

scarcely novel, and they are more likely to enter the lore pressing for "positive discrimination" in favor of women than to "offer new directions for Australian anthropology." There is a great deal happening "out there" in Australian society that does not rate a mention: not least, the grievances of Australian men.

God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School. ALAN PESHKIN. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. viii + 360 pp., appendixes, tables, notes, references, index. \$24.95 (cloth).

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"Let me tell you about born-again Christians. They are different from you and I." There are many differences, Alan Peshkin goes on to tell us in *God's Choice*, but the difference that riveted his attention for three years of research and defined his voice in this book is that they are "true believers."

God's Choice is an account of Peshkin's journey into the world of Bethany Baptist Academy, a small church school in Illinois. The church is in the Bob Jones orbit: it is independent, evangelical Baptist and old-guard fundamentalist, that is, not apolitical but still separatist in ways that other fundamental Baptists under leaders like Jerry Falwell and Tim LaHaye have forsaken. Peshkin presents himself as coming from the other end of America: an education professor specializing in public schools and community maintenance, a practicing Jew, a man who does not hold absolute beliefs, a "genuine pluralist." "Never had I felt so alien so geographically close to home." He cannot conceive of converting into a fundamental Baptist and acknowledges "the probability of constraints" on his understanding given his background, but says he encountered no "unfathomable mysteries" at Bethany and "it is absurd to think that only insiders can truly understand." True understanding, Peshkin is convinced, is fully separable from true belief.

From his journey, we get what appears to be a study of behavior, beliefs and attitudes that mark these born-again believers as different from the author, plus a critique and threat-assessment of contemporary fundamentalist culture; just below the surface, we perceive Peshkin struggling to hold together the pieces of his identity, an awkward but intriguing combination of detached and passionate perspectives. It would seem it is the author's culture, not the natives', that is in jeopardy in this study. This is not surprising, since the natives continuously and vigorously questioned Peshkin's authority to know them, denied the validity of his culture, and tried aggressively to convert him to theirs.

A school based on absolute truth leads to a "total institution," one that endeavors to organize and orient the life of its students around the clock, to separate them from "the world" in manifold ways, and to integrate its doctrines into every aspect of student experience. Doctrine shapes the curriculum (God is omnipresent), class sessions (all open with prayer), teaching ("our job is teaching the truth"), discipline ("we don't have any rules here that nobody ob-

eyes"), extracurricular activities, parent-teacher meetings, casual conversation, and student culture. Learning at Bethany means submitting cheerfully to authority; it rejects opening up the mind to diverse points of view, critical thinking, and probing the limits of the thinkable. Spirituality is the main measure by which students are evaluated and ranked by school authorities and by each other, and the school's purpose is to save children, steep them in the Word, mature them in Christ, and lead them into full-time Christian service. Peshkin tells us at length about the deviants, but they are few and their deviations small.

Bethany Baptists have built a monastery without walls. Peshkin's preoccupation ("total institutions and absolute Truth are . . . anathema to me") results in a scrupulous account of Bethany's visible order, but only pale glimpses and hints of its invisible order. Evidence of the unseen world is everywhere, especially in the language, but Peshkin is too locked into his outsider status to track it. So Jesus Christ is a doctrine, a belief, not a living person; God is a way of talking about one's purpose in life, not a palpable presence; and the Holy Spirit never appears. Faith is a badge of membership, an emblem of difference, not an experience that reconfigures both person and reality. Because Peshkin overrates the effects of socialization and neglects the consequence of salvation and authentic religious experience, he actually underestimates how different fundamental Baptists are. Peshkin has done a very valuable study of their behavior and attitudes in school, but their born-again culture remains an unfathomed mystery.

Avenues to Adulthood: The Origins of the High School and Social Mobility in an American Suburb. REED UEDA. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. ix + 306 pp., figures, tables, appendixes, notes, index. \$29.95 (cloth).

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An historian describes the transformation of a Massachusetts farming village into a Boston commuter suburb, casting it as the matrix of a history of the origin of a high school within sight of Harvard Square. He stages the story around events and political maneuvers to establish various parts of a free public school system. In a richly fretted narrative of processes, causes, and people, he links the origin of Somerville public high school to the expansion of the middle classes into the suburb during the final decades of the 19th century, as the American industrial revolution flourished in the Northeast. It became the seat of the ideology of equal opportunity and upward social mobility, despite the fact that, statistically speaking, its success was in mobility of sons of lower-white-collar families to upper-white-collar occupations rather than in the movement of blue-collar and working-class sons into the white-collar occupational ranks.

Ueda's story is loosely framed as a test of whether the high school actually helps sons and daughters in significant numbers to change classes from those of their parents, or instead, maintains the existing