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The gospel of justification in Christ: where does the church stand today?

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of the development of religious studies in the United States. Further, he asserts that scholars must move beyond “otherizing” (198). He states: “The point is not to make the other world radically and irrevocably other, but to render one’s own world other to oneself as prelude to a new understanding of the two worlds in relationship to each other” (202).

Orsi’s *Between Heaven and Earth* is a masterful scholarly achievement that is pleasure to read. It is an interesting mixture of ethnographic fieldwork and Orsi’s own family stories. His book provides a useful, informative and insightful examination of popular American Catholicism as well as pertinent issues related to studying one’s own religious culture. It will be of interest to both laity and scholars who are interested in North American Catholicism, religious healing, and the academic study of religion.

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The Gospel of Justification in Christ: Where Does the Church Stand Today?

Wayne C. Stumme, editor.

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006

182 pages. \$26.75 Softcover

Those interested in finding an ecumenical dialogue about what the gospel of justification by grace through faith might mean today will find willing conversation partners in Wayne Stumme’s edited volume. Although the various perspectives contained therein come from Lutheran, Roman Catholic (including one Canadian), Episcopal, and Reformed theologians, they represent for the most part studied responses to the Joint Declaration on Justification (JD), signed in 1999 by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. While other ecumenical documents are also taken up in the book, the impetus is clearly the momentous ecumenical agreement that is the Joint Declaration.

One strong point of this edited volume is its inclusion of dissenting voices. Persons familiar with the difficulties of concluding

the JD will recall that not a few Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians raised protests and concerns touching on matters of both substance and process prior to its signing. Although Steven Paulson's article in this volume is not the only one to touch on such concerns, his contribution brings several of the contentious issues in sharp relief, especially the questions around imputed righteousness. This, together with much struggle among several of the ecumenical contributors of the volume over the question of the *simul justus et peccator*, make the volume seem like an even more engaging dialogue.

One fascinating addition to the conversation is the interfaith reflections offered by Paul Varo Martinson. I learned much about the interreligious significance of the doctrine of justification as it relates both to similarities and fundamental differences between the world religions. In this sense, learning about other faiths is a bit like learning a foreign language. In doing so, you learn something of value while perhaps picking up, even for the first time, the grammar of your mother tongue. In this sense, the criterion of "incommensurability" made famous in George Lindbeck's work is both more *and* less than it seems.

For those who struggle with any series of articles about doctrinal matters, the sequence in Stumme's volume is occasionally broken by brief sermons. While a collection of sermons shares one thing with any collection of essays (namely, a typically uneven character), their existence in Stumme's volume does highlight the fact that the gospel of justification is never simply about conversation – let alone ecumenical documents crafted by denominational elites – but about proclamation. Those committed to preaching the gospel more clearly in a time of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue will find this collection useful indeed.

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