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THE PASTOR AT WORK

(A Review *)

In a spanking new dress *The Pastor at Work* is presented to theological students and parish pastors as the third major publication of Concordia Publishing House in the specific area of pastoral theology and practice. As one remembers the two standard stalwarts of the past (C. F. W. Walther's *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, published in 1872, and John H. C. Fritz's *Pastoral Theology*, published in 1932) which for many years served as the basic texts for students and pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in defining the principles and practices of pastoral care, one greets this newcomer with mixed emotions. What will this generation of "experts" have to say that will be different or better? Does pastoral theology still claim its rightful place as one of the theological disciplines in the church or has the "practical" become watered down into much "busyness" in the place (activism) or washed out into a strange, flaccid mixture of ecclesiastical psychology, sociology, human relations, highly organized programs, etc. (mere pragmatic clericalism)?

Strictly speaking, the title of the book is the clue to its nature. The Rev. William H. Eifert, former chairman of Synod's General Literature Board and the person primarily responsible for the development of *The Pastor at Work*, indicates in the Preface that the book is not to be considered as a text in pastoral theology but "is to acquaint the reader with the wide scope of the pastor's duties and opportunities in twentieth-century America as well as with some of the ways and means of meeting them" (v). Pastor Eifert is careful to explain that "since pas-

toral theology does not qualify as an exact science, much of the subject matter being in the field of the adiaphora, *The Pastor at Work* cannot give rules and regulations which would direct a pastor's course of action in every parish problem. Nor are all readers expected to agree with every position taken in this volume even in such important matters as, for instance, parish education, liturgy, giving, tithing, counseling, and others. A prudent pastor will, however, learn from the experiences and opinions of others, and these, together with correct basic principles of pastoral theology (see chapter one), should aid him in determining what is best for his parish or for some individual looking to him for direction in a given case" (v, vi). One may assume from the foregoing that the book is not to be a "Bible" on pastoral practice. This is a valid assumption. The book is primarily a "reader" written by men chosen for their special capabilities or experiences in a particular area of pastoral work. The book in its various emphases, either intentionally or by default, lacks the specific theological integration which a single author might have supplied. This means that the student and parish pastor must absorb the theological substance of the introductory chapter and apply that to the remainder of the book. Had each chapter been prefaced by an introductory paragraph reiterating or weaving in the theology of the introductory chapter, the book would have been strengthened.

The list of the authors of the 23 chapters is imposing. One seldom finds such an array of talent organized to produce a book in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, from Richard R. Caemmerer, who wrote the introductory chapter, "The Pastor at Work," to Adalbert R. Kretzmann, who concludes the book with a chapter entitled "The Pastor and the Arts."

* *THE PASTOR AT WORK*. By various authors. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960. 414 pages, with index. Cloth. \$6.50.

Several notable chapters contain certain emphases which are either new or especially pertinent in Missouri Synod pastoral care thinking and practice. Some of this material has not been heretofore articulated in any published form. These chapters or sections merit brief description and/or evaluation.

"The Pastor at Work" (Chapter I) by Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., sets forth clearly and in detail the basic Scriptural sanctions for the function of the pastor in the body of Christ. In fresh and invigorating style he develops the Scriptural principle that the pastor is set apart for special tasks by which he carries out God's plan of redemption for people through the Gospel and that he remains a part of the group and body of Christians in the place as servant and witness. In concise fashion he further describes how the pastor works for and with Christians in group worship, group activities, in catechetical instruction, in pastoral care, in relationships with the community and denomination, and in training people to minister to one another. He says (p. 8): "In all of these activities God's Word strikes the people, when the pastor is adequate steward of it, in two ways: helping them to realize their deficiencies under God and to demand help (the Law), and helping them to confront God's grace in Christ and seize upon it for life (the Gospel)." Of parish administration, Dr. Caemmerer, true to form, states the pure principle to be: The pastor "is not to interpret Acts 6 to suggest that he should have more leisure time for study and that therefore the people should do some work. But the purpose of all phases of parish administration is to train people, and give people the opportunity, for bringing Law and Gospel to one another" (p. 11). This chapter furnishes the keystone for the proper understanding and use of everything else in the book.

The chapter by the late Dr. Arnold H. Grumm, "The Pastor and Synod" (Chapter

IV), covers the Scriptural and confessional principles of authority in the church, of confessional unity and fellowship outreach, and defines the privileges and responsibilities of synodical membership on the basis of the *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. A further treatment of the privileges and duties of the Christian congregation in matters of church discipline, in dealing with other religious bodies and members of anti-Christian secret societies, follows in Chapter VI by Prof. Henry J. Eggold, Jr., Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill.

"The Doctrine of the Call" (Chapter VII) by Dr. Albert H. Schwermann of Concordia College, Edmonton, Alta., Canada, covers 39 pages in presenting the most concise and practical treatment of this matter one will find in Lutheran writings. Dr. Schwermann writes from the evident conviction that the church needs to study and be guided by the doctrinal and practical principles which he delineates. This reviewer agrees. This chapter should do a great deal, we hope, to "firm up" the weak knees of those who are inclined to trust and employ "modern" methods of personnel selection, behaving as though the Holy Spirit and the appointed channels of the church were sometimes unreliable and a bit passé.

"The Pastor Administering Holy Baptism" (Chapter X) by Dr. J. T. Mueller, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., and "The Pastor and Holy Communion" (Chapter XI) by Prof. Fred Kramer, Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill., are most helpful study resources for the private study of pastors and for study in pastoral conferences. Serious study of Chapter XI should do much toward clearing up some of the hazy and sometimes doubtful discussion and practice regarding Communion announcements and preparation for Holy Communion.

In Chapter XII, one possibly finds the most helpful piece of writing in the book as it speaks of the knotty problem of divorce

and remarriage. Dr. Erdmann W. Frenk, parish pastor in Joliet, Ill., treats "Marriage and Related Matters" with heavy Scriptural emphasis and tackles the problem of divorce and remarriage with a clear and cogent statement of principle and procedure. The bibliography is carefully selected and up to date (containing one 1960 item) and will be of great value to the pastor in choosing materials in this field for personal study and in guiding the reading of his parishioners. This chapter is worthy of personal study and conference discussion.

Chapter XV covers 42 pages of the best of what Arthur C. Repp, academic dean of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., has developed from his years in the educational field. Under the title "The Pastor and Parish Education," Dr. Repp covers the principles of Lutheran education, the objectives of parish education, the Christian home, and leads over into a splendid section on confirmation instruction (much of which will be new and of interest to the reader). He further treats the Lutheran parochial school, the Sunday school, and part-time agencies. This is a chapter which will provide the pastor with solid resource material for meetings with teachers and board members, for conference programs, sermons, and addresses.

Students and pastors will, of course, be interested in the other chapters of this book which space does not allow this review to describe. A listing of the titles and the authors will indicate the scope and character of what the purchaser may expect.

"The Pastor as a Person," Otto A. Geiseman, pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, River Forest, Ill.

"The Pastor's Family," Alfred O. Rast, Secretary of Missions, Texas District, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

"The Pastor and the Public," O. C. J. Hoffmann, Director of Public Relations, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

"The Pastor in the Pulpit," Richard R.

Caemmerer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

"The Pastor at the Altar," Roger L. Sommer, pastor, St. John the Divine Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.

"Pastoral Care of the Sick," Edward J. Mahnke, chaplain, Lutheran Hospital, Saint Louis, Mo.

"The Christian Burial Service," J. Franklin Yount, pastor emeritus, Akron, Ohio.

"Effective Biblical Evangelism," Arthur H. Haake, pastor (deceased), West Portal Lutheran Church, San Francisco, Calif.

"The Pastor and the Burdened Soul," Edwin A. Nерger, pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

"Stewardship in General," Carl Walter Berner, pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, Calif.

"The Stewardship of Money," Erwin Kurth, pastor, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Detroit, Mich., and Rev. Herman Zehnder, pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Bay City, Mich.

"Reaching Out to Human Need," Charles A. Behnke, pastor, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Rochester, N. Y.

"Parish Administration," Kurt Biel, pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Pagedale, Mo.

Reviewers usually smile first and frown later. Somewhere down at the end of a review they often say, "This book is very good, but it could have been better if. . . ." One may note that the bibliographies at the end of the majority of chapters for the most part contain the "best of the most" whether old or new. Four chapters have no bibliography. The index is very complete and provides a notable, useful feature: an index to Scripture passages. The chapter on "Stewardship in General" is a gem, but one misses a chapter on "The Pastor and Youth." The chapter "The Pastor in the Pulpit" touches the heart of the matter, while the chapter "The Pastor at the Altar" concerns itself with little more than movement in the chancel and nave. In many places the rubrics are inspiring, in

others they are wooden and pedestrian. There is a great deal of "ought to be" and "ought to do" and oftentimes not enough, if any, theological reason for the to be and to do. Sometimes there is very little thought given to the source of power to do what one ought to do or inspiration for doing it. Some chapters state positively why, or to what end, the pastor does what he does, others do not. The various activities of the pastor are not always related to the Lutheran doctrine of applying the means of grace to the end that people in faith may have their life under the forgiving Word of God. What we are trying to say is that a book which speaks to the pastor on the firing line lacks that certain degree of cohesiveness which Lutherans should always find in the doctrine of the church and the means of grace. The most splendid accents of the introductory chapter do not always, one may say seldom, break through as the central orientation of the sweat and toil of the pastor's activity.

We hope sincerely that no student or pastor will use *The Pastor at Work* as a "how to do it" book. When pastoral theology degenerates into a seeking for those rules which tell the pastor what he should do in each particular situation, it soon loses its character as a theological discipline. No set of rules can govern every possible situation, and for this reason pastoral theology must concentrate on more general theological principles which in a valid way arch over many situations. Homiletics, for example, does not attempt to guide the pastor to sources where he may find sermons for specific occasions; rather it lays down general principles of writing sermons so that the pastor may himself write sermons for particular situations. One often hears the remark that the pastor need not be interested in the "theoretical" concerns of theology, that what he needs more particularly is the more "practical" know-how to meet the needs and problems of the day. Such thinking leads one to the

doubtful place of believing that practical problems can be met as they arise without recourse to theological principles. Such thinking leads to sterility, too, to the place where the pastor no longer fulfils his distinctive function and becomes something of a "secular priest" in the same category with the psychologist and the social worker. Concern for theological principle does not mean, however, that the pastor's attempts to shepherd and to heal are limited to some walled-off compartment labeled "religious." The pastor will assimilate whatever method is true and useful in bringing what is absolutely needed to the hearts and minds of men, taking into account different situations.

The student and practitioner of pastoral theology must of necessity, if he is to be true to his calling, synthesize and unify into a related whole the results of the other theological disciplines. That is to say that the systematic, historical, and exegetical insights must be translated into theological principles applicable to the life of the church. One must also say that underlying every statement or principle of pastoral theology there needs to be the conviction that the pastor has been divinely called to serve in a special way those who have been called to be in Christ and who are gathered about the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Such conviction regarding his office has radical implications over against the specific task of the pastor as a minister in and to the Body of Christ. It is the touchstone to all that he does in the life of the church.

This reviewer believes that *The Pastor at Work* will serve students and pastors well, building as it does on the writings of the past while bringing new syntheses to practical application. He also believes that a pastoral theology which will more thoroughly integrate Lutheran doctrine and the work of the pastoral ministry is yet to be written.

St. Louis, Mo.

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