Secularists, and Why We Can't Leave the Battle Up to Our Divided Government." Its author, Bill Hecht, is a 1960 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. After serving as a pastor for seven years, he was offered the position of executive director of the Missouri

Republican Party. This led to his becoming a lobbyist in Washington, DC. In 1981, he founded his own lobbying firm. He is still active in national politics and has acquired a close acquaintanceship with presidents, congressmen, and others in our nation's capital.

The first two chapters deal with Hecht's 41 years on what he calls the Washington "front lines." He points out what is so painfully apparent today, that there has developed a "major polarization" of the Republican and Democratic parties. He says, "It is truly difficult for a radically divided government to function above the level of a bare minimum" (118).

The third chapter is devoted to the challenge President Obama presents for the nation and the Christian church. He judges Obama to be the "Most secular president in U.S. history." Here and elsewhere Hecht points out that "the United States was founded as an intensely religious country that believes our rights come from God" (184). Obama, however, ignores this fact. Instead, Obama claims, "America is a secular country that is respectful of religious freedom" (184). Hecht provides a comprehensive view of Obama's background, political and religious views, and his view of America's role in world politics.

In the preface of his book, Hecht states that the two threats that confront our country and the church are "1) the war declared on America by Islamic radical terrorists, and 2) the cultural war being waged by radical secularists on the traditional and spiritual foundations of our country" (13).

Chapter 4 describes in detail modern-day Muslims, and chapter 5 our modern-day war with Islamic terrorists, a war we dare not lose. From the beginning of the Muslim religion by Mohammed, his disciples have waged war against Christians. This "holy war" has gone on for fourteen centuries. In the Middle Ages, Islamic armies conquered Spain, Portugal, and southern Italy. Coming from the east, they penetrated Europe as far as Vienna. They believed they had a divine obligation to spread their religion by violence. Hecht writes that "if the Crusades had not succeeded we might all be reading the Koran in our native Arabic language" (368).

Hecht writes that today we are facing a new phenomenon: Muslims by the millions are migrating to non-Muslim countries such as Germany, France, England, and the United States. The majority of Muslims appear to be peaceful, but significant minorities are terrorists who believe they have a divine obligation to spread their religion by violence. This terrorist activity is not limited to the United States. Hecht writes that, since the September 11 attack on New York and Washington, there have been over 10,000 jihadist terror attacks around the world in such locations as London, Madrid, Moscow, and Thailand (225).

In chapters 6 and 7, Hecht analyzes the second war that threatens the USA. It is the cultural war being waged by radical secularists. He states that a war on the moral and religious foundations of the American republic was declared in earnest

in 1920 with the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Its purpose was to attack the moral and religious values of our nation. A gradual approach has been followed with a slow but steady infiltration of academia, law and the courts, the media, various elements of government, etc. The purpose was to relegate religion to a purely private matter with no place or authority in public debate or laws governing public morality and behavior.

Little progress was made until 1947, when a Supreme Court decision ruled that “the First Amendment (of the Constitution) has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable” (394). Hecht then traces the effect of this ruling through the years. Prayer was banned in public schools. Only evolution could be taught in public schools; creationism was banned. Ministers of religion were banned from offering prayer at public school activities. In 1973, the Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade* had the effect of drastically increasing the number of abortions. These and many other actions reflect the ACLU’s goal of expelling God from the public square. A war has even been waged against the observance of Christmas by seeking to ban publicly-displayed nativity scenes.

Chapter 8 bears the title, “The Role Lutherans Can and Should Play in this Life and Death Struggle for the Soul of Our Country.” Hecht points out that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has had little involvement in politics. At the time of his writing, only 26 Lutherans were in the Congress. The clergy has also failed to enter the political fight against secularism.

However, Hecht writes that leaders of the LCMS have begun to recognize the problem and take action. He points out the speakers of the Lutheran Hour and their positive influence. Synodical presidents have also become more active in the public square. President Jack Preus led a delegation of American church leaders in an around-the-world humanitarian mission on behalf of POWs in Vietnam. President Jerry Kieschnick led a “Rally for Life” march to the Supreme Court, and after the march preached a sermon on the sanctity of life. Just seven months after his election, President Matthew Harrison testified before a congressional committee in defense of religious liberties. He has continued to be active in this respect and has written a strong recommendation of Hecht’s book.

Future editions of *Two Wars We Must Not Lose* should include an index. Another problem is that Hecht appears weak on the subject of evolution versus creation. On page 478, he makes a case for creation and indicates that Christians should have a say about what is taught in public schools. However, in note 60 on page 495, he writes, “I am not suggesting that any Christians get involved in the fight since it has too much historic baggage.”

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