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By What Authority Do We Teach? Sources for Empowering Christian Educators (Book Review)

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knowledge is limited to its own sovereign sphere, they are unable to account for the unity of the different law-spheres. Such a notion of unity could come only from basic convictions, convictions that are religious in nature. Hence, the law-idea is fundamentally a religious idea that accounts for the origin of the law-spheres and their interrelationship (162).

One of the main weaknesses in Henderson's book is his analysis, via three unpublished manuscripts by Dooyeweerd, of Dooyeweerd's study of Neo-Kantian philosophy of law. This section of his book will prove to be incredibly difficult to the reader who is not well versed in Neo-Kantian schools of philosophy of law. This weakness may unfortunately hinder Henderson's own concern for bridging the gap in problems of communication by creating communication problems of his own.

The importance of Henderson's book, it seems to me, lies in his carefully documented historical analysis of the struggles Dooyeweerd went through in finding the answers and articulating the basics of his philosophical ideas. Henderson deals specifically with Dooyeweerd's *early* development (1918-1928). In this development, he does not shy away from tracing the impact and influences of Neo-Kantian terminology and ideas upon Dooyeweerd's own ideas. On the other hand, he has also tied his work together with a golden thread that in many ways lies at the heart of Dooyeweerd's development: the reality of a

divine Law that illuminates a creation ordered by a sovereign Creator. This book is necessary to understand the roots and building blocks of Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Dooyeweerd also affirms the ultimate dependency of our own legal concepts, goals, and ideas upon basic religious convictions, convictions that *either* locate the origin for normativity in our law-making in a divinely established order *or* within the autonomy of the human consciousness. With this, Dooyeweerd radically breaks with the Neo-Kantian approach to the philosophy of law. With this, Dooyeweerd breaks with the copernican revolution of Immanuel Kant, and thus the whole tradition of thinking that relies on the autonomy of human rationality.

Beyond this insight into Dooyeweerd's early philosophical journey, this book is also significant to all who find themselves struggling amidst a whirlwind of relativist and nihilist voices in the public square. Within this context, Dooyeweerd affirms a biblical message of hope in a sovereign Creator-God who lovingly upholds his creation with his ordinances, with a Law that brings light to our path—in our everyday struggles and also in our theorizing and scholarly endeavors.

* The book is available from the Dordt College Bookstore, Sioux Center Iowa 51250, or from the bookstore Hearts and Minds, 234 E. Main, Dallastown, PA 17313.

By What Authority Do We Teach? Sources for Empowering Christian Educators, Robert W. Pazmiño. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). 160 pages, paper, \$10.99. Reviewed by John Van Dyk, Professor of Education.

This book, the third in a trilogy on foundations and practices of Christian education, addresses the authority of teachers, in the hope of "fostering a faithful response to God and others in both the thought and the practice of Christian education" (11). Two key questions at once come to mind: (a) What is authority? and (b) what does Pazmiño mean by Christian education?

We need not look very far for Pazmiño's answer to the first question. In the first chapter he defines authority as "the legitimate, recognized, and/or verifiable power that certain persons possess in various areas of life by virtue of their relationship with others" (19). Now this is a complicated matter. We ask: What makes power legitimate? What is the connection between "legitimate" and "recognized" power? And does authority indeed reside in persons, or is it to be attributed to the office, the place or position in which the authoritative persons find themselves?

Pazmiño does not address these questions in detail. While he recognizes the importance of a position of authority (top of 19), he generally sees teaching authority as located in or attached to a person. In chapter 2, for example, Pazmiño affirms that the "exercise of authority assumes the presence of a group of persons who recognize the authority of a person, his or her office, or that person's function in a particular setting" (38). The titles of chapters 3, 4, and 5, too, suggest a focus on a *person's* authority.

The second key question is more easily answered than the first: Christian education clearly means "church education," i.e., education practiced within the "faith community" as it comes to expression in an ecclesiastical context. The dedication of the book, for example, refers to "my students and colleagues in theological education." There are no explicit references or applications to teaching in Christian elementary or secondary day schools, or

to Christian higher (non-theological) education. This book grows on you. As you begin to read, you soon find yourself raising your eyebrows. For example, in the first chapter Pazmiño introduces a trinitarian model of education: God the Father is the educator from whom all content flows, Jesus Christ the Son is the exemplar (or model of the master teacher), and the Holy Spirit is the Tutor (20-22). We ask: How does such a model do justice to the equally powerful, biblical picture of Jesus as the Logos through whom all things were created and in whom all things cohere? Or again, why would Pazmiño identify the "Word of God" with the Spirit rather than with Christ who *is* the Word (27)? But once we get past these speculative, somewhat forced models and their attending theological puzzles, we begin to encounter a succession of valuable insights.

The author discusses teaching authority in six chapters, as follows: authority of God and God's call (Ch. 1), authority in the faith community (Ch. 2), authority of one's person and gifts (Ch. 3), authority of one's experience (Ch. 4), authority of one's expertise and study (Ch. 5), and authority of truth in an age of pluralism (Ch. 6). In this review I shall highlight only a few of the issues, insights, and problems in an effort to encourage the reader to read the book itself.

Chapter 1 sets the stage. Its central point seems clear: God is the source of and basis for teaching authority. But Pazmiño's discussion of this ostensibly simple thesis lacks both clarity and focus. Part of the problem is Pazmiño's sometimes opaque, sometimes even turgid prose. For example, the descriptions of the various kinds of divine authority (i.e., the authority of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, and of the believers) require close, if not repeated reading (22-34). Pazmiño argues that God the Father represents "fontal authority." Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, represent different implementations of this divine authority. Jesus' authority discloses the divine fontal authority, while the authority of the Holy Spirit enables and empowers. These divine authorities authorize Christian teachers to act with authority. The reader will need patience to wade through the numerous distinctions.

However, mixed in with the complications and distinctions we find some excellent insights. For example, the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit as absolutely indispensable to authoritative Christian teaching is a theme we do well to note and remember (27-29). Similarly, Pazmiño rightly presses the point that in view of the "web of [divine] authorities" (30) Christians need not shun authority and power. The author puts it well: "To reject authority is to reject our position in Christ and

our mandate or calling from Christ to be in relationship with God and others" (32).

Chapter 2 proposes that the "question of authority in the teaching ministry must be posed in the context of the faith community, the church" (37). But what does Pazmiño mean by church? Although he speaks of "those gathered and scattered as the church for the common good" (39), it looks as if the author has in mind what we would call the instituted church, i.e., the ecclesiastical organization and expression of the community of believers. Once again, lack of precision on this point creates problems for our understanding of authority. If Pazmiño thinks of the church in its pristine New Testament sense of "ecclesia," a people called out as relatively undifferentiated society within a larger pagan society, then authority will primarily reside in the office of elder. If, on the other hand, we think of the church as a differentiated institution alongside other institutions, then authority will assume different contexts and different parameters. Then we need to distinguish between the offices and authorities in the institutional church on the one hand, and the offices in other Christian institutions, such as the school and the home, on the other hand. Such distinctions will inevitably necessitate consideration of the nature and extent of authority in various offices, and ultimately of the question of sphere sovereignty.

In spite of these unresolved difficulties, this chapter makes some important points about teaching. The three models of authority proposed by Letty Russell, for example, are very helpful (50). Authority, according to this model, is exercised as heteronomy, autonomy, or partnership. Pazmiño is critical of the first two, on the grounds that heteronomy can lead to authoritarianism and tyranny, while autonomy encourages unbridled individualism. "Authority in teaching is best modeled," Pazmiño concludes, "where mutuality can be established between teachers and students, between a teacher-directed approach and a student-directed approach" (56). Pazmiño's discussion of this model is excellent.

Chapter 3 considers the authority of one's person and gifts. The title of this chapter reminds us of earlier debates about the relationship between insight and authority. To mind comes, for example, the much discussed book by philosopher Peter Schouls, *Insight, Authority and Power*, published in Toronto in 1972. But Pazmiño takes us in a different direction. He focuses on other elements of our teaching task, such as our spirituality and our gifts. Pazmiño helps us see that what we have commonly described as false philosophies are in fact false spiritualities. The section "Do you have a gift for teaching?" prompts serious self-reflection. To sum up, any teacher,

whether in church school or in the day school classroom, can benefit from reading this useful chapter.

Nevertheless, the chapter does leave us with an important and unanswered question: Just what is the relationship between gifts and spirituality on the one hand and authority on the other? The word "authority" is hard to find in this chapter. Only in the final paragraph do we get some sense of how authority relates to gifts, when Pazmiño suggests that "those with teaching gifts are empowered and given authority to teach as a means by which to serve the Christian church and the world" (76).

The next two chapters deal with two closely related concepts, namely, the authority of one's experience and of one's expertise and study. Perhaps Pazmiño could have linked the issue of expertise more closely to giftedness. The question of experience as a separate topic also raises problems: How do we differentiate between experience and other dimensions of life? At one point, for example, Pazmiño tells us that the "value of experience in Christian life and teaching must be seen in relation to faith, in relation to the content of the Christian faith that persons encounter and embrace in their lives" (89). This makes it seem as if faith and its content somehow transcend human experience.

Like the others, these chapters, too, contain a mixture of unresolved ambiguities and helpful insights. Problematic, for example, is Pazmiño's discussion of "reason." The author appears to work with a dualism between "natural—unaided— reason" and "supernatural faith," and, following Parker Palmer, seeks to overcome the dichotomy by linking "reason" to love and passion (108-112). The sort of critical analysis required at this point falls beyond the scope of this review. Helpful, however, is Pazmiño's plea for taking more seriously the teacher's task to develop "critical reasoning." Pazmiño correctly reminds us that "Christian teachers need to be aware of the tendency to provide simple, ready-made answers for students who need to think for themselves" (113).

The final chapter takes us in a new direction. It examines the "authority of truth." What Pazmiño means by

"truth" remains singularly unclear. But that is not the point of the chapter. His real interest here is to help us understand that since "all truth is God's truth," we need to be open to other religious orientations. The chapter recounts Pazmiño's own experience in a class taught by Philip Phenix at Columbia University. This course surveyed a variety of religious orientations, ranging from Buddhism and Islam to communism and existentialism. We can learn from all these faiths, Pazmiño declares. And indeed, Pazmiño rightly warns us against the sort of dogmatism that has led to many a "remnant syndrome" within the Christian church. To often schismatic groups of Christians believe that only *they* see through a glass clearly, that only *they* possess the truth, and that everyone else is dead wrong. At the same time, Pazmiño would have served us better had he also considered, in some detail, how we as Christians ought to position ourselves over against the increasingly powerful spirit of postmodern relativism.

A pervasive weakness of his work is Pazmiño's overuse of "authorities." In some way the book reads as if it were an eclectic compilation of opinion. All sorts of people are quoted and introduced. Of course, Pazmiño's extensive documentation is to be commended. At the same time, one wishes that we could read Pazmiño's own views, clear and simple, without having to distinguish continually between what someone else is suggesting and what the author thinks of it or does with it.

In spite of my critical observations, *By What Authority Do We Teach?* is, all in all, an interesting book, well worth the time it takes to read it. True, the book offers many ambiguities and unanswered questions. But the ambiguities are stimulating and thought-provoking, and can lead to fruitful reflection. At the same time, the book contains a multitude of helpful insights. Indeed, the book has much to teach us.

Teaching in the Christian community is, as the Apostle James points out, a task of colossal responsibility (James 3:1). Clearly it is the sort of calling that compels us to reflect deeply and continuously. Pazmiño's work helps us to do so.

Native American Voices, by David A. Rausch and Blair Schlepp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994). 164 pages, bibliography. \$10.99. Reviewed by Louis Y. Van Dyke, Professor of History Emeritus.

Rausch, Professor of History at Ashland University in Ohio, and Schlepp, an MA graduate from Ashland and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, have written an historical survey of the life and culture of Native Americans in the forty-eight contiguous United States. Their purpose is to show the cultural contributions and current status of

Native Americans, and to convince the American majority (whites) that the "debilitating prejudice" against Native Americans will end only with a change of attitudes.

The survey of four regions is rather elementary and adds nothing new to what is already known about Native American history. Life before the conquerors