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Reading Programs in Theology: An Overview of Pastoral Care

Harry G. Coiner

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

David S. Schuller

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Reading Programs in Theology

In the midst of the intensifying "explosion of knowledge," the speed with which cultural changes are taking place, and an increased number of specialists, clergymen now are keenly aware of the need for continued professional growth. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is attempting to meet part of this need. The ideal answer, of course, lies in intensive retraining in terms of graduate programs, summer school study, and quarter-long sabbaticals from the parish for concentrated study. Regional institutes and workshops offer another level of educational experience.

We introduce at this time a program less intensive in nature than the preceding and yet of great potential value. Our reading programs in theology are designed as brief introductions to limited fields of study. The introduction will orient to the main questions in the field and to the key authorities, and they will suggest a sequence in which the material might be read. We currently envision a program of some 30 individual reading courses, to include all four subfields of theological study. Some courses will serve as bridges to ancillary disciplines. The first courses will deal with the subjects of pastoral theology, authority and tradition in the early church, New Testament theology, pastoral counseling, developments in the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

From conversations with many men in the

field, we know that this approach will be met with enthusiasm. Many have been realistic enough to acknowledge, however, that the danger will be that one begins with enthusiasm but lacks the discipline to pursue sustained study over a longer period. Thus where feasible we recommend this material for use in small groups. Perhaps two or three men can agree on a designated period of joint study for a half-year. Smaller pastoral conferences might use some of the guides in developing their programs. Supervising pastors and their vicars might utilize these courses.

We have asked the authors to arrange their bibliographies so that a key selection of books — preferably paperbacks — will be included in Group I. As a service to you, the Book Store at Concordia Seminary hopes to make these books available at a professional discount. Details regarding this service will be mailed.

We hope to provide five or six guides per year. They will appear in this journal every two or three months. Reprints will be available at a nominal cost.

Nomination of additional courses and suggestions as to how the material might be made more usable will be appreciated.

DAVID S. SCHULLER
Assistant Academic Dean

AN OVERVIEW OF PASTORAL CARE

HARRY G. COINER

Pastoral care is a term denoting what a Christian pastor does when he takes care of people. What pastoral care offers people and how it is given ranges all the way from how the pastor takes care of himself to how he serves the needs of the ill, the bereaved, the shut-in, the narcotic, the alcoholic, etc. The range is wide. Wynn's older classic (*Pastoral Ministry to Families*), Hulme's later work on the same subject (*Pastoral Care of Families*), and Jackson's general study (*The Pastor and His People*) are cases in point of both the particular and the overall.

The most ambitious series covering almost every facet of pastoral care is the effort of Prentice-Hall. The series is somewhat spotty in quality. Our personal judgment about specific volumes will be noted below.

A warm, practical, and in some ways profound little book that restores wholeness and direction to the pastor's work in today's world is Robert Rodenmayer's *We Have This Ministry*. His lucid discussion of the pastor, the administrator, the preacher, the teacher, and the priest will kindle the imagination and inspire the purpose of the young pastor and enrich the thought of older and more experienced men.

A book from England (*Pastoral Care in a Changing World* by Erastus Evans) deals with the Biblical assumptions from which the pastor steps into the modern dialog, the nature of his concern for people, and his main purpose in such personal encounters. It also examines the relationship of pastoral care to other disciplines which seek to meet human need in our time: specifically, depth psychology and scientific healing.

Edward Thurneysen's larger effort (*A Theology of Pastoral Care*) probes deeply into the nature and practice of pastoral care. Unfortunately this book is somewhat tedious. Though clearly written, it covers the same ground too often. The emphasis on the Word of God as the basis and means of pastoral care is fresh and stimulating. Lu-

therans will notice a Calvinistic flavor in many places and will be somewhat unhappy with some statements about the use of Law and Gospel.

William Hulme has written a new book dealing with pastoral care for the pastor; in it he speaks as a pastor to pastors. The book reveals that Hulme has been sensitive to many problems that he has faced as a pastor and has counseled with many pastors. He looks with a kind and brotherly, though sometimes beady, eye at *Your Pastor's Problems* and hits most of them with helpful and reasonable comment.

The searching question now being raised more persistently by discerning writers in the pastoral care field is: What is the proper place of pastoral care within the orbit of Christian theology and the church? They are asking what pastoral care has to do with the working out of the Word of God at a person-to-person level within the structures of the faith and the relationships within the faith. The conviction that pastoral care is theological as well as personal, a conviction that had almost disappeared, is growing. The *meteria theologica* not only has a bearing on everything the pastor says or does—it makes the pastor what he is.

What one wants to look for in his reading, I think, is what it means for a responsible and alert Christian pastor to bring the Word of God to bear on the many and varied points of human need. Carroll Wise (*The Meaning of Pastoral Care*) observes that "pastoral care is more a function than an activity, more a living relationship than a theory or interpretation, more a matter of being than of doing."

May we enlarge on this? To view pastoral care as an activity apart from other pastoral duties would be to see it inorganically and thus ultimately to render it useless. To see pastoral care merely as a particular activity of the pastor would seem to make trivial the task and witness of the church in the world. To trust in personal influence and the power of persuasion is to slip into failure. Although

we would not discount the advantage of an attractive personality which persuades someone to come to church for the right reasons, yet beyond any personal equation is the much greater sense of the reality of God and His judgment and grace in the total complexity of human life. What the pastor does when he takes care of people is not the mere application of personality or of human wisdom to human need; he works within the stream of what God is doing in his life and in the lives of the people he serves. Pastoral care should move into every situation with sensitiveness to the closeness or distance of the Law and Gospel to the personal problems. The pastor is the bearer and interpreter of the Word of God and an agent of God's healing power. This latter principle is illustrated in the two articles by Harry G. Coiner which are listed below.

Pastoral care, unique and necessary as it is, justifies itself by its roots in Biblical theology, that is, in the exegetical, systematic, and historical revelation of what is coming through from God to people and through people to people. Wherever a pastor meets a person, the witness of the church and the great realities of the Word, the sacraments, and the Christian fellowship are behind him. He ought to have his specifications right, however, and not give the wrong reading to the situation. The certainty of his theology will make his witness steady and condition fundamentally all his speech and helpfulness. How he handles his words of judgment and mercy for Christ will give vitality and power to his handling of a situation.

Taking a Glimpse at Some Books

- 1) Wynn, John Charles. *Pastoral Ministry to Families*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957. A classic. Pastors invariably find this helpful. If you haven't read it, get it and enjoy it. If you have it, read it again.
- 2) Hulme, William E. *Pastoral Care of Families*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962. This will help you sharpen your insights into family needs and whet your understanding of the ways and means by which you can encourage family stability. Hulme takes the reader from a theological approach to marriage through premarital guidance and marital crisis counseling to pastoral care of youth (four chapters) and concludes with a discussion of mid-life and old age. The book has an excellent bibliography.
- 3) Jackson, Edgar N. *The Pastor and His People*. Manhasset, New York: Channel Press, Inc., 1963. The author of *Understanding Grief* understands the great challenges and frightening responsibilities imposed on the pastor each day. Jackson knows well the language of theology and the behavioral sciences, and his synthesis of the resources of these two disciplines as they bear on pastoral work will be especially helpful to the pastor in the care and sustaining of his congregation. There isn't much that this book doesn't touch on as it moves across the gamut of pastoral care.
- 4) Rodenmayer, Robert N. *We Have This Ministry*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958. This book is dated but it is a classic. We doubt that even the most blasé and satiated reader can fail to enjoy this one and be warmed by it to his task. One for underlining because some things are said in a way one wants to remember.
- 5) Evans, Erastus. *Pastoral Care in a Changing World*. London: The Epworth Press, 1961. A carefully written book with a different flavor and with surprising insights. This book speaks to the relevance of pastoral care in the modern world and owes a great deal, as the author admits, to Edward Thurneysen.
- 6) Thurneysen, Edward. *A Theology of Pastoral Care*. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962. As has been mentioned, this book is very helpful, does discuss theology, does emphasize the Word of God, is easy reading, but is repetitious. Nevertheless, I found myself reading

certain chapters as many as three times. It is a significant work in the field.

- 7) Hulme, William E. *Your Pastor's Problems*. Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966. Possibly the most helpful feature of this book is that it helps the pastor to realize that he does not have all the problems that are common to other pastors—one pastor could not possibly have all of these problems as the title implies. Pastors need to understand themselves and one another. Hulme has captured the spirit of helpfulness toward that end.
- 8) McNeill, John T. *A History of the Cure of Souls*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965. This is a new edition of a very readable but scholarly work, first published in 1951. One of America's great church historians covers an aspect of church history of primary interest to every pastor. He covers the ground vertically from the Biblical times to the present and horizontally from Lutheranism via the Reformed and related traditions to Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy.
- 9) Morris, J. Kenneth. *Marriage Counseling: A Manual for Ministers*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965. The author of *Premarital Counseling: A Manual for Ministers*, published in 1960, has provided pastors with a tool which they will be glad to have in their kit.
- 10) Tournier Paul. *Guilt and Grace*. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. If someone should ask what this book is about, the four parts inform him almost perfectly. The extent of guilt, the spirit of judgment, the reversal, and the response comprise the step by step discussion of guilt and grace. The emphasis on judgment and confession, standing as they do in relation to "the reversal," is especially pertinent. The flashes of clinical insight spread throughout the book will please the pastor who wants to understand why people react and behave as they do.
- 11) Prentice-Hall, *Successful Pastoral Counseling Series*. Of this series we would recommend:
Scherzer, Carl J. *Ministering to the Physically Sick and Ministering to the Dying*.
Terkelsen, Helen E. *Counseling the Unwed Mother*.
Shipp, Thomas J. *Helping the Alcoholic and His Family*.
- 12) Scharlemann, Martin H. *Healing and Redemption*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965. The purpose and message of a splendid study can be indicated in this quote: "A Christian congregation serves as a community within which the saving acts of God occur, and where healing is found in the very fact of belonging to a group. . . . For when we are baptized into Christ we are joined with Him to the whole sinful, sick world; but at the same time, we are made part of the community of the redeemed, where love and forgiveness prevail to provide a climate of healing." The total view of man in relation to the total view of redemption predominates in this study.
- 13) Fisher, Wallace E. *From Tradition to Mission*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1965. This is the real-life story of how a congregation recovered the secrets of true vitality. The Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, went on a quest for authentic ministry. How the pastor and people worked it out brings a fascinating and enlightening experience to the reader.

ARTICLES

- Coiner, Harry G., "Divorce and Remarriage," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXIV (Sept. 1963), 541—554.
- . "Living Toward One Another with the Word of God," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXVI (Oct. 1965), 613—647.
- Sohn, Otto E., "The Church and Mixed Marriage," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXIV (Sept. 1963), 517 to 540.