

ESSAY REVIEW

OF TWO FIELDS: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CATECHESIS

INTERPLAY: A THEORY OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION. By Gabriel Moran. Winona, Min.: Saint Mary's Press, 1981. Paper 172 pp. \$8.95.

Gabriel Moran refuses to allow us to play intramural ecclesial games. He is in search of a new context for the discussion of religion and education in contemporary culture. The framework he proposes here does not negate the ecclesiastical form of religion, but rather places it within a larger educational framework in interaction with diverse religious expressions. In a word, Moran advocates inter-play.

During the past decade, religious education has had the courage to examine some of its fundamental underpinnings. This has led to a sort of creative dislocation within the field. Who are we? What is the nature of our work? What is the scope of the field? What are its limits? What is the appropriate context for our concerns? These seminal questions have surfaced from various sources, but no satisfactory answer has emerged — until now.

Interplay is an attempt to develop a sound and systematic theory of religious education. It keeps faith with our ancestors while also being true to our changing world. In terms of substance and style, the book sparkles. The prose is a marvel of clarity, precision and economy; while its substance opens up a context and content that have been sealed off from religious educators for too long.

The first six chapters of the book describe the *field* of religious education as an arena where religious bodies encounter and engage in forms of education. A major initial task, however, is to recognize the problem: no clearly defined field exists and no consistent language is available with which to theorize. Moran's strategy is to formulate a language that does justice to the religious and educational in life. He resists the easy sliding back and forth between terms prevalent in the field, and the subsequent reduction of religious education to church matters. (Chap. 1).

After sketching the historical limits (*religious* and *educational*) from the founding of the REA in 1903 (Chap. 2), Moran proceeds to reconstruct the enterprise (Chap. 3). His reconceptualization is based on taking the words seriously with their surplus of meaning. With e.e. cummings, he can say: "Like the burlesque comedian, I am abnormally fond of that precision which creates movement." The words religious and education come to life with a novel conciseness and comprehensiveness. The words break open, and we break through to a new standpoint.

Moran returns to previously explored territory in Chapters 4 and 5. His gift and genius, however, is to come at old themes and persistent topics with a fresh-

ness and new angle. The concept of revelation is again exposed as an epistemological box from which the churches have found no escape. The muddled concepts surrounding the act of teaching and teaching of religion are clarified. He points us in the direction of intelligent religion. Moran is at his brilliant and original best when he tries to reappropriate and correlate the classical meaning of work and leisure and their central role in religious education. (Chap. 6).

Chapter 7 switches from consideration of an academic field to the probing of a *profession*. Two distinct but related professions are named and examined: religious education and church minister. This discussion and distinction is invaluable in light of the current cluttering of concepts in church circles and academic programs.

The final section of the book (Chapters 8-11) brings the concerns of religion within an education framework. This can radically change the nature of education and complete its true process. Moran demonstrates his thesis through an examination and critique of adult education, moral development, developmental schemes in general and the place of justice in education. He challenges the assumptions, content and procedures of these popular enterprises and indicts them for being antagonistic to religion. His words are provocative and profound.

Interplay (re)establishes Gabriel Moran as *the* pioneering force in religious education in the United States in this century. Here is vision and tactics for a new day, and a design for religion in a world of religious diversity. The categories are old but the context is new. The book is a striking demonstration of continuity and rootedness in the particular and the past, and, at the same time, provides a reconstructed guiding vision to the future.

Three questions kept simmering in my mind after I put the book down:

Political. Moran's position is consistent, logical and intellectually defensible. How politically feasible, however, is it? Can the words be turned around? Will those who need to hear (inside and outside of churches) listen? Can we realistically expect theologians and those in religious studies to come in under the canopy of a term which has an undistinguished past and doubtful future?

Programmatic. What series or set of courses would constitute an M.A. in religious education in light of the proposal? Would a university credential such a "large and sprawling project?" Would it have different tracks?

Professional. If religious education is not a church office (p. 98), how can religious educators retain their integrity and independence working in a church setting? Who will hire them under such an auspices? Why pay to have the institutional pattern undermined?

We are beginning to sense the right questions and focus on the key issues. The time is ripe for religious education to emerge as a field and a profession. *Interplay* will be the cornerstone of the project. — *Kieran Scott*, Assistant Professor, St. Bonaventure University.

A FAITHFUL CHURCH ISSUES IN THE HISTORY OF CATECHESIS.
Edited by John H. Westerhoff III and O. C. Edwards, Jr. Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc., 1981. Paper 314 pp. \$12.95.

"How do we maintain a faithful church and prepare it for faithful life in the world?" Responding to this burning question, Westerhoff and Edwards have edited a compilation of well documented treatises on the historical development