

Pastor At Work

a critical review

THE PASTOR AT WORK. By various authors. Concordia, St. Louis, 1960. 414 pages. Cloth. \$6.50.

Since this volume deals with the practical ministry, it seems to call for an evaluation by a pastor in the field. Our guest reviewer is a seasoned clergyman who writes penetratingly from his rich background of parish experience: H. M. Schwehn, pastor of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In his book *THE MINISTER: HIS LIFE AND WORK**, the late Dean William Adams Brown included a discussion on modern theological education. It was his contention that "the chief weakness of the professional training of the clergy is in the realm of pastoral theology." Too often, pastoral theology has been content to remain in the idealistic clouds of theory, refusing to descend to the realistic and recalcitrant soil of practice. All too many seminary graduates have made the disillusioning discovery that, while they had been fitted out with all of the accouterments of theoretical battle with The Enemy, The Enemy fights along lines of his own choosing, and they are not always commensurate with theory!

Recent years have seen numerous volumes added to the library of Pastoral Theology. *THE PASTOR AT WORK* by Concordia Publishing House is one of the most recent additions. Regrettably, it adds little if anything to what is already in the library. Those who are willing to invest \$6.50 will be disappointed to discover that the most impressive thing about this collection of theological articles is the list of contributing authors. The book's jacket describes it as "an invaluable guidebook for those who preach the Word of God and have congregations in their care". This is a rather loose use of the adjective. "With so many different authors . . . a certain uniformity . . . had to be forfeited," says William H. Eifert in the book's preface. This observation cannot be gainsaid.

The General Literature Board of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to be commended for having encouraged the production of *THE PASTOR AT WORK*. It could have meant a very real contribution to the literature of the church. But ambition sometimes outstrips achievement. One is left with the impression that the volume was designed to appeal to a limited market rather than to satisfy a need. It will do neither. Clergymen of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who own *PASTORAL THEOLOGY* by John H. C. Fritz or its predecessor *AMERIKANISCH-LUTHERISCHE PASTORALTHEOLOGIE* by

* *THE MINISTER: HIS LIFE AND WORK*, p. 194 (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1937).

C. F. W. Walther will add nothing to their library by the purchase of this new publication, with the possible exception of a few articles on Public Relations, Evangelism, Administration, and The Arts.

The Heart and Core of It All

The initial chapter, "The Pastor At Work," from which the book gets its title is by Richard Caemmerer. He admits that it "seeks to present an initial summary, point out what is to be the heart and core of it all, and to indicate at what point the pastor's work carries out the plan of God and, therefore, stands under God's own promise . . ." (p. 1) Commenting on and various Biblical terms used to describe the pastorate, Caemmerer concludes that pastors have two basic tasks: feeding and leading people. The chapter does furnish a succinct summary of the requirements and goals of "the vocation of a contemporary, busy parson". (p. 12)

Chapter II titled "The Pastor As A Person" by O. A. Geiseman submits that a pastor is a person of dedicated soul, reverent and cultivated mind, and consecrated body. One may ask if the chapter was at all necessary in view of Chapter I.

Chapter III on "The Pastor's Family" by A. O. Rast covers slightly more than seven of the volume's four hundred fourteen pages. This article is replete with such generalities as "Of course, the pastor's family is human." (p. 37)

Chapter IV, "The Pastor and Synod," by the late Arnold Grumm, one-time vice-president of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is simply a commentary on the SYNODICAL HANDBOOK of THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD. Much better had the entire chapter been devoted to one of its small paragraphs which treats of a pastor's relationship to his fellow pastors.

Oswald Hoffmann who is, perhaps, best qualified among the clergy of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to write on the subject, does an excellent job of summarizing the matter of Public Relations in Chapter V titled "The Pastor and The Public." The Bibliography is very good and could be helpful to anyone who wishes to understand better the whole area of public relations. Dr. Hoffman's comment that the Christian congregation "ought not neglect any avenue of communication within its means in order to identify itself with the Gospel of Jesus Christ" summarizes the summary. (p. 60)

Henry J. Eggold, Jr., writes of "The Christian Congregation" in Chapter VI. Definition of the term, a brief Biblical history of the congregation, a review of membership requirements in the congregation, and two brief paragraphs on the privileges of the congregation make up the first part of the chapter. The second half of the chapter treats of congregational duties. The greater part of this section has to do with church discipline and how to deal with the lodge member. Of the twenty-one books and tracts listed in

the bibliography, fourteen have to do with some phase of the lodge practice of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Doctrine of The Call

Chapter VII, "The Doctrine of The Call," by Albert H. Schwermann, holds the distinction of being the longest chapter in the entire volume, covering forty pages. A note which prefaces the chapter acknowledges indebtedness to John H. C. Fritz's PASTORAL THEOLOGY, stating that this forms the basis for the presentation. It is a disappointing chapter, since it is repetitious of what has already been said. The disappointment arises from the knowledge that one of the subjects which is most often discussed and debated at pastoral conferences is the doctrine of the call and present practices. This article does nothing to clear the air. The section of the chapter which is headed "Ministers in Missions and Auxiliary Offices" hardly answers the multiplicity of questions that have arisen with respect to these offices and the doctrine of the call.

Chapter VIII on "The Pastor In The Pulpit" must have been a chore for the author, Richard Caemmerer. He is obliged to compress into ten pages what consumes semesters of his seminary teaching. The result is simply a stating of some basic principles and a skimming of the surface. Its one service is to recognize that preaching is an important part of being a pastor, but this was already stated in Chapter I.

Nuptial Communion

Chapters IX through XI give good, practical, and specific directives to the pastor as he carries out his ministerial functions before the altar and in the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These chapters are authored by Roger Sommer, John Theodore Mueller, and Fred Kramer, respectively. It is interesting to note that in his article on "The Pastor and Holy Communion" (Chap. XI, p. 174) Kramer does not agree with the author of Chapter XII in regard to nuptial communion. "The use of the sacrament in the wedding service may be looked upon as a private communion in public . . . Unless conditions are ideal, a better solution would be to have the couple receive the sacrament together at a regular communion service just before or soon after the wedding," says Kramer. His fellow contributor to THE PASTOR AT WORK, Erdmann Frenk, in his chapter on "Marriage and Related Matters" writes: "Nuptial communions, if properly celebrated and integrated in the service, serve a wholesome purpose." (Chap. XII, p. 187) This latter chapter is very good and provides an excellent bibliography for the pastor who is becoming increasingly confused by the modern spectacle of divorce among his own parishioners as well as among the infidels.

E. J. Mahnke's article (Chapter XIII) on "Pastoral Care of The Sick" is very clinical in its approach and offers basic directives to the pastor for this important phase of pastoral activity. This may also be said of the following chapter (XIV) on "The Christian Burial Service" by J. Franklin Yount.

Better to have titled Arthur C. Repp's Chapter XV "Parish Education" than "The Pastor and Parish Education." It adequately covers the teaching

opportunities of the church but in only a very general way demonstrates where the pastor fits into the whole scheme of things. There are, of course, sentences here and there which indicate that the pastor ought to be involved. One might ask why a separate chapter was not devoted to the matter of confirmation instruction on the adolescent and adult levels, since these are such important areas of responsibility for the pastor.

"Effective Biblical Evangelism" by the late A. H. Haake is the title of Chapter XVI. The article is true to its title. Here again the reader will find general statements as to the pastor's responsibility but very little about how to go about discharging that responsibility.

The Burdened Soul

Chapter XVII headed "The Pastor and The Burdened Soul" is written by Edwin Nerger. By his own admission, the author states that the chapter is nothing more than a "summary of pastoral counseling on the basis of personal experience and in the light of some of the better materials that have been written on the subject." (p. 277) A glance at the bibliography reveals how limited the article is in its coverage of the subject. What it says may be true, but it will give a minimum of help to the pastor who is searching for answers to some of his weighty counseling problems.

Why a separate article on "Stewardship In General" (authored by Carl W. Berner, Chapter XVIII) is included in this volume is a legitimate question. Why not "The Stewardship Of The Pastor" since this is allegedly a volume devoted to "THE PASTOR AT WORK?" The following chapter co-authored by Erwin Kurth and Herman Zehnder and titled "The Stewardship Of Money" is nothing more than the presentation of their program for conducting a successful every member canvass. In that respect, it is one of the most practical chapters in the entire book.

The title of Chapter XX may be misleading ("Reaching Out To Human Needs" by Charles A. Behnke) in that it deals with special classes of people who are in need of pastoral care. It treats of Family Welfare, Unmarried Mothers, the Handicapped, the Aged, and the like. It is a good chapter, written by an able pastor who has had much experience in these special areas.

"Parish Administration" (Chapter XXI), the title of Kurt Biel's contribution to the volume, is necessarily repetitious of matters which have been discussed at greater or shorter length in earlier chapters. To cover the matter of parish administration in twenty pages is a task that would have befuddled even Aladdin's celebrated genie. At least, the chapter does call attention to the need for better parish administration.

Ottomar Krueger's "Societies In The Congregation" (Chapter XXII) admits that there are such things, that there are problems, but offers little help in the way of meeting and solving the problems. The bibliography contains no listings later than 1932! This is surprising when one is aware

of all the research which has been done in the area of group techniques in recent years.

If you are a devotee of the arts—the ecclesiastical sort—you will enjoy Chapter XXIII by A. R. Kretzmann. Its bibliography is a good introduction to the literature of the church in this field. This final chapter is titled “The Pastor and The Arts.”

Summary

This reviewer feels that *THE PASTOR AT WORK* has attempted to cover a wide range of subjects rather than widely covering the subject. The book gets bogged down in a lot of generalities and repetitions. One wonders if any of the authors knew what the others were writing. How can one explain the lack of cohesion? The volume remains a collection of articles about pastoral theology.

One will search in vain for lucid and specific directives for the pastor in the area of his personal prayer life; the technique of visitation in the homes of parishioners; the virtue of Christian courtesy with special reference to its use among members of the same profession; beginning work in a new parish and the like.

Perhaps, the authors were restricted by the general format of the volume. Some chose to be too restrictive in treating the subject assigned. The publisher makes bold to assert that the volume is “practical, stimulating and edifying.” To one who has been privileged to serve in the congregational pastorate for a score of years, the assertion is unsupported by the work.

H. M. Schwehn