

The Pastor's Self-Care

Barry Shucksmith

We begin by first defining what a pastor is!

The word 'pastor' derives from the same Greek word as that for 'shepherd' (*poimen*) and carries with it all the meaning inherent in the biblical culture and economy.

The major Old Testament reference to the pastoral ministry is in the Book of Jeremiah where the Lord promises 'and I will give you pastors according to my own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding' (Jer 3:15). The same prophet pronounced judgment on pastors who failed to feed and visit the sheep, thereby scattering them (Jer 23:1-2).

The Pastor in the New Testament

The offices of a bishop (overseer or supervisor), elder (presbyter), and deacon (server), were established in the New Testament churches but are not mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. In the Ephesians list only the pastor-teachers (they refer to one office) were local ministers, while the others (apostles, prophets and evangelists) were itinerant.

It is clear from the New Testament that the roles of bishop and elder were interchangeable, and at first seemed to refer to the same office. In time, however, the bishops became the 'supreme' pastors of the local churches with the elders serving as their assistants. As the functions of each became more specialized, the bishops were permitted to exercise the exclusive rights of ordination, confirmation and the appointment of pastors, while the presbyters (later priests) were permitted to celebrate the Eucharist and to baptize with water.

The Pastor in the Patristic Age

By the third century the essentially charismatic ministries declined as the hierarchic ministries developed. The first bishops were considered to be the pastors of a local church of a major city and its surrounding environs, with the presbyter/priests serving as pastors of subdivided units called parishes. As the pastoral system developed in the West, authority flowed from the top down through a pastoral 'hierarchy' that included all the pastors of the Church from the Pope down to the major orders.

Protestant and Reformed Heritage

The Protestant Reformation saw the development of new forms of pastoral authority. The episcopal system had been the common form of government in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church for one thousand years. In this system, pastors were ordained and assigned to parishes by the bishop with no elections coming from either the presbyters or the congregations.

An early Reformation change was the presbyterial form of government, where pastors were ordained and assigned by the 'presbytery'. However, in pure congregational government, pastoral authority lies with the local church, with the pastor serving as 'first among equals'. Advocates of all three systems, episcopal, presbyterian and congregational claim authority and precedents for each in the New Testament, and the latest scholarship now concedes that all three were indeed present to some degree in the New Testament and may all claim some biblical validity. Some have gone further still, wishing to see every Christian as a pastor/minister, Paul Benjamin, a leading Evangelical, being one of them:

Fundamental to our thinking must be the New Testament precept and precedent – every Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ ... the idea of every Christian being a minister for Christ is finally dawning upon the American Church. During a long night, growth has been thwarted by the 'one minister – one congregation' concept of ministry ... once we acknowledge that the congregation is composed of Christ's ministers, then the weekly worship time becomes a meeting of the ministerial association.¹

We are not convinced by this argument! The history of the rise and decline of 'Brethrenism' in the country gives a different story. Furthermore, an honest reading of the New Testament shows a clear development from 'charismatic' ministries to 'selected, ordained ministries' and the Pastoral Epistles (late) give clear directions for the role and character of the pastor (1 Tim 3:1-7). The major role of the pastor was the care and feeding of the sheep. This could not be done regularly by an itinerant apostle, prophet or evangelist. The pastor was also called to protect the sheep from wolves who might attempt to seduce them with new and heretical doctrines. This is stressed in Paul's last letter to Timothy, which has been used from time immemorial in the ordination charge. The newly ordained pastor is to 'preach the word, be instant in season and out of season'. He is to 'reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine'. This instruction was given in light of the time 'when they shall not endure sound doctrine' but follow false teachers (2 Tim 4:1-5). So,

1 H M Conn ed *Practical Theology and the Ministry of the Church 1952-1984* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed 1990) p 71

whatever the church or tradition represented, the role of the modern pastor is much the same as in biblical times – except where it is challenged by the charismatic movement. He is the primary preacher and teacher to his flock. He is the chief administrator of the congregation for which he is responsible. In order to fulfil this ministry adequately he will need to take notice of 1 Timothy 4:16, paraphrased by the writer as ‘the pastor’s spiritual self-care’ – ‘take heed unto yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you’.

Commenting on this verse, in a lecture to his students, C H Spurgeon drew out several components of spiritual self-care.² These included (i) pastors should be ‘saved’ men, (ii) pastors should be mature advanced believers, (iii) a pastor’s personal character should be consistent, especially in the life of holiness. The chapter concludes:

Even in your recreations, remember that you are ministers. When you are off parade you are still officers in the army of Christ, and as such demean yourselves. But if the lesser things must be looked after, how careful should you be in the great matters of morality, honesty, and integrity. Here the minister must not fail. His private life must even keep good time with his ministry, or his day will soon set with him, and the sooner he retires the better, for his continuance in his office will only dishonour the cause of God and ruin himself.³

Of course, this in itself is an inadequate definition but it will serve as a place to begin as we proceed through several important points to examine the pastor’s spiritual self-care.

I The Life of Prayer

Chief among the requirements of a ‘successful’ pastor is the private and personal life of prayer. This is a theme well developed by Jay E Adams in his important contemporary book *Shepherding God’s Flock*:

Prayer! in this one word the simplest, yet probably the most difficult, part of pastoral work is identified. Prayer is not a problem to describe; there is no end to the books written on the subject. The real difficulty for the pastor, to put it simply, is to pray well. He must recognise that prayer is not merely a personal matter but is a part of the pastoral task to which he has been called (Acts 6:4). He must pray not only personally but also with and for the members of his congregation.

2 C H Spurgeon *Lectures to my Students* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott 1965) p 7

3 C H Spurgeon *Lectures to my Students* p 21

Prayer then, is work, work that in order to do well he must take the time to do and for which he must develop the self-discipline.⁴

The disciples, the future pastors of the Church, made request, 'Lord, teach us how to pray'. The lesson on prayer taught by Christ, in answer to the request, consisted of two parts, in one of which thoughts and words are put into the mouths of immature disciples, while the other provides aids to faith in God as the Answerer of prayer. There is first a form of prayer, and then an argument enforcing perseverance in prayer.

The form of prayer commonly called the 'Lord's Prayer' may be called the alphabet of all possible prayer. It embraces the elements of all spiritual desire, including those of busy and needy pastors, summed up in a few choice sentences, for the benefit of those who may not be able to bring their struggling aspirations to birth in articulate language.

Most surely, what is true for Christians in general will be of specific value to pastors. A B Bruce thinks that the future pastors of the Church used it in this way:

[Although] ... it was meant to be an aid to inexperienced disciples, not a rule imposed upon the apostles ... [yet] ... even after they had attained to spiritual maturity, the twelve might use this form if they pleased.⁵

A much older work is the classic, *The Christian Ministry*, whose author is Charles Bridges. This was reprinted in 1958 but was originally published in 1849. Bridges quotes Martin Luther: 'prayer, meditation, and temptation, make a Minister'. In language rather quaint for today Bridges, early on in his book, drives home the truth and priority of personal devotion.

The student's conscious need of wisdom, humility and faith, to ascertain the pure simplicity of his purpose, his necessary qualification, and his Divine call to the holy office – will bring him a daily suppliant to the Throne of grace.⁶

Where Bridges begins his work, a modern preacher ends his, in a splendid chapter on 'the preacher's inner life'. Professor James Stewart says that the first mark of the herald of Christ (a man utterly dedicated to his work) leads on inevitably to the second; that he will be a man of prayer. Stewart is more practical, too, than some. He suggests methodology, as well as principle:

4 J E Adams *Shepherding God's Flock* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed 1980) p 25

5 A B Bruce *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregal 1988) p 56

6 C Bridges *The Christian Ministry* (London: BOTT 1961) p 61

Whether your congregation be large or small, a great part of your task on its behalf lies in the realm of intercession. I do not simply mean asking God to bless people collectively ... I mean praying for every family, each separate soul, by name ... take your Communion Roll. Use it as a directory of intercession.⁷

Stewart, furthermore, is insistent: “‘In Love’s service”, says the Angel in Thornton Wilder’s play, “only the wounded soldiers can serve”. And only those who have been wounded in the region of their human confidence, whose self-sufficiency has been shattered by supplication, only they can be the healers of this ailing world.’⁸

II Self-Examination and Reflection

To turn from the life of prayer to the need of self-examination and reflection is not to leave prayer behind. These are interconnected, interrelated, but still separate and distinct studies, a vital part of the pastor’s spiritual self-care.

We are far removed from the Puritan period, yet the Puritans, forerunners of contemporary nonconformists, were masters of self-examination and reflection, as their sermons indicate. Neither were they adept at giving advice to their people, which they as pastors, did not first apply to themselves.

Samuel Annersley suggests, as an aid to spiritual benefit, ‘mix your hearing with ejaculatory prayer; ejaculations to God and soliloquies to yourselves will help to make and keep the heart right. Jog your own hearts as you do your sleeping neighbours. Call in your thoughts while they are within call, and as far as possible think of nothing but what you are about’.

Another Puritan, George Swincock, is almost overly pictorial in his language, a pastor who clearly believes in self-examination and reflection:

I have read a story of two men who, walking together, found a young tree laden with fruit. They both gathered and satisfied themselves at present; one of them took all the remaining fruit and carried it away with him; the other took the tree, and planted it in his own garden where it prospered and brought forth fruit every year, so that though the former had more at present, yet this had more when he had none.⁹

7 J Stewart *Heralds of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1949) p 203

8 J Stewart *Heralds of God* p 205

9 P Lewis *The Genius of Puritanism* (Haywards Heath: Carey) p 59

This illustrates, if we may borrow a prayer-book image, that it is one thing to 'hear, read, mark, learn' it is another 'to inwardly digest' Holy Scripture, or for that matter, any other literature.

Even more important than Swincock is the book which had such a profound influence upon the Evangelical Awakening of the eighteenth century – William Law's *Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Law singles out the pastor as a person of self-examination and reflection, the key to useful ministry:

Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is, in the exercise of holy office, in the ministration of prayers and sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods ... [we] must all with one spirit live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels in their heavenly ministrations, but men as men, women as women, bishops as bishops, priests as priests, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections ... bishops and priests [must] walk before God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers and in the same discipline and care of their souls.¹⁰

Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*, actually argues that 'the active life does not precede the contemplative life', a danger always prevalent for the Christian pastor. Aquinas, writing in the thirteenth century, leaning heavily on Aristotle, produces a triple argument for the value of self-examination and reflection before ministerial activity: (i) the contemplative life is not directed to any love of God whatever, but to perfect love, (ii) a person progresses from the active to the contemplative way of life according to the order of generation, whereas his return to the active life from the contemplative is by way of direction, (iii) those who are more suited for the contemplative life can undertake the works of the active life so as to become even more ready for contemplation.¹¹ Aquinas, no doubt, had the monastic life well forward in his thinking but, as the Book of Psalms teaches, meditative self-examination is timeless.

J E Adams counsels far more than subjective evaluation in self-examination and reflection. He outlines practical exercises which concern what he sees as five vital principles of Christian ministry – self-directed study, formal courses of study, regular teaching, keeping in touch with the real world, and poise and manners in presentation. His exercises include:

10 P Hodgson *Readings in Christian Theology* (London: SPCK 1985) pp 313ff

11 P Hodgson *Readings in Christian Theology* p 203

- 1 Read over the section on poise and manners to your wife!
 - a Ask her to evaluate you.
 - b Ask her to add any additional suggestions that you may need to hear.
 - c Be sure you sincerely thank her; do not defend yourself, make excuses or get angry.

- 2 Ask yourself
 - a What have I read in the last six months? Was it enough? Varied? Substantive?
 - b When did I last study formally? Teach a course? Write an article?
 - c What are my study habits?
 - d Do I regularly pray? For myself/My family? My flock? For God's honour in all?
 - e When did I last lead someone to faith in Christ? When was the last attempt? Am I evangelizing adequately? Am I too tightly enclosed in the Christian bubble?
 - f In general what is my relationship to God? What does it lack? What must be done about it?¹²

III Regular Habits of Study

One of the most influential pastors of the Reformation period was undoubtedly John Calvin. In his book on Calvin, T H L Parker, an authority on the Genevan reformer, shows how habits of study, from the earliest days, became Calvin's lifelong pattern and made him into the theological and intellectual giant that he unquestionably is.¹³ Calvin is a model for the pastor-student. Neither was his study limited only to Scripture and theology, as important as these are to the pastor. At the College de la Marche, Jean Cauvin, aged about eleven, studied in order to enter the arts course, and after that, theology. But grammar meant considerably more than learning Latin declensions off by heart. According to Thurot the course was in three stages. In the first he learned reading, writing, and the elements of Latin grammar. The second stage took him through the bewilderments of grammatical irregularities and anomalies, as well as through syntax and prosody. The third stage in the course consisted of elementary logic, studied by means of *summulae*, an abridgement of Aristotle's *Organon*. Within one year the young John Calvin (Jean Cauvin) was adjudged capable of starting the arts course, *philosophia*. Today his stature, as one of the major theologians in the history of the Church is not in dispute, and his remarkable *Institutes of Religion* are still studied with

12 J E Adams *Shepherding God's Flock* pp 26ff

13 T H L Parker *John Calvin* (Tring, Herts: Lion 1982) p 5

immense respect and admiration. Calvin thus serves as an illustration of the importance of determined, lifelong habits of study for the contemporary pastor.

Helmut Thielicke, one of the leading Christian pastors of the twentieth century, former Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Hamburg (1954) was also an authority on the greatest pastor of Victorian England – Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In his book *Encounter with Spurgeon*, Thielicke quotes the celebrated baptist with approval:

Master those books you have. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you. Read and re-read them, masticate them, and digest them. Let them go into your very self. Peruse a good book several times and make notes and analyses of it. A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books, which he has merely skimmed, lapping at them, as the classic proverb puts it, 'As the dogs drink of Nilus'.¹⁴

Another outstanding pastor of our day, John Stott, has an excellent chapter in his book *I Believe in Preaching*.¹⁵ For Stott, Bible study for the pastor is a priority. It should be comprehensive, open-minded, and expectant. He even commends the Robert Murray McCheyne Bible Reading Calendar, which takes the student through the whole Bible in one year. But, says Stott, 'biblical and theological studies do not by themselves make for good preaching. They are indispensable, but they need supplementing by contemporary studies, otherwise they can keep us disastrously isolated on one side of the cultural chasm'.

No doubt, for this reason, Charles Bridges' list is more comprehensive still in his plea for 'an all-round ministry', and regular habits of study, as an essential part of the pastor's self-care. Bridges recommends a competent acquaintance with the evidences of the Christian religion, the Holy Scriptures, the history of the Church, pastoral theology and the study of the 'Fathers' as a place to begin.¹⁶

IV Continuing Education

Regular habits of Bible study do not excuse the pastor from seeking other forms of continuing education. It is important to consider that all resources come from the Creator's hand. He will certainly not deny his blessing to any undertaking which leads to developing the Christian mind. The

14 H Thielicke *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Cambridge: James Clarke 1964) p 14

15 J Stott *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1988) p 180

16 J Stott *I Believe in Preaching* pp 33-60

relationship between mental wholeness and spiritual effectiveness is established, and it is some cause for concern that Christian pastors are not engaged in further education, as they might be.

Education is a word susceptible of various definitions according to the stance of the use: (i) education is the passing on of a cultural heritage, (ii) it is the initiation of the individual into worthwhile ways of thinking and doing, (iii) it is a fostering of the individual's growth.

Many of the most crucial educational problems cluster around the issues of maintaining and enhancing each individual's competence for coping both with life and with his or her inherited and creative powers.

For the Christian pastor most areas of study are legitimate; wide areas of study and research will enrich and 'fill out' his ministry, and there are, in the modern world, almost unlimited opportunities for continuing education.

V Physical Self-Care

Writing in 1 Timothy 4:7, 8, within the pastoral context of Christian ministry, the Apostle Paul exhorts:

But reject profane and old wives' fables and exercise yourself rather to godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

Some argue that by 'bodily exercise' Paul refers to the asceticism repudiated in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. But the use of athletic imagery to encourage a proper *αγων* in one's Christian life is typical of Paul (1 Cor 9:25). Some, who propose that Paul has asceticism in mind with *σωματικη γυμνασια* mean by asceticism not what has been repudiated in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 but rather the commendable self-restraint of bodily appetites seen in passages such as Romans 13:14 and 1 Corinthians 8:13. But this sort of self-restraint should not be called asceticism, for a clear reading indicates that the whole drift of these verses is towards a vigorous spiritual outworking of the truth. This should not be impeded by preoccupation with the physical. Neither should we say that Paul is rejecting any physical exercise or bodily care – only imploring a sense of priority and balance.

In fact, Scripture has much to say about the importance of the body, the need for bodily care, and the unique relationship it has with the spiritual life.

The New Testament has two distinct words for body: '*sarx*' and '*soma*'. While *sarx* designates the external physical aspect of man's bodily existence (1 Cor 15:50, Gal 4:13), *soma* identifies and expands the concept and is best seen in Pauline use.

The unique aspect of Paul's *soma* concept is his use of it to indicate that man has both physical and spiritual existence, and that his spiritual existence is an integral part of his total being. As J A T Robinson states: 'Soma ... does not mean simply something external to a man himself, something he has. It is something he is.' A M Hunter similarly describes Paul's use of 'body' as 'the organic principle of identity which persists through the years of all changes of substance'.

Paul uses this concept in at least five ways:

- 1 *Soma*, in a way impossible for *sarx*, expresses the identity of the whole person as an entity before God.
- 2 As the body/self, *soma* is the locus of the spiritual in man.
- 3 As body, *soma* means the whole man as destined for membership in God's kingdom.
- 4 The *soma* provides the vehicle for the Resurrection.
- 5 Since the Resurrection is associated with judgment, the body in its earthly existence, is viewed as the site of spiritual testing.

So it is clear that the body is used to represent the whole man and militates against any idea of the biblical view of man as existing apart from bodily manifestation, unless it be during the immediate state, which reformed Christians do not believe exists.

All this indicates that the pastor will not maintain his maximum spiritual potential without equal concern for his body. This should show itself in disciplined patterns of sleep, a weekly day off, realistic holidays, periodic sabbaticals, and continual exercise, with sensible medical care.

VI Congregational and Personal Worship

One of the greatest dangers to the pastor and ultimately damaging to his spiritual self-care, unless regularly checked, lies in the realm of weekly worship. The pastor is called upon to lead worship. But he is first a Christian and so needs to worship as an individual. The danger is one of professionalism over/against personal participation.

Some words of R A Ward in *Royal Sacrament* are particularly apposite for leaders of worship. He was, of course, as a Canadian Episcopalian, speaking in the context of liturgical use, but the same danger exists to all pastors:

The forms of service are repeated time and time again, and some Christians, lacking a complete and sympathetic understanding of the matter are critical. They would agree with the opinion of Lord David Cecil, given in his life of William Cowper, 'An emotion cannot be induced by an intellectual effort; and, besides, the same emotion cannot be roused often by the same stimulus. The mind is numbed by familiarity. One soon becomes used to the colouring of a room, however striking; the change of key that sent a thrill down the spine like a douche of cold water on first hearing becomes a mere insignificant noise if it is often repeated'. (*The Stricken Deer*, p 126). But the incompleteness of the liturgy is due, as we have seen, to its need of worshippers to use it, not to its inability to stand the strain of constant use. Its spirit of devotion, its theological content, its noble English prose, ensure that it will not wear thin. It is what we put into it that is, alas, often so thin and scanty. It is ever ready for use, it does not wear out, and it is a fit medium to express our needs and aspirations and worship. That is why we have to prepare ourselves for worship; the liturgy is ready; we ourselves are not.¹⁷

What this will mean to the pastor is set out in Evelyn Underhill's *magnum opus*, entitled *Worship*. As for all Christians, the pastor will need to engage in imaginative worship. Only such can keep him spiritually alive. 'The three great faculties at the disposal of the worshipping spirit are those of feeling, imagination, and reasoning mind.'¹⁸ Underhill spells this out in fine detail while at the same time indicating that the life of worship is no peripheral matter:

If by worshipping we mean the adoring response of the creature to the total demand of God, and the utmost contribution to his glory which it is able to make – and Christians cannot mean less – it is obvious that so far as the individual is concerned, neither spontaneous or liturgical saying of 'Lord! Lord!' nor the practising of an equivalent devotion in contemplative silence, fulfils its requirements. The single yet composite creature must make a single yet composite response; bring to the 'altar' all aspects of his nature, and not one alone. The dedicated will must bit by bit take up, transform, and unify the dedicated body and mind, welding them into a single instrument devoted to the purposes of God.¹⁹

This is only to affirm what another declared in a purple chapter, dedicated to this very theme of self-care in the pastor. The chapter is

17 R A Ward *Royal Sacrament* (Edinburgh: Marshall Morgan and Scott 1960) p 163

18 E Underhill *Worship* (London: Nisbet 1948) p 178

19 E Underhill *Worship* p 186

entitled 'The Oversight of Ourselves'²⁰ and comes in Richard Baxter's *Reformed Pastor*. Says Baxter, (i) we are to take heed to ourselves, lest we should be void of that saving grace of God which we are offering to others, (ii) we take heed to ourselves, lest we live with those actual sins ... which we daily condemn, (iii) we need to take heed to ourselves that we may not be unfit for the great tasks which we have undertaken to complete, (iv) we take heed to ourselves, lest we exemplify contradictory doctrine.

What is true generally for the pastor, is a lesson worthy of consideration specifically in worship. Self-care is rarely more important than at this point.

VII A Final Consideration is the Need for Ongoing Fellowship with Christian Ministers

Writing even a century ago, bishop J C Ryle, first Bishop of Liverpool, commends fellowship with a wide spectrum of Christians:

- 1 We must cultivate the habit of recognizing the grace of God and love to Christ, wherever that grace and love is to be found.
- 2 We must cultivate the habit of speaking charitably and courteously of those who disagree with us.
- 3 We must cultivate accurate acquaintance with the real opinion and phraseology of other schools.
- 4 We must cultivate opportunities of meeting men of other schools on neutral ground.
- 5 We must co-operate with other schools of thought wherever we can.²¹

Dialogue with other Christians is an important factor in spiritual self-care. John Stott reminds us that 'the living God of the biblical revelation himself enters into dialogue with man. He not only speaks but also listens. He also questions and waits for the answers'. Bruce J Nichols takes a similar line in an essay in honour of the late Professor E P Clowney.²² 'As Christian partners, we are called to patience, to transparent honesty and openness and to a sensitivity to the work of the Spirit in others as well as in ourselves.'

Dialogue is the lifestyle of the community. If the Church (and the pastor) is to maintain an effective openness and witness in dialogue, it needs to be constantly transformed in all its life, theological understanding, spirituality, ethical behaviour, unity and structures, and

20 R Baxter *The Reformed Pastor* (Basingstoke: Pickering and Inglis 1982) pp 27ff

21 J C Ryle *Principles for Churchman* (Leeds: Wm Hunt 1889) p 65

22 J C Ryle *Principles for Churchman* p 271

commitment to mission in the world. *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. The structure of the Church must be constantly renewed to maintain the primacy of the Church's function.²³

Can we not equally say that the pastor needs to be constantly transformed in all his life if he is to maintain that level of spirituality required of him?

In the end, because he is human, he will be found to be both fallible and mortal. But much can be achieved by his own spiritual self-care. The life of prayer, self-examination and reflection, regular habits of study, continuing education, physical well-being, sensitive and honest worship, and dialogue with other Christians engaged in the work of ministry, will ensure a measure of pastoral success.

Yet, to be true, in the final analysis, the pastor's spiritual self-care is not really care of self at all but divine enabling. All pastors will need to remember that the pastoral enterprise is not a human undertaking in which we take into account our forces and counter-forces. It is the work of Jesus Christ, the Bishop and Shepherd of our souls (1 Pet 2:25), who upholds, sustains, and pastors the pastors of the flock. For he is the *pastor pastorum*.

BARRY SHUCKSMITH is former Rector of Broughton, Diocese of Lincoln.

23 J C Ryle *Principles for Churchman* p 272