

BOOK REVIEWS

Albanese, Catherine L. *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976. 274 pp. \$15.00.

Ever since Robert N. Bellah began publishing his sociological essays on civil religion the subject has caught the attention of scholars in many disciplines. The recent bicentennial has turned this interest to the American Revolution. One of a number of writers looking at the religious aspects of this era, Catherine L. Albanese, Associate Professor of Religion at Wright State University, uses a history-of-religions methodology to study the origins of the American civil religion. Assuming that the perceived religion of a people is a smaller component of the "real" religion, Albanese argues that the Revolution was in itself a religious experience that provided the fundamental basis for the American civil religion. The patriots lived out an inner myth that symbolized this religious experience. Regarding themselves as analogous with both ancient Israel and their Puritan fathers, they saw the present as in peril of decline. Moving forward to arrest this decline, they more and more made America a transcendent object of religion and came to supplant their ancestral fathers as its creators.

This religious experience revealed itself in a number of ways. Rituals developed that dramatized the myth of newness. In the process of creating such symbolic forms as the liberty tree the patriots discovered that they were their own men, the makers of history. Although at the beginning of the war they talked much about the Lord of Battles intervening on their behalf, by the conflict's end the patriots were placing more emphasis upon their own involvement with liberty and their own virtues as the basis of their freedom. God increasingly departed their universe as an active force, becoming instead the "Great Governor" and "Architect," one who found his home in the church of Freemasonry. During the early republic the legend of Washington grew until he became a divine man, unifying elements from America's classical and Christian past. At the same time the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution developed into sacred documents that cemented the unity of the nation. In the Revolutionary experience, Albanese concludes, Americans found an invisible religion in which they, rather than God or even their ancestors, were at the center.

To support this argument Albanese has drawn from a wide range of sources: broadsides, pamphlets, sermons, songs, histories, and private correspondence, among others, all of which appear in the footnotes. Typically and probably unavoidably, New England and the Middle States contribute the most evidence (although the author does draw upon some Southern material), and thereby may slant the argument toward the religious concerns of those areas.

While the research is thorough, one wishes that the theoretical framework were more clear, at least for those readers unacquainted with the history of religious methodology. The author's definition of religion as a way of orientation to the world and institutions needs further amplification and justification. One is tempted to think that in these terms everything becomes religious, and thereby the word loses any useful meaning. Also, the author's use of the concept of paradox to explain American culture, drawn from historian Michael Kammen, is often unclear, as when she states, "The language of right and reason was enticing the patriots to the affirmation of a new two-in-one, for it was suggesting to sinners that their persons contained a divinity which corresponded to the divinity in the nature of things." Statements such as this may well be true, but they need further explanation and support. As they

appear here they often have an air of abstractness that requires clarification by a closer tie to historical evidence.

Despite these problems, Catherine Albanese has given us a book that necessitates a new way of thinking about the Revolutionary era. Beyond this it leads to questions about the relationship between this religion of America where man is the chief actor and the various religions in America whose sometimes peculiar qualities often puzzle foreigners. That there is an American civil religion seems clear; its effect upon the theological understanding of American churches needs exploration.

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GARY LAND

Andreasen, Niels-Erik A. *The Christian Use of Time*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978. 128 pp. Paperback, \$3.95.

The author is an associate professor of OT at Loma Linda University and known through several scholarly studies on the Sabbath. According to the preface, *The Christian Use of Time* is neither a doctrinal nor a technical book. It proceeds "from a decidedly Christian premise, namely that every person, Christian and non-Christian alike, is created with the potential to lead a meaningful life" (p. 9). To assist man in reaching this potential, Andreasen suggests that the biblical day of rest, by whatever name it may be known, should once again be given the most careful attention. Hence *The Christian Use of Time* is a series of ten reflections upon the insights and benefits that the weekly day of rest may bring. In some ways it will remind the reader of Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath: The Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1952).

The reflections are of a theological and philosophical nature and integrated around the subject of time. The chapters are entitled: (1) "Finding Time," (2) "Setting Time Aside," (3) "Time for Work," (4) "Time for Rest," (5) "Time for Being Free," (6) "Time for Recreation," (7) "Time for Worship," (8) "Time for Meditation," (9) Time for Others," and (10) "Time for the Future."

Andreasen submits that rather than filling *time* with a spree of activities one should learn to appreciate its value. In this the biblical concept of a weekly day of rest may guide man into a creative use of both "empty (free) time and full (actively engaged) time" (p. 19).

Israel's seventh day was filled with worship, celebration, and joy like her other festivals, yet it differed in that the Sabbath was not demarcated by astronomical and seasonal conditions. The Sabbath of the creation story is a "Time for Rest," when all work reaches its goal. The writer defines rest as a symbol for meaning. The rest day frees man from his preoccupation with "having" and "doing" and makes provisions for "being" and "becoming." Recreation, afforded by the sacred day, implies activity designed to restore our energies and therefore is distinct from leisure and entertainment (which are ends in themselves) and from rest (which implies cessation).

Walter J. Harrelson has defined worship as "an ordered response to the appearance of the Holy" (*From Fertility Cult to Worship* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969], p. 19), and the day of rest is time which supplies the Holy with the occasion to appear. Andreasen adds, "Without time, holiness is mute and worship ceases" (p. 81).

The biblical day of rest is a remarkable and radical solution to our need of stillness—one of those basic human needs threatened with extinction. This day provides time to be alone; and being alone, the author proposes in existential language, means to be a person because one may discover oneself. The day of rest is a retreat in time, when stepping aside, man may catch a glimpse of his goals, methods, motives, and himself.