



Blue Collar Jesus : How Christianity Supports Workers' Rights

by Darren Cushman Wood (Seven Locks Press, 2005 ISBN 9781931643429)

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This review is being written as the nation awaits the news of the fate of the coal miners trapped in Utah. Rev. Cushman Wood's book is a reminder of why the church should care what goes on outside its doors.

Blue Collar Jesus is a primer. It is a basic guide, an eye-opening guide, an instructional guide that takes us past stereotypes and informs us of the history of the labor movement in this country. It reveals the on-again, off-again relationship between labor, management and the church. It also is a book of theology that reminds us of the centrality of work as our calling, and of the call of the prophets to stand for justice and dignity for those who do the work.

This book can be a helpful reference point for clergy and lay as they are seeking to discern both the reality and the call for the church to pay attention to and respond to the questions that are raised in everything from the living wage discussions in many of our urban and suburban communities, to what is happening to those who work in the ever declining industrial base in this country.

Preachers will find the author's exegesis of several well known biblical texts a good guide for sermons on this topic. I wonder how many will use it though?

The spirituality offered throughout the book challenges the church to care more about what happens outside its doors than much of what we read these days. That's one of the reasons this book is a good

contribution in the midst of so many other clamoring voices. The author certainly desires to undergird and perhaps, revitalize, this connection between Christianity and Labor. It is deep and thoughtful and well argued. It is a voice raised at a time when, honestly, most in the church will probably simply shrug their shoulders at this discussion. I think that's why it is important that this book has been written and brings to light something that has been too well hidden over the last 20 years.

This book is a useful reference point. It is a breath of fresh air in a day and age when Christianity seems to be more inward focused than the gospel would encourage. The author does a good job in showing the history and the connections that have existed between the labor movement and Christian faith. He roots it in a deep commitment to the poor and a desire to listen to God's call for justice.

Blue Collar Jesus offers a response to the materialism and consumerism of our age, rooted in the spirituality, history and practices of our faith.

The book points to a notion of the common good. An idea that reflects an awareness that the spirit of God is at work in the world as well as in the church – and that it is the calling and claim of God upon the church to join ourselves to that work.

It is a delight to read a book that recognizes that the church has a role in the marketplace not only as one advertiser among others for the competing attentions of the public – but also as a voice to encourage a just society that bears witness to the gospel through the commitments it makes with its life, its liturgy, and its practice.

The hush of people as they tune their ears to what is happening in Utah reminds us of the way in which such things touch the hearts and lives of all of us.

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