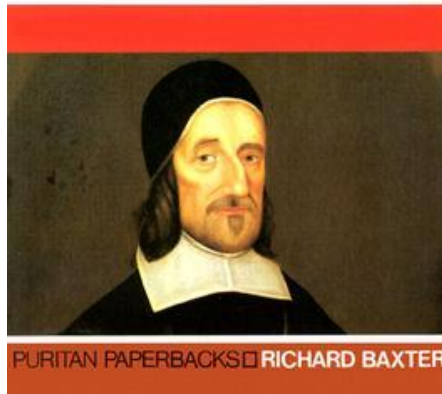


The Reformed Pastor



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Richard Baxter

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One of the best known classics on the work of the Christian ministry.

The Reformed Pastor Details

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From Reader Review *The Reformed Pastor* for online ebook

Demetrius Rogers says

There's no doubt Richard Baxter was an amazing man of God and a most devoted pastor. I love the premise of his work - the pastorate is larger than the pulpit. What a good reminder. Preaching sermons is not enough to effectively pastor a congregation. Using Acts 20:20 as his basis, Baxter sought to advance the idea that pastors are to teach in public and from house to house. Visitation was heavy on the heart of Baxter as he considered the state of pastoral ministry in the 17th century. He felt too many of his colleagues were simply locked up in their studies and negligent of their vocational calling. I'm sure in some quarters of the church this is still applicable today. However, in the circles I'm from it's the other way around. Pastors are so inundated with people that they have little to no time for the study. At any rate, Baxter is trying to restore a critical balance to pastoral ministry.

As much as I loved the heart, I did not enjoy the book. For one, it was hard to follow. The grammar was comprised of long and complex sentence structures. The English was archaic, verbose, and repetitious. Baxter seemed to make just a few points over and over again. And the outlining of the book was extremely convoluted. The other thing was that the tone of the book had a brooding severity. Maybe I'm just a child of my times, but there has to be more ways of inciting reform than just driving your readers. I can see why sincere ministers of the next generation worked themselves to an early grave (Whitefield, Brainerd), because, perhaps, this was the tenor of the day. And I quote Baxter: "What is a candle made for, but to burn? Burned and wasted we must be..." Well, I'm sure some people (then and now) need to hear this, but for others this kind of sentiment can easily translate into compulsive work loads.

I'm sure these critiques are a little exaggerated, and a second reading may temper my initial response. But, given the thick Middle English writing style I doubt I will ever traverse these pages again.

Matt Pitts says

Baxter's style is plain, vivid, and vigorous. When it comes to the puritans I have attempted to read a little of Owen and Sibbes, but now I wish I had started with Baxter. (I've read Bunyan too, but he seems to be in a class by himself!) Baxter is not at all hard to understand or hard to follow, nor is he boring or tedious. He is full of life and zealous for the truth to be not merely known but lived. No doubt some of his zeal was due to the fact that he was never far from death because of his poor health. He was truly a 'dying man preaching to dying men.'

This particular book is an exposition of Acts 20:28 that is about 250 pages long. His vision of personal pastoral ministry is unlike anything I have ever witnessed, but I am convinced that his conviction about private (one-on-one or pastor-to-family) pastoral ministry is biblical. His main contention is that pastors who only minister to their flocks through public preaching and not through personal spiritual conversation fall short of what God requires of them. Pastor must shepherd all of the flock, and that cannot be done merely through public preaching.

Suffice it to say that you will not be able to read this book casually, nor will you be able to read it without being changed.

Ian Hodge says

Richard Baxter's time as a pastor proved very fruitful. IN this book he has advice for his fellow-pastors, shepherds of the flock. But this is no soft-treading nice reflection on pastoral theology. It is a challenge to every pastor to live the life that is preached from the pulpit or else face neglect, even ridicule, for a hypocrisy.

While this is an excellent book as far as it goes, it does not give the total story of Baxter's success, which had much to do with his practical application of the Scriptures in the life of the townsfolk in which he ministered.

This is one of the books that brings you back to sanity and the real world, since too often we can put ourselves on a pedestal of our own making.

Aaron Ventura says

A worthwhile read for pastors. Baxter makes a big deal about living out what you preach and not expecting from your congregation that which you don't do yourself. Common sense that is too uncommon in our day.

Rafael Salazar says

Apesar de já ter altas expectativas acerca do livro devido às recomendações de peso de homens como J.I. Packer e C. H. Spurgeon, posso dizer que fui muito surpreendido positivamente com o livro. Como alguém que sente o chamado e aspira ao ministério, fui amplamente confrontado e desafiado a considerar a obra pastoral com toda a seriedade e solenidade que merece. Baxter expõe a questão da obra da pregação e do ministério particular na primeira parte de seu livro, que para mim foi a melhor. Em seguida, passa a considerar a obra do pastor em relação ao seu cuidado do rebanho, essa seção é cheia de recomendações práticas, além de listar razões para a prática da disciplina eclesiástica e para o ministério catequético particular para com todas as ovelhas. Um livro obrigatório para todos os que seriamente consideram o ministério, assim como para aqueles que já se encontram nele. Leia "O Pastor Aprovado" tendo em mente que é impossível terminá-lo com a mesma mentalidade de quando começou!

James says

This book has great things to say about pastoral self care, pastoral vocation and the priority of cataphesis. I do think Baxter is a little dour and I would question how some of his methodology would translate, but I am wowed by the sacredness in which he views his vocation and the attentiveness he had towards his flock.

mpsiple says

Great for reminding pastors of the seriousness of their business, but it's so heavy handed that I was numb to it by the end.

Jen Vanderwey says

Straight talk about a pastor's call to feed and shepherd his flock. What does it mean to oversee faithfully? What does it mean to preach to your people? Should a preacher pastor large numbers? Baxter brings it. Hard.

His book was very instrumental for me when our church was considering a multi-site model. Through Baxter's teaching and the teaching of his modern understudy, Mark Dever, I became convicted that multisite does not meet the high calling for a pastor to look out on his congregants, know them, love them and beseech them with the Word, week in and week out.

Clayton Hutchins says

Good, but lengthy and repetitive. Baxter really has a way with words, but occasionally I found the rhetoric verbose and overbearing. A bit too demanding and stringent in his demands for pastors, particularly on the issue of "recreation." Baxter—along with not a few modern Christians, actually—needs to read Joe Rigney's *Things of Earth.*

Baxter argues that pastors should know the spiritual condition of every member of their flock, and should personally converse with each of them about their spiritual life in private. The method he suggests is that a pastor meet with each church member on the membership role. He set aside two days a week, and was able to meet once with every church member in a year.

Baxter's argument is thought-provoking on a number of levels. As of now, I am convinced that a properly ran, elder-involved small group ministry is a better method of implementing Baxter's vision than the method he himself used. Regardless of the method one ends up employing, Baxter helps us realize, as Packer points out in the forward, that we ought to be figuring out the best ways "of creating situations in which [we] can talk to [our] people personally, on a regular basis, about their spiritual lives" (19). I'm glad this book made me think more about this area of ministry.

Jason Todd says

This book is excellent. Once I started it, I couldn't put it down. I would strongly suggest this book for anyone considering going into ministry. It is a blunt observation and challenge to pastors regarding their personal faith and the responsibilities they have committed to. It's hard to read this book without feeling convicted, but surely those of us in ministry are required to feel the weight of that calling.

Read it, and take heed!

Joe Cassada says

This is one of those books that every pastor must have in his library - and not only in his library, he must have it bouncing around in his heart and lingering in the back of his mind. In this book Baxter shows what is the bone and marrow of effective pastoral ministry. He exposes frauds, denounces sin, and exhorts to greater works for the Saviour. If you can read this book, O man of God, and not be humbled, convicted, and motivated, then you have a stony heart.

This book should be required reading in every Bible college and seminary. In fact, I think it's a shame my *alma mater* did not require their preacher students to read this yearly. Other than the Bible and possibly Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, I can't think of a book that is better suited to equip ministers for the front lines of the war for the souls of men.

Some may struggle with the antiquated language. I've been reading the Puritans for many years, and the King James Bible for even longer, so I didn't have any issues. But if you need your literature to be, like, totally, you know, modernized, then take it slow and steady - but read it! Good LORD! Read it!

I have resolved to reread this book yearly, probably towards the holidays so as to have it fresh on my mind for the start of a new year.

Graham says

My mentor/ordination supervisor "assigned" this for me to read and we discussed it at length.

In typical puritan fashion, Baxter is "wordy". His intent is good- to make clear the need for those called to ministry to be spiritually alive, healthy, and passionate for seeing God's work of rebirth happening in the people of a given parish. He makes this point abundantly clear, but repeats that same idea over and over. This book could be 1/3 the size it is.

But at the time, Baxter was revolutionary in calling pastors to a commitment to see regeneration truly happen in their congregation by exemplifying it, by preaching boldly the need for conversion using every opportunity to speak into people's lives to shake any spiritual apathy away.

While I don't subscribe to everything put forward in this book, the basic thesis is vital to anyone in ministry. The rigorous ministry schedule Baxter is calling for can be a bit problematic as many who attempt that pace, may find it unsustainable. But certainly pursuing transformation for all a pastor ministers to and having a flourishing spirituality is essential. So there are things to draw out of this book, and areas to read critically.

Matthias says

Clear and convicting. This is a must read for anyone who takes their duties as a pastor seriously. Things that modern pastors are mocked for (visiting members, warning the lost, disciplining unruly members, etc...) Mr. Baxter pulls no punches in reminding ministers of their duties. This is a book I will revisit in the future.

David says

I bought this book over a year ago on a whim without knowing anything about the book or writer. Heck it only cost a quarter. I did not touch the book for a year.

I read the book because of it seemed like many people were referencing Baxter. Before I read it I learned that Spurgeon had his wife read it to him EVERY SUNDAY and supposedly he cried everytime because he felt he had fallen so far short. Whether this story is true or not is unsure even though there are many quotes from Spurgeon praising Baxter. This alone should make the book merit our attention.

Baxter was a huge advocate of catechizing his congregation. Whether you are an advocate or opponent of catechism's should be irrelevant though to this book's merit. The introduction is by J.I. Packer (prior to Packer going off the deep end) and is a griping story of Baxter's life, faults, theology and affects of his ministry. Baxter's strength was his pastoral position and work and it is greatly shown in this book.

The book was written when all of the English minister's were having a conference that Baxter was supposed to speak at; however, Baxter was extremely sick and could not attend. So he published his talk in this book (Praise be to God.)

The main points of the book are the minister's role in: watching over himself lest he be too weakened to help others, motivation for his work (a phenomenal portion of the book), watching over his flock, motives to do so and the application to the daily work (another great part of the book). Finally he covers the motives, difficulties and applications to catechizing each individual of his congregation. Baxter does not believe that catechizing in itself saves people, but does believe that it is an exceptional tool for the pastor.

Overall, I think this book was very humbling, motivating and informative. Strongly suggested for anyone in the ministry.

Joey Schwartz says

The best work on pastoral ministry I've read -- a must read for pastors and ministry leaders.
