

THE SCHOLAR AS PASTOR¹

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I am profoundly grateful to the Henry Center and the other sponsors of this evening's gathering for inviting John Piper and me. It is always an enormous pleasure to work with John. And I am frankly humbled to see so many people turn out for a topic many might consider esoteric.

To prove how wonderfully I can mangle fundamental homiletical principles, I shall proceed with an introduction divided into five parts, followed by a main body with an apostolic number of points. For my purposes, I will not count Paul, so there are only twelve points. But first:

1. Introduction

(1) "The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor": To begin by criticizing the title is usually a cheap shot, but in this case there is an ambiguity that needs to be exposed. In England, where I lived for nine years, this title might be thought presumptuous. Over there, "scholar" is not a word by which one would usually define oneself; rather, it is a word that someone else might use of you, if you are exceptionally gifted in your field. In other words, over there "scholar" tends to be a measure of one's *competence*; the word for the corresponding *role* is probably "academic." So could the title of this evening's sessions morph easily into "The Pastor as Academic and the Academic as Pastor"?

But now you can see that there is an issue at stake beyond the word preferred by one side or the other of the Big Pond. An "academic" is normally thought of as a person who has a post in an academic institution. In that sense, an academic is not a pastor, unless a bi-vocational, part-time pastor; conversely, a full-time, vocational pastor is not an academic, except perhaps in the sense of offering some part-time courses in an academic setting. Immediately the discussion becomes still more complicated when one recalls how some larger churches, not least Bethlehem Baptist Church where John Piper serves, begin their own parallel training schools, in this case The Bethlehem Institute, currently morphing into Bethlehem College and Seminary. Is this department of Bethlehem Baptist Church rightly called an academic institution? If so, when we speak of academic-pastors or pastor-academics, must there be some kind of institutional affiliation for the categories to take on meaning?

¹ This lightly edited manuscript is the second part of a two-part address by John Piper and me entitled *The Pastor as Scholar and the Scholar as Pastor*. The two one-hour addresses were followed by a Q&A before about two thousand people gathered on April 23, 2009 at Park Community Church in Chicago, organized by the Henry Center. Local arrangements were made under the capable leadership of Pastor Jackson Crum. Audio and video from the evening can be seen on the websites of the [Henry Center](#), [Desiring God Ministries](#), and [The Gospel Coalition](#).

Lest we wallow in a semantic quagmire, we abandon “academic” and retreat quickly to the word “scholar,” and acknowledge that even here in North America it can refer to either an academic role or a relatively advanced degree of competence in one’s field. The title may sound self-promoting to British ears, but the lovely ambiguity means that when we talk about, say, a pastor-scholar, we are not *reduced* to talking about institutional affiliations and the like (though we may include such reflections), but about pastoral work in the framework of rather more advanced technical competence than is customarily the case—a competence that may or may not have an institutional outlet.

(2) This is the time, I think, to recognize that God assigns hugely different gifts, so that one of the things this evening must *not* do is give the impression that there is only one legitimate path to working out pastoral and scholarly vocations. Arnold Dallimore was a Baptist pastor who took theological training with my Dad. His only degree, his terminal degree, was a B.Th. For forty years he served one church in the small Ontario town of Cottam. Nevertheless he also set himself the task of mastering material on George Whitefield. It became a hobby, a summer challenge, a life goal. He traveled frequently to England, ransacked archives, found material that no one had ever used before, and wrote his magnificent [two-volume](#) biography of Whitefield. Few books make me weep, but on occasion that biography did. For all of its technical competence and heavy documentation, it made me pray, more than once, “O God, do it again!” But no one insists that every pastor has the intellectual gift and long-term stamina to do the research and writing that that magnificent project entailed. John Piper has advanced training from Marburg. He has been known to write poetry *in German*. Few of us in this room can claim similar research and writing skills. Tim Keller has taught in a seminary but for years has served as a pastor—but which of us does not admire his [The Reason for God](#), probably the most important apologetic for outsiders since C. S. Lewis penned [Mere Christianity](#)? So are these the sorts of examples one should call to mind when one reflects on “the scholar as pastor”? My purpose in listing these men is twofold: *first*, more significant than the formal education are the gifts of intellectual curiosity and rigor, of focus and stamina, of lonely research and writing, that some have and some do not; and *second*, although some of these gifts can be cultivated and nurtured, precisely because some have these gifts and some do not, it would make no sense to set up an arbitrary standard as if all could and should attain them. It makes no sense to pretend you are something you are not. Some scholars will never display great pastoral gifts; some pastors will never function as gifted scholars.

(3) We should not proceed much farther without some brief reflections on one frequently abused text that is often applied to our topic. There is an evangelical tradition that treats what Jesus calls the “greatest” or “first” commandment as authorization for all Christian intellectual endeavor. Does not Jesus himself instruct us on this matter? He says that the most important command is this: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your *mind* and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). Here, surely, is a dominical mandate for evangelical scholarship.

Well, yes and no. Certainly Jesus' words lay a heavy emphasis on thought, on engaging our whole person, focusing on how we *think* as we love God—more so than our English translations always allow us to perceive. In English, to love someone with our “heart” (as in “I love you with all my heart”) bespeaks emotion: the “heart” becomes the focus of emotional engagement, while the head becomes the focus of mental or cerebral engagement. But as you know, in the Bible the “heart” is the center of one's entire being, not just of one's emotions. In other words, it is very close to what *we* mean by “mind,” except that it includes emotion, will, and value system. So to love God “with all your *heart* and with all your soul and with all your *mind* and with all your strength” includes a huge emphasis on what and how we *think*; the other two words—love God with your *soul* and with all your *strength*—bespeak intensity, total engagement. Transparently, this means that using our minds and wills in a lazy, slapdash, or arrogant way is not only pathetic, it verges on the blasphemous. And since all truth is God's truth, we are not far from the inference that all Christian intellectual endeavor offered cheerfully and whole-heartedly up to God—that is, all Christian *scholarship*—lies close to the heart of our calling. Whether you are tackling the exegesis of Psalm 110 or examining the tail feathers of a pilated woodpecker, you are to offer the work up to God and see such intellectual endeavor, such scholarship, as part and parcel of worship.

And yet, we cannot forget that Mark 12, and Deuteronomy 6 as well (from which Jesus draws the first commandment), do not tell us to exercise heart and soul and mind and strength in order simply to *understand* God better. The commandment is to *love* him. Indeed, in the context of Deuteronomy 6, this love is expressed in knowing and following his words, not least in passing them on to the next generation. Love for God must never degenerate into protestations of passion without thought, into sentimental twaddle. It must be shaped by thinking God's thoughts after him, and loving him precisely in and through and by means of knowing and delighting in his words—which is precisely why there is so much emphasis on mind and volition. So just because I study the half-life of a quark, a pilated woodpecker, the consistory records of Geneva in the years after Calvin's death, the destructive influence of Richard Simon, or a Hebrew infinitive construct does not guarantee that I love God better. In fact, it may seduce me into thinking I am more holy and more pleasing to God, when all I am doing is pleasing myself: I *like* to study. After all, plenty of secularists are fine technical scholars who enjoy their work and make excellent discoveries and write great tomes, without deluding themselves into thinking that they thereby prove they love God and deserve high praise in the spiritual sphere. Nothing is quite as deceitful as an evangelical scholarly mind that thinks it is especially close to God *because* of its scholarship rather than because of Jesus.

Nevertheless, as soon as one has delivered this warning, one must immediately repudiate the pendulum swing that favors anti-intellectualism. We *are* to love God with our *hearts* (in the biblical sense), with our *minds*. Or again, the very business of training others involves the closest use of the mind: “[T]he things you have heard me *say* [which surely entails text understood by mind] in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to

teach others [which certainly requires the life of the mind, though it requires more than that]” (2 Tim 2:2).

In short: biblical warnings about how knowledge puffs up but love builds up (e.g., 1 Cor 8) do not condone anti-intellectualism; conversely, biblical mandates to love God with our minds do not grant scholarship an elevated status that exempts it from adoration, faith, obedience, and love. At some level, scholarship without humility and obedience is arrogant; talk of knowing and loving God without scholarship is ignorant.

(4) So far I have been painting with a broad brush. I have referred to a wide sweep of scholarly disciplines, from ornithology to European history to biblical exegesis. But in the rest of this address I shall focus on biblical and theological scholarship, including those disciplines, such as church history and historical theology, that may most directly strengthen the pastor’s grasp. Institutionally, therefore, I am not thinking primarily about universities, Christian and otherwise, but about seminaries and similar institutions; topically, I am not now focusing on every discipline but on those most tightly related to faithful pastoral ministry. The reason, of course, is that I am supposed to be talking about the scholar as pastor, and I doubt if the Henry Center, when it issued its invitation, was thinking about how theoretical physicists might be faithful bi-vocational pastors.

This is the place where I should probably offer one further clarification. In this address I am not unpacking all the disciplines and habits that go into how a Christian scholar ought to function *as a scholar*. That is a hugely important topic, but it is not the one I am addressing here. I am thinking, instead, of the biblical-theological scholar *as pastor*.

(5) Probably I should say a word about my own pilgrimage. As an undergraduate I went to Canada’s McGill University and studied chemistry. My intention was to pursue a Ph.D. in organic synthesis; my dream was to do it at Cornell. The steps the Lord took to move me toward vocational ministry were multiple. For a start, the pastor of the church I attended in Montréal approached me one spring and told me he wanted me to intern with him that summer. I told him that, owing to the significant number of college-age students in the church, he was doubtless confusing me with someone who was planning to head into ministry. As for me, I was heading for a life in chemistry. He persisted, and so did I. We had a two-hour scrap, and I won: I went to another city that summer and worked in a chemistry lab. Nevertheless this pastor, doubtless working out of 2 Timothy 2:2, was the first person who got me to wonder about whether I *should* be thinking of vocational ministry.

Some time later I was working in a chemistry lab in Ottawa, Canada’s capital. I thoroughly enjoyed the work. Nevertheless I soon discovered that most of my colleagues in the lab could be divided into two groups. On the one side were those who hated their jobs and who were hanging on until retirement saved them from it; on the other side were those for whom chemistry was god. I didn’t fit into either group. Meanwhile I was helping a young minister with his Sunday School in a fledgling work up the valley where he was trying to plant a church, and the challenges of that minor ministry began to capture more of my imagination than the

chemistry. Somewhere along the line, the words of a chorus I had sung as a boy played incessantly in my mind:

By and by when I look on his face—
Beautiful face, thorn-shadowed face—
By and by when I look on his face,
I'll wish I had given him more.

Of course, I knew full well that some people are called to chemistry, or to become plumbers, nurses, garage mechanics, whatever. The old sense of *vocatio* is important: all of us, in whatever vocational calling we have, are to offer up our work gratefully and faithfully to God as a component of our adoring worship, whether we are collecting garbage or making violins. Still, in my case I could picture approaching the judgment seat of Christ and saying, “Here, God, here’s my chemistry,” without having given adequate thought to what else I might have offered. And then, early that autumn I heard a missionary by the name of Richard Wilkerson preach on Ezekiel 22:30: “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.” It hit me very hard. It was as if God by his Spirit was compelling me to say, “Here, please send me!”

When the Lord called me into the ministry—the potted biography does not do justice to how this was a strange and complicated time in my life—my aim was to preach, pastor, and plant churches. I had no intention of pursuing advanced degrees in biblical studies or theology. But some years later, while serving a church in the metropolitan Vancouver area, I was asked to fill in from time to time at a small Baptist college in the area. I was merely covering for a few faculty members when they were ill, or providing input as a local pastor. When a normal vacancy turned up on their faculty, however, the Dean asked me to apply. I declined: I was a pastor, and enjoying the ministry. This was the front line. Nevertheless the invitation served to make me wonder if I should get more training while I was still young and single. Our church was growing. We bought property next door, a precursor to expansion. I realized that if I stayed another year, I would have to stay for five, because all things considered it is the part of prudential wisdom not to leave in the middle of major expansion.

To cut a long story short, I resigned and went to Cambridge University, where I had three very happy years, working on a Ph.D. and speaking here and there. When those three years were over, I looked at my records and discovered I had preached or led a Bible study or the like an average of 2.6 times a week for the years I was there, so at no point was I entirely disengaged from pastoral ministry even though I was a full-time research student. By the end of that time I was married, and my wife and I returned to Vancouver where I took up a post at that same College, while my wife and I helped to plant another church on the side. Some years later, in another providential twist, I found myself at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). I had not sought the post, but in God’s providence it came to me, and I have served there for more than thirty years. So far, the most serious temptations I have had to leave my present post and go elsewhere have not been to join another faculty, whether at a seminary or a department in a

university (though I have had both), but to return to full-time pastoral ministry. I was very close to heading in that direction some years ago when Carl F. H. Henry and Kenneth S. Kantzer descended on me with prophetic fervor and told me in rather intense ways that if I left TEDS at that point I would be defying what God called me to do. You must understand that by saying this, they were *not*, emphatically *not*, relegating pastoral ministry to some second tier. I have known both of those men steer Ph.D. graduates *into pastoral ministry*. Both men were churchman; they had the highest regard for the priority of pastoral ministry. Perhaps they thought I was not very qualified for it, and thought I would be better at a quartermaster's job than on the front line. But the reason they gave me was that they thought, at the time, that some of the material I was writing met certain needs not everyone was addressing in the same way, and they did not want me to take a post that was likely to reduce that output. To be perfectly frank, I still wrestle occasionally with whether or not they were right.

So much, then, for the five points of my introduction. I think I'd have preferred to devote the rest of this address to the theme of the pastor as scholar, but John Piper has done that more ably than I could, and, not surprisingly, I have been asked instead to address the theme of the scholar as pastor. Perhaps I should revise it to read "The Scholar as (Frustrated) Pastor." Out of the lessons I have learned, I offer a dozen.

2. Lessons for the Scholar as Pastor

(1) Take steps to avoid becoming a *mere* quartermaster. Now, any army needs quartermasters: they are the ones who provide the supplies to the front lines. By all means give appropriate honor to those who devote themselves to equipping and supplying—with books, training, courses, modeling, answering questions—those who will be on the front lines. Yet it is possible to write learned tomes on apologetics without actually defending the gospel in the current world; it is possible to write commentaries without constantly remembering that God makes himself present, he discloses himself afresh, to his people, through the Word. If you are an academic, you need to put yourself into places where, as it were, you take your place with the frontline troops from time to time. This means engaging the outside world at a personal level, at an intellectual and cultural level; it means working and serving in the local church; it means engaging in evangelism. Avoid becoming a *mere* quartermaster.

I suppose I was at least somewhat shielded from initial temptations along these lines because I had been a pastor and was still preaching and teaching. My research area had to do with some elements of theology in John's Gospel against assorted Jewish backgrounds. My *Doktorvater* was a brilliant man who on many fronts had become convinced of what was essentially a naturalist approach to most biblical texts. After I had been in Cambridge for several months and the initial glory of this spectacular university had faded at least a little, one Tuesday afternoon I was in my mentor's office for a supervision on the background to the notion of "new birth" in John 3. It was all very interesting, and impossibly uncontrolled, as I was finding my way around Jewish mystical texts, gnostic texts, Philonic thought, and so forth. But deep inside I was sort of grinning. For the previous weekend I had preached in a chapel in the market town of

March, and one of the village constables, a man who was known to be a bit of a brute, had got converted, rather dramatically. He was born again. I could not at that point read John 3 without thinking of that man. My point is that by continuing in forms of pastoral ministry, even while engaging in technical scholarship, you will not only avoid some pitfalls, but you will avoid becoming a mere quartermaster.

Perhaps more importantly, one of the effects of such discipline is that you will become a better teacher. Elsewhere I have told the story of how I came to write *The Gagging of God*. It was the direct result of speaking at university “missions”—series of evangelistic addresses on university campuses—and observing first-hand the changing face of student questions. When I first began to do such work, even the atheists I met were “Christian” atheists—that is, the God whom they disbelieved was recognizably the Christian God, which is a way of saying that the categories were still on my turf. Eventually, however, the depth of biblical illiteracy among undergraduates changed that; more dramatically, postmodern epistemology meant that the approaches students were taking to “knowing” God and “knowing about” God and to exclusive claims for God and the like were so different from what I had been brought up with that I was doing more and more reading in these areas to make sure I could stay engaged with these new generations of students. At some point an undergraduate young woman in the English department at the University of Cambridge asked me to address some of her friends. The meeting grew, and the evening turned out to be electric—and it suddenly dawned on me that I ought to put a book together on the subject, not only to clarify my own thinking but also to help others who were negotiating the same changes.

In short, take steps to avoid becoming a *mere* quartermaster. Unless you are actively involved in pastoral ministry in some sense or other, you will become distant from the front lines, and therefore far less useful than you might be.

(2) Beware the seduction of applause. This can come from at least two directions. *First*, it can come from an academic direction. To be seduced by applause means that for you it becomes more important to be thought learned than to be learned. The respect of peers who write erudite journal articles becomes more immediately pressing than the Lord’s approval. Obviously there is no grace in simply irritating academic colleagues, in confusing contending for the faith with being contentious about the faith. Yet if it becomes more important to you to be published by OUP or CUP than to be absolutely straight with the gospel, if you shy away from some topics for no other reason than the fact that these topics are unpopular in your guild, then you are in the gravest spiritual danger.

When I first arrived in Cambridge in the autumn of 1972, I suppose I reacted in the same way as do many postgraduate students who first arrive in the United Kingdom from the United States or Canada. Canada’s oldest cities are only four or five hundred years old; I had been living in Vancouver, barely a hundred and fifty years old. There I was in Cambridge with parts of one church building, St. Benet’s, going back a thousand years. Cambridge was at one time a Roman camp: they built a bridge over the river Cam, hence, “Cambridge.” The university itself was then almost eight hundred years old, steeped in traditions; by contrast, my undergraduate university

was founded in 1827, and that made it the oldest in the Commonwealth outside the British Isles. I was walking on stones where John Owen walked; my college, Emmanuel College, boasts a chapel designed by Sir Christopher Wren, who also designed St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The College Library—quite apart from the glories of the intoxicating treasures of the University Library—boasted the second-best Puritan collection in the world. It was easy for a young and inexperienced Canadian pastor to feel massively intimidated. It was easy to be more concerned about being accepted in this glorious environment, about not sticking my foot in it, than about being faithful.

In God's providence, he helped me steer clear of some of the worst excesses by the means of a serendipitous conversation I had some months after I first arrived. My *Doktorvater* was, like me at that time, single. He was high Anglican—so high that he belonged to an Anglican order of monks, the Society of St. Francis. He wore the monkish habit, had a rope around his middle instead of a belt, and, in addition to his faculty job in the university, presided over a local high Anglican church. He was also the head of the local chapter of the Society of St. Francis. Because we were both single, we sometimes ate meals together, usually either at the chapter house or at the residential research library, Tyndale House, where I was then living. One evening after a meal together at Tyndale House, we retreated to my room for coffee. I inquired as to whether he would mind if I asked him about his spiritual pilgrimage, and he assured me he wouldn't. I had become perplexed by his stance on all kinds of things. Usually Anglo-Catholics are pretty conservative on a wide range of critical issues, while being theologically akin to traditional Catholics on many points of doctrine. But by this time I had learned that my mentor, though very Catholic in his theological views—for instance, he had a very “high” view of the Mass—was just about as liberal as you could get on most critical issues. By “critical issues” I'm including not only matters of what is called “critical introduction”—details about, say, the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and of 2 Peter—but also matters concerning the historical Jesus and his person and work. So I asked him, in effect, “How did you get to your present stance on historical and theological matters? How do you become a liberal Anglo-Catholic? Isn't that an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms?”

He responded graciously by telling me something of his story. His father had been an Anglo-Catholic bishop. At the age of five, my *Doktorvater* had started learning Greek and Latin at his father's knee; Hebrew was added at the age of eleven. He had been sent along to a fine prep school. At the age of eighteen, instead of going to university he chose to go to an Anglo-Catholic training college because he wanted to enter ministry in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England and work with the poor. On graduation he joined the Society of St. Francis and worked with the poor in London for almost twenty years. Toward the end of his thirties, he was sent by his order to work with students—and thus he came to Cambridge. He decided that the best way to work with students was to become one, so he enrolled in the university to study theology. For the first time he came across liberal-critical views, and he bought into the lot, becoming more and more creative himself in this respect. By his own account, he went through a revolution in his own thinking and approach to the Bible. He did so well in his studies that the

University asked him to teach, and his Order gave him its permission. Here he was, fifteen years later, at the height of his intellectual powers, supervising my own work. He loved university life and delighted in the teaching, research, and writing. His own academic star was still on the ascendency.

I told him I appreciated his frankness, and I could see how he had arrived at his stance, but I couldn't quite see how he put it all together. For instance, I could see how someone who has a high view of who Jesus is, who believes that he truly is the God-man, might take the next step and have a very high view of the "host" in the mass, seeing that somehow the deity of Jesus is present in the elements. That wasn't my view, but I understood how the connection might be made. But how could a theologian with a "low" view of the historical Jesus, an essentially naturalistic understanding of who Jesus is, then take a "high" view of the elements in holy communion? I never get quite as enthusiastic in debate as John Piper, but as usual I was getting into the discussion, with several responses and inquiries back and forth, when it suddenly dawned on me that he was becoming red-faced and sweaty and was beginning to stutter. My mentor simply did not have a clue how to put this together. It was not my role to embarrass him, so I backed off. I'm sure I can be a smart-mouth in debate, but on that occasion I was not trying to score points, but merely to understand. And in a flash I knew that I would rather have, in God's grace, what I had than what he had; I'd rather have the gospel, knowledge of forgiveness of sins, a reverence for God's Word, than all the academic applause in the world. I wasn't sure the two were necessarily incompatible; but at least I was sure that if you had to choose one or the other, academic applause can't compare with Jesus.

Some years later I again witnessed, but from a slightly different angle, the danger of being seduced by academic applause. John Woodbridge and I had come to the conclusion that we ought to edit a couple of tough-minded books on the doctrine of Scripture, books that ultimately became *Scripture and Truth* and *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. In my recruitment of writers for this project I approached a friend I had known since Cambridge days who was then teaching at another university, and who, I knew, shared our views on how Christians are to think about Scripture and what the long-sustained history of the doctrine is. He replied that although he wished our project well, he did not want to write on a subject like that, since he thought it would queer any chance he might have of getting a post at Oxford or Cambridge, where he could eventually do a lot more good. My response was that if he took that approach to confessional matters, it would not be long before he distanced himself not only from defending the doctrine, but from the doctrine itself. And that, I regret to tell you, is exactly what happened over the ensuing years. Beware the seduction of academic applause.

The *second* direction from which seductive applause may come is the conservative constituency of your friends, a narrower peer group but one that, for some people, is equally ensnaring. Scholarship is then for sale: you constantly work on things to bolster the self-identity of your group, to show they are right, to answer all who disagree with them. Some scholars who are very indignant with colleagues who, in their estimation, are far too attracted by the applause

of unbelieving academic peers, remain blissfully unaware of how much they have become addicted to the applause of conservative bastions that egg them on.

On the last day we stand or fall on the approval of one Person, one Master, the Lord Jesus.

(3) Fight with every fiber of your being the common disjunction between “objective study” of Scripture and “devotional reading” of Scripture, between “critical reading” of the Bible and “devotional reading” of the Bible. The place where this tension usually first becomes a problem is at seminary. Students enter with the habit of reading the Bible “devotionally” (as they see it). They enjoy reading the Bible, they feel warm and reverent as they do so, they encounter God through its pages, some have memorized many verses and some chapters, and so forth. Seminary soon teaches them the rudiments of Greek and Hebrew, principles of exegesis, hermeneutical reflection, something about textual variants, distinctions grounded in different literary genres, and more. In consequence, students learn to read the Bible “critically” or “objectively” for their assignments, but still want to read the Bible “devotionally” in their quiet times. Every year a handful of students end up at the door of assorted lecturers and professors asking how to handle this tension. They find themselves trying to have their devotions, only to be harassed by intruding thoughts about textual variants. How should one keep such polarized forms of reading the Bible apart? This polarization, this disjunction, kept unchecked, may then characterize or even harass the biblical scholar for the rest of his or her life. That scholar may try to write a commentary on, say, Galatians, where at least part of the aim is to master the text, while preserving time for daily devotional reading.

My response, forcefully put, is to resist this disjunction, to eschew it, to do everything in your power to destroy it. Scripture remains Scripture, it is still the Word of God before which (as Isaiah reminds us) we are to tremble, the very words we are to revere, treasure, digest, meditate on, and hide in our hearts (minds?), whether we are reading the Bible at 5:30 AM at the start of a day, or preparing an assignment for an exegesis class at 10:00 PM. If we try to keep apart these alleged two ways of reading, then we will be irritated and troubled when our “devotions” are interrupted by a sudden stray reflection about a textual variant or the precise force of a Greek genitive; alternatively, we may be taken off guard when we are supposed to be preparing a paper or a sermon and suddenly find ourselves distracted by a glimpse of God’s greatness that is supposed to be reserved for our “devotions.” So when you read “devotionally,” keep your mind engaged; when you read “critically” (i.e., with more diligent and focused study, deploying a panoply of “tools”), never, ever, forget whose Word this is. The aim is *never* to become a master of the Word, but to be mastered by it.

(4) Never forget there are people out there, people for whom Christ died. We don’t have mere colleagues in our institutions—we have brothers and sisters in Christ. We don’t have mere students, organic sponges whose primary function is to soak up data and then squeeze it back out again on demand; rather, in our classrooms are blood-bought children of the living God. Many of them will become vocational ministers of the gospel, cross-cultural missionaries, evangelists. They are never mere sponges; they are creatures made in the image of God, human beings who

have been born again, justified by grace, organically members of the church of the living God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Of course, a seminary is an academic institution, and educational institution; our job is to teach, and teach well. Yet not only should a Christian scholar in a seminary environment remember what any Christian scholar in *any* academic environment should remember—viz., that these students have been created *imago Dei*—but such a scholar should also recognize the ministry potential of the students and detect all the more the enormous potential found in each classroom. Every day former students spring to mind who once sat in my classroom and who are now serving challenging and fruitful ministries. I would love to take the time to tell you of a couple, for instance, whose name I dare not divulge, both of whom graduated from both Princeton and Trinity with a 4.0 GPA, and who are now serving in a Muslim country, working with refugees. Another couple I taught twenty years ago is currently working diligently at translating the Bible into eleven languages in Papua New Guinea. Many hundreds of pastors serve faithfully, week in, week out, who once sat in my classroom. Some have become pastor-theologians themselves, producing outstanding material that benefits others in turn. All of us stand on the shoulders of others: the Lord has ordained it that way (2 Timothy 2:2). Just as a good pastor will not treat the sermon as an art-form that is an end in itself, but a means of extending grace in the re-revelation of the Word of God, so the seminary professor will not treat lectures, papers, quizzes and assignments as nothing more than formal hoops through which to jump in the necessarily painful passage toward a degree, but as means of grace, wisely and rightly administered, as part of a larger mentoring and shaping designed to encourage a student to be a servant of the gospel, a herald of the Word, rightly interpreting this Word of truth, a worker who does not need to be ashamed. Moreover, at least some of your students will be carrying enormous emotional, moral, guilt baggage. Can you so handle the Word of God and apply it to their lives that you sometimes observe spectacular transformation taking place? If not, what makes you think you are qualified to teach others?

This also means that just as a pastor must be more than a preacher, but must develop warm and trusting relationships with the people he serves, so the scholar-pastor must be more than an information-generating teacher who tests nothing more than content acquisition. I repeat: the seminary is an educational institution, and we should never downplay that mission. But because of the content we teach, because of the Lord we serve, we who teach in such institutions must also be eager for relationships with students, with mentoring, with the whole person. Of course, there are only so many hours in a day: it is impossible for one teacher to have the same sort of mentoring relationship with each student. That is why most seminaries foster chaplaincy groups or spiritual formation groups (or whatever they might be called). The students in my group will be the first ones to be invited to our home, the first ones in my office, the ones who might come along for a Saturday hike, the ones who take priority on my prayer list, and so forth. I will get to know their spouses, and sometimes their children. An occasional student has become a prayer partner. Whatever the diversity of relationships you develop and cherish, you must see that a scholar with pastoral concerns will be more than a dispenser of information.

Never forget there are people out there.

(5) Happily recognize that God distributes different gifts among scholar-pastors, as he distributes different gifts among other groups. Some will be able to teach and write, but not preach; others will be able to teach and preach, but writing may be more of a challenge. Some will be excellent writers, but perfectionists, such that what their output is small, but superb; others are more slapdash, but gifted popularizers; some are narrowly-focused specialists, outstanding in a very narrow specialism, while others are scholarly jacks of all trades; and so forth. Some are more personable than others. Obviously we are wise to hone and develop the gifts God gives us, but we should not slip into the trap of thinking that all scholar-pastors must be similarly endowed. As the green-eyed monster can rear its head among pastors, so also among scholars; as pride and triumphalism can cripple pastoral ministry, so also scholarly ministry. What have you but what you received? Rejoice in the service to which God has called you, and eschew both arrogance and jealousy.

Having said that, however, I must hasten to add a few lines about the importance of listening to and learning from scholar-pastors who have preceded us or who exercise wider ministry or differently-focused ministry than our own. Certain habits and priorities are worth careful emulation. On my own horizon I happily acknowledge a sense of indebtedness to an array of scholars on whose shoulders I stand, rather inadequately. Leon Morris was in many ways a straightforward confessional New Testament scholar whose gifts were steady and wisely marshaled. He was not utterly extraordinary. Nevertheless at certain junctures in his life he perceived crucial needs and wrote works that were prescient, prophetic, hugely stabilizing for the next generation. One thinks especially of his *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, still worth buying and reading more than four long decades after its publication. He taught a generation of students that one is not necessarily selling the scholarly pass if one holds that the Gospel of John is far more historically framed than is commonly held today. He produced a handful of technical pieces that responded to temporary, influential, false steps in his day: one thinks, for instance, of his little book, *The New Testament and the Jewish Lectionaries*. I learned quite different lessons from Kenneth Kantzer. Kantzer's breadth of learning was extraordinary; his gift of analysis and synthesis was sometimes breathtaking. He had the potential to become one of the great Calvin scholars of the twentieth century. Yet he chose to marginalize these gifts in his life in order to build Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, which until very recent years was more the product, humanly speaking, of his gifts of vision and administration than of any other agent. Yet he remained astonishingly accessible to colleagues and students alike: he was a scholar-theologian-administrator-pastor. It would be easy to add the names of another twenty or thirty scholar-pastors who have largely shaped me, and of course the diversity of their gifts and callings attests to the truth of the point I am making: happily recognize the diversity of gifts that God gives scholar-pastors.

Perhaps this is the place where we should recognize another aspect of diversity, viz., diversity in reading habits. A new generation is coming along that turns reflexively to the web for information but that reads fewer books. I don't care whether you read books in print form or in digital form; I am quite happy with my Kindle 2. But for all that the Web makes information

gloriously accessible to a huge number of people, it has two huge shortcomings. *First*, it is so democratized that it is more difficult than ever to distinguish between truth and error, between authoritative opinion and fatuous opinion, between speculation and learning. *Second*, it swamps you with brief information and opinion; it entices you into endless worthless discussions even on blogs that may themselves be valuable. One of the things that thoughtful scholar-pastors will do is preserve time for reflective reading of the *best* books. You can find out what those books are by having probing conversations with a variety of scholar-pastors who are more mature than you are—but be sure you seek out the opinions of several people, not just one. Through their books, get to know some epochal thinkers reasonably well. Slow down; read, take notes, think, evaluate.

Yet having said these things—things that must be said as a kind of foil to the temptations of reading exclusively on the web—I must quickly add that in this domain of reading, there is, and there should be, quite a diversity of legitimate reading practices. Some, more focused than others and perhaps slower readers and sharper thinkers than others, want you to restrict your reading to very good books that you must read slowly. For some readers, I suspect that that is the wisest choice; for all readers, reading some books slowly and analytically is mandated. But I doubt that it is wise to suggest that every scholar should read only good books and only slowly. For once again there is a diversity of gifts and graces. If you can develop the habit of reading different things at different speeds, you might be wise to read some books slowly, evaluatively, and often; to read some books briskly, once, but comprehensively; to skim other books to see what they are saying; to dip into still other books to see if they add anything to a discussion, or merely say the same old things with a minor twist here and there. And that is apart from reading some poetry, some serious literature, even occasional pieces that have no enduring value but that everyone is reading at the moment—not because you want to spend much time there, or should spend much time there, but so as to offer penetrating first-hand comments on material that virtually every literate person in your world knows something about. Not every scholar-pastor should attempt to do all of these things, but those who have the gift, time, and energy to do so, and who then offer their “take” on a broad array of literature, become a great gift to those of us who read more narrowly or at more limited speed. Precisely because there is a diversity of gifts, the perspective of Roger Bacon is memorable: “Reading maketh a full man; speaking maketh a quick man; writing maketh an exact man.” What is virtually *never* justified, however, is *never* reading *anything* slowly, seriously, analytically, evaluatively. For such reading of good material not only fills our minds with many good things, but teaches us how to think.

In short, happily recognize that God distributes different gifts among scholar-pastors.

(6) Recognize that students do not learn everything you teach them. They certainly do not learn everything I teach them! What *do* they learn? They learn what I am excited about; they learn what I emphasize, what I return to again and again; they learn what organizes the rest of my thought. So if I happily *presuppose* the gospel, but I rarely articulate it and I am never excited about it, while effervescing frequently about, say, ecclesiology or textual criticism, my students may conclude that the most important thing to me is ecclesiology or textual criticism. They may pick up my *assumption* of the gospel; alternatively, they may even distance

themselves from the gospel; but what they will almost certainly do is place at the center of *their* thought ecclesiology or textual criticism, thereby wittingly or unwittingly marginalizing the gospel. Both ecclesiology and textual criticism, not to mention a plethora of other disciplines and sub-disciplines, are worthy of the most sustained study and reflection. Nevertheless, part of my obligation as a scholar-teacher, a scholar-pastor, is to show how my specialism relates to that which is fundamentally central, and never to lose my passion for living and thinking and being excited about what must remain at the center. Failure in this matter means I lead my students and parishioners astray. If I am then challenged by a colleague who says to me, “Yes, I appreciate the competence and thoroughness with which you are handling ecclesiology or textual criticism, but how does this relate to the centrality and non-negotiability of the gospel?” I may, regrettably, respond rather defensively, “Why are you picking on me? I believe in the gospel as deeply as you do!” That may be true, but it rather misses the point. As a scholar, ecclesiology or textual criticism may be my specialism; but as a scholar-*pastor*, I must be concerned for what I am passing on to the next generation, its configuration, its balance and focus. I dare never forget that students do not learn everything I try to teach them, but primarily what I am excited about.

(7) Therefore make the main thing the main thing. In other words, the principle I enunciated in the previous point needs thoughtful application in quite a number of domains. In *every* area of a biblical-theological scholar’s work, it is important to keep asking what is at stake, what related issues constitute the “main thing.” Permit me three examples.

First, consider some of the various ways scholars teach systematic theology. Some, trained in philosophical theology, help students work through complex notions like “person” when explaining patristic Trinitarian formulations: one substance but three “persons.” Others, trained in historical theology, may construct their systematics largely out of the trail of theologians who have gone before them. Both may be effective teachers; both *may* never open their Bible from the first class period in the semester to the last. That means a “main thing” has been overlooked: students with a high view of Scripture *must* be trained in how theological formulations ought to be grounded in and derive from what Scripture says. *Otherwise what systematians are really teaching is that the structures of systematic theology not only do not spring from Scripture, but need not spring from Scripture.* In that case, how is Scripture the “norming norm” of the discipline? In propagating one aspect of the complex discipline of systematic theology, such scholars are sacrificing what is *essential* to the discipline: self-consciously drawing the connections, *for the sake of the student*, from Scripture, through historical/philosophical/hermeneutical grids, to confessional formulation.

Second, the drumbeat of our themes may do unwitting damage, even when every point we make is right. For instance, those who teach Bible, theology, and historical theology sometimes (and rightly) point out weaknesses, aberrations, and assorted blind spots in contemporary evangelicalism. This *may* work its way out in students who become more and more critical of confessional evangelicalism, and pretty soon even of the evangel itself. They are in danger of becoming smart-mouths. Their superciliousness guarantees that they cannot minister effectively anywhere. Instead of becoming believers whose lives fruitfully foster change within

the church, these students become condescending critics. Not only are they less fruitful than they might have been, they are in great spiritual danger. All this has occurred because their teachers have not been as careful in fostering a sense of indebtedness to those who have come before as they have been in fostering what they think of as discernment. Jesus nowhere says, “By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you are scintillatingly critical and condescending toward evangelicals who have some things wrong.” I do not mean to hint for a moment that we who teach can afford to duck the responsibility of teaching discernment. I mean only to say that even discernment must be nestled into the bigger “main thing” of love for the brothers and sisters in Christ.

Third, scholarship inevitably cares about innovation, fresh discoveries, new insights. Such strengths are not to be dismissed. But if a scholar makes that sort of pursuit his or her primary passion, it will become easy to overlook or marginalize the gospel once for all delivered to the saints; it will be easy to stand loose with respect to what must be proclaimed in *every* culture, to the gospel of Jesus who stands athwart the tides of history and cries, “Come to me!” In all our legitimate concern for the innovative, what is of greater importance is the changeless—and this is what has dominant pastoral importance. Let the main thing be the main thing.

(8) Pray and work for vision beyond that of publishers. A well-known scholar has boasted that he has never had to submit a book manuscript to any publisher, asking if they might be interested. In *every* case—and he has written many books—publishers have approached him and asked him to write something. This happens far more often than people realize, especially once a scholar has published an initial book or two. I suppose the scholar in question takes this as a point of strength, almost a matter of self-congratulation. At one level, it is powerful attestation that what he writes will be purchased, and that is why publishers want him on their lists. But what this *also* means is that this scholar has entertained no vision for research and writing beyond what publishers have asked him to tackle. That is almost unbearably sad. If you are a pastor-scholar, you ought to be asking yourself what might be especially helpful at the present moment, what work of scholarship is crying out to be tackled, what popularization would benefit the Lord’s people. Sometimes publishers will think of such things first: their invitations coincide with your interests and priorities. Where *you* think of certain topics first, however, part of your job is to “sell” a publisher on the idea, so the material can be published or achieve prominence on a better website or the like. If you write only what others ask you to write, I fear you may be displaying a want of scholarly imagination, and, still worse, a lack of pastoral care.

(9) Love the church. Love the church because Jesus loves it. Let your students *know* you love the church; make sure that the fellow members of your church are deeply aware that you love the church, that you love them. This will work out in many different ways, but such love for the church *must* find outlets in your prayer life, your priorities, your willingness to participate (with the elders? in a small group? in teaching a class? in taking your turn on a preaching rota? in helping with the cleaning? in drafting a new constitution?). Loving the church is not only important to balance out the rugged individualism that is often part and parcel of having grown up in America and that is sometimes in danger of neglecting both communal life and strong

personal relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, *but also to stamp our students*. If we are training a preponderance of pastors and others who will serve in the local church, it is *essential* that the faculty members truly love the church that Christ loved and for which he gave himself. Many students will learn to love what their professors truly love. So love the church.

(10) Avoid lone ranger scholarship. Every scholar knows that part of the task of scholarship is bound up with long, lonely hours of disciplined study and writing. Some projects, however, are better undertaken with collaboration. No less important, if you are beginning to press into arenas of thought that are not your first area of competence, you are wise to run your work by others in the field, to solicit criticisms and suggestions. Better yet, it is often good to seek out a new generation of younger scholars and embroil them in new research and writing projects, giving them books to review, soliciting their opinions, interacting with their suggestions. Not only do you yourself benefit—it is much better to receive criticism for a work before it goes to press than in the reviews after it has been released—but you are involved in a kind of scholarly mentoring that is the fruit of essentially *pastoral* commitments.

I once knew a scholar (he has gone to his reward) who produced, among other books, a remarkable reference volume that covered vast areas. It was “remarkable” because its entries ranged from the brilliantly insightful to the mediocre, then all the way down to the painfully ignorant. The volume never did have the kind of influence its author hoped it would have. He could have easily avoided such a mixed work if he had taken the time to collaborate with other scholars who legitimately claimed overlapping areas of competence, and who could have saved him the embarrassment of so many mediocre and ignorant entries mingled in with the brilliant.

(11) Be at least as interested in the work of others as you are in your own. This is wise not only because you do not want to become the party bore who turns every conversation and discussion toward his or her own work—a peculiarly nasty form of narcissism—but because the commandment and example of Christ compels you to seek the other’s good, to love your neighbor as yourself, to promote scholarship insofar as it is explicating and promoting the truth and not just because it is *your* scholarship. Be at least as interested in the work of others as you are in your own.

(12) Take your work seriously, but not yourself. Make sure you have some people around you who feel free to laugh at you. I have no idea how many times in dinner parties and the like my wife has enjoyed poking fun at some of my titles: *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, for instance. Isn’t that one a winner? Walk humbly: you have far more to be humble about than you realize. Take your work seriously, but not yourself.

3. Concluding Comment

I have been talking about the scholar-pastor. It would take only a little imagination to see how the kinds of virtues I have been promoting have analogues in virtually *every* sphere. Is it only the scholar, for instance, who must avoid the seduction of applause? Is it only the Christian who is a scholar and who wishes to serve pastorally who must be urged to love the church? Is it only the scholar who must constantly check to ensure that the main thing is still the main thing?

In short, most of what I have been urging has correlative application in the lives of all Christians. Because the virtues and graces that go into pastoral care are essentially *Christian* virtues and graces, the application is as broad as the number of Christians.