

1998

Review of Richard J. Edlin's The Cause of Christian Education

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point, ask.

This edition contains three pieces which did not appear in the original book. One of these, the 'Teacher as mentor and model' chapter, is especially helpful, in part because Edlin spells out eight specific implications of the teacher as mentor. The sixth and seventh of these warrant mention here: that the teacher allows for what Edlin calls the possibility of defection, and that the teacher, like David, King of Israel, is frail and subject to failings. This reviewer finds refreshment in any discussion of the teacher as model and mentor that deals realistically with teachers' shortcomings.

Besides the conventional bibliography (largely assembled by Harro Van Brummelen of Trinity Western University in Canada), Edlin has also included an appendix of world wide web sites dealing with education and Christian education. No doubt, Edlin's readers would be able to find some of these sites on their own, but the list includes some that readers might never find, and those addresses make the whole appendix worthwhile.

If the book contains any fault, it lies in Edlin's discussion of neutrality. We assume that the location of this discussion, in Chapter 2, indicates its importance to Edlin's whole book (although one could quite ably discuss Christian schools without the chapter). Understanding the non-neutrality of public education or of all education is important to Edlin's argument, for he is discussing the cause of Christian education. Edlin's research on this neutrality question shows: he draws on a range of sources to demonstrate that some educational thinkers recognize the non-neutrality of education. He even uses the word 'some' in a sub-heading to that effect. After demonstrating his awareness that the myth seems alive and well, he declares that 'the myth of religious neutrality in education is dead' (p. 45). On inspection, that claim appears to mean that the myth is logically inconsistent. Major changes in law or policy in some nations (such as Britain) indicate that this myth may, in fact, be ill. Even the United States Supreme Court has seemed to recognize, beginning about 1993, that all worldviews are value-laden and that schools cannot be neutral as regards religion. Yet, among professors, teachers,

Richard J. Edlin

The Cause of Christian Education

Vision Press 1998 pb 269pp

ISBN 1-885219-07-5

In his revised *The Cause of Christian Education*, Richard J. Edlin has offered an ambitious and helpful survey some of the philosophical and practical questions that anyone in Christian education will, at some

curriculum developers, employees of ministries of education and local school trustees in several parts of the world, the myth is alive and quite well, carrying on the nourishing – or, in this case, corrosive – work that myths do.

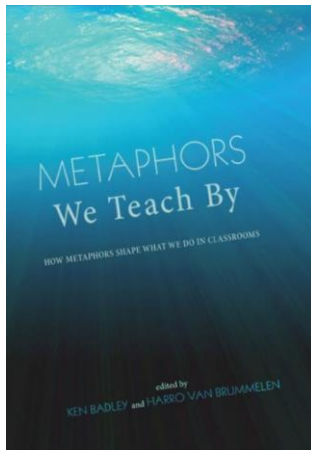
At several points in his book Edlin uses phrases that end in the word 'centred' – child-centred, content-centred and Christ-centred – especially with reference to Dewey and humanistic worldviews in education. Without doubt, most picking up Edlin's book will want Christ-centred education. But Edlin's argument would be stronger if he recognized that for Dewey both teaching methodology and epistemology are child-centred while many teachers with what we might call a Christ-centred epistemology use a variety of teaching methods, some of which are student-centred. If education is to be neither student- nor content-centred – Edlin warns us off both – then ordinary teachers will be left wondering what methods to use in their Christ-centred education. Distinguishing these two levels – epistemology and teaching methodology – would help Edlin and all of us in Christian education.

The strengths of this book far outnumber and outweigh its flaws. For example, in his discussion of the Bible in the Christian school, Edlin calls for a permeative rather than merely additive role for the Bible. He does not hesitate to name the shortsighted ways Christians have used the Bible in Christian day school curricula and teaching, and he illustrates his own ideal with examples from instruction and curriculum. He provides a useful discussion of the Biblical limits on the role of the state and what those limits imply for education. And he gives over a whole chapter to a Biblical model of evaluation that avoids the errors of both the fog-enshrouded liberal view of evaluation meant to boost student-esteem despite the facts (or lack thereof), and the hard-line, thundering-God view of evaluation taken by some Christians.

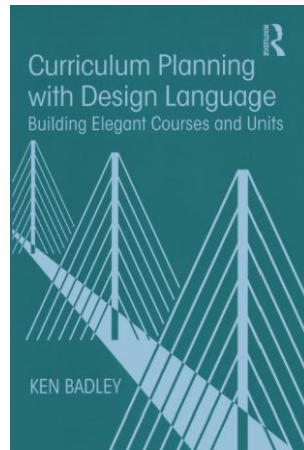
Overall, Edlin's book is worthwhile. Those who already own the first edition will find that the additions justify purchasing the second. Those new to Edlin's work will benefit from reading it.

Ken Badley

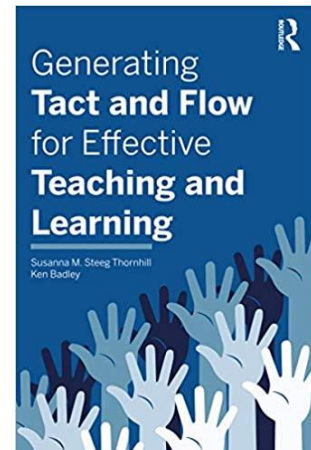
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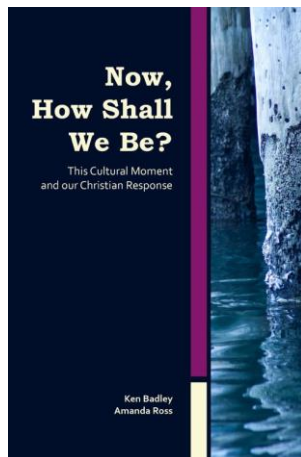
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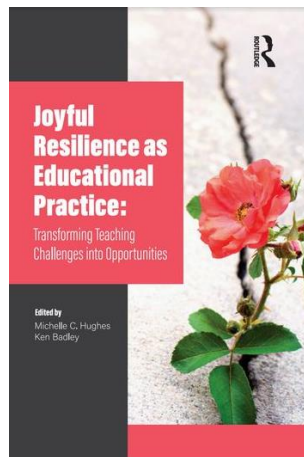
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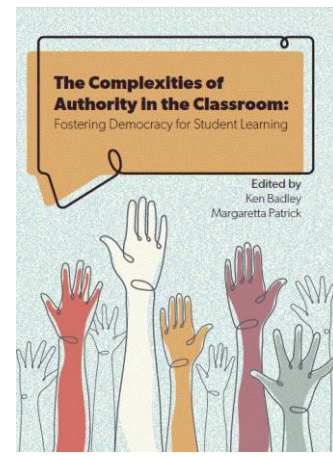
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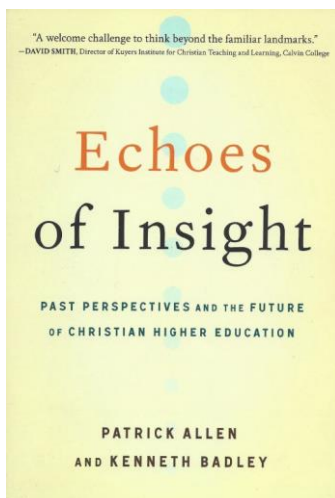


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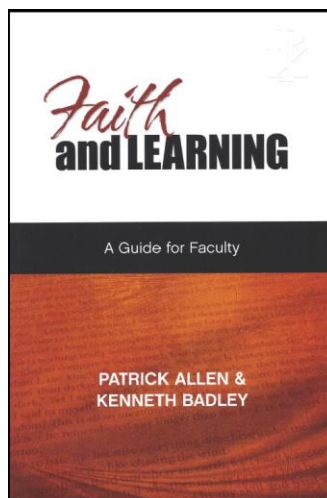


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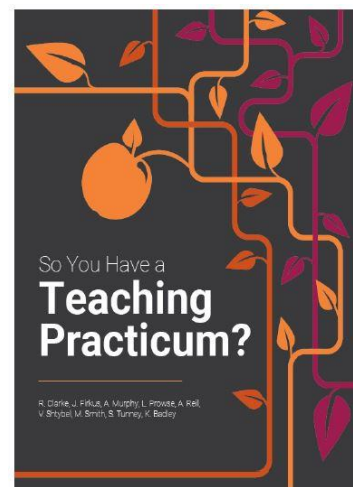


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