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## Theology of Christian Education (Book Review)

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of all Christian women—the unmarried, the mother, the childless, the grandmother, the widow.... This is effectively illustrated by examples from the author's life and the lives of women acquaintances and relatives. Gladys Hunt's emphasis on Scripture and her personal style of writing should help women who read this book to re-examine their commitment to God, their relationships with others, and their acceptance of themselves.

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#### A Theology of Christian Education—by

Lawrence O. Richards. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975. 324 pages. Reviewed by J. B. Hulst, Dean of Students.

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This book could better be described as a "Theology of Church Education," since it deals with the educational ministry of the organized church. It was written as a text to be used, I assume, on the college and seminary levels. It is divided into two parts. Part One deals with "theological considerations." Convinced that "ecclesiology must be the source of our educational understanding and that Christian education is truly a theological discipline" (Introduction), the author sets forth what he understands the church to be. He then goes on to point out the implications of his ecclesiology for church education.

In defining the church, Dr. Richards states that "the Church of Christ is a living organism, not merely an organization. And principles for its growth and nurture must be sought in its nature as an organism, not in its organizational expression" (p. 16). While one can agree with this understanding of the Church, one wishes that Richards had kept the distinction between the church organism and organization clearly in mind in the rest of the book. Because he fails to observe this distinction he tends to identify the Church with its institutional expression and to view Christian education as that activity performed exclusively by the instituted church.

The home is seen as a "nurture center," but there is almost no recognition of the significance of the day school and the importance of Christian education in that sphere.

Part Two is entitled: "Implementing Christian Education in the Local Church." Under this heading Richards deals with "Building the Body," "Childhood Education," and "Adult Education."

In "Building the Body" the author emphasizes that each member of the congregation is a "believer priest" (p. 131). Anyone acquainted with the spirit of the New Testament must applaud this emphasis. However, when the author says that this means that the pastor must "step aside in his pulpit" and involve the members of the congregation in his ministry, we are led to question his understanding of the pastoral office and his concept of the universal office of all believers.

"Childhood Education" is the second sub-heading. Here is where Richards points out the importance of the home and the importance of the instituted church in assisting the home in the performance of its task. Even though, as we have indicated, we are disappointed with his failure to recognize the necessity of the Christian day school, we appreciate the author's repeated statement: "Scripture must be communicated as a lived and liveable reality" (p. 193).

In this same section Richards points out that "revealed truth has an intrinsic correspondence with reality" (p. 180). As one involved in Christian liberal arts education I appreciated this statement, and wish the author had expanded upon his understanding of the concept.

"Adult Education," the third sub-heading, reiterates a theme found throughout the book: "...the critical concept underlying 'ministry' is one of service and support of others of any kind" (p. 231). The most significant chapter in this section is Chapter 25, "Educational Strategies: the Preached Word," in which the author acknowledges: "The central role given to biblical preaching in the conservative churches is educationally as well as theologically appropriate" (p. 293).

The last three chapters are a summary of the total contents of this interesting volume.

Dr. Richards is an excellent writer. He is also a good teacher, which is evident from the diagrams throughout the book and the "probes" at the end of each chapter. As I have already

noted, I have objections to some of the material in this volume. What I object to most of all is the fact that, while he calls his book a "theology," Richards very often deals with and settles issues in a rather non-theological, pragmatic way; e.g. the manner in which he considers the various offices in the church. At the same time, I appreciated many things in Richard's work. Not only is it well-written, but it contains ideas which can be used to make our programs of "church education" more effective.

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**Philosophy of Religion: Contemporary Perspectives**—by Robert O. Schedler. Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1974. 564 pages. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy.

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When man rejects the Light of the world, he can no longer remove the fears and anxieties of daily living. The contents of Schedler's excellent anthology of theological and philosophical reflections on the existence, meaning, and horizon of religion clearly demonstrate this precarious impasse of contemporary man.

The thirty-five articles, written by twenty-nine prominent present-day thinkers, are arranged into seven chapters, each of which Schedler begins with an introduction and ends with a well-prepared list of suggested readings for further explorations. Some of the more outstanding contributors are Michael Novak, Harvey Cox, Will Herberg, Mircea Eliade, Rudolf Bultmann, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Paul Tillich, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Erich Fromm, and Carl Braaten.

The central question that is discussed in this collection of post-Christian writings is whether the world we live in is chaotic, filled with outmoded myths, and surrounded by good-luck charms, or whether our reality is, after all, coherent and in the design of some unknown, beneficent force. The way of either Sartre or Tillich is a "cruel and long-range affair.... No man has seen God. We are

all struggling in the darkness to live well" (p. 124). We live in an age in which "to be an atheist is not to be a deviate," writes Schedler, "for it is not the religious who are looked upon as being less than that what one ought to be.... It is on moral and rational grounds that contemporary atheists make their stand; belief in God is immoral and irrational" (p. 330).

The irrationalism in Schedler's own linguistic analytical approach is apparent when he claims that "change is the essence of things" and that everything is "disposable" (p. xiii). Although Schedler is fascinated by the new, open, even faddish, especially in theology, he does sense that there is some form of continuity of the "old questions and options" in his own philosophy of religion.

Schedler is basically not that novel in his views. As a matter of fact, he is in a sense still very old-fashioned. He remains entangled in the classic misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy and theology. "The philosopher is less superstitious," he writes, "because he does not rely on faith and revelation; the theologian is more broad-minded because his concept of experience includes depths denied by the philosopher" (p. xi). The question of defining "philosophy of religion" Schedler has "sidestepped" (p. xiii). Rather than talk directly about God, humankind and the world, Schedler believes, we should concentrate on "talk about the talk" of these three (p. 220).

All who desire to improve their "exegesis" of our modern world since the late fifties would do well to make a careful study of this well-arranged anthology of popular articles by reputable scholars. The forces of irrationalism and the subtle powers of new paganism loom larger and larger the more one reflects on the contents of this book, especially the statement by Schedler: "In this volume the student is confronted by the careful exact thinker who attempts to keep us from fanaticism, irrationalism, superstition, and the new paganism" (p. xiii).

But even modern man is religiously restless. The search of the ages continues relentlessly. To answer the questions of contemporary secularists, we must question their answers. This presupposes a sympathetic understanding, on our part, of their peculiar questions and inevitable answers.