

Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education

Pazmiño, Robert W. *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009. 94 pp. \$13.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781606089392.

Theological research has a unique vocabulary and schema. In the context of the theological library, librarians are continually looking for new ways to help students to transition into the world of theological education. In his most recent book, *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education*, Robert Pazmiño puts forth a Bible-centered introduction for new or anticipated students of theology. In seven short chapters, Pazmiño takes the reader step-by-step through the processes and methods of theological research.

Pazmiño's intended audience is clearly stated in chapter one: "My thoughts up to this point assume one is presently studying or convinced they are to begin theological study" (3). Consequently, everything he writes is focused on assisting the student in the creation of a system uniquely geared for the study of theology. Pazmiño incorporates ideas from a broad variety of theologians and educators such as Max Stackhouse, Philip Phenix, Paulo Freire, Duane Huebner, and Brenda Ueland. The ideas of these scholars and others are paraphrased and developed in order to create a framework for theological study.

Beginning with the premise that theological study is a form of worship, Pazmiño introduces the reader to the basics of theological education. "Theological study and research can actually be seen as a form of worship that seeks to glorify and enjoy God" (18). In chapter two, Pazmiño further lays the groundwork by providing five pithy commandments for theological research, such as "If it is not theological, it is not deep" and "Tell the truth, warts and all" (6). He goes on, in chapter three, to suggest that the use of "perennial questions"—who, what, where, when, why, and how—can assist the student in his or her response to theology and theological research. In the ensuing chapter, Pazmiño espouses the importance of inter- and multi-disciplinary work. He expounds upon the theological disciplines and highlights ten dimensions of each. In chapter five, Pazmiño offers practical suggestions for "writing from the heart," while affirming a process of writing thoughtfully and intellectually (Pazmiño outlines Zebubavel's *The Clockwork Muse*). He writes, "Theological education is an enterprise that strives to discern truth and meaning in the world" (39). Spiritual discipline is advocated in the areas of prayer, community, scholarship, engagement with the world, and ecumenical and cross-cultural exchange (chapter six). "Theological education calls for openness to new learnings offered by God's Spirit to those who have ears to hear, inquiring minds to explore, and pliable hearts to engage truth with love" (39). Finally, in chapter seven, everything is summed up with a little bit of practical advice: "Start early," "ask for help," "share your work," "commit one's work to prayer," and "learn from feedback" (43-46).

Five short lectures on exegesis, style and citation, and practical guidelines for the completion of writing assignments are appended to the work. These lectures allow Pazmiño an opportunity to incorporate the ideas of several of his colleagues at Andover Newton. As in the main body of the work, it is helpful to hear an assortment of voices discussing the various components of theological research. Certainly, Pazmiño recognizes the importance of multi-disciplinary teaching and study.

The author's evangelical and reformed perspective is infused throughout the book. He is clear in his intent to provide a biblically based outline for theological study. Pazmiño's stated objectives are "to explore the purposes and basics of theological study and research, to reaffirm the importance of theological study and research... [and] to inspire Christians in relation to the calling to study as a form of worship and spiritual discipline" (ix). This book provides a unique and inspiring holistic method for theological research.

Pazmiño's style is concise and straightforward. He provides lists of suggestions for how to do theological research. Consistently, he attempts to break ideas down into memorable categories. For example, Pazmiño enumerates "the five commandments of Theological research" (6), Phenix's six realms of meaning (14), Huebner's ten dimensions (26), and Ueland's twelve points (33).

Many practical suggestions are put forth by the author. His chapters are short and quick to read although some of his terminology does conceivably go beyond the introductory level. Perhaps in an effort to be brief, the book includes many lists which I found fairly tedious. Some, however, may prefer this succinct and functional style. The brevity of the book and the straightforward table of contents do help the reader refer back to the various lists he or she might wish to consult.

Unfortunately, both the annotated bibliography and the comprehensive bibliography are too brief. However, the books listed include many standard resources, and the annotations are helpful. Again, as this resource is designed for new students of theology, perhaps a shorter, less overwhelming list of resources is satisfactory.

Overall, this book provides a constructive orientation for the new theological student. As the book is short and quick to read, it is a handy personal tool. Beginning seminary students will find it helpful during their preparation for those first research papers. Due to the price and size of this book, I would expect that most students or faculty who wish to use it on a regular basis will purchase it themselves. Still, *Doing Theological Research* is a valuable item for a theological library to hold as it carefully outlines the elements and thought processes involved in theological study.

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