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Harton's "Orthodoxy and heresy in early Christian contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer thesis" (Book Review)

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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

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