

Race, Ethnicity, and Urbanization: Selected Essays. By Howard N. Rabinowitz. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. Pp. xii, 359. Notes, tables, index. \$42.50.)

New ideas in American social history often get presented in juxtaposition to received scholarship. This has been the case particularly for the last three decades, when the author of each new insight seems to be at war with his/her progenitors. The situation has contributed to an air of contentiousness in the field, a competitiveness with a sharp edge. Apart from the social discomfort this might engender, it has also cut many historians loose from their moorings, weakening the foundations of collective historical knowledge.

In this vein, it is refreshing to be able to plunge deeply into Howard N. Rabinowitz's work. He self-consciously grounds himself in the work of scholars of an earlier generation, such as C. Vann Woodward, John Hope Franklin, and Richard Wade. He sees himself standing on their shoulders even as he takes up the key questions raised by the "new" social history pertaining to race, ethnicity, and class.

The essays in this collection appeared in some of the most respected journals in American history between the early 1970s and the late 1980s. The University of Missouri Press has performed a service for students of American history by bringing these essays together and making them available within the covers of a single book. Not only have the publishers made a richness of detail and a sharpness of insight accessible, but, by publishing these essays together, they have raised the level of discussion to include the methodology and framework of social history.

Rabinowitz's central thesis in his key work is that the pattern of race relations in the post-Civil War South—in public institutions of education and social welfare, in political life, and in social life—flowed from exclusion to segregation. In exploring this dynamic, he contends that segregation itself cannot be understood as an imposition from on high by a conservative white elite. To the contrary, he argues that African Americans themselves, together with their white Republican allies, helped push southern race relations in this direction by organizing their religious and social lives; by demanding control over classrooms, schools, and other public institutions from almshouses to insane asylums; by demanding access to services, such as streetcars, from which they had once been locked out; and, typically, by settling for separate access to those services.

Rabinowitz's thesis, which is grounded solidly in careful historical research, is presented in several of the essays in this collection ("From Exclusion to Segregation: Health and Welfare Services for Southern Blacks"; "Half a Loaf: The Shift from White to Black Teachers in the Negro Schools of the Urban South, 1865–1890"; and

“Three Reconstruction Leaders: Blanche K. Bruce, Robert Brown Elliott, and Holland Thompson”), as well as his major book, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (1978). In the introductory essay to the collection under review (which is the only essay not published elsewhere), Rabinowitz rejects any intimation that his thesis is politically problematic or “incorrect.” It is here that he most explicitly ties himself to earlier generations of historians. “I’m an empiricist at heart,” he writes, “and the highest compliment I can pay an author is that he or she displays a common sense based on a thorough reading of the sources” (p. 15).

Yet Rabinowitz sells himself short, for he is far more than “an empiricist.” These essays not only sketch a framework for understanding the key dynamics of race relations in the post–Civil War South, but also present a model of historical scholarship—built upon collective knowledge constructed over generations of work, informed by broad questions, and based upon careful work in historical archives—which is hard to surpass. Whether the reader is an experienced historian or a new student who wants to know what “history” is, this collection offers itself as a worthwhile read.

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Communication and Change in American Religious History. Edited by Leonard I. Sweet. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993. Pp. vi, 481. Notes. Paperbound, \$24.99.)

This is a timely collection of essays dealing with the interaction of the media and religion throughout American history. It is especially opportune because in recent years we have been reminded of the power and influence that the electronic church has been able to exercise in national and local politics as well as in the controversies surrounding moral and ethical issues. But this is not another book taking conservative preachers to task, although it does have relevance for understanding the close connection between religious leaders and the successful manipulation of available media, whether print, visual, or electronic. Nor is it a “how-to” book, providing strategies or practical suggestions for those who seek to use the media effectively. It is, as its title accurately states, a collection of historical essays.

The essayists are a distinguished group of historians, most of whom are well known in the field. Several draw on research that they have published elsewhere in fuller form. For example, Harry S. Stout writes about George Whitefield, A. Gregory Schneider about the domestication of American Methodism, James H. Moor-