

***The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision*** by Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI: 2015. (11 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

### **1. Sound Theological Principles Necessary for Healthy Christian Life.**

Theology divorced from life is arid intellectualism. A Christian life not based on sound principles will end up in sterile activism or sentimental fluff. [page 7]

### **2. Pastors Theological CEOs.**

Pastors are the theological chief executive officers of the church. [page 8]

### **3. Pastors Lack Clarity in Job Description.**

Pastors don't know who they are or what they are supposed to be. Perhaps no profession in the modern world suffers from a greater lack of clarity as to the basic requirements of the job. [page 9]

### **4. In the Past, Pastors Provided Intellectual Leadership.**

Indeed, in pre-Civil War America, the pastorate was a go-to calling for intellectuals. If a man was unusually gifted and sought a career in which he could make full use of his mental prowess, he could hardly find a better option than the pastorate.

Think of New England pastors like Jonathan Edwards of North Hampton (1703-58), Samuel Hopkins of Newport (1721-1803), Joseph Bellamy of Bethlehem (1719-90), or Nathaniel Taylor of New Haven (1786-1858). They were like their Reformation-era predecessors—“trained theologians who combined spiritual urgency with profound learning.” And because of this, they were able to provide first-rate intellectual leadership on all sorts of social and ecclesiastical issues—from sacramentology to soteriology, from moral reform to human rights, from theories of the atonement to the nature of the will. What is more, they were catalysts for revival and yet critiqued revival; they preached learned sermons and yet counseled the downtrodden; they wrote philosophical essays and yet weighed in on civil matters; they offered theological rationale for global missions and yet founded colleges and tutored budding theologians. Truly they were men of whom the world is not worthy. [page 12]

### **5. Lacking Theological Substance in the Church Today.**

The lack of pastor theologians in the church is a serious moral and spiritual condition in which there is an insufficient amount of ecclesial substance to our theology and theological substance to our churches. [page 13]

## **6. Ecclesial Theology.**

We envision a pastor who is engaged in a kind of theological scholarship that is as intellectually robust as academic theology yet distinct from academic theology. We call it *ecclesial* theology; that is, theology that is germinated within the congregation, that presses toward distinctly ecclesial concerns, and that is cultivated by practicing clergy. [page 18]

## **7. Guarding the Theological Integrity of God's People.**

The whole New Testament appears to be one sustained appeal to know the living God and his world. “Do you not *know* ...?” the apostle Paul asks seven times in his first epistle to the Corinthians. (Because if you did, you wouldn't be doing what you're doing!) The crisis that Paul confronted in his letter to the Corinthian church was a moral crisis. But it was a moral crisis exacerbated and enabled by a crisis of *thought*. So too his letter to the Galatians. And the letter to the Hebrews. And Peter's epistles. And James' epistles. And John's first epistle. Correct understanding can't get us all the way there, but wrong understanding is often all that is needed to shipwreck one's faith. And it is the pastor's duty, above all others, to guard the theological integrity of the people of God. [page 19]

## **8. Theology Is the Base of All Church Ministry.**

Every pastor needs to be a pastor theologian in the sense we are calling for here. The pastoral community will always need gifted leaders, visionaries, managers, counselors, and preachers, just as much as it needs gifted theologians. Yet theology is not simply another leg in this stool; rather, it is the floor upon which the legs rest. And it is this aspect of the pastoral vocation that is most neglected today by contemporary evangelicalism. [page 20]

## **9. Augustine's Contribution.**

...towering above all other theologians during this time—whether clerical or nonclerical—was the great North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo (c. 354-430). Augustine's literary output was staggering. His two most famous works, *The City of God*—a lengthy defense of Christianity in the face of pagan critics—and his *Confessions*—a first-of-its kind autobiography detailing his life and conversion (with his views on time, memory, and dreams thrown in) are just a small sampling of his larger corpus. All told, Augustine's works contain five million words. It is not a hyperbole to state that he wrote more than many pastors will read in a lifetime. Apart from the sheer volume of his work, his theological range was extraordinary. His writings demonstrate a profound grasp of Scripture, and he was conversant in pagan philosophy, pagan religion, and heretical Christian teaching as he was in Christian theology. His soteriological synthesis on grace and free will, his sacramentology, his articulations of

the trinity, and, above all, his capacity for introspection still shape contemporary Christian theology. Like Athanasius, Augustine's office of bishop pulled him into the larger social and political events of the day. [page 29]

### **10. Calvin's Output.**

Calvin's theological output was significant. Beyond his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (his magnum opus), he wrote numerous tracts, as well as commentaries on nearly every book of the Bible. Calvin's influence stretched beyond Geneva across Europe, and he was considered a leading theologian by those sympathetic to the Reformation. Luther spoke highly of him, and even Jacob Arminius, his theological opponent on the matter of predestination, said of Calvin, "Next to the study of the Scriptures which I earnestly inculcate, I exhort my pupils to peruse Calvin's *Commentaries*, which I extol in loftier terms than Helmich [a Dutch divine] himself; for I affirm that he excels beyond comparison in the interpretation of Scripture and that his commentaries ought to be more highly valued than all that is handed down to us by the library of the fathers. [page 40]

### **11. An Ecclesial Theologian Needs Undistracted Time.**

Despite the necessity of this kind of reflection, the expectations and demands of your congregation will pull you away from it. If you're going to get after it, you are going to have to make it a priority in your schedule. Generally, the work of an ecclesial theologian requires large blocks of undistracted times. We've found that setting aside the morning hours works best for us. The advantage of prioritizing our study time in the morning (instead of the afternoon) is that we can start as early as we want, and we tend to have a head that is less cluttered by the day's events. Peter Leithard was once asked how he managed to be such a prolific writer. He shrugged and said, "I get up at 4:30 a.m." that'll do it. [page 111]