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**Review of *Gender and the Social Gospel*. Wendy J. Deichman
Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Giffors (Eds.). Reviewed by John
Herrick.**

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Book Reviews

Wendy J. Deichman Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Giffors (Eds.), *Gender and the Social Gospel*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003. \$49.95 hardcover, \$21.95 papercover.

Students of social welfare institutions in the United States often fail to examine the influence of religion on the careers of social reformers and on the creation of a broad array of social services. This important book examines the Social Gospel movement and its influence on social reform and social service activity well beyond the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the usual temporal boundaries of the Social Gospel. Traditional Social Gospel scholarship held that middle class white, male Protestants such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Josiah Strong, and William Gladstone exemplified Social Gospel thought. These influential men argued that Christians should actively work to achieve the Kingdom of God on earth by pursuing social reform and social justice. Many scholars agree that their work influenced many religious and secular reformers. This book presents convincing evidence that there were tensions resulting from the class and gender bias of Social Gospel leaders. Creation of a just society required connecting across class lines with working class Americans which was generally prohibited by class bias. Furthermore, a truly "Social" Gospel suggested that work would have to be carried on in a civic or community framework which was difficult given the strength of laissez faire and Social Darwinist notions of individualism in American Protestantism. Widespread acceptance of attitudes concerning women's appropriate "spheres" also limited women's roles in the Social Gospel movement.

Many of the essays in this book were first presented as papers at conferences on the Social Gospel at the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School or at the American Society of Church History. This book's diverse research demonstrates the value of careful historical analysis in revising understanding of the Social Gospel movement by documenting its influence in the social welfare work of women, Canadians, Catholics and African Americans from the late nineteenth to the close of the twentieth

century. These essays "restore(s) women and reclaim(s) gender in social gospel studies" as the editors rightfully claim.

The religious motives and contributions of women as diverse as Mary Bynon Reese, who worked at a grass roots level among loggers in the Pacific Northwest to spread the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; Dorothy Day, the radical Catholic activist who worked directly with the urban poor in Catholic Worker houses of hospitality; Mary Richmond, prominent in the development of social work; and late twentieth century African American activists Faye Waddeleton, prominent in women's health advocacy and Marion Wright Edleman of the Children's Defense Fund, are examined. Each of these women's social welfare contributions work is placed within the broad and inclusive conceptualization of the Social Gospel and its influence.

Other essays include Carolyn De Swart Gifford's study of Frances Willard, the influential leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in the late nineteenth century, whose belief in the equality of men and women put her at odds with other social gospellers. She was deeply disappointed when her own Methodist Episcopal Church would not grant laywomen ecclesiastical suffrage. It was the failure of many male proponents of the Social Gospel to accept equality between the sexes and their perpetuation of traditional assumptions about women's appropriate spheres that so disappointed Willard. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards assesses the Christian socialist Josiah Strong's assumptions about women's appropriate roles and finds him to have been progressive for his advocacy of equality for women in the workplace but conservative for his opposition to women's ordination to the ministry. Eleanor J. Stebner explores the many contributions of middle and upper class white women Social Gospellers in Canada through their work in settlement houses, missions and deaconess societies. Her study of Beatrice Brigden, whose labor activism led her to grow disillusioned with the Methodist Church, shows as only good historical research can, how complex events and personalities shape the destiny of social reformers and that the social gospel movement was not limited to the United States. Janet Forsythe Fishburn's examination of Walter Rauschenbusch, a leading proponent of the Social Gospel, finds that while he shared the progressive belief that women

should be given opportunities to be educated, he remained committed to middle class beliefs that women's proper sphere was the home. This demonstrates a paradox within Social Gospel thought which could argue for the realization of God's Kingdom on Earth through social reform but cling to traditional gender role norms even though there were women who were carrying out the Social Gospel mission through their work in settlement houses and other social reformist organizations by acting in non traditional leadership roles.

Paul William Harris' study of Emma Rauschenbusch Clough, sister of Walter Rauschenbusch, wife of John Everett Clough, a Baptist missionary to India, shows how the Social Gospel movement influenced the progressive work and thought of a woman who did important missionary work in India. R.A.R. Edwards offers a critical, comparative study of Jane Addams, Walter Rauschenbusch and Dorothy Day, arguing that Addams and Rauschenbusch naively equated social progress and optimism with watered down versions of Christianity while Day's unwavering adherence to Catholic teaching and practice imbued her with Christian hope based on the gospels and informed her advocacy for radical social change. He contends that Day's strict adherence to Catholicism led inexorably to a radical social critique since the Catholic Workers knew that their religion set them apart from the dominant and powerful secular society. Kendal P. Mobley's study of Helen Barrett Montgomery, a Rochester New York social reformer, committed Baptist and proponent of women's missionary work in the late nineteenth century, asks if the Social Gospel movement should be redefined to include her gender-based theology which assumed women should be emancipated both in the United States and internationally. The book's last section shows that the Social Gospel movement must be defined broadly to understand its significance. Susan Hill Lindley's reprinted essay on women in Social Gospel novels finds them to have been important for their popularization of women's religiously inspired social reform activities at a time when most women were barred from active ministerial roles. Ingrid Overacker's study of African American Women Christian activists in Rochester, New York, shows again how good history can revise popular understanding. She finds that African American Christian women were active in

social reform such as antislavery activity well before the Social Gospel movement and that they worked effectively during the first four decades of the twentieth century to address urban social problems in keeping with the spirit of the Social Gospel.

The provocative research included in this book does, indeed, expand traditional notions of the Social Gospel movement. These essays shows that women as well as men were active particularly at grass roots community levels in working for Social Gospel objectives, that the Social Gospel movement had international dimensions, that African Americans did important Social Gospel related work in cities and that Catholics as well as Protestants were involved. It reveals that the Social Gospel held great appeal for many beyond the walls of seminaries and that its legacy lives on today. It is recommended for students of the Social Gospel movement and anyone interested in the intersections of religion, gender, class and race with nineteenth and twentieth century social reform.

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Dena Rosenfeld. *The Changing of the Guard: Lesbian and Gay Elders, Identity and Social Change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 2003. \$59.50 hardcover, \$18.95 papercover.

This study explores sexual identity among 35 gay men and women who were at least 65 years old in 1995. The author got involved in a number of Los Angeles organizations for older lesbians and gay men and chose her snowball sample through the contacts she made.

The study is situated in historical context. Dana Rosenfeld, a sociologist at Colorado College, asked her respondents about the social reality they dealt with during the 1940s and 1950s and then traces their "identity careers" across the many social changes that have occurred since that time. I came out as a gay man while I was a sophomore at UCLA in 1957 so I am not too far off the age and location of her sample. With one foot in that generation, I found myself reflecting on my own identity career and agreeing with her in so many ways. In the following, my voice often blurs with hers.