H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Edith L. Blumhofer, ed.. *Religion, Education, and the American Experience: Reflections on Religion and American Public Life.* Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2002. x + 246 pp. $34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8173-1146-9.

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Published on H-AmRel (July, 2003)

This book has something for everyone interested in religion and education. Ranging in focus from home schooling to literary criticism and in genre from sociological analysis to personal testimony, this collection presents a sample of the conversations on education hosted by the Public Religion Project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and directed by Martin E. Marty from 1996 to 1999. Those seeking a summary of the project's findings should consult *Education, Religion, and the Common Good* (2000) by Marty and Jonathan Moore. Readers of this volume will find ten essays that present an intriguing selection of contemporary discourse on religion in education.

In the first essay, "Liberal Education and Religious Studies," Warren A. Nord claims that people are "illiberally educated" if they are not required to "take religion seriously." "Religious ways of thinking and living" must be presented to students as "live options" that can contend with secular ways of thinking (p. 10). To achieve this goal he recommends that all secondary-school and college students be required to take courses in religious studies. He acknowledges, however, that to achieve this goal, the way many religious studies courses are taught will need to be changed. To serve liberal education, courses must lead students to consider the merits of religious teachings rather than emphasizing the methods of religious studies. Nord's call for greater attention to religion and for a transformation of how religion is included in education is echoed in most of the essays that follow.

Roger Lundin's essay builds on Nord's by examining how one secular way of thinking, modern science, has affected literature, an academic discipline often seen as more closely related to religion. Surveying the whole modern era, Ludin shows how literature has variously sought to present itself as an alternative to science, to legitimate itself on scientific grounds, or, paradoxically, to do both. In the latter part of the essay, Ludin rejects the "'strong' textualist" position represented by Richard Rorty that regards science as simply another form of textuality and therefore subordinate to literature as a discipline (p. 60). Finally, Ludin examines the work of four poets to show how Christians can use literature to respond to

the knowledge of the world opened by science through ethical reflection and playful creativity. Ludin's essay fits somewhat awkwardly in this volume. It is almost twice the length of the longest of the others, more demanding of the reader, and most removed from discussions of educational policy. Yet it is one of the most thoughtful and rewarding.

In one of four essays on church-related colleges, Robert Sullivan develops issues discussed by Nord and Ludin as he considers whether American Catholic higher education has ever had a coherent and distinctive intellectual perspective. In a historical study, Sullivan suggests that there was no golden age with a coherent understanding of Catholic educational identity. While the neo-Thomist revival of the early and mid-twentieth century provided the appearance of a unified intellectual system, Sullivan shows that it was not as pervasive or as distinctively Catholic as it claimed to be. Rather, throughout their history, American Catholic colleges and universities have been shaped by movements and structures that affected other schools. In a closely related essay, Charles Zech presents an empirical analysis of the extent to which faculty feel connected to their school's Catholic identity and mission. Based on his findings, he makes a number of practical suggestions about faculty orientation and recruitment.

While Sullivan and Zech highlight the difficulty of maintaining a distinctive identity, Robert Benne examines six schools (Calvin, Wheaton, Notre Dame, Baylor, St. Olaf, and Valparaiso) that have maintained their religious identity. In an essay that reflects the findings of his book ***Quality with Soul*** (2001), he emphasizes the importance of a coherent theological vision, a prevailing Christian ethos, and a critical mass of persons from the sponsoring community. In the following essay, Mark U. Edwards, Jr., former president of St. Olaf, offers a counterpoint to Benne's emphasis on the salutary benefits of coherent religious identities. Noting the tendency of strong communities "to stigmatize those with whom they disagree as not merely mistaken but evil," Edwards calls for church-related colleges to foster diversity within themselves (p. 116). Together these four essays offer a remarkably good introduction to the issues confronting church-related higher education.[1]

These issues of distinctiveness and uniformity are also central to James C. Carper and Brian D. Ray's essay on the home school movement. They make a compelling case that all home schoolers, even those who "claim no denominational or ecclesiastical religion," join conservative Christian home schoolers as "educational anabaptists." They all reject state-run education on religious grounds to provide education that is "parent-led, home-based, and family-based" (p. 238). Since most essays in this book deal with the powerful homogenizing trends in higher education, this essay serves as an important reminder of a portion of the U.S. educational world that is shaped by strong religious motivations and individual independence.

The remaining three essays offer personal reflections that demonstrate how different the role of religion can be on the campuses of secular universities. At Southwest Missouri State University, James C. Meyer attributes the success of his religious studies departments to the good relationships it maintains with local religious communities. This helps it gain a steady flow of students and good will. At the University of Chicago, Alison L. Boden, dean of the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, expresses her frustration in finding ways to fulfill the chapel's mandate "to enable spiritual growth" (p. 186). Individualism and anti-instutitionalism among the students, a lack of interest in building inter-religious community among student religious groups, and a denial of the place of ethical and religious reflection within the institution at large make her work "somewhat less than obvious" (p. 190). At Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York, President Edison O.

Jackson explains how his Christian faith is the foundation of his career. He frankly owns up to his religious motivations in his daily work. This is well received on campus. He reports that when he tells students that "God is the center of my life, their faces light up" (p. 211). These three essays contain many insightful suggestions and careful considerations of policy issues, but together they chiefly illustrate how the role of religion varies with the culture of different secular campuses.

>From this volume three dominant questions about the role of religion in education emerge: How do religious ways of knowing relate to modern secular understandings of knowledge? How should religious values and practices shape educational communities? How can religious educational communities maintain their identity while participating in the broader educational world? These essays suggest some of the ways these questions are being answered. Each provides an important perspective on the role of religion in education and will be useful in further reflection and research. Despite the diversity of focus and genre in these essays, however, all of the religious traditions highlighted here are Christian. Given the book's broad focus, the inclusion of essays focusing on other religious traditions seems appropriate. While readers looking for a systematic introduction to the role of religion in American education need to look elsewhere, this volume provides a well-chosen sample of perspectives on the topic.

Note

[1]. Church-related higher education has received remarkable attention over the past decade. For a survey of this literature and a thorough bibliography see Stephen R. Haynes, ed., ***Professing in the Postmodern Academy: Faculty and the Future of Church-Related Colleges*** (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2002), pp. 1-30, 341-355.

Citation: David R. Bains. Review of Blumhofer, Edith L., ed. ***Religion, Education, and the American Experience: Reflections on Religion and American Public Life.*** H-AmRel, H-Net Reviews. July, 2003.

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