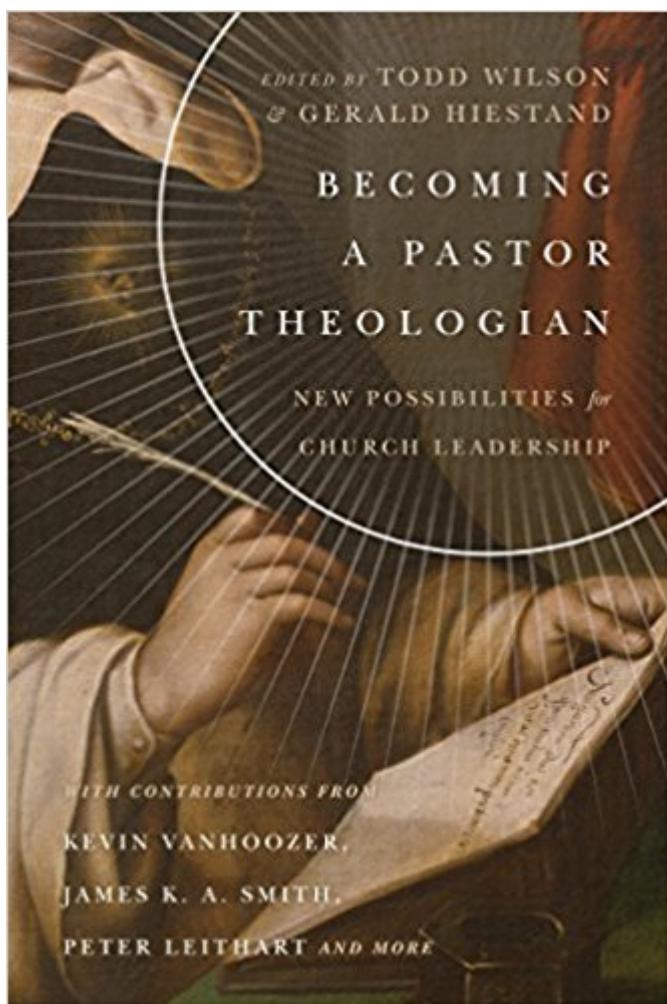


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# Becoming A Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities For Church Leadership



## Synopsis

The roles of pastor and theologian have gone their separate ways. Throughout much of the church's history, these two roles have been deeply intertwined, but in our contemporary setting, a troubling bifurcation between them has developed. The result has been a theologically weakened church and an ecclesially weakened theology. The Center for Pastor Theologians (CPT) seeks to overcome this divide by assisting pastors in the study and production of biblical and theological scholarship for the theological renewal of the church and the ecclesial renewal of theology. Based on the first CPT conference in 2015, this volume brings together the reflections of church leaders and academic theologians to consider how pastoral ministry and theological scholarship might be reconnected once again. The contributors consider several facets of the complex identity of the pastor theologian, including the biblical, public, and political dimensions of this calling. In addition, the essays explore the insights that can be gained from historical examples of pastor theologians—including John Calvin, John Henry Newman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—as well as the essential role of Scripture within the ministry of the pastor theologian.

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## Customer Reviews

"There was a time when the word pastor meant something. That this term has now become so vacuous is not primarily the fault of the ambient culture but represents instead a crisis of vocation. So here we have, none too soon, a collection of stout essays calling for a new generation of

shepherd-teachers—ecclesial theologians who do their work in the best tradition of the Church Fathers and the Reformers, in the light of eternity and pro Christo et ecclesia." (Timothy George, founding dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, general editor of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture)"A clarion call for pastors to embrace their vocational identity as theologians! Pastors will surely benefit from the encouragement and challenge these essays offer, but because the authors celebrate the different callings of other members of the church, all those who come 'from within the liturgical and common life of a local congregation'—be they full-time academics or laypersons in other fields—will (re)discover ways to think about and support theology from the church, for the church." (Amy Peeler, assistant professor of New Testament, Wheaton College)"This passionate set of essays comes at a crucial time for the church. God's people are starving for biblical and theological nourishment. Many pastors long ago abandoned their theological duties, and many theologians work in a way that is lost on the people of God. Who is left to shape Christians with the knowledge of God and his Word? Many thanks to Wilson and Hiestand for this clarion call to pastors to lead their people once again, not so much as CEOs, therapists, or entertainers, but as those who want to help them know the Lord." (Douglas A. Sweeney, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

Todd Wilson (PhD, Cambridge University) is senior pastor of Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, Illinois. He is the cofounder and chairman of the Center for Pastor Theologians, a ministry dedicated to resourcing pastor theologians. He is the author of *Real Christian: Bearing the Marks of Authentic Faith* and *Galatians: Gospel-rooted Living*, and the coauthor of *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* and *Pastors in the Classics*. Gerald L. Hiestand (PhD candidate in classics and archeology, University of Kent, Canterbury) is the senior associate pastor at Calvary Memorial Church in Oak Park, Illinois, and the cofounder and director of the Center for Pastor Theologians. He is the coauthor of *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision*.

I love what this book says. Not crazy about how it says it. It is a series of academic essays that come off distant and at sometimes smug. But if you can swallow your bachelors from a state school and masters from a southern Baptist seminary you will find treasures of important thoughts and conclusions about the biblical role of pastors. I hope this book is only the first of its kind. It's time we pastors begin to focus more on teaching doctrine than pretending to be CEO's.

Todd Wilson and Gerald Hiestand co-wrote a book entitled *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an*

Ancient Vision. The book *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, which they edit, includes essays by scholars about the role that theology can play in the life of the church. In short, can the academic study of theology perform a practical function in the lives of Christians, or is it an arcane, esoteric enterprise? In this review, I will comment on the essays. Peter J. Leithart, *The Pastor Theologian as Biblical Theologian: From the Church for the Church*. This is a strong first chapter. Leithart performs a scholarly analysis and interpretation of Revelation 17, then he shows how his insights about the chapter can be employed homiletically. James K.A. Smith, *The Pastor Theologian as Political Theologian: Ministry Amidst the Earthly City*. For Smith, Augustine's thoughts are relevant to the question of how Christianity should relate to the political realm. Smith is critical of blaming Augustine for the Holy Roman Empire-ism, noting that Augustine differentiated between the earthly city and the city of God (page 35). Smith should have addressed the view, however, that Augustine advocated the state persecution of heretics; as it stands, the chapter appears rather rosy. Smith also discusses Augustine's correspondence with Boniface, an African governor and a Roman general who had an interest in Christianity. Augustine offered theological justifications for Boniface's participation in war, maintaining that Boniface's work was necessary to keep Christians, and others, safe. Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Pastor Theologian as Public Theologian*. Speaking for myself, I identified with what Vanhoozer said on pages 41-42: "Most scholars are specialists who know about a little, but are tongue tied when it comes to the big questions." I also liked Vanhoozer's reference to Neil Plantinga's advice that pastors read at least one novel a year, as part of their quest "to understand culture and people" (page 46). Gerald Hiestand, *The Pastor Theologian as Ecclesial Theologian*. On page 61, Hiestand offers specific examples of how academic topics about the Bible and theology can be employed in a practical church context. Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian as Cruciform Theologian*. On page 73, Wilson talks about how his own trials and experiences enabled him to understand and appreciate the Bible better. Scott M. Manetsch, *Pastoral and Theological Leadership in Calvinist Geneva*. According to Manetsch, ministers in John Calvin's Geneva were expected to study, and ministers were supposed to gather with other ministers so that none of them would fall into heresy! That sounds like too much group-think for my taste! Still, Manetsch did an effective job in gleaning practical application and

insights from Calvin’s Geneva. Philip Graham Ryken, “Thomas Boston as Pastor Theologian.” Thomas Boston lived from 1676 to 1732, and he was a Presbyterian pastor in Scotland. This chapter covers Boston’s use of the Scriptures in his preaching and lectures, his personal trials, and his views on the sacraments. This was my favorite chapter in the book, since it resonated with the part of me that enjoys reading about the Puritans. Ryken says that half of the typical sermon that Boston delivered concerned how to apply Scripture to the Christian life, and that made me think of Jonathan Edwards’ extensive sermons. Yet, Boston was more succinct than many preachers of his day: he would follow an hour glass, and, when a half hour had passed, he would put an

“X” in his manuscript to mark where he would begin the following Sunday! On the sacraments, Boston in one quote seemed to come close to supporting transubstantiation, which struck me as odd, for a Presbyterian. Boston also had noteworthy views on baptism, as he opposed private baptisms and refused to baptize ill babies lest baptism become a superstitious rite. Boston himself was aware of the pain surrounding infant mortality, however, for he lost six children. Chris Castaldo, “The Pastor Theologian as Mentor: The Legacy of John Henry Newman.” Castaldo shares that writing about Newman was his Plan B, in terms of this chapter. Castaldo originally wanted to write about Martin Bucer, as Castaldo notes that Bucer mentored John Calvin in pastoral ministry. Part of me wonders if we could have done without that information about Castaldo’s writing process, and yet Castaldo’s reference to Bucer’s mentorship of Calvin did enhance the chapter, as it showed that mentoring played a key role in who John Calvin became. Castaldo’s discussion of Newman had interesting details:

Newman’s problem with Oxford’s system “in which academic tutors were mere lecturers who scarcely knew their students,” and his collaborative work to move the system towards mentoring (page 113); Newman’s disagreement with evangelicals who defined justification merely as imputation, and how that related to mentoring; and Newman’s conceptualization of conversion as an intensely personal act, in which God’s heart speaks to the person’s heart. That latter point was noteworthy, considering the communitarian subject-matter of this chapter. Joel D. Lawrence, “The Ecclesial Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.” Bonhoeffer, like Barth, thought that theology should be for the church. Barth, after all, called his multi-volume work of theology “Kirchliche Dogmatik,” or Church Dogmatics! On page 131, Lawrence discusses

Bonhoeffer’s time at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Lawrence states: “Here, Bonhoeffer saw the theological limpness of the American liberal tradition in the mainline churches but experienced the passionate preaching of the Gospel in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, an African-American congregation that gave him a vision of the church that he’d never experienced in Europe.” Lawrence did not provide substantial detail about this, but what he said made me curious about the influence of the African-American church on Bonhoeffer. Edward W. Klink III, “The Pastor Theologian and the Interpretation of Scripture: A Call for Ecclesial Exegesis.” I liked this chapter more than I expected. Klink elegantly defends a Christian theological reading of the Bible, as opposed to a historical-critical reading that atomizes the text, arguably depriving individual texts of their larger canonical or theological context. Klink actually says that the atomist historical-critical approach is eisegesis, a charge that atomist historical-critics usually apply to Christian theological readings! Klink attempts to account theologically for a tension between John 3:22 and 4:2, which appear to be contradictory on the question of whether Jesus baptized anyone. Klink’s explanation struck me as rather forced, yet his approach of seeking theological edification in the “errors” of Scripture (not that he would necessarily call them “errors”) intrigued me, as do rabbinic and patristic attempts to do so. Klink also provides a helpful discussion of the idea that Scripture is perspicuous: for Klink, that does not mean that a biblical text’s meaning is obvious, but rather it relates to the role of Scripture in speaking to and changing a human being, with the Holy Spirit’s illumination. Jason A. Nicholls, “The Pastor Theologian in the Pastoral Epistles.” The Pastoral Epistles are I-II Timothy and Titus. What stood out to me in this chapter was Nicholls’ contrast between the pastorate, including the pastorate in the Pastoral Epistles, with academia. To give you a taste, from page 155: “Thus, when Paul advises Timothy to ‘silence’ his theological opponents, we can imagine that this probably wouldn’t fly before a tenure committee! Yet within the context of local church discipline, exercised faithfully under the authority of qualified elders, such censure would be quite appropriate. In fact, the integrity and health of God’s flock depends on it.” Laurie L. Norris, “The Female Ecclesial Theologian.” Norris contends against the tendency of theological discussions to exclude women. She argues that the fact that women, too, are made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27) means that they have insight about God, as men do. She maintains that

conservative Christians can exclude women from the pastorate on what they believe are biblical grounds, while still welcoming women. The Pastor Theologian as Apologist. What I liked about this chapter was the digs against apologetics, from both academics and also prominent church thinkers, such as Barth, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Abraham Kuyper. To quote from page 177:

In the academy, apologist signals either a glibness that ignores complexity in favor of easy answers or a failure to play the part of a disinterested neutral observer. • or both. Chatraw acknowledges that there have been cases of bad apologetics, and he exhorts Christians to let I Peter 3:15 to speak with its own voice, rather than jumping the gun and assuming that it is speaking about modern apologetics. Chatraw thinks that apologetics can have fruitful potential, if done humbly and with the right emphasis. He cites Tim Keller as an example of a pastor theologian as apologist (to quote the title of the chapter). Eric C. Redmond, The Pastor Theologian as Giver of Wisdom. This chapter was about the importance of wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and how it can be preached within a larger theological context. Douglas Estes, John as Pastor Theologian: 2 John as Creative Theological Ecriture. Estes observes that II John creatively applies and adapts biblical passages about love: John recreates the meaning of the original commandment in a new form (page 198). To quote Estes (from page 198): Whereas the law suggests that loving God comes alongside obeying God, commands, John synthesizes these two ideas and suggests that loving God is obeying God. commands. In fact, we can trace the development of John's theology from obeying God's commands as a condition of loving God (Jn 14:15), to obeying God's commands as the definition of love God desires (1 Jn 5:3), to love being the action of walking in God. commands (2 Jn 6). These are interesting observations, as I enjoy discussions about the diversity of Scripture. Estes' discussion here would have been better, however, had he explained more the implications of this development, what it entailed, and why it occurred. How are these ideas different from each other, and what is at stake? Estes' discussion of antichrist in II John was especially effective, as Estes explained how denying that Jesus came in the flesh undermined significant Christian doctrines, and thus deserved the label of antichrist! I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. My review is honest!

It is a difficult time to be a pastor. I am not sure if there has ever been an easy a time to be a pastor, but the challenge now before us is not the task but the pastoral calling: what it is, what it means, and how it is fulfilled. Wilson and Hiestand introduce this collection of essays by noting that the pastoral vocation is presently in a crisis of identity, and apart from a sound understanding of what the pastor is, it is very difficult to articulate and envision what the pastor does. To address this confusion, Wilson and Hiestand founded the Center for Pastor Theologians, and have furthered their pursuit of clarity concerning the pastoral vocation by assembling this collection of essays, presented during the initial CPT conference held in 2015. This collection has three major divisions. First, the book offers a theological account of pastoral identity. Second, we find a historical examination of pastoral practice. Lastly, we explore the relationship between the pastor theologian and the Bible. Several well known scholars are among the contributors, including Peter Leithart, James K. A. Smith, and Kevin Vanhoozer. My favorite essays were written by Todd Wilson (Ã¢â€¢The Pastor as Cruciform TheologianÃ¢â€¢) and Laurie Norris (Ã¢â€¢The Female Ecclesial TheologianÃ¢â€¢). These essays contain plenty to digest, ponder, and practice. Wilson and HiestandÃ¢â€¢s commitment to robust scholarship, pursued within the everyday context of the congregation, is laudable. Their conviction that the church can be renewed through sustained and rigorous theological reflection, skillfully implemented during the pursuit of the pastoral vocation, is compelling and far more sustainable than other alternatives. Their vision evidences a trust that God has worked through Scripture and in church history, imparting wisdom and direction that can continue to shape and inform the ministry of the people of God today. Yet, this vision also looks to the future, expressing confidence that the work God has begun among his people will be brought to completion at the proper time. In the interim, the pastoral vocation includes the call to announce the gospel, to preach and teach the whole counsel of God, to love and to care for the people of God, and to equip the saints for the work of the ministry until the day Christ returns and the kingdom comes in full. I recommend these essays, for I believe in the vision of the Center for Pastor Theologians. May their tribe increase.

I requested for a review of this book because I had read "The Pastor as Public Theologian" (Eds. Vanhoozer & Strachan). As a final year seminary student, this title appealed to me, for it is something I believe in passionately. As indicated by the title, this book is targeted at pastors who have already been convinced that being pastor-theologians is something that they want to strive toward, and the many chapters essentially provide the characteristics and the historical examples of what that looks like. The challenge with books that are made up of compilations by various scholars

is putting together a seamless flow of thought, which I'd imagine that the editors have attempted to do. I felt that because of the sake of brevity, many of the articles from the contributing theologians were so dense and rich that I had difficulty absorbing the ideas and substantives. For me, the mark of a 5 star book would be the communication of complex ideas in a manner that the reader can easily comprehend, be inspired by, and apply. And unfortunately, I do not feel that this book meets this criteria. I received this book from IVP Academic for the purposes of providing an unbiased review. All views are my own.

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