

ON TEACHING RELIGION: ESSAYS BY JONATHAN Z. SMITH. By Jonathan Z. Smith. Edited by Christopher I. Lehrich. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. viii + 164. \$35.00.

Throughout this collection of previously published material, Smith asks what it is that we do when we teach the study of religion and design the study of the liberal arts. In the time spanning the first appearance of these texts and this volume, calls to demonstrate the employability of liberal arts degrees have grown louder. Dedicated to a labor-intensive form of teaching in evidence in part one, "Religion in the Academy," Smith is not defensive about the value of the liberal arts. He clarifies why we should welcome this new frontier, suggesting that the liberal arts are no longer the enclave of the wealthy. Several essays address the divide between religion and scholars of religion, concluding that religion scholars can enjoy a productive co-existence with many theologians as informants accountable to religious communities. Other theologians and some religious studies scholars ("transcendentalists," to Smith) eschew history and context, rejecting specific languages (academic or theological) and translation and instead "striv[ing] for some Esperanto." In part two, "The Academic Profession," Smith addresses undergraduate curriculum, the religion major, meaningful graduate education, and the distinction between discursive communities and disciplines. Required reading for any scholar of religion concerned with the state and fate of the profession, the book should be read either prior to or at the outset of graduate studies in religion. The book is vital to any committee in the humanities or social sciences concerned with the aims of education and the mission of the university.

Ipsita Chatterjea
Vanderbilt University

As it Appeared in *Religious Studies Review*, Volume 39, Issue 4, December 2013, 235-36.