

2007

Review of Carter's "Rethinking Christ and Culture"

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Rethinking Christ and Culture
Craig A. Carter
Brazos, 2006
220 pages, ISBN: 1587431599

Fifty years after its 1951 printing, H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* appeared in a new edition, stimulating much discussion and reevaluation. Craig Carter's *Rethinking Christ and Culture* will endure as an important part of that reevaluation.

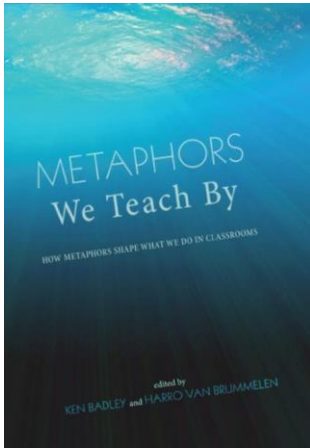
Carter argues that Niebuhr mistakenly assumed the existence of Christendom in his well-known schema of five ways that Christians have viewed the relation between Christ and culture. Not everyone will find Carter's reading of Niebuhr compelling, although he offers a rather persuasive critique of *Christ and Culture*. Whether or not one accepts Carter's account of Niebuhr's failure to note that Christendom was either going or gone, one will have to take seriously his claim that Christendom has ended, and that we need to understand our role as Christ's church in a new way.

In the gospels, but also in Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* and in "The Grand Inquisitor" chapter of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Carter finds quite a different Jesus from the Christ of Niebuhr's book. This Jesus denounces violence, and refuses to align himself and his reign with the powers, whatever they are. In the later chapters of *Rethinking*, Carter proposes a schema with six categories, three of which consistent with this non-violent, non-coercive Jesus and three of which permit violent coercion.

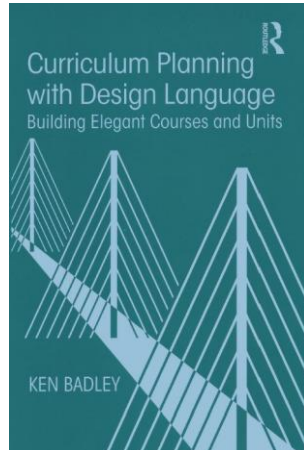
In his Preface, Carter expressed his hope that pastors, theologians, students and all thoughtful Christians would find his book helpful. Undoubtedly they will. Whether they accept all the premises of his argument or not, they will find themselves moved by Carter's careful and beautiful writing, and they will have to respond to his compelling argument that with the welcome demise of Christendom, we have the opportunity to discover what it means to follow Christ.

Reviewed by Ken Badley, Seattle

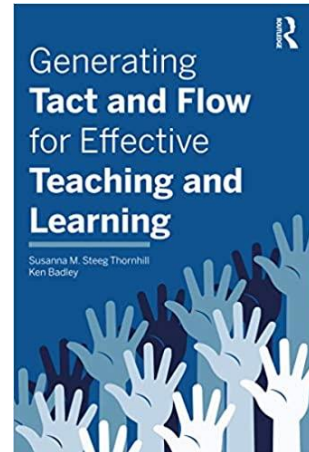
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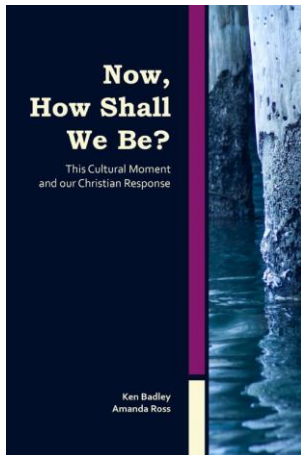
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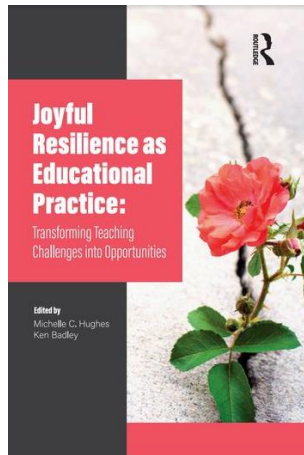
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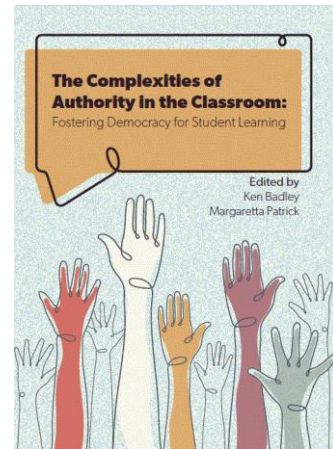
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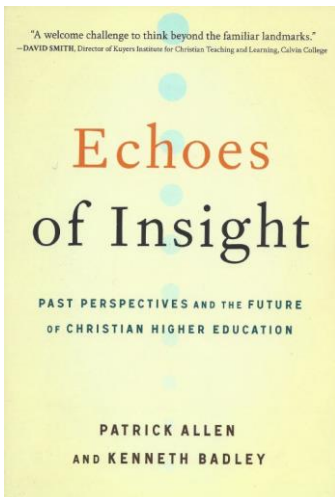


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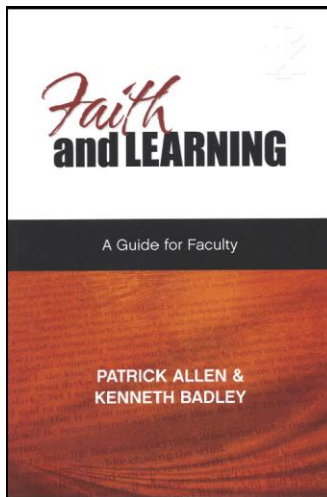


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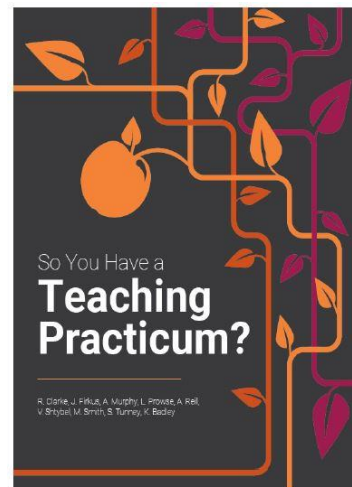


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