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INTRODUCTION

PASTORAL: used for the keeping or grazing of sheep or cattle:¹

“What does your wife do?”

“She’s a rector.”

“Oh, my wife loves cooking, too. She loves anything to do with the kitchen.”

The salesman in the car showroom evidently did not know what a “rector” was. And perhaps I should not have assumed that he would. Presumably Earl, the salesman, did not know Latin, and so did not know that we get “rector” from *regere*. Of course, even if he had, the clue was not there that this word—which means “ruler”—describes the profession of a certain kind of clergy person. Indeed, as Gordon Lathrop reminds us, “rector” is hardly a good word to describe the work of a Christian minister.² It is one of what he calls “broken titles,” along with “reverend,” “father,” “priest,” “presbyter,” and “minister,” among others. Each broken title, Lathrop suggests, is problematic for its own reasons.

1. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pastoral>.

2. Gordon W. Lathrop, *The Pastor: A Spirituality* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 9. Lathrop’s book, and especially its introduction portion of “the pastor’s lifelong catechumenate,” is brilliant.

How could I have started to explain the work of a rector to Earl? He himself had told me that he was of Filipino heritage, and so perhaps he had some Christian background, but he obviously did not have enough to know the insider-speak of Episcopal church-talk. And would “pastor”—Lathrop’s preferred word amongst the broken titles—have made anything clearer, given that it too comes from Latin, referring to one who looks after herds?

What, if anything, does this vignette suggest? Maybe only that we cannot assume that the role of the clergy is obvious to those outside a certain experience and worldview, perhaps an orbit that is getting smaller. Who, in fact, could doubt that?

I joined the train when it was quiet, with only a handful of people dispersed around the carriage. Station by station, passengers joined and the train filled up with people. The seats were arranged in different kinds of ways, with those where I sat in configurations for four persons. I wondered for a while why people sat everywhere else but with me in the four seats, even standing in the aisle. The journey itself was one I made often, and this was not behavior that I was used to seeing. And then I became conscious that I was wearing a clerical collar. Had people avoided me because of it? Was this symbol, intended to invite ministry, warding people off? What did they think I represented? What associations did the collar invite? At the time, wondering, I remembered a speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury to the UK Evangelical Alliance: people under thirty-five now not only found the church’s rejection of homosexual persons incomprehensible, they found it wicked.³ Was I identified with that oppression? And then I considered that Boston had been a storm center for stories of abuse by clerics, and had seen a subsequent hemorrhaging of the local Roman Catholic worshiping population. Was I being seen in that light? Was this very literal space around symbols

3. For versions of news coverage, see www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/28/gay-marriage-opposition-wicked-archbishop and www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10271438/Archbishop-urges-Christians-to-repent-over-wicked-attitude-to-homosexuality.html. Reporting of the address varied across the national press and a video of the speech can be found at the Evangelical Alliance website: www.eauk.org/church/stories/address-by-the-archbishop-of-canterbury.cfm (all websites accessed April 27, 2015).

of ministry a gesture of mistrust, disgust, at the very least caution? It is difficult to deny that the churches' failures to protect the vulnerable young have greatly damaged their reputation, and not least their audacity to pronounce on loving gay people's sexual practices. What is the day-to-day impact of this on those who bear Christian symbols in public space? This train ride was, for me, a rude awakening. It has continued to resonate with more recent experiences: for example, reading what a Hollywood actor has said about her "elation" that a church in my neighborhood was burned to the ground by an arsonist. She had attended the church as a child, witnessed the abuse of peers and friends, been caught up in the trauma caused to the community, moved away but managed to retain a discipline of worship elsewhere, and thinks that the destruction of the building is a "relief."⁴

The role of public ministers in public space is ever more ambiguous, as I think these brief vignettes suggest. The role of the churches in public debate—including "moral issues"—is as contentious as ever. Yet the response to these realities cannot be retreat by the churches into ecclesial enclaves of one kind or another, withdrawal from the wider public world. Anglican tradition at least has very little in its history to support any such move. So how should we think of the role of the public minister in public space? This is an important question in our changing context. And so *Pastoral Theology for Public Ministry* invites reflection on the role of ministers of the church, and it does so in two different but related ways.

Narration of Steps

Part One: Pastoral Theology

Part one offers an introduction to some of the main contours of the academic discipline of pastoral theology. How pastoral care and ministry are understood is related to what theological vision and resources

4. For versions of news coverage, see www.theage.com.au/victoria/fire-at-st-james-church-in-brighton-a-relief-says-actor-rachel-griffiths-20150330-1mawmo.html and www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-3/haunted-house-on-hill-rachel-griffiths-describes-church-abuse/6357960.

are available to enable ministry. So the first three chapters are a way of telling the story of how pastoral theology is the way it is, what some of its main trajectories are, and where tensions exist within the discipline. Part one articulates key ways in which, in recent decades, pastoral theology has experienced a self-conscious transformation “from hints and tips to hermeneutics.”⁵ Hence it places different approaches to, different traditions of, pastoral theology side by side and sets them in conversation with one another. Naming these foci “traditions” emerges out of my attention to aspects of their history, their association with particular persons in particular settings, and their developments over time. We will call these traditions the “therapeutic,” “classical,” and “liberationist,” and these are the focus of chapters 1–3, in turn. In narrating the concerns of these traditions, I introduce various theologians whose work exerts influence on the discipline: These thinkers range from figures such as Gregory the Great in the sixth century, George Herbert in the fifteenth century, and Anton Boisen in the twentieth century. We will employ perspectives from many important present-day pastoral theologians from across an ecumenical spectrum: Elaine Graham, Emmanuel Lartey, Gordon Lathrop, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Thomas Oden, and Stephen Pattison among them. These writers are women and men, of different ethnicities, ordained and lay, from North America and elsewhere. As well as exploring the hermeneutics associated with therapeutic, classical, and liberationist traditions of pastoral theology, we will relate the traditions to particular images which I mean to be seen *together* in order to suggest the broad orbit of ministry. Most importantly, while the “altar” might stand at the center of church, references to hospital and roadwork are meant to assert that pastoral care moves beyond congregational domains of ministry. So as the explorations of part one develop, they press toward a view of pastoral care and pastoral theology as public work, with eyes open to various demanding contexts in which public

5. Stephen Pattison and Gordon Lynch, “Pastoral and Practical Theology,” in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford with Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 408.

ministry is practiced. None of this, of course, could be simply put to use to enter into a conversation with individuals such as Earl who did not know what a rector is, but it does, I hope, enable some confidence about what resources are available to ministers to frame and reframe their understanding of what they are doing.

Part Two: Public Ministry

Part two of the book is especially concerned to underline the representative and symbolic dimensions of pastoral care. These are important to help orient the minister in public space. As the vignette of my train journey suggests, questions of what ministers represent are fraught with associations of prejudice and abuse in the church. So it is imperative to think through what symbols of ministry might best intend, what representation might involve at its best as well as at its worst. Notwithstanding that ministry moves beyond the congregational domain, the representative dimensions of ministry are concentrated and best learned at the center of congregational life—at the altar table, in the place of word and sacrament. The discussion, therefore, is not simply about documents and what might be made of them, however important those documents may be. It is *not* intended simply as an “academic” discussion of pastoral theology, but intentional about the ways in which liturgy and spirituality resource pastoral care. If, as suggested in part one, ministry has very wide *scope*, part two invites reflection on ways that Christian ministry finds its *focus*, but this is emphatically not to narrow “ministry” to “ordained ministry.” On the contrary, the baptismal ecclesiology that has been fostered by contemporary ecumenical renewal rightly asserts that ministry belongs to all God’s people. With that conviction, “pastoral care” may be part of baptismal ministry. But pastoral care, whoever exercises it, is always in some way related to word and table and, inevitably, this cluster of convictions does invite exploration of what might be so distinctive and demanding about ordained ministry. In part two, then, chapters 4 and 5 reflect on the caregiver as person and as symbol, and hence that pastoral ministry always involves dynamics of being not only “always oneself” but also “never only oneself.” Just as part one draws on an ecumenical

spectrum of theologians, so part two explores an ecumenical array of liturgical resources. That being said, chapter 4 offers a particular focus on the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer 1979, exploring its Baptismal Covenant and some rubrics around the celebration of the Eucharist, making for a more intensive example that reflects my understanding of representative ministry being learned in liturgy.

Criss-Crossing, Sloping

While, for some, this terrain may be new, my thinking is that some of the perspectives introduced in this book are riches from the past that are at risk of being forgotten but which are helpful for orienting ministers at the present time. This is particularly so with respect to the potential for ministry beyond the congregational domain and the symbolic freight of pastoral care. So I want to lay foundations for thinking about pastoral practice and for further exploration in practical theology, but to do so by looking at pastoral theology and public ministry emphatically *together*. Although there are particular emphases in each part and each chapter of what follows, there is also an intentional—perhaps inevitable—amount of criss-crossing and sloping from one focus to another.

To a certain extent, this can be seen as an alliance with a style of pastoral theology that I value and that resists too much systematization. One of the manifestations of this is that I have tried to press weight toward opening up discussion, rather than always stating my own conclusions. Another is in the stories I tell. This emphasis is also because I personally constantly navigate different cultures with their different mores, and I appreciate the breadth of the Anglican tradition, its ecumenical alliances, and different church styles. So I hope that I have found a “passionate balance”⁶ between asking questions, making connections, telling stories, and stating personal convictions.

It is also the case that part one is more abstract than part two, and even as it is concerned with representative ministry, part two is at points

6. For this image, see Alan Bartlett, *A Passionate Balance: The Anglican Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

quite personal, as seems to me to be apt to reflection on being “always oneself, never only oneself.”

I confess that I have written *Pastoral Theology for Public Ministry* in the hope that it will be encouraging for students in seminaries, enabling reflection on the vocation they are entering and engendering appreciation of the rich resources at their disposal. I will, of course, be glad if ministers, lay and ordained, in different contexts, also find it helpful. Still, I am most grateful to students who at United Theological College in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, and Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, have recently studied together with me in classes on pastoral theology, sacramental care, ordination studies, and various kinds of directed reading, dissertations, and other study projects that touch on the themes of this book. Many—but by no means all—of those present in classrooms were, of course, candidates for ordained ministries, with whom I have also shared in liturgy and, in some cases, deep spiritual conversation. I hope that this book conveys my great respect and affection for those students with whom I have been enormously privileged to learn and worship. I hope that this book emboldens them, and nurtures confidence about the possibility of intentional, self-conscious, representative ministry with a wide orbit.