

EDITORIAL

'Beware the Papacy of the Pastor' was one of the warnings sounded by John Stott during this year's Keswick Convention. He maintained that too many people in the Church behave as though they believe 'not in the priesthood of all believers but in the papacy of all pastors'.¹

In a recent book on leadership and ministry,² Andrew Clarke has described the various models of leadership from the first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish society. However, because these models were based on 'social values of honour and status'³ the Christian community chose to speak of their leaders in terms of 'service or ministry'.⁴

The model of the pastor as a servant leader has become increasingly popular within the life of the church and even our own culture.⁵ In a society which is often suspicious of authoritarian leadership, the theme of the 'servant' in Isaiah and the ministry of Jesus who came 'not to be served but to serve' provides a paradigm of a ministry which is motivated, not by the love of power, but by the power of love. In Philippians 2, Paul reflects on the person and work of Christ, and challenges the church to 'look not to their own interests but to the interests of others'.

Philippians is ordinarily seen as reflecting a warm relationship between Paul and the congregation, marred only by some petty bickering. Some commentators give the impression that Paul is writing out of a deep affection for the church and that the congregation has been a source of constant joy to the Apostle.⁶ However, more recently a number of

¹ *Baptist Times*, No 7828 (August 3, 2000), p. 1

² Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Cambridge, 2000).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249. Clarke even questions whether Paul was willing to use the term 'leadership' and concludes that 'not only is the word "leader" avoided by him, but he also eschews the associated concepts of leadership.' *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁵ Wesley Carr, *Handbook of Pastoral Studies* (London, 1997), pp. 187-90; Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1997), pp. 197-204.

⁶ Robert C. Swift, 'The Theme and Structure of Philippians', *Biblica Sacra* 141 (1984), pp. 234-54. Loveday Alexander proposes that Philippians

scholars have suggested that conflict underlies much of the letter and that disunity is a major theme of the epistle. D. A. Black speaks of a church 'diseased by strife and self-interest',⁷ even amongst leaders such as Eudia and Syntyche.

Many of us live and minister in churches where believers have set up rival groups and anathematised each other. There are far too many broken fellowships, broken hearts and broken lives. The breakdown in pastoral relationships between ministers and their people indicates that the issues with which Paul grapples in this section of scripture are not peripheral to the needs of the church as it ministers in the 21st century. As well as providing an example to all believers to live in harmony and fellowship, this section provides a paradigm of ministry for pastors who are called to do 'nothing out of selfish ambition' but in their service to 'look to the interests of others'. As pastors follow the example of Christ in Philippians 2 they will demonstrate a 'model of kenotic leadership which leads... for the sake of love, and not for any more complicated inner motive to do with the satisfaction of the exercise of power itself'.⁸

Paul is using this Christological hymnic passage to encourage the attitude of 'not looking towards one's own interests' and in v. 7 he tells us that Christ 'did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped'. Like other words and phrases in this passage, the Greek word *harpagmos* has been variously interpreted although R. W. Hoover's interpretation of 'taking advantage' of something that one already possesses seems to have become the most common understanding of the word.⁹ Thus N. T. Wright concludes that the passage means that 'the one who, before becoming human, possessed divine equality did not regard that status as something to take advantage of, something to exploit, but

bears striking similarities to the type of ancient letter which may be described as a 'family letter' that had the purpose of strengthening relationships between the writer and the addressees. 'Hellenistic Letter Forms and the Structure of Philippians', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989), pp. 87-101.

⁷ D. A. Black 'Paul and Christian Unity', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985), pp. 299-308 cited in Davorlin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (Leiden, 1995), p. 6.

⁸ Richard Holloway, *The Divine Risk* (London, 1990), p. xvi.

⁹ R. W. Hoover, 'The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution', *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971), pp. 95-119. See also N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 82-6.

instead interpreted it as a vocation to obedient humiliation and death'.¹⁰ Paul is suggesting that just as Christ did not consider that being God meant having your own way, getting what you want, so the pastor, the servant-leader, will see Christ-likeness as giving and spending yourself for the sake of others, in selfless and sacrificial love.

Yet so often the temptations of 'office' and 'ordination' can lead us to use and abuse our position in the life of the church, to push ourselves forward and to claim certain 'rights'. At times, our responsibility of expounding God's word makes us touchy and defensive when people disagree with us and we find ourselves tempted to defend ourselves at every turn, never considering the possibility that we might be in the wrong in the leadership which we are giving to the church. In his ministry, our Lord knew who he was and he must have been tempted to 'reveal' his glory but he chose to 'conceal' it and not allow himself to exploit his status for his own ends. Perhaps this is why, in an age when management and professional models of ministry are emphasised, that the more mundane aspects of pastoral ministry such as routine pastoral visitation are no longer viewed as being important. Eugene Peterson suggests that the majority of pastoral work is similar to 'cleaning out the barn, mucking out the stalls, spreading manure' and he insists that 'if we expected to ride a glistening black stallion in daily parades and then return to the barn where a lackey grooms our steed for us, we will be severely disappointed and end up being horribly resentful'.¹¹

Evangelicals have rightly stressed the importance of preaching in the life of pastoral ministry and drawn on the examples of men like Robert Murray McCheyne and Richard Baxter as preachers of the word of God. However, they have not always remembered the priority which such men gave to 'assiduous pastoral visiting' as McCheyne 'worked his parish with devotion and zeal, sustained by a profound sense of responsibility to Christ'.¹²

Paul goes on to speak of the humanity of Christ in his humility as he calls his people to a life of service and suffering. Ray Anderson suggests that the way of kenosis 'is not... a self-emptying in the form of a renunciation of the nature of God himself, but is a self-emptying precisely because self-renunciation is the very nature of God himself. Here, self-renunciation must be understood in a positive, and not a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids, 1992), p. 16.

¹² James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London, 1991), pp 123-4.

negative sense.... It is actually the dynamic dimension of love as activity.'¹³

Whereas the classical kenotic interpretation of this verse suggests that the eternal logos emptied himself of all the attributes of deity that were incompatible with his full humanity, some recent interpretations of the phrase argue that Paul is using the terminology of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:12 who 'poured himself out unto death' in his sacrificial service for others, thus indicating that 'in his self-emptying the Son of God is most fully divine'.¹⁴

One thing which is crystal clear from this passage is the emphasis that Paul places on the true humanity of Jesus and the words 'form', 'likeness' and 'appearance' are used to reiterate the fact that the pre-existent Christ in his incarnation fully identified himself with humankind.

In his ministry our Lord became vulnerable.¹⁵ He was open to being wounded physically, emotionally and spiritually without protecting himself. He allowed his inner self to be seen by others, without being hidden behind a shell of professionalism, control, skill and technique. Herrick comments 'the vision is of a Christ who hangs naked before us, unafraid to be naked and vulnerable because he stands naked before the Father's love... to follow such a Christ is to allow God to strip you, to let him make you vulnerable to his love in your ministry'.¹⁶

To enter into the paradigm of Christ's servanthood is to enter into pastoral relationships with people and risk rejection, pain and suffering. Any concept of professionalism in pastoral ministry which promotes detachment seems far removed from the one who weeps along with and suffers for those whom he loves. This is not to say that we ought to be *professional* in the way in which we go about our ministry but not *professional* in the sense that we remain distant from the life situations of our people. Yet so often, particularly in the past, views of ordination were modelled upon other professions in which people develop 'practitioner/client' models in which we deal with people in 'a trustworthy, competent, controlled and emotionally neutral way'.¹⁷

¹³ Ray S. Anderson, *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 242-3.

¹⁴ Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle, 1992), p. 84.

¹⁵ See Vanessa Herrick and Ivan Mann, *Jesus Wept: Reflections on Vulnerability in Leadership* (London, 1998).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Herrick suggests that 'rather than [even speaking] of *being* professional' (in ministry) we ought to speak about 'professional *being*'.¹⁸

So much of contemporary life manifests a scramble for power, every bit as deadly as Goldings' description in *Lord of the Flies*. Power struggles are not unknown with the community of faith. Over against the love of power, the exalted Jesus sets the power of love.

If 'God is Christlike and in him there is no un-Christlikeness' then Philippians 2 reveals a God of Trinitarian love who 'is not closed to us, for he has come to share with us the deepest movement of his divine heart... to share the weakness and sorrow and affliction of others and to spend himself in going to their relief and in saving them'.¹⁹ This is the paradigm of pastoral ministry which will view the life of service as being seen in the vulnerability of the one who offers herself as a channel of love for the needs of others.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, 'Service in Jesus Christ' in *Service in Christ: Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday*, edited by James I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker (London, 1966), pp. 4-5.