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The Pastor and the Modern World: Reformed Ministry and Secular Culture. By William Edgar, R. Kent Hughes, and Alfred Poirier. Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-955859-04-2. xvi + 114pp. £12.65.

This book is a compilation of the first three chair-holders' of the John Boyer Lectures on Evangelism and Culture at Westminster Seminary. The original intent was to publish each lecture separately, but providentially the lectures provided a cohesive and sequential theme that would prove beneficial to the church and the minister:

William Edgar's brilliant modern cultural analysis should be paired with R. Kent Hughes's loupe-like study of the timeless essentials of pastoral ministry, and that the conclusion should be a vision for ministry that Alfred Poirier mined from the ancient life of Gregory of Nazianzus (p. xv).

Each is a pastor-theologian; Edgar is professor of apologetics, Hughes was professor of practical theology, and Poirier is professor of pastoral theology. *The Pastor and The Modern World* provides a picture of the pastor-theologian, one who interacts with his culture while at the same time having a vibrant preaching and pastoral ministry.

Chapter One (Edgar) *Are We Really Secular?* — combines theology and culture. Secularization casts an ominous shadow, attempting to replace trust in God with trust in self, emphasizing subjective over objective truth. Hence revelation is marginalized at best and discarded at worst (pp. 11, 12, 16). Against religion, secularization seeks to insert the values of intellectualization, rationalization, and disenchantment (p. 18). Edgar illustrates this aptly by devoting several pages to the arts where he explains that 'there is no real dependence on revealed truth, either general or special' (p. 47). Further, he reminds the reader that 'a truly biblical worldview is not vaguely spiritual but highly definite: beginning with the ontological Trinity, centred in the Incarnation, anchored in the verbal revelation of Scripture' (p. 47). Edgar provides a two-fold emphasis to battle secularization: 1) the certainty of judgment to come (i.e., Acts 17:22-34) and 2) our message must be the gospel — as secularization permeates every area, every institution, every artistic vision, so the gospel applies to every area of life (p. 53).

The next chapter (Hughes) *The Heart of the Pastor and the Pulpit* is a homiletic intensive. Hughes probes the preaching task by looking through the lens of Jonathan Edwards' religious affections and his use of 'heart' — one's inclinations and will (pp. 64, 69). As Hughes begins with the *Affec-*

tions and Preaching, ultimately providing us with a twofold focus. First, there is *Affectionate Preparation*, what Hughes calls twenty sacred hours:

Sermon preparation is twenty hours of humble, holy, rigorous, critical thinking (in the presence of God!) about the text in its context [...] I say all of this because getting the text right is serious business, because our theology and religious affections are determined by it. Precision in exegesis and homiletics is of cosmic importance (p. 71).

The preacher must let the 'light' of God's Word elevate the heat of the religious affections (pp. 71, 72), thereby enlightening his imagination to raise the 'Fahrenheit of [his hearers'] affections' (p. 72). Second, *Affectionate Proclamation* is essential in reaching the heart (p. 75). The effective proclaimer will be a man of prayer (pp. 75-76) and the Spirit (p. 80), authentic (p. 76), and genuinely passionate, 'Where there is no passion, there is no preaching' (p. 78). The conclusion of all preaching is to exalt Christ (pp. 82-83).

Chapter Three *Gregory of Nazianzus: The Pastor as a Physician of Souls* (Poirier) is a master class in pastoralia. Poirier provides a sketch of Gregory's life, who saw the church move from persecuted, to tolerated, to being the official state church (p. 92). Poirier gives keen insight into Gregory's *Second Oration, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*, a document that stands as the first pastoral theology of the church (pp. 98). So, why did Gregory flee the ministry? He longed for solitude with God rather than to be 'thrust into the midst of a life of turmoil' — a fitting description of pastoral ministry (p. 101). Gregory contrasts the physician of the body with the physician of the soul. They differ in terms of:

1. Subject matter: One is concerned with the physical, the other with the soul,
2. The ends for which they labour: One deals with prolonging human life, the other with matters of eternal destiny; and
3. The power of the science each employs: One appeals to medical science while the other ponders the mysteries of God and the gospel of his Son (p. 104).

In the end, Gregory believed that no one was fit to be a pastor, yet someone must care for God's flock (p. 113).

This book is for the church, but especially the minister and is highly recommended. Hughes is worth the price of the book. The faculty of Westminster expands each of these through panel discussions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16rixJqjQY8&list=PLktunQkWQghX1s8NmEOUGuBB68nayoM0>.

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