

EDITORIAL

The Pastoral Task and Seminary Curricula

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The character of the pastoral ministry in American Protestant churches has changed radically in the last few decades. Pastors have come to see that they must provide a broad ministry in their churches if they are to meet the pressing needs of parishioners and others in their communities.

A broad pastoral ministry is composed of three basic elements: (1) worship and preaching, (2) pastoral care, and (3) administration. It is axiomatic that pastors serving in single-minister churches must be effective in all three of these ministries if they are to serve Christ well. Recognizing this, seminaries must provide a broader training in the distinctly professional principles and methods than was made available in earlier years.

One hundred years ago American Protestant ministers saw themselves primarily as *preachers*. Their chief, and sometimes almost exclusive task, was to minister to congregations in the leading of worship and the declaration of the Word. Thus, quite logically, the curricula of theological schools gave almost complete attention to the matter of providing *preachers* with materials for public worship, and primarily for preaching.

A few generations ago most of the content of the courses in the biblical, theological, and historical divisions was regarded as background material for the pulpit. The practical theology division often had few courses other than those in homiletics. Such a curriculum met the basic needs of many of the ministers of that time.

In the earlier days of American Protestantism ministers spent

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little time in pastoral care for, in many cases, attention to the person-to-person ministry was impossible. For instance, circuit riders, each serving many local churches and preaching points, had little time for pastoral calling. Having preached at one place, they went on to the next to declare the Word of God. When pastoral time did permit, many of the local churches were so far from the pastor's residence that no systematic plan of pastoral care could be implemented for the whole circuit. Furthermore, many of the pastors who served single churches did not have an adequate perspective to carry on an effective ministry of pastoral care. Their pastoral calling for the most part was a type of "professional friendliness" which expressed the church's interest in people, and calls were often little more than a direct or indirect salutation for attendance at the house of God.

Moreover, little attention was given to local church administration in the earlier days of American Protestantism. In fact, there was little to administer in most of the congregations. There were no Sunday schools in colonial Protestantism and very few sub-groups of any kind in the church. The days of young people's societies and children's interest groups had not yet arrived, and adults viewed the church holistically as a congregation for the worship of God.

This situation has changed radically and there are numerous expressions of our broadened concept of the pastoral ministry. Many church buildings witness to it. There are numerous church sanctuaries, built only or primarily for worship in the mid-nineteenth century, that are now surrounded by facilities—architectural addenda—devoted to the use of pastoral counseling, administration, Christian education and fellowship. Moreover, clerical titles suggest a broadened concept of the pastoral work. Ministers are called "preachers" less frequently than a few generations ago and they are more likely to be looked at as "ministers" or "pastors." Seminary curricula witness to the change. Many seminaries have increased their offerings greatly in the practical or professional fields in an effort to equip their students to carry on an effective ministry.

Both denominational officials and laymen in local churches have recognized the need of a broad training for the pastoral ministry. Concerning the need for administrative ability on the part of the pastor, for instance, Roland G. Leavell, a one-time denominational official, said recently, "Today it takes more technical skill to direct the 'Sunbeam Band' than it took to be a pastor of a church fifty years ago." While this statement carries a degree of intended exaggeration, it underlines the important place of administration in today's pastorates. Some studies indicate that pastors normally spend fifty percent of their time in administration. A few years ago

Richard Niebuhr said that the work of modern pastors makes them *pastoral directors*, with the focus of their work in the training and supervision of laymen in Christian service.

The contemporary minister must have an orientation in areas that were of little concern to earlier theological schools. Pastors today must understand personality dynamics, social forces and social structures, basic principles and processes of education, and principles and methodology in pastoral care and administration.

The broader pastoral pattern of ministry creates new demands for both theological schools and for students. The schools must provide broader and more enriched curricula, and seminary faculties must be imbued with a sense of urgency to make all of their courses professionally relevant. The students, on the other hand, have a larger and more demanding basic core of studies than had ministers in earlier years. The contemporary ministerial student needs, to be sure, to be grounded in the biblical, philosophical, theological, and historical aspects of his faith, but he cannot stop there. If he concentrates only on these fields he will be professionally like a physician who masters physiology and anatomy, but who gives little attention to diagnosis and therapy. The articles which follow show, rather, the contemporary need for the pastor's close integration of theoretical study and increased service to the community.