FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The Pastoral Nature of Theology: An Upholding Presence

R. John Elford
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> *This book explores the way in which the historical and cultural setting of theology has a seminal influence on its nature. We will see how theology always has and still does arise out of pastoral concern. In doing so, we will challenge all those writers on the subject who presume that the reverse is the case; that pastoral care arises out of theology.*

This is the premise of the book. Elford builds his case for a relevant theology that grows out of the time and culture, and out of the events that are actually occurring in peoples lives. The ultimate questions of theology have been discussed and debated in places and with ideas that are quite remote from the life and concerns of ordinary people. This creates a false theology. As ministers understand the reality of the lives of ordinary people, theology has significance and true meaning.

Elford found that what he was taught in seminary and what people were experiencing were entirely removed from each other. Thus he came to study theology in a new way, looking back at historical theological developments and searching the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to present the ways in which theology was and should continue to be formed.

The manner in which a religion views the human identity will determine the way in which it answers the ultimate questions of theology and philosophy. Elford states that historically everyone has been "faced with the monumental task of having to reconstruct theology and the life of faith in the face of a collapse, or the collapsing of what has gone immediately before." Thus, he believes the past and present need to be in conversation when forming our model for pastoral theology.

In conclusion, Elford says there is an "ever ongoing theological remaking which is required by a living faith. It demands, as we have seen throughout, that we be open to modernity and be steeped in understanding our own tradition, its theology, spirituality and….the rituals of

prayer and worship which sustain it.”

Though it requires some familiarity with Church history and the Bible, The Pastoral Nature of Theology is written in a way that will be meaningful for every individual who seeks to make ministry relevant today.

Linda Wilson