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Reformation
& **REVIVAL**
JOURNAL

THEOLOGY:
WHY BOTHER?

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1. To encourage *reformation* in the local Christian churches worldwide.
2. To promote the cause of *revival* and spiritual awakening through prayer and the provision of resources to aid Christian leaders.

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The views expressed in this publication should be considered as the personal opinions of the authors and are not to be taken as an official editorial perspective.

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THEOLOGY: WHY BOTHER?

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INTRODUCTION
Theology: Why Bother?



John H. Armstrong

Theology has fallen on hard times at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is viewed by many as obscure, arcane, and irrelevant. Churches search for leaders who are practical. Good communicators, good administrators, good counselors, true visionaries—this is what we need. But God save us from the theologians! They will only add to our problems. Truly odd is the church that makes “good theologian” a serious expectation for its pastor. And odder still is the church committee that asks theological questions of a pastoral candidate.

Simply put, pastors who care about theology find the going rough in most churches. People do not read theology these days, much less care about what theologians do or why they do it. The word itself makes some cringe. And assessing blame does not solve the problem. What is needed are models—models of leaders and of churches where theology really does matter. And where it is done well.

Make no mistake, theology does matter. It is a matter of life and health. From the heresies of the early church, through the upheaval of the Reformation, to the *Jesus Seminar* of the past decade, theology matters and it matters profoundly. Karl Barth once noted that theology is the *conscience of real preaching*. If this is true we have a great deal of preaching today that

lacks conscience. But how does theology function as the conscience of preaching? By forcing us to never seize upon a particular point, especially from a biblical (proof) text, which makes everything we have to say hang upon this one point without the *whole* of God's revelation bearing upon our word. The comfort zones people create for themselves, and every culture creates them, will only be challenged by preaching which is profoundly theological. Churches will ultimately be reformed only through theological preaching, deeply rooted in the Bible, preached in the power of the Spirit, and well done.

We must not forget the watchword of the sixteenth century: *ecclesia semper reformanda*—"The church always reforming—and thus always in need of further reform." God has not abandoned his church, even if it suffers from amnesia and is plagued with serious errors. She is dear to him, and he will still use her in the service of his kingdom.

G. K. Chesterton once noted that Christianity had not been tried and found wanting, but rather it had been found difficult and not tried. The same might be said of theology. Leaders need to see how theological discussion and commitment has not been seriously tried in our time. You might be amazed at how really interested some people are.

As we pray for revival and awakening, we must labor for reformation in our specific churches and secular culture. We do well to be encouraged by John Calvin's motto in Geneva: *post tenebras, lux*—"after the darkness, light."



Theme Articles