Thinking, Listening, Being: A Wesleyan Pastoral Theology
Jeren Rowell
Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press
2014, 192 pp., paper, $19.99
ISBN 978-0-8341-3246-7.

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Jeren Rowell serves as the president of Nazarene Theological Seminary and has served as the district superintendent of the Kansas City District of the Church of the Nazarene and as an adjunct faculty member of Olivet Nazarene University where he earned his highest degree, Ed.D. in ethical leadership in 2010. For fourteen years, he served as the Senior Pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Shawnee, Kansas; previously, he served for 12 years as an associate pastor in three different congregations. He also served as editor of two denominational publications The Communicator and Preacher's Magazine. In addition to the current volume, he is the author of two books What's A Pastor to Do? and The Good and Difficult Work of Ministry.

Despite the author's denominational affiliations and the use of the denominational publisher, Rowell avoids the use of parochial terminology in favor of employing more ecumenical terminology (cf. p. 8 where he employs the term "overseer" rather than "superintendent"). Although he quotes from the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene (147) in discussing the ritual of the sacraments, the source of the citations are only evident in the footnotes and not in the body of the text itself. The attempt to avoid denominational references makes the book useful to a wider audience, specifically Wesleyan-holiness pastors (23).

Rowell holds that many pastors fail due to "a poorly constructed pastoral theology" (22). He determines to correct the faulty theology. The aim of his work is stated as follows: "…I set out to gather in some kind of systematic way a theological and practical framework for thinking about, preparing for, and executing the life and work of a pastor" (22). He is modest in his purpose, not supposing that it will add "greatly" to the classic pastoral theologies (22-23, 181), but does anticipate that his work will provide "theological reflections on the life and work of the pastor" (23).

The first eight chapters appear under the first part entitled "Good Thinking: Wesleyan Pastoral Theology" and include descriptors of the word "thinking" which are: Wesleyan, theologically, identity, prayerfully, leadership, essentially, humbly and holy. In chapter one, "Thinking Wesleyan," Rowell provides pointers on how the

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Wesleyan Quadrilateral can be used in developing a Wesleyan pastoral theology. The identity of effective pastors arises from the call of God and the Church. Pastors should maintain a prayerful orientation that engages in constant prayer. Rowell challenges the secular paradigms of leadership and promotes a biblical model of leadership, which is characterized by humility, solidarity, compassion, integrity, and sacrifice (58f.). In the chapter, "Thinking Essentially," Rowell, borrowing a page from Eugene Peterson, challenges pastors to focus on the essentials: prayer, study of Scriptures, and spiritual direction. Thinking humbly entails downward mobility, submitting to authority, and a humble leadership posture. Rowell desires for pastors to demonstrate a leadership "that is so defined by God's perfect love that it no longer has anything of its own to prove; it has only to prove the authenticity of a love that lays down its life in service to another" (87).

Part two is entitled "Good Listening and Being: Wesleyan Pastoral Practice." The first two chapters focus on listening to God and to people. Rowell focuses in these two chapters on techniques and means of listening, including, in the first chapter, respecting Sabbath and listening to God through Scripture. The second chapter discusses listening to people in an unhurried manner and active listening both with individuals and among groups. The next six chapter titles use descriptors of the word "being"; they are being preacher, evangelist, teacher, officiant, reconciler, and true. Rowell emphasizes biblical preaching and planning for preaching. The role of evangelism and the role of the pastor in teaching congregants to witness to their faith are stressed. Rowell holds that pastors should live so that their "entire life becomes instructive as a model of fully surrendered discipleship" (127). Chapter 14, a longer chapter, stresses the role of the pastor as a leader of worship, including his/her role as an officiant of the sacraments, weddings, and funerals. The author discusses the importance of church unity and the role of the pastor in reconciling in conflicting circumstances within the local church through the use of strategies of reconciliation. In the chapter "Being True," Rowell addresses ethics traps and strategies for the ministers to remain true to their calling.

Part 3, entitled "Faithful and Effective: Rightly Assessing Pastoral Work," discusses the appropriate perspective on ministerial success in the seventeenth chapter. In the last chapter "Legacy," the author discusses two ways that pastors can make a purposeful investment in the lives of successors: 1) nurturing the call of God in the lives of others (177); 2) mentoring others in the ministry (179).

Rowell's work has made an important contribution to the field of pastoral theology for Wesleyan-holiness pastors. The author acknowledges debts to the writings of pastoral theologians Eugene H. Peterson and William Willimon

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(22), but he extends the discussion beyond the writings of these mentors, making application of ministerial disciplines to the thinking of the pastor. Not only does the writer stress thinking and the need for practical theologians (22, 37), Rowell also emphasizes mentoring, integrity, humility and other disciplines of the pastor's life. Despite the subtitle, the book does not provide a comprehensive treatment of pastoral theology, but its emphasis on the disciplines of the pastoral life is its strong suit. This seasoned pastor, writer and overseer of churches should be commended for a heartfelt introduction to pastoral ministry and the emphasis on the spiritual life and thinking of pastors.