



Volume 59 | Issue 2

Article 47

2016

Sweet's "Me and we: God's new social gospel" (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Hippenhammer, Craighton (2016) "Sweet's "Me and we: God's new social gospel" (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 59 : Iss. 2 , Article 47.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol59/iss2/47>

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library examples. Finally, this new edition of *Management Basics* reflects the “new normal” of financial constraints, by including practical guidance in facing budgetary freezes and fiscal cut-backs. This revised volume should serve commendably (and expensively) as a standard in LIS education, but also as an orientation resource for newly appointed library managers.

Reviewer

Paul Hartog, Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary

Sweet, L. (2014). *Me and we: God's new social gospel*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 173 pp. \$17.99. ISBN 9781426757761

In this oddly titled book, Sweet attempts to redefine the old social gospel into something he calls “God’s new social gospel,” which is the subtitle of the book. The old social gospel was an early-twentieth-century movement that concentrated on transforming social structures – rather than changing hearts which would change the world, it attempted to change the world which it thought would then change the world. Sweet says, “The first social gospel movement was more about institutionalizing social Christianity than about incarnating a Jesus faith. Its naïve view of sin and optimistic outlook on the betterment of human nature failed to look up close and see that evil is real and personal. Evil is not just impersonal systemic forces but hurting people hurting people” (p. 3). The problem is, according to Sweet, the latest incarnation of the social gospel in the last 25 years is a “social justice” movement being pushed by Evangelicals. “It’s as if evangelicals showed up a hundred years late to the social gospel party, and they are making many of the same mistakes that the first social gospelers made” (p. 4). The problem with advocating for Jesus’ justice in the world “rather than Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection as the framing story, what you end up with is everything ‘social’ and nothing ‘gospel’” (p. 5). This book is designed to be a corrective to that approach.

The Me/We combo is necessary because an emphasis on the self is empty. Discipleship is a “We Garden ... a story lived together” (p. 11). For Jesus, salvation was not “transformation of social structures but healing of mind, body, and spirit; reclamation of relationships and restoration to community. Social systems, institutions, and structures are human-built mechanisms” (p. 12), like institutional churches, which can leave people without a savior. “The Christian life is not a code of moralisms, doctrinal creeds, or a semantic/semiotic system. It’s a daily indwelling of a Jesus spirit and outcropping of a Jesus life story. You can’t save a system. You can only save a people ... Holding hands is true community, not holding meetings” (p. 18).

Much of the book describes three great me/we sins: individualism, racism, and consumerism, for which Sweet offers the suggested solutions of “de-selfing in a selfing culture” (p. 21), seeing darkness/blackness as a blessing, and conceiving rather than (excessive) consuming. “Living a Me/We ‘House and Garden’ gospel is not easy. But it is fun, filling, and full of surprises” (p. 153).

There are 19 helpful pages of notes but no index.

Reviewer

Craighton Hippenhammer, Olivet Nazarene University

Harton, P.A. (Ed.). (2015). *Orthodoxy and heresy in early Christian contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer thesis*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. 288 pp. \$32.00. ISBN 9781610975049

This edited work includes chapter contributions from ten different scholars; the majority of whom have already published works related to topics in early Christianity. They cover a great deal of material and are thorough in the examination of Bauer’s claims that the common understanding about orthodoxy and heresy might be incorrect. Contributor Rodney Decker handles the overview of those concepts as presented by Bauer. Decker highlights Bauer’s main argument as being a theory where the “heretics” might have been mainstream, orthodox Christians, but that their peculiarities might have not have been recorded as voluminously or may have been intentionally destroyed to the extent that their “voice” now appears lost to us. The other contributors look at the specific subsets of his thesis where he addresses the development of orthodox Christianity throughout the ages to include the Apostolic Fathers, Gnosticism, Early Christian Jews, Montanists, North African Christianity, the Patristic Fathers, and Catholicism. The book is very balanced and collegial as Decker, referring to Bauer’s major contribution to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, begins by graciously noting that “Although taking sharp issue with Bauer’s thesis ... I have a great respect for his lexical work” (p. 11). The level of scholarship displayed is evident as each chapter averages over 80 footnotes giving the reader extra opportunity for consideration. This work would be helpful for seminary students and professors looking to delve into the arguments underpinning Walter Bauer’s opinion of how one could view the orthodox and heretical which is still currently being espoused by Bart D. Ehrman and Elaine Pagels today.

Reviewer

Mark Hanson, Maranatha Baptist University