



The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision

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Many pastors today see themselves primarily as counselors, leaders, and motivators. Yet this often comes at the expense of the fundamental reality of the pastorate as a theological office. The most important role is to be a theologian mediating God to the people. The church needs pastors who can contextualize the Word of God to help their congregations think theologically about all aspects of their lives, such as work, end-of-life decisions, political involvement, and entertainment choices.

Drawing on the Bible, key figures from church history, and Christian theology, this book offers a clarion call for pastors to serve as public theologians in their congregations and communities. It is designed to be engaging reading for busy pastors and includes pastoral reflections on the theological task from twelve working pastors, including Kevin DeYoung and Cornelius Plantinga.

The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision Details

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From Reader Review *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* for online ebook

Jeff says

“Too many pastors have exchanged their vocational birthright for a bowl of lentil stew: management skills, strategic plans, ‘leadership’ courses, therapeutic techniques, and so forth.” This is just one among many of the first ideas surfaced by Kevin Vanhoozer in his coauthored work *The Pastor as Public Theologian*. Theology has been sidelined for the most part and pastors have almost been urged to possess a different set of skills for the modern American church context. We, the church, prefer managers to scholars and value managerial and CEO-ish mentalities. Questions such as “how does focusing on the Trinitarian nature of the *missio dei* affect the church?”, “what is a Christ-shaped response to suffering?”, “is the church still relevant for today’s culture?” are de-emphasized and traded for others: “what’s the overall ROI (return on investment) if we implement this strategy?”, “what’s our 5 and 10 year growth rate for the church?”, etc. Sadly, nowadays the pastor is more appreciated for having an MBA than a MDiv. But as Vanhoozer and his coauthor, Owen Strachan point out, this is because the church has forgotten the vision for the pastoral office. And so here in their important work both authors provide a reorientation for readers (hopefully both pastors and laity) to reclaim this vision and create a richer understanding for who a pastor is supposed to be. To them the pastor is a “generalist who specializes in viewing all of life as relating to God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Better: the pastor is a theologian is an organic intellectual who is present as the mind of Christ, which animates the body of Christ.” The pastor’s role then should always be to direct individuals back to the gospel, to help one see his/her actions/thoughts/attitudes in work, home, or any other spheres of their life as relating to God.

Long forgotten is the tradition of the pastor. That he serves the congregants by standing as a point man (of a sort) and always seeks to minister the reality of Jesus Christ to them. But this is what the pastor is to be. And to do this, the authors argue, it’s crucial that the pastor be a “pastor-theologian.” That is, he must strike a balance between pastoral duty and theological study. To quote David Wells, the pastor must be “as comfortable with books and learning as with the aches of the soul.” But of course this is hard work and adequate study time often falls by the wayside when a pastor takes office. This is risky however, and could ultimately spell tragedy for both the laymen and the pastor himself. This, as they point out, can’t happen. The pastor must protect his study time at all costs so as to not collapse under the weight of pastoral responsibilities or risk being swept away by the various cultural winds. Reading through the book, though, I began to wonder if what the authors are proposing is a bit too idealistic or lofty for the typical pastor. I understand that certain churches, certain “well off” churches with substantial staff can free up the pastor to do just that, be a pastor-theologian, but I couldn’t help but think about the numerous small congregations unable to make this a reality. Is this idea a mere fairy tale for the pastor of church like this? Can a pastor really afford to suspend certain pastoral duties to engage more in study and theological reflection? This was a question (among many) I had. But as I continued to let Vanhoozer and Strachan develop their argument I began thinking differently, wondering whether a pastor could really afford to not engage in theology study and reflection. I would agree with them that the health of the pastor and laymen is just too vitally important to allow it not to be a top priority and daily discipline. While the balance may feel awkward at first and potentially create a higher level of anxiety (after all, certain tasks might go unfinished), the path forward is for the pastor to keep his study sacred. And this is the argument that is continually developed from start to finish. These authors have done well to identify a significant problem in the church today and I’m confident it will serve the church tremendously by aiding pastors to realize that helping congregants cultivate the mind of Christ is of utmost importance but to be this help requires having a solid footing in theological

Brent McCulley says

A timely, relevant, and extremely pertinent book that is much needed in today's pastoral circles. Vanhoozer is an excellent communicator: highly recommend.

JB says

I was very excited for this book by Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan. And while I was a bit disappointed, I think that's largely a function of so much of their material being already familiar territory for me. So my disappointment is in no way contrary to a strong recommendation (even if their weird obsession with novels is, as other reviewers have noted, a bit discordant with the rest of the book).

Vanhoozer and Strachan argue that the pastor's primary role must be defined theologically, not administratively (e.g., the Pastor-as-CEO model), therapeutically (e.g., the Pastor-as-Therapist model), or other models (e.g., self-help guru) that predominate in our era. They offer a sweeping survey of historical images of the pastorate to buttress this presentation.

They further argue that the pastor-theologian qualifies as a "public intellectual," a generalist of human knowledge who brings all things (especially including the lives and contexts of those served) into connection with the word of God. Utilizing the schema of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, they analyze the pastor-theologian's work under the same rubrics.

Again, many sections were a tad humdrum (for me), but Vanhoozer had some powerhouse material when examining in greater specificity some of the roles a pastor-theologian fills, e.g., *"The sermon, at its best, is the jewel in the crown of public theology. In expositing God's Word, pastor-theologians give their congregations a powerful means to discern, and then cast down, the idols of our time. ... The sermon is thus a word full of grace and truth that takes subevangelical thought captive, exposing the emptiness of other narratives and false gospels that seek to colonize our imaginations. The sermon is the heavy artillery in the pastor-theologian's arsenal and thus the best frontal assault on imaginations held captive by other stories, alleged gospels promising other ways to the good life"* (158-159).

And while the section on "The Pastor as Apologist" was rather anemic, I did like Vanhoozer's formulation that *"pastors are charged with maintaining a faithful and credible witness to the gospel and with helping members of their congregations to do the same"* (174). Oh, that all my colleagues in the pastorate - and myself - would take that rousing call to heart!

Grayson Gilbert says

The Pastor as Public Theologian has hit some fairly good feedback from many Christian circles, and for good reason. Not only is the structure of this book laid out cleanly, but it is easy to interact with the writing as you are reading it. The style of the book is largely pastoral, rather than exegetical in nature, but for obvious reasons (hence, the title). While I don't feel as if this book has set an earth-shattering precedent, it is indeed a timely book for the evangelical church, who is in desperate need of filling the pulpit with men who

are not only equipped to do the service of a pastor – but focus foremost upon the proclamation and exposition of the Word from the pulpit.

One thing I greatly appreciated about this book was that it lacked the tendency to run away with polemics and chastisement of the church. We know the American church and the pastorate are weak currently (as a collective whole) – what is needed is the solution: a return to expository preaching and for the pastorate to be seen as one of a rich historical foundation. This foundation is precisely what Vanhoozer and Strachan argue for, using the historical-theological narrative to build their case.

Beyond this, the layout of the book is easy to follow. Starting with a brief biblical theology of the pastorate, they deal within the nature of prophet, priest, and king, drawing from OT texts and offices to inform in part what the pastorate looks like – under the auspices of the true Prophet, Priest, and King. In the next section of the book, they dive deeply into the historical roots of the pastorate, drawing from the Early Church Fathers, Medieval Period, Reformation, the Puritans, and a few modern examples of pastors who stood against the tides of theological liberalism (Ockenga) and tumultuous times (M.L.J.).

In the second section of the book, Vanhoozer and Strachan turn the focus toward a systematic and practical theology of the pastoral office. In this, they further build the case for both the nature of theological depth and practical orthopraxy. Thus, not only is the pastor-theologian fulfilling the deep need for an in depth knowledge of the God who saves, but also an in depth treatment on how that theology informs their lives in the wake of living under God's commands, trials and burdens this life gives us, having an abiding faith and trust through knowing Christ crucified and the power of His resurrection. Yet also, here they offer a brief treatment regarding the imperative (command) in light of the indicative (fact) mood within scripture. More clearly, they seek to draw the line in why the pastor obeys the scriptures, and leads others to do so as well.

The final chapter of the book focuses specifically on how the Great Commission informs the role of the pastor-theologian. Thus, it is not the conventional growth-by-numbers treatment that is so common in the broader Evangelical church, but the "building of God's house" through disciple-making. In breaking down this commission, the tasks are fairly straight forward:

Evangelism: Proclaiming What Is in Christ

Catechism: Teaching What Is in Christ

Liturgist: Celebrating What Is in Christ

Apologist: Demonstrating What Is in Christ

In between each of these chapters are brief sections called Pastoral Perspectives, and they offer exactly what it sounds like. Some of these are incredibly helpful, others are less so. That's always the nature of the beast with multiple contributions within a larger work, but these are at most 2-3 pages each.

I set off to read this book because I was excited to read it. I have long lamented over the state of the American church, having recognized the systemic issue of unqualified men in the pulpits. Often, the pulpit is the last place the broader evangelical church sees as a bastion of theologically rich, biblically sound doctrine. Rather, the pastor is oft seen as the man who dons the drape of public service, performs the weddings, funerals, and dedications. Those who regularly study the scriptures will note the disparity between how the majority populous views pastoral ministry and what it is actually intended to be, per scriptural qualifications outlined in the Pastoral Epistles.

Though I would heartily give a recommendation for this book, there were a few weak spots within the content, which I disagree with equally as heartily:

“God does not directly will suffering” (pg. 154).

There are a host of responses to this, but suffice it to say, I would think by now we should have developed a more rich theology of suffering. 1 Peter directly contradicts this quote.

“The Pastor-theologian works largely in the indicative mood, proclaiming the gospel, and whenever possible, using words to do so: Jesus’ own words about Jesus” (152).

I would like to give deference where it is due, but at the same time, this is the same re-hashed (falsely) attributed quoted of St. Francis de Assisi. The gospel must be proclaimed using words, something Vanhoozer and Strachan undoubtedly understand, as they expound on this in numerous point in the book and even slightly here. Yet that little phrase, “whenever possible, using words to do so” seems to reinforce a problematic inference of one’s actions giving credence to the testimony of the scriptures. While it is true that “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentile because of you...” there are better ways to phrase what I believe the author is seeking to say.

The only other issue I had within this text, and by far, this left me unsettled in the midst of reading the book, was one of the pastoral perspectives. In the midst of reflecting upon the need for the pastor-theologian to have a breadth of knowledge in general fields, this pastor slips in his presupposition of theistic evolution (or OEC; it wasn’t entirely clear which, yet nonetheless it was clear he held to one of the two). Interestingly, he seemed to highlight the need for gentle disagreement on these matters – yet neglected to mention the untenable hermeneutical principle this methodology embraces, and the exegetical problems this creates later on. I suspect many reading this review will disagree with me on this, but perhaps he has moved too broadly in his perspective, and it seemed like an intentional act of hegemony. Throw it out there enough times and in enough popular works, and the next generation of Christians is much less likely to challenge the exegetical grounds on which it stands.

Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Academic through the media reviewer program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/wa....>

James says

Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan aim to recover a theological vision for pastoral ministry. *The Pastor As Public Theologian* diagnoses our contemporary anemia as "[t]oo many pastors have exchanged their vocational birthright for a bowl of lentil stew (Genesis 25:29-34; Heb. 12:16): management skills, strategic plans, "leadership" courses, therapeutic techniques, and so forth"(1). Pastors are recast as CEOs, therapeutic gurus, managers, life coaches, community activists, storytellers, political agitators and a host of other images borrowed from secular culture (7-9). With the bifurcation of academic theology from practical disciplines, pastors increasing are leaving theology to the academics and rooting their identity in these secular cultural images.

So Vanhoozer and Strachan propose recovery. The publican theologian is a scholar saint deeply invested in people's lives, sound doctrine, and biblical faith. They unfurl their proposal with a brief introduction (written by Vanhoozer), an examination of biblical and historical images for pastoral ministry (Strachan), and an exploration of the purposes and practices of pastoral theologians. Vanhoozer and Strachan point out the

pastor's role as an organic intellectual who builds up the body of Christ (22). Theology is too important to leave in an ivory tower. However, Strachan and Vanhoozer are both career theologians and not pastors. Between their chapters are short reflections by twelve other scholars: mostly pastors (with the exception of Cornelius Plantinga), all male, and generally Reformed. These little snippets provide an 'on-the-ground' view of how these ideas work out in real life. These are written by people like Josh Moody, Gerald Hiestand, Melvin Tinker, Todd Wilson, Jim Samra, Wesley Pastor, Kevin DeYoung, David Gibson, Bill Kyes, Guy Davies, and Jason Hood.

Strachan is professor of theology and church history at Boyce College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His contribution to this book explores biblical and historical images for pastoral theologians. In chapter one, he looks at the Old Testament and how Yahweh's wisdom, truth and grace was mediated to the people through kings, prophets, and priests. While acknowledging differences between Old Covenant contexts and New Testament and contemporary realities, Strachan uses these images (of priest, prophet and king) to give us a biblical theology of the theological office in the pastorate. In chapter two he gives an overview of church history, highlighting the importance of theology in the tradition for pastoral work. Early church theologians, Reformers, Puritans and the leaders of the First Great Awakening (especially Jonathan Edwards), and Neo-Evangelicals like Harold Ockenga all prized the practical importance of good theology for ministry and mission; however, Medieval Scholasticism divided theology and ministry (76-77) and contemporary populists placed no premium on theology for practical ministry (86-90).

Vanhoozer's chapters present the features of their positive proposal. He argues that pastors are generalists who use theology to help form people in Christ's image:

Christian theology is an attempt to know God in order to give God his due (love, obedience, glory). Jesus Christ is in the thick of it: he is both the ultimate revelation of the knowledge of God and our model of how rightly to respond to this knowledge. Pastoral-theologians, too, are in the thick of it: they represent God to the people (e.g. through teaching by word and example) and the people to God (e.g. through intercessory prayer). Changing a lightbulb is child's play compared to teaching people to walk as children of the light (Eph. 5:8). Far from impractical, the pastoral-theologian is (or ought to be) a holy jack-of-all-existential-trades. (104).

Vanhoozer then presents a compelling vision of the pastoral theologian's task: expressing the gospel, with biblical, cultural and human literacy, with wisdom and love in the image of Christ. "What are theologians for? What is the distinct service of the pastor-theologian? We reply: for confessing comprehending, celebrating, communicating and conforming themselves and others to what is in Christ" (125). In chapter four, Vanhoozer walks through the peculiar tasks of pastoral ministry (i.e. evangelism, counseling, visitation, preaching, teaching, liturgy, prayer, apologetics) and show how public theology enriches and enables real ministry.

This is a well reasoned account of the importance of theology in pastoral ministry, one in which I am in deep sympathy. Studying is spiritually formative for me, so I resonate with Vanhoozer and Strachan recovery of a robust theology for ministry. My own ideas of pastoral ministry have been shaped by my reading of Eugene Peterson. As I read this book, I thought of Peterson as the public-theologian par excellence. He certainly embodies the sort of combination of thoughtfulness, active attention and pastoral concern that Strachan and Vanhoozer describe and argue for.

Nevertheless I found this book limited in a couple of respects. First, I am on board with this vision but I have served and attended churches where good theology was not valued. What this book doesn't do is present a way to bridge the gap from the modern therapeutic/CEO models of ministry to their public theologian

proposal. More work needs to be done on how this works out practically, especially in churches and contexts that 'don't get it.' Second, for a book that includes contributions from fourteen people, it is exceptionally narrow. White. Protestant. Reformed. Male. Calvinists aren't the only Christians who value theology and the life of the mind. Methodists, Radical Reformation churches, and Pietists deserve their due (there is one Evangelical Free Pastor, so Pietists are marginally represented). Women and minorities would bring different perspectives and concerns. I wish that Vanhoozer and Strachan widened their net beyond their own boys' club.

But these demurrals aside, I liked this book, agreed with it and find aspects instructive for ministry and mission. I give this four stars.

Note: I received this book from Baker Academic in exchange for my honest review

Curtis says

Few books speak directly to my passions and calling, causing me to exclaim 'yes!' and 'exactly!' continually while reading, but this book is one of them. The call to bring the theological task back into the church is a much needed corrective today and the authors set forth to make a strong case for churches and seminaries to reconsider their roles when it comes to theological training.

The authors trace the Scriptural and historical roots of the pastor-theologian in order to draw the reader's attention to this very ancient calling. It was a fascinating read but I felt the authors relied too heavily on Calvin and Edwards to prove their point. It would have been nice to see alternative points of view through a greater exploration of other pastor-theologians. Due to this reliance on Calvin and Edwards, the individualist nature of this office throughout history was emphasized, but is this ideal or Spirit-led in light of new creation? Is the single pastor the great and high calling this kind of reading suggests? Or is the pastor to be found in among the community as one who stewards and leads the church equally alongside others?

In the third chapter the authors explore the mood that ought to be reflected in the lives of Christ-followers and I especially enjoyed this. The indicative mood of the gospel changes the believer from one of being-in-the-world (with the resultant being-toward-death) to one being-in-Christ (being-toward-resurrection). From this indicative proclamation comes the imperative to response and faithful action in the world. I highly recommend going over this section.

In the final chapter the authors propose the many ways that pastors perform their theological role within the Body of Christ as they show what is in Christ. In four ways the pastor functions in the local body: Preacher, Teacher, Liturgist, and Apologist. While all very important and necessary to grow up the body into Christ the reader can end up feeling overwhelmed by the breadth of tasks required of them. Better to see each of these being performed by those who are gifted and called to such roles as they work together in unity, of the same mind. Rather than concentrating these varied-while-connected roles into a single individual I find it more realistic (and reflecting the unity of the Spirit) to see a distribution and common support for those who lead the body from within. In addition, the authors believe very strongly in the necessity and power of the sermon to transform the church. It can be seen in several places, not least in the double amount of pages given to the sermon in a gathering compared to all other aspects. I think this is overstated as there is much more required than this, and if these other aspects are not in place the sermon is rendered ineffective. Perhaps the authors intended it to be further embedded in the whole of the communal life than they're stronger statements imply.

I agree strongly with the call of the authors for pastors to be doing theology from within their context as those forming the body of Christ into his image. Pastors cannot neglect such important reading and growing in their own lives if they ever hope to raise up mature followers of Christ in their communities. I differ on the extent to which an individual should be responsible for all they have proposed and would rather see a more communal inclusive approach. One based on the gifting and calling of all those in the body as they together in unity seek to edify the body.

I encourage all pastors to work through this book in order to be challenged and inspired in their own theological study and journey as they faithfully shepherd God's people. There are many more books to consider in regards to this task and how it is performed but this is a great introduction.

Thank you to Baker Academic for providing this work for review.

Robert D. Cornwall says

There is a problem in the profession. It would seem that many pastors do not see themselves as theologians. That is an academic kind of position. Clergy often see themselves as part of a helping profession. They look to the latest therapeutic and business models for insight, for theology just doesn't sell very well. Thus, preachers mount the pulpit and sound more like Wayne Dyer than Karl Barth or Serene Jones. It wasn't always that way. Until very recently many of the great great theologians from Irenaeus to Augustine to Calvin and to Barth were pastors. But, today most theology is written by academics for academics. As a theologically trained pastor I haven't been willing to let go of my calling as a pastor-theologian. While I don't think you need a PhD in theology to be a pastor, a pastor needs to have a strong grounding in the biblical, theological, and historical areas, and hopefully be able to integrate them into a wholistic model. I've been arguing for this even as many of my colleagues have decided theology isn't worth the bother.

So, I was excited to see in the Baker Academic catalog a book that would argue for the pastor-theologian model of ministry. I understood that the authors were evangelicals writing primarily to evangelicals, but still, I was excited to see an effort to assert the importance of pastors as theologians. While I knew the name of Kevin Vanhoozer, one of the two authors of this book, I hadn't read him. I knew nothing of the other author Owen Strachan. Nonetheless I asked for a review copy and got down to reading it.

Things started out well, as I read Vanhoozer's introduction, arguing that pastors need to be public theologians, opening up the scriptures so that people might understand this treasure that informs the Christian faith. I agreed that seminaries need to beware of the trend to give folks what they think they need -- skills in management and counseling, skills one can learn elsewhere -- at the expense of learning the foundational elements needed to teach and preach and provide worship leadership and pastoral care.

My concern, and why I rated it only as two stars, is that I found the tone problematic. Their vision of a pastor is not only that of a theologian (a generalist not a specialist), but a controlling figure (my sense of things) whose job is to refute error and speak absolute truth. As a former conservative evangelical/postliberal theologian in a mainline church that values freedom of thought (in covenant) the model offered here comes across as arrogant and unable to brook dissent. I realize that others might read this differently, but I think this vision is summed up well in sentences written by Vanhoozer that defines the purpose of the book.

He writes:

"Theology -- living to God -- is the lifeblood of the body of Christ, and the present book aims both to stop the bleeding (i.e., theological illiteracy) that is draining the life out of the church when nonbiblical doctrines (e.g., selfism) lead us to live not to God but to oneself. Pastors need to inoculate the body of Christ against idolatrous toxins, ideological infections, and other forms of false teaching." (p. 162).

I'm not sure that rather pessimistic and narrow vision of the teaching/preaching role of the pastor fits my schema. My model is a bit gentler than Calvin or Edwards. And in reading the book, I'm not sure I would be in agreement with them as to where the false teachings and toxins lie (there is a strong anti-gay sentiment in the book).

So, with that said, let me give a sense of the book's layout. The book begins with Vanhoozer's introduction, laying out the problem and offering the solution (pastor's reclaim their role as theologian). From there the book is divided into two parts. Part one is written by Owen Strachan, a professor at Southern Baptist Seminary and former Vanhoozer student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He takes us on a tour of the biblical and historical development of the office of pastor (he suggests that the idea of Christ being prophet, priest, and king -- three OT offices -- provide a foundation for the pastoral role). From there he takes us in a second chapter through the history of the role of pastor-theologian, noting how most of the early theologians were pastors or bishops -- including Augustine. He bemoans the turn during the medieval period toward the academy -- and then the reclaiming of the role of pastor theologian during and after the reformation -- Calvin and Edwards being key figures. Unfortunately in the 19th century the role of theologian is set aside by Finney and revivalists who look to modern methods of communication, leading eventually to the embrace of other professional models, while theology is shunted off to the academy. Harold Ockenga is lifted up as a counter balance in the mid-twentieth century, but we've turned once again to other models.

In part two Vanhoozer, a professor of theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, speaks to the subject from the perspectives of Systematic and Practical Theology. Under systematics (his area), he writes of the purpose of the pastoral theologian, noting the moods of theology, both indicative and imperative. Then in the final chapter he explores the practices of ministry -- disciple-making, building of God's house, evangelist, catechist, liturgist (he envisions the pastor as the presider over most of the service), and apologist (the role of public intellectual arguing for the truth).

The book concludes with 55 theses that summarize the content of the book, so if you want to get to the heart of things, just read the theses! Interspersed through the book are "pastoral perspectives," essays offered by practitioners who have embraced the model. All are conservative evangelical, and most (all male) embrace a rather narrow and hierarchical view of ministry.

So, What do I say here. As a left-of-center Disciple, the vision is too narrow for me. I embrace the premise that pastors need to reclaim their role as theologian. They need to pursue training (preferably in a seminary) that will provide these foundations. I just will need to wait for another book, one that speaks to my own context and vision of ministry as pastor-theologian.

Alex Stroshine says

In "The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision," co-authors Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan (as well as several contributing writers, mostly pastors) lay out a call for pastors to become "pastor-theologians." According to the authors, the pastoral office has dramatically shifted over the centuries

following the Reformation, especially during the Second Great Awakening where evangelists such as Charles Finney became obsessed with "results" (i.e. number of souls saved). Today, much of evangelicalism is similarly preoccupied with results, with meeting "needs," with running the church less like Christ's body and more like a corporation. This has led to theology being displaced from the church and confined to the academy. The authors want to bridge these worlds. They call upon pastors to become "generalists" who, through careful and comprehensive study, are able to illuminate the Christian vision for all of life. This is demonstrated by not focusing only on doctrinal theology but on other key areas of life as well. For instance, Jim Samra notes the importance of cultivating a theology of technology. Pastor-theologians are also exhorted to read literature so that they can enter into the "worlds" of characters they may not have yet encountered so as to learn from these narratives for when they DO experience similar situations ("Elmer Gantry" is mentioned frequently in the book as a bad example of a pastor but it is a must-read book and hilarious!).

I found myself nodding along in affirmation to much of what the authors declare, although, never having worked in a church, I acknowledge that I am not so aware of the concrete hurdles that bar the vision for pastor-theologians to take place. My own church is C&MA and tends to focus on the perfectly justifiable mission of reaching unbelievers and bringing them into relationship with Jesus but it tends to neglect those Christians who seek deeper teaching than merely skimming the surface. The potential danger of favouring the intellect over the affections is avoided in this book; I think this binary of head vs. heart/hands is well balanced by the authors and contributors. Indeed, by bringing every thought captive to Christ, pastor-theologians can be of comfort to those who are, for example, mourning a death, by proclaiming the glorious reality that Jesus has conquered death. Still, as someone who is not in pastoral ministry but who is well aware that pastors often suffer burnout, I wonder how reasonable it will be for pastors to devote even 5-6 hours a week to study (I am not including sermon prep) when they must also juggle one-on-one meetings, sermon preparation and visitations (especially if they are the only pastor in their church). Additionally, I doubt if every pastor needs to be a pastor-theologian; youth pastors should know their stuff, but I don't necessarily think they need to read Aquinas, Luther and Barth to be of service to their "flock." Perhaps, in the end, I think the heart/hands are more important than the head; sometimes presence is more important than disquisition, no matter how well intended the latter may be (I suspect also that the authors certainly and most of the contributors are all Reformed and as Molly Worthen demonstrated in "Apostles of Reason," the Reformed have largely been the intelligentsia of evangelicalism; what would a Wesleyan contribution look like?).

As figures like Thomas Oden have already noted, the early Church fathers were both pastors and theologians. Vanhoozer and Strachan's proposal seeks to recover such a vision. I would have liked to have seen them discuss the future of theological education. I have come to wonder whether larger evangelical churches and seminaries may collapse into one institution (I say this as someone whose own grad school has had to make major budget cuts). Also, granted that this isn't primarily a history book (although history doesn't get mentioned nearly enough as part of the pastor-theologians repertoire unless it is biblical history), the authors do a disservice to the breadth of the Christian tradition by skimming over the medieval period (like good Protestants!) and its perspective on the pastorate and entirely neglecting the Pietist pastoral tradition, leaping from the Reformation to the Puritans

Rodrigo Almeida says

Um pastor e um teólogo podem caminhar juntos? Kevin Vanhoozer dirá: NÃO! Isso porque para Vanhoozer um pastor é um teólogo. Não qualquer tipo de teólogo, mas um teólogo público.

Kevin Vanhoozer e Owen Strachan buscam através deste excelente livro como o próprio subtítulo demonstra: recuperar a visão perdida. E que tarefa!

O livro tem uma introdução, quatro capítulos, divididos em duas partes, e uma conclusão. Na introdução, Vanhoozer começa demonstrando como a figura e o papel do pastor tem sido moldado pela sociedade. E a visão dicotomista vigente entre o teólogo e o pastor. Enquanto o primeiro é o sujeito de uma mente extraordinária que vive enclausurado numa torre de marfim chamada academia, lidando com os conceitos e teorias, o segundo, é aquele indivíduo não tão capacitado intelectualmente que por não ter as “credenciais” para a atividade de “teologia profissional” lida com as questões de níveis mais práticas, no contexto eclesiástico. A partir daí, o autor fala de sua proposta: o pastor como teólogo público.

A primeira parte escrita por Owen Strachan é dividida em dois capítulos. No primeiro Strachan faz uma “teologia bíblica” do papel do pastor, tanto no Antigo Testamento, como no Novo. No segundo capítulo, ele descreve uma “teologia histórica” do papel pastoral. Ou seja, mostra ao longo da história como o papel do pastor foi mudando até chegar na visão que temos hoje.

A segunda parte é escrita por Kevin Vanhoozer, e também é dividida em dois capítulos. No capítulo três, Vanhoozer lida com a “teologia sistemática” do pastorado. Aqui, o autor fala da natureza e propósito do pastor-teólogo. No capítulo quatro, é a “teologia pastoral”, ou seja, Vanhoozer procura responder a pergunta: o que faz um teólogo público?

O livro conclui com 55 teses sobre o pastor como teólogo público que foram explanadas ao longo de toda a obra.

Se eu pudesse definir o livro em duas palavras seriam: Equilíbrio e Amplitude. Vanhoozer e Strachan fazem um trabalho espetacular que procura o equilíbrio entre a visão pastoral e cobre uma gama extensa de assuntos que isso envolve e deveria ser leitura obrigatória para aqueles que aspiram ao ministério pastoral. Tenho certeza que farei muitas visitas a este livro ao longo de minha trajetória.

Bob O'bannon says

Inspiring reminder of what a pastor is supposed to do -- bring theology to bear upon the lives of people by being a well-read intellectual, ministering Gospel reality to them in a way that overturns the forceful power of culture to cultivate hearts. Great way to start 2016 as a pastor myself.

Brian Watson says

It's been a while since I finished this book (I'm catching up on book reviews), so my thoughts aren't very fresh. Overall, I would recommend this book to pastors. The call is for pastors to be theologians. Ideally, there shouldn't be a divide between academic theology and the church. We tend to forget that Church Fathers like Augustine and Athanasius were priests/bishops. They served the church in preaching and in writing.

Most of the writing in this book is done by Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan. Ten others write brief "pastoral perspectives." This is one of the benefits of the book. Pastors weigh in on the place of theology in the local church. As for Vanhoozer, his writing is insightful but I find his prose a bit off-putting. He tends to

make assertions, then come back to those assertions later, which creates a circular feeling (didn't I already read this?) and he is far too clever in his writing. But his ideas are presented more clearly here than in, say, Biblical Authority after Babel. Strachan's contributions are solid.

[Finished reading March 2, 2016.]

Aeisele says

This is a great book for any pastor who feels the pressures of expectation of pastors in the 21st century church. Pastors are often put into a role of CEO, chief strategist, therapist, our life-coach, and while aspects of those functions are normal in leading a church, that's not the main function of the pastor. This book really delves into the function of the pastor, and chapters 3 and 4 are probably some of my favorite words written about the pastoral role.

The reason I only gave this book 3 stars is because of the first two chapters. This book is written from a "confessional church" perspective, and there is a reason I am not a part of the confessional church! I found certain parts of these chapters rather galling (like when in the historical section on pastor-theologians they skip over 1000 years of church history, saying that between Augustine and the Reformation there were few "pastor-theologians." Really? Gregory the Great? Bernard of Clairveux, whose sermons on Song of Songs became the intellectual framework for much of Calvin's thinking on union with Christ? The Franciscans, who renewed preaching?), and the Reformed lens sort of overwhelmed this section.

But I LOVED Kevin Vanhoozer's chapters, especially his discussion of "the evangelical mood." This discussion was worth the price of the book!

Steven says

The church is facing a theological crisis. The crisis being that there isn't much theological work being done in and for the church especially by those who have biblically been instructed to be those that are to teach the local church.

The Pastor as Public Theologian by authors Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan seeks to reclaim the identity of the pastor as a public theologian or as is described in The Pastor Theologian a local pastor theologian. This work defines the responsibility of the Christian theologian as one who "is to seek, speak, and show the understanding of what God was doing in Christ for the sake of the world" (17). This responsibility is part and parcel of what it means to be a pastor theology is not optional. Those who serve in the role of pastor have been called to be the theologians of their local congregation. Strachan's chapter tracing the historical trajectory of the pastor as theologian readily demonstrates that the by and large the role of theologian has been tied to that of the pastor.

What sets the work of Vanhoozer and Strachan apart is the practicality of their work. Whereas The Pastor Theologian, which I reviewed earlier, seeks to give call for a renewal of an ecclesial pastor theologian the authors in this book have a broader focus which in fact is foundational for the work of an ecclesial theologian. Vanhoozer demonstrates the practicality of the public pastor theologian for the local church in the third chapter. Pastor-theologians are for life and death in this world where many are bound by anxiety and seek to address it with the ultimate reality which is seen in the death and resurrection of Christ. Pastor theologians lead the local church in growing into the fullness of Christ. Vanhoozer addresses the practical

realities of being a pastor theologian and the implications of it in the areas visitation, preaching, catechesis, corporate worship, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. In addressing visitation Vanhoozer guards against the notion that the pastor theologian can fulfill his role in the privacy of the study.

At the end of each chapter pastoral perspectives are given by those who embody the concept of the pastor theologian, and this is one of the key strengths of the book. A pastor reading this book without those perspectives would be tempted to think the vision put forward by the authors is nothing more than the wishful thinking of academic theologians.

For many this book will bring about a needed paradigm change in how they view their role as pastor. I have thankfully been mentored and educated by men who have embodied the role of pastor theologian. Many pastors don't know who they are and what they are supposed to do, they adopt secular views of leadership and apply them to their role. This book serves as a corrective to many of the problems plaguing pastoral ministry in contemporary truth. My hope is that this book will find a wide readership and that churches and pastors would be awakened to the true nature of a pastor's work.

Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Academic through the Baker Academic Bloggers program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255
<http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/wa...>

Ben Aurich says

Probably one of the best books I've read, to date, on pastoral ministry. This book has revived my joy for this dangerous, unique calling. Recommended for any current or future pastors, or those who wish to better understand the unique blessings and challenges pastors face.

Douglas Wilson says

I enjoyed this. A lot of good material here. I didn't really appreciate the layout and flow of the arguments (too broken up), but it was still quite good.
