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DEMOCRACY AND THE RENEWAL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, ed. by Richard John Neuhaus. The Encounter Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. 170. $7.95 (paper).

This is a book that one can read profitably starting with the last chapter! There is a discussion of the encounter and dialogue at the conference where the preceding five chapter-papers were presented by their individual authors.

Democracy and the Renewal of Public Education is the fourth in The Encounter Series, a medium for dialogue among a diverse group of public and private persons over a broad range of topics across the political and religious spectrum in American life and for presentation to the wider public for further study and conversation.

Public education in the United States has its problems today. But there always have been problems, from the days of Jefferson onward. And the course of democratic life over the years has produced solutions and changes that seem to work. In fact, American educational problems have a history of management that has a way of tempering whatever uneasiness people feel about public education and of muting the voices that want to call that uneasiness a crisis. Those voices, represented by the authors in this book, are troubled about what goes on in public education and what supports it by way of political and economic policy. They find themselves needing to rescue a sense of crisis from being swallowed up in the experience of stability in the contemporary democratic way of life in America.

They argue that public education in this country is fraught with injustice and inequity that touch the lives of children, parents and teachers day after day and that the key to the problem lies in turning back the ownership of education to parents and teachers who can make justice and equality happen when a public system does not.

But that is only the edge of a deeper problem. Beyond arousing public sentiment about the far-reaching injustices and inequities that characterize public school education and calling for redress, the authors are proposing to make democracy do the job it should for all citizens. Neuhaus says that "in one way or another, the proposals [offered by individual conference participants in the first five chapters of this book] meet around the idea of 'democratizing' education. And, in their understanding of democracy, 'choice' has a central role."

The chapters give a brief survey of the development of educational ideas and the governmental and public policy that have produced the strategies and tactics of public education today. Though the survey is sketchy, it focuses the problem. Richard A. Baer, Jr., writes on "American Public Education and the Myth of Value Neutrality." Charles L. Glenn writes on "'Molding' Citizens," Rockne M. McCarthy writes on "Public Schools and Public Justice: The Past, the Present, and the Future." James W. Skillen writes on "Changing Assumptions in the Public Governance of Education: What Has Changed and What Ought to Change." Paul C. Vitz writes on "A Study of Religion and Traditional Values in Public School Textbooks." Finally, Tracy Early summarizes the conference discussion in "The Story of an Encounter."

Each chapter argues knowledgeably and convincingly for strengthening the part of parents and teachers—in order to make education truly more "public"—by challenging the ways government has taken control of the principalship of children's schooling. But the discussion and suggestions about "democratizing"

education often beg the question. The assumptions the authors make regarding both democracy as a political system and the nature of public education shaped by democratic processes for almost 200 years are less than clear.

The need for equality and justice within the system is the presenting cause for the discussion about renewal. But it is precisely in the renewal of public education within a democratic framework that one begins to see the deeper reaches of the problem.

"Choice" is claimed by the authors to be a *sine qua non* of education in democracy. As important as parental choice is, however, its origin is more determinative of what will result from choice. Is choice a universal right of individuals independent of political systems? Or is it constitutive of some such system? If the latter is so, what view of democracy obtains? Furthermore, what are the options parents have for choice? Does contemporary American democracy offer only freedom to choose among a limited set of options? And are those options free of injustices and inequities in giving parents the "right to choose"? Or does choice allow for choosing beyond the options available when parents decide what education is best for their children? If the latter is the case, what is the place of individual parental values in the choices they make within a democratic framework?

Though McCarthy and Skillen claim to build on Baer, they come close to committing the fallacy he warns against of viewing government as value-neutral. They assume that the primary function of government is to administer justice and equity by giving choice. And yet, in their discussion they recognize the absence of neutrality is in the limitation of choices even within the framework of government schools and the principalship of parents. If parents want government schools for their children, what really are their choices?

Personal convictions about the equality of people of all races, supported by articulated beliefs and expressed intentions to further racial justice, is one way the problem of justice and the issue of race can be clarified when it comes to choices and options. But beyond that clarity is much ambiguity about justice in the form of institutional racism not adequately addressed in the conference papers or discussion. In reality, intentions to afford equal educational opportunity to all children are again and again consciously and unconsciously frustrated by readiness/ intelligence testing, curricula designs and classroom performance evaluations that are developed out of data from a predominant race or social class, thereby excluding or judging less valuable the social and cultural heritage of others.

The issue of racial justice in public schools transcends institutional expression, however wide-ranging, to reach the individual in all his or her human capabilities. Moreover, what would be just is not easily derived from an analysis of what is, in reality, unjust.

One cannot assume that as long as government has given parents choice it has exercised its function to ensure justice and equity for all citizens. It is, therefore, not enough simply for governments to recognize the principalship of patents or deal with the question of justice and equity by liberal programs of funding.

The problems of public education, thus, go deeper than such matters as government-or-parent principalship, parent choice, etc. The problems reach back to the way governments as political-economic systems define justice and equity *de facto* and *de jure* and to the institutional nature of what results, often making personal parent choice a moot point at best.

Besides this uncertainty on the matter of parental choice is the lack of clarity in the way the word "democracy" is used by the authors. They seem to understand democracy as a political reality that derives from some theory of consensus in which the government exists to protect (and fund) but not to interfere with the process of education. At best, such a theory allows for anyone to get into the ranks of decision-makers and guarantees competition among all groups by a pluralistic structure of society in which political and economic systems are accountable to the people.

The problems the authors raise, however, suggest that all this is more rhetoric than reality. The democratic society they

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claim as the context for renewal turns out, by the very problems they raise, to be monolithic, one in which all social classes do not have access to positions of power and one in which political power is linked closely to a concentration of economic power. The pluralism they speak about seems not much more than a vague kind of public diversity currently under-represented in the democracy that presumably fosters and sustains it.

Their theory of consensus needs to face the reality of democratic elitism. Thomas Dye (*Who's Running America*), for example, points out that the interests of the corporate sector (utilities, banks, insurance companies, etc.), the public interest sector (mass media, the legal system, foundations, civic organizations, etc.), and the governmental sector (especially the structures of the national government) coincide in a very small concentration of elite decision-makers that precludes the openness and balance that consensus assumes.

Perhaps more helpful in working with the problems of public education would be the view that the social order produces a dominant class—a hegemony—which formulates and gives expression to the beliefs and value systems of social institutions. Such a view might provide insight not only into the processes of "democratizing" education (a Deweyan view holding that democracy does in fact educate) but also into the processes of "educating" democracy.

An illustration of the way public education in a democratic system can be exclusive because of the assumptions people hold about democracy and education can be found in Paul Vitz's chapter

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reporting the survey he did on religious and traditional values in public school textbooks. He found that such textbooks are definitely biased against such values. He laments the lack of material on the contemporary Protestant religious world, noting the heavy emphasis in some texts on today's job market and the world of recreation. More generally, he notes the absence of reference to the history, values, and beliefs of large segments of the American people.

What is lacking, however, in Vitz's survey and analysis is some reflection on the reasons for this absence of material. Though he leaves the impression that the absence might be

accounted for as a simple rejection of material within the choices of pluralism, he does not allow for the view that the present political-economic policy in U.S. public education is more likely dominated by a monolithic structure that simply excludes certain historical data out of hand as inconsistent with the prevailing assumptions about the value and content base for public education.

In suggesting that the assumptions standing behind the call to "democratize" education might helpfully be appraised from the alternate perspective of "educating" democracy, I am not suggesting that public schools are primary agents for social change or that social change is the primary function of education and the schools. If that suggestion were argued, it would require schools to have as their goal the change of other institutions within society. And such a goal could go far beyond the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of education.

If, on the other hand, we view democracy as a framework for education, we can argue that the goal of schools is to be more educative. They can affect the learning of students more critically. There, it seems to me, is where the deeper questions of justice and equity are lodged—in the way schools educate because of and in spite of the public political-economic policy assumptions that shape the process—and not simply in choices about schools parents can make or in a pseudo-disestablishment of government principalship that gives freedom and government funding to ail on the basis of some theoretical consensus about democratic ideals and values.

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RELIGION AND REPUBLIC: THE AMERICAN CIRCUMSTANCE, by Martin E. Marty. Boston: Beacon, 1987. Pp. 391. $25.00.

This book is a collection of fifteen essays, originally published as articles in several journals or as chapters in books over the period 1967 to 1985. All bear on the theme of religious pluralism in American society. They are grouped in four sections: I. The Present and the Past; II. Dimensions of Pluralist Experience; III. The Peoples' Republic; and IV. Directions. These historical essays provide analysis of and reflection on the critical role that religious diversity has played in our nation's history up to the present. The coverage is broad, ranging from a general survey of contemporary religion to discussion of the Mormons as illustrative of "a special people."

In a republic whose motto is *E pluribus unum,* and in which religion has been significantly involved in political/social issues, there is a long history of varied efforts to guarantee freedom for diversity at the same time that some commonality of shared convictions is expected. The author's position is that pluralism "deserves celebration," although it is constantly the object of criticism. He is concerned to remind the reader that those political and religious leaders who appeal to a golden age in our past when there supposedly was complete consensus regarding values and morals only imagine a situation which never existed. Religious diversity is of long standing, and the nation continues to grow increasingly pluralistic. It is his conviction that pluralism "permits humans to face their problems in a spirit of freedom and open engagement for argument and toward possible consensus" (4).

In Section II three chapters, among the most interesting in the book, are devoted to public,

or civil, religion. The historical

review of the ways in which public religion has been viewed in this nation is instructive. Discussion of the range of attitudes or positions adopted by members of particular churches in relation to what is sometimes called “the religion of the republic” helps clarify why so many Americans can find seats at “the republican banquet” (William James’ term) while still adhering to their denominational convictions. One of the three chapters is devoted to Reinhold Niebuhr as “the classic public theologian,” who, according to Marty, increasingly saw the nation itself as a repository of religious conviction and practice (117). Niebuhr’s appreciation of civil religion “was born of his frustration over the limits of what particular churches could achieve” (121).

A fascinating essay entitled, “The Bible as Icon in the Republic,” stresses the high regard accorded the Bible by the culture (alongside the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution) while there is at the same time widespread ignorance of its contents. This is a factor in the great resistance in many religious communities to historical criticism despite its acceptance and use in academia.

In Section III several essays are devoted to the subject of “peoplehood,” focusing on the groupings of Americans along racial, ethnic, and religious lines. Marty’s purpose is to illustrate “the thickness of pluralism” (a chapter title). Until the 1960s most interpreters of American religion, according to the author, stressed the idea of the development of a common American religion, understood in a variety of ways. They favored an assimilationist ideal, perceiving movement toward sameness and oneness. The last two decades have witnessed a counterbalancing emphasis on particularity, separatism, and ethnic or racial pluralism, which Marty affirms is a legitimate compensatory interest after years of neglect. In a provocative essay he discusses the theme of American ghettos. Using the term in a broad sense he applies it not only to Catholics and Jews, who to one degree or another have differentiated themselves from the dominant culture, but also to a variety of Protestant subcultures. He raises the question whether mainline Protestants are not in a certain sense a ghetto, and meanwhile points out that WASPs are one of many minorities.

In further illustration of diversity separate essays are devoted to evangelicalism, fundamentalism, and the Mormons, each of which has experienced recent changes and challenges. Evangelicalism is portrayed as the characteristic Protestant way of adjusting to modernity. Fundamentalism, in a dramatic about. face, has become a social-political force on the American scene. The Mormons are experiencing a “crisis of historical consciousness” in consequence of serious study of Mormonism’s historical origins.

In a final chapter entitled “Transpositions” Marty contends that the major religious phenomenon of the decade of the eighties is the transposing or repositioning of major religious groupings in American society in terms of influence, roles, and changing emphases.

Marty’s book is an engaging study of the phenomenon of American religious pluralism. He demonstrates his ability, as he has in other books, to interpret and evaluate a diversity of religious groups both appreciatively and critically. Each chapter is self-contained, but taken together the essays comprise a valuable historical and interpretive study of a complex subject. The book sustains one’s interest in virtue of its readable style and its wealth of insights.

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CHRIST AND HIS BENEFITS: CHRISTOLOGY AND REDEMPTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, by Arland J. Hultgren. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. Pp. xvi + 285. $24.95.

In this book, Hultgren concentrates on the New Testament "portrayal of Jesus as a redemptive figure." Put in other terms, one can describe the subject as "functional" christology, the work of Christ as represented in the various New Testament writings. Unlike many previous studies, Hultgren is not primarily concerned here to investigate the history of the development of early christology, the traditions lying behind the New Testa-

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page 306

ment texts, the major christological titles, or particular conceptions such as the preexistence of Christ. Instead, his emphasis is on how the various New Testament writings witness to Christ's salvific work, with attention given to their various historical contexts.

Nevertheless, in chapters 1-3 Hultgren cogently takes positions on a variety of debated issues dealing with the historical development of New Testament christology, and interacts with much modern scholarship. His main concern is to insist both that the conviction that Jesus' death and resurrection constituted the major salvific events upon which eschatological redemption depended arose quite early in the young Christian movement and that this conviction seems to have been pervasive in various types of the earliest Christian communities. Particularly worth noting are Hultgren's criticisms of some recent theories concerning so-called "Q christology," and proposals by Perrin, Schillebeeckx, J. A. T. Robinson and others about the earliest stages of christological reflection.

In the central part of the book (pp. 47-164), Hultgren discusses the christological content of the New Testament writings mentioned above, classifying them according to a proposed schema. He finds four types of "redemptive christology" in the New Testament: "redemption accomplished in Christ" (Paul, Mark); "redemption confirmed through Christ" (Matthew, Luke-Acts); "redemption won by Christ" (Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Letters, 1 Peter, Hebrews, Revelation); and "redemption mediated by Christ" John, Johannine Letters). The first two types he sees as "theopractic," in which God is "the major actor" in redemption and Christ is seen as "the agent of redemption." Types three and four Hultgren describes as "christopractic," meaning that in these types, though God wills redemption, Christ is presented as "the major actor in redemption."

In the final part of the book (pp. 167-206), Hultgren compares the various types of redemptive christology in his schema (their differences and points of unity) and assesses the four types as to their respective coherence with "the larger canonical context and the historical ministry of Jesus." Of the four types of christology he discusses, Hultgren clearly prefers type one, represented by Paul and the Gospel of Mark, arguing that all the others fail in varying degrees to meet these criteria. He concludes the book by engaging certain current theological issues on the basis of his investigation into the types of New Testament christology.

There is a good deal of interaction with scholarly literature in the endnotes (pp. 207-62),

and the book reflects wide acquaintance with the literature and issues of current New Testament scholarship. In addition to this technical competence, Hultgren demonstrates both an attempt to think broadly about the religious content of the New Testament and a willingness to engage in theological reflection on questions concerning the mission and message of Christianity in the modern world. Here is scholarly expertise, not paraded merely for show, but offered in the service of theology and proclamation. The book is also clearly written and the thoughts presented are easy to follow. Hultgren demonstrates serious biblical scholarship made accessible and relevant.

Space does not permit a discussion of many details of Hultgren's treatment. I shall confine my further comments to a few major matters.

First, Hultgren's four-fold schema is clearly presented and works well as a tool for classifying individual christological statements in the New Testament writings. But his attempt to classify and evaluate the New Testament writings and their authors by means of this schema seems to me to involve too much oversimplification. Within the same New Testament author and writing one can find statements reflecting different ways of portraying the redemptive work of Christ. Hultgren formally acknowledges this but claims that the overall emphases of the various New Testament writings can be categorized as he proposes. In my opinion, however, while he correctly emphasizes the variety and complexity within the New Testament as a whole, he does not succeed so well at doing justice to the complexity within individual New Testament writings and authors. I am not really sure how valuable an exercise it is to try to pigeon-hole New Testament

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authors into Hultgren's four-fold schema when it sometimes seems to be a Procrustean bed.

Secondly, in spite of his wish to read the New Testament with regard for the historical context, it seems to me that his critique of certain New Testament writings does not always adequately take into account the particular practical objectives and historical situations of the authors. I suggest that both the New Testament authors and preachers to this day focus on the work of Christ in varying ways depending upon the particular needs they are addressing and the particular behavioral responses they wish to elicit from their audiences.

Finally, while Hultgren's concern to correct imperialistic presentations of the Christian message is commendable, I am personally not sure that he has the biblical support he claims for his view that the New Testament teaches a universal salvation of all, regardless of their response to God's redemption in Jesus Christ. It is not so clear to me that the New Testament emphasis upon the judgment of God can be relativized as rhetoric as easily as Hultgren wishes.

These reservations aside, Hultgren has produced a book worth reading, an instructive example of biblical theology informed by current scholarship and engaged with important questions of faith and life.

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DIVERSITY IN FAITH—UNITY IN CHRIST, by Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. Philadelphia:

Westminster, 1986. Pp. 144. $10.95 (paper).

Can Christians of a liberal-activist bent and "spirit-filled" pietists find a consensus of faith? Can orthodoxy and liberal moralism find common ground for anew vision of Christian mission? Shirley Guthrie, Jr., thinks they can. *Diversity in Faith—Unity in Christ* examines the strengths and weaknesses of three major strands of Christian tradition: orthodoxy, liberalism (two kinds), and pietism. Each strand is characterized by chapter headings named for well-known hymns and songs such as "Faith of Our Fathers" for orthodoxy and "Amazing Grace" for pietism. You get the idea. Part Two of the book proposes a "new song," in which a new, uniting consensus is put forward, one which moves beyond the narrow confines of each tradition.

Guthrie's treatment of the debits and credits of orthodoxy, liberalism, and pietism is non-technical and easily understood by the general reader. It is an evenhanded, though occasionally homogenized, evaluation. Even at that, the orthodox, liberals, and pietists of whom he writes, might, with some justification, deny some of. what he says about them, e.g., "The God of orthodoxy is by definition a distant God, who is not only unwilling but unable to be present in a world and in lives that are so ungodlike" (31). One may also wonder if the orthodoxy of the scriptural inerrantists is indistinguishable from that of the confessionally orthodox or how modern fundamentalism enters the discussion. Perhaps a more glaring deficiency is that Roman Catholics, in so far as they are not represented by Guthrie's rather Protestant definition of orthodoxy, liberalism, and pietism, are left out of the discussion altogether, as are an who represent a liturgical-sacramental song among the traditions.

These criticisms aside, Guthrie's approach takes diversity in faith seriously and lays the groundwork for his proposal for unity in Christ, which is by far the book's most valuable contribution. For Guthrie, "a Christian is first and last simply a witness to Jesus Christ" (81). And here the word "witness" is redeemed from the parochial, self-serving, and exploitative connotations it has often received at the hands of those who like to promote their own sanctity or the hard-sell door-to-door "evangelists." To be a witness "is what hearers of the gospel are invited to become: witnesses in attitude, word, and action to what God has done, and is doing, and promises to do in the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth, the living and coming Lord" (84).

Christians are primarily witnesses to the presence of God in the world even when—especially when—the world is seen as a godless and godforsaken place.

When those who have been taught to see God in displays of power, success, and glory are later led to doubt God's existence when these things do not happen, Christians witness to the suffering love of God. Curiously, Guthrie says, "classical orthodox Christian theology has always been suspicious of talk about the suffering of God" (91). Perhaps it is a side-tracked orthodoxy of later generations and not "classic" orthodoxy (if one is talking about the apostolic and Nicene witnesses as "classic"), which is responsible for a God who is unable to suffer and experience our death. But whatever is responsible for the "Rambo" image of God amid so much obvious human misery and unanswered questions, the witness to the suffering love of God is a powerful reminder that God is present in *our* world and not in some Hollywood backlot where the world goes according to cue. A consensus of faith as witness to a God present in human history and

suffering also simply makes many of the squabbles between the orthodox, liberals, and pietists irrelevant. Guthrie demonstrates that he indeed knows what's really at stake for Christian unity and evangelical mission—a God who can be taken seriously in a world of pain and who promises his presence even in the midst of it.

Guthrie also speaks of witness to the liberating power of God. The liberating power of God is not a triumphalism touted at the expense of the theology of the cross to which Guthrie himself has just borne faithful witness, but a witness anchored in resurrection hope. Authentic Christian witness is based on what God has already done and still does. It is unflinchingly honest, as Guthrie reminds us, and unflinchingly hopeful as well. He writes, "The Christian community was held together by its weekly celebration of the liberating power of God that had actually been demonstrated on the first Easter" (106). One might add that such celebrations were eucharistic. The sacramental presence of the God who suffers and yet offers Easter hope is the church's witness *par excellence* until he comes again. Participation in bread and cup as an aspect of witness to the sacrifice and hope of the Christian life of faith is left unexplored by Guthrie. Perhaps doing so might be a way to move beyond a merely Protestant consensus on Christian unity.

Be that as it may, Guthrie has made a fine and altogether too rare contribution to ecumenical dialog—a consensus based on a Christian witness by attitude, word, and action to the God who suffers and liberates. This book would make a fine guide for discussion and study by classes within the local parish and other groups who seek to understand and be in conversation with Christians of other traditions, as together they seek to sing a new song.

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HOUSEHOLD OF FREEDOM: AUTHORITY IN FEMINIST THEOLOGY, by Letty M. Russell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. Pp. 116. $8.95 (paper).

Feminism is the body of this book, power and authority are the heart of its content, and special interest groups are the life-blood of its acceptance as a valuable work. I am not a member of its central interest group and I was not persuaded by its exposition. That is one test for a book that argues for a new order of things. On that score it fails, despite its other potential merits.

In a very assuming personal dialogue, Letty Russell is trying to create an apology for feminists to share the power of authority of theological thought that has long been the domain, according to the author, of the male gender.

Despite all of Russell's credentials, I have reservations regarding her understanding of the nature of the Holy Scriptures, especially in regard to the teachings of Jesus. The gospel presents and provides the common denominator for all people. No one has an advantage or extra power—the gospel is a gift to *all.*

In her preface, she writes: "This book is an invitation to explore ways of including all the people of God in the sharing of authority in a household of freedom" (14). I found it to be more of a diatribe against what Letty Russell and other feminists, whom she quotes liberally, have experienced in the church and theological

circles of Western Culture dominated by white males.

How one justifies wanting to share power and authority with those one does not particularly respect is not answered. The motive behind such sharing is seemingly suspect.

Letty Russell has an axe to grind and does so sharply in six brief chapters. The *Household of Freedom* in her title is, as she states: "...a metaphor for the glimpses of God's household that we catch from time to time in our own relationships." This explanation is pointed to in the first chapter—" Authority of the Future"—where she writes:

> Yet the question of authority is still a source of interest and debate, and the experience of women is still a norm for the truthfulness of tradition. Like other liberation theologies, feminist theologies recognize the importance of experience and context in the formation of all theologies as well as in the formation of scripture, tradition, and paradigms of rationality. But the very fact that women's experience is appealed to as an authority in theology is often cause for disbelief on the part of white male theological establishments. And this disbelief is compounded when the experience claimed is not just female (biological) or feminine (cultural). It is the feminist (political) experience of those advocating a change of society to include both women and men as human beings, created in God's image to participate with God in the fashioning of new creation. (11-18)

This new creation, the "household of freedom," is claimed on a utopian faith, claimed on a belief that the scriptures, at least in regard to women, are a distortion of the past, and claimed as the basis for a revolution of freedom in the present.

In the chapters that follow, the author provides her reasoning for the appeal for a sharing of power and authority, an understanding of why it is vitally necessary, and some suggestions, though not answers, as to how this can be brought about in our present day church and society.

I present her themes with direct quotes to whet your appetite to discover for yourself the seeming crusade feminist theologians have embarked upon to gain identity and respect for themselves as well as others.

Paradigms of Authority:

> In feminist theory this paradigm has a variety of designations, including partnership, friendship, community, relationship, mutuality, and matriarchy....The intention is not simply to reverse the old paradigm of domination, but rather to search out an alternative way of ordering reality and our world that is less harmful to human beings, to nature, and to all creation. (35)

Power of Naming:

> The feminist movement has discovered that naming ourselves has to do with claiming our own identity, thought, and action. Changing sex-exclusive language is no longer some whim of a few fringe women....It is a serious, well-researched, political action to change sexist language and social structures. (45)

In a sense, Christian feminists are constantly admitting that the Bible is "hopelessly sexist" and known to be "harmful to women's health." (51)

The desire of those working for inclusive language is not for domination but for true diversity in which no one image or model decides the nature of God or of the human person. (51)

New House of Authority:

Even grace seems of no avail for those whose very nature threatens the old male house of authority. Those who wish to protect this old house are, perhaps, well advised to reject women as pastoral leaders, because there are a great many persons in many different confessional houses that are becoming "house revolutionaries." (59)

Women are the "oppressed of the oppressed" in every land; there will be no new household of freedom if these women have no part in it. (71)

Household, Power, and Glory:

The presence of Christ among those who confront the authorities of domination creates the possibility of a new household of freedom where persons are able to relate to one another in an authority of partnership. But households of freedom are not in themselves "the power and the glory." Rather, they are signs of the power of God's kingdom at work in our midst, through the praxis of messianic politics. (82)

Good Housekeeping:

Partnership is an authority of freedom that

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uses people's need for solidarity and care to empower them through a relationship of mutuality. (92)

Subversion is most certainly one way of standing against the powers in this time before the full realization of God's eschatological household. (93)

A household of freedom has no one structure or shape; it simply represents the two or three—or two or three thousand—gathered in Christ's continuing housekeeping ministry for the world. (95)

Letty Russell has provided an interesting, if not disturbing, insight into feminist theology. It will instill enthusiasm in some, and provoke anguish for others. The struggle for power and

authority permeates not only society but the church as well. This author calls upon everyone to bring about a sharing of our common concerns and roles of leadership so that all people may be included in the *household of freedom.*

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PAUL THE TEACHER: A RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH, by Kent L. Johnson. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986. Pp. 126. $6.95 (paper).

Using modern educational theory to examine Acts and the letters of Paul, Kent Johnson has sketched a convincing portrait of Paul the teacher. He identifies Paul as an "authority-enabler" type of teacher. That is, Paul taught with authority, and he wanted his hearers to grow in faith. As a teacher, he was concerned with both proclamation and nurture.

Johnson shows how Paul perceived his hearers—as persons created by God, persons whose greatest need was reconciliation with God and with each other. Paul saw more in humankind than its limitations, says Johnson. He saw that people have worth in their differences, and that they are capable of change. Subsequent chapters describe Paul's purpose in teaching, his accountability and his methods.

Some punctilious readers will balk when modern educational concepts are applied to Paul. One reviewer has solemnly intoned that we must beware of applying descriptions like "authority-enabler" to a person like Paul, who simply did not think along those lines. To his credit, Johnson gracefully acknowledges the limits of such terminology and the limits of what we know about Paul. But Paul *was* a teacher. Johnson's use of educational insights provides not only a new look at Paul, but an occasion for parish teachers to evaluate and strengthen their own ministries.

Paul the Teacher is rich in illustrations from Paul's letters and Acts, and has at times an almost devotional quality—in the best sense of that word. Written in a direct and graceful style, this book will appeal to a broad range of readers. Discussion questions are provided at the end of each chapter. Johnson set out to describe Paul as teacher and to provide a resource for teachers in the church. He has succeeded on both counts.

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NORMAN PERRIN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: FROM "EXEGETICAL METHOD" TO "HERMENEUTICAL PROCESS," by Calvin R. Mercer. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1986. Pp. 151. $24.95.

This volume is the second in a series entitled " American Biblical Hermeneutics," edited by Charles Mabee. Its publication coincided with the tenth anniversary of Perrin's untimely death on November 25, 1976. European born and educated, yet rooted in the American scholarly scene, Perrin's work reflects a creative dialogue between the European traditions and his new American setting. To illustrate this, Mercer organizes his material according to the pattern: The Continental

Heritage/The American Reformulation.

In tracing Perrin's pilgrimage, Mercer contends that Perrin's fundamental concern was for a proper methodology and his theological motivation was the quest for a foundation for faith. He sees a reciprocal relationship between Perrin's method and theology, in which theology seeks support from method, which leads

to a change in theology, followed by a search for a method adequate to the new theology.

In Part I, "The Development of an Exegetical Methodology," the continental heritage is historical criticism. Mercer traces Perrin's methodological movement from the cautious form criticism of his mentors, T. W. Manson and J. Jeremias, to the radical form criticism of Bultmann, and finally to redaction criticism.

This movement was matched by a corresponding theological movement. Perrin became more convinced of both the difficulty and the inappropriateness of basing faith on a knowledge of the historical Jesus. Perrin came to agree with Bultmann that the locus of revelation is not in the ministry of the historical Jesus but in the reality of the Christian experience. At the same time, Perrin continued to seek a place for historical knowledge of Jesus by suggesting that such knowledge could contribute to the formulation of the faith image we have of Jesus. This Mercer sees as ambiguous and undemonstrated in Perrin's work.

If the continental part of his pilgrimage involved a loosening of the connection with the historical Jesus, this was accelerated by the American reformulation. Redaction criticism, with its emphasis on the gospels as literary wholes, led Perrin to his encounter with literary criticism, particularly the New Criticism. Perrin's work shifted in emphasis from a historical paradigm to a literary paradigm, from a concern for historical context and authorial intent to an emphasis on literary form and the semantic autonomy of the text.

Perrin did not abandon his historical pursuits, however, but sought a hermeneutical process which would combine historical criticism with his new insights. This is reflected in his last major work, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Fortress, 1976), in which he proposed a four-stage hermeneutical method: 1) textual criticism; 2) historical criticism; 3) literary criticism; 4) hermeneutics. The inclusion of the first two steps reflects his concern to prevent totally subjective readings through the use of historical controls.

In the second major section of the book, "Rethinking the Teaching of Jesus," Mercer examines Perrin's treatment of the Kingdom sayings and the parables, again working from the continental discussion to the American reformulation. It is in these two areas of Jesus' teaching that Mercer seeks to chart Perrin's methodological and theological pilgrimage, especially his literary turn in the American reformulation. In the study of the Kingdom of God, Perrin moved from a concern for the historical expression of this concept in Jesus' proclamation to a treatment of the Kingdom of God as a tensive symbol with potential for ever new and relevant meanings. In the study of the parables, he moved from a concern for the point of the parable in its historical context to the treatment of the parable as a literary object with an ongoing life of its own. These shifts moved Perrin from a position where he viewed history as the basis for faith towards a position where history was not important for faith.

In the third part of the book, "Perrin and American Biblical Hermeneutics," Mercer sets Perrin in the context of the American discussion. Perrin's work is seen as both paradigmatic and

prophetic. It is paradigmatic in that it reflects an important movement in American interpretation from history to text. That movement is seen as salutary by Mercer, since a literary criticism, which severs the text from history and theology, can relate well to America's increasingly secular and pluralistic society. The risk is that, with its stress on the autonomy of the text, such interpretation may sever the text from extrinsic spheres of meaning. Mercer sees help in Ricoeur's notion that the object of understanding in interpretation is the world projected by the text; i.e., the outline of a new way of being in the world. It is with the horizon of that world that the horizon of the interpreter is fused in the act of understanding.

While such a move opens the way for meaning and significance, it raises the question of subjectivity in interpretation. Mercer finds Perrin less skeptical than Ricoeur and the New Critics about our ability to uncover the original meaning of an ancient text as a starting point in interpretation. The consensus of modern scholarship, when incorporated into a hermeneutical process such as Perrin's, should provide some historical controls. It may not permit the verification of one

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interpretation, but it can validate an interpretation as more acceptable than another.

Mercer sees Perrin's work as not only paradigmatic, but also prophetic. Perrin recognized that not all texts are amenable to New Critical inquiry, and therefore attempted to construct a hermeneutic that would do justice to various interpretative approaches. In this way, his work stands as an example of the need today for a pluralism of approaches in dialogue with one another and with the texts.

If the reader is familiar with Perrin's work and conversant with the contemporary hermeneutical discussion, this book may be an interesting review and a helpful interpretation. If not, the rapid survey of complicated issues in shorthand fashion, and the occasionally dense jargon, may prove a barrier to an appreciative reading.

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THE BIBLE: A CHILD'S PLAYGROUND, by A. Roger Gobbel and Gertrude G. Gobbel. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986. Pp. 164. $9.95 (paper).

Children at a playground don't all play in the same way. Even if two or more children play on the same piece of equipment, they play in different ways. No one learns to swing or slide just by reading about it, or even by watching others play. Some things can only be learned through direct engagement. That is why children should have direct access to the Bible, argue A. Roger and Gertrude Gobbel. Too often, they contend, children are taught *about* the Bible and the information in it, but are given little or no opportunity to encounter the Bible directly.

The authors are quick to concede the limits of their playground analogy. After all, the Bible is a book written by adults for adults. Unfortunately, too many adults think that if children do not understand the Bible the way they (the adults) do, then the adults have failed as teachers. But in fact, "children do not have the tools, either intellectually, emotionally or experientially, to

understand the Bible as adults may" (6). However, children can and do engage the Bible *as they are able,* just as they engage other adult events that occur in their lives.

Adults who teach children the Bible should provide their learners with direct access to texts, appropriate activities to help the children interact with the texts, and acceptance of the children's responses—even if those responses are different from the teacher's. The authors give helpful guidelines for how this may be done with children of different age levels. They also provide essential background on child development, and how this affects a child's encounter with the Bible.

As a parent, I was most interested in the chapter called "Snippets, Rewrites and Children's Books." The authors persuasively argue that we do children a great disservice when we treat Bible story books and church school curriculum as a substitute for the Bible. "In many instances, rather than solving problems, the storybooks have introduced problems that are not in the biblical stories themselves" (96). We would do well, therefore, to use those books of Bible stories which stay very close to the biblical text. Curriculum should be used as an aid to teaching the Bible and not as an end in itself. The constant theme of the book is that adults can and should "encourage and assist children to engage the text as they are able and respond to it as they are able" (151).

The Bible: A Child's Playground is intended for parents, pastors, Christian education directors, church school teachers and seminarians, but the book may not appeal to such a wide audience. The writing is flat and at times redundant. Yet the value of this book lies not in the reading experience but in the application of the approach it sets forth. It may spark some much needed evaluation and change of the ways adults teach—or do not teach—children the Bible.

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