

ANGLICAN PASTORAL CARE. A ministry of compassion with people in “the true wilderness” of life (Williams, 1965), shaped by three basic perspectives (Sykes 1978; Wolf, 1979). (1) Anglican pastoral care is grounded in a particular way of doing theology that features “comprehensiveness” (The Lambeth Conference, 1968). (2) It is rooted in a historical, universal, and unifying view of the church and its ministry (Carey, 1954). (3) It presupposes an incarnational understanding of nature and society (Temple, 1942). Each of these perspectives, in turn, helps to articulate pastoral care for Anglicans as an art form of a community rather than a profession of an elite.

1. Anglican Theology and Pastoral Care. As Augustine and Anselm remind us, theology is faith seeking understanding. Anglicans attempt to make sense of their faith that “Jesus is Lord” by interrelating biblical revelation, teaching from doctrinal tradition, and reason, which grows out of “the best of contemporary knowledge.” The Scriptures as a whole are essential for understanding because they record the historical encounter between God and people. Tradition includes the accumulated wisdom of the Judeo-Christian heritage and enables us to draw upon the insights and experiences of our religious predecessors. Reason enables us to be honest, to be open to all sorts of truths, and to engage all of our intellectual capacities and ways of knowing (Baycroft, 1980).

The implications of such a theological method for pastoral care are clear. First, one basic task of Anglican pastoral care is educational. In a variety of ways, it endeavors to develop and deepen people's comprehension of faith in Christ. In doing this, it draws on all that is available not only within the Bible and doctrinal tradition but also from reason, which grows out of the whole of life's experience informed by such intellectual disciplines as psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and philosophy. Such reliance on extra-biblical and extra-traditional authority echoes Carl Jung's acknowledgment of the “religious dimension” in psychotherapy.

A second task for pastoral care that follows from this way of “doing theology” is an ethical or moral one (Elmen, 1983). As people gain a greater understanding of Christian faith, they also search for ways to express the relation of faith to practice. In seeking to inform their conscience about responsible and faithful witness, they look for concrete ways to engage with integrity about matters of personal and social transformation. They also seek the “gift of courage” to live with the ambiguity of the moral life (Wilkes, 1981). In doing all this, they can draw upon a rich heritage of spiritual direction and casuistry.

2. Anglican Ecclesiology and Pastoral Care. While there are many different models of the church, Anglicans stress a historical, universal, and unifying expression of the church. They draw upon the ancient creedal formulation of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” church. In doing so, they organize their community life around the worship of God, the proclamation of the gospel, the care of persons in special need, and the pursuit of social justice (Ramsey, 1956). Central to all of these activities is a commitment to a sacramental way of life. “The sacraments are focal points for a life lived in relationship to all that conveys the humanizing grace of God in Christ. . . . The Passion of Christ becomes, in this process, the prevailing icon of all life for each of us” (Holmes, 1982).

Although the fundamental sacraments are those of baptism and the eucharist, traditionally, there are five others. Each of these touches us at different stages of our lives from birth to death. While every sacrament has specific implications in Anglican pastoral care, two in particular have a prominent place in the growth and development of persons. These are “confession” (i.e., reconciliation) and “unction” (i.e., healing) (Ross, 1975). The former enables us to deal in concrete ways with issues of guilt (legitimate or neurotic) and challenges us to live with God’s unconditional and unending love. The challenge of God’s unlimited forgiveness can liberate us to become whole. Unction, on the other hand, is prayer for healing. It helps us to focus on God’s continuing presence in our lives and the constant divine desire that we become whole, whatever that might mean in detail. Confession and unction, of course, also assume the usual considerations and sensitivities of pastoral care and counseling.

3. Incarnation and Pastoral Care. The prologue to St. John’s Gospel tells of God’s creation and redemption. Central to this powerful portrayal is the proposition that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.” Anglican theology presupposes an incarnational understanding of nature and society. Consequently, Anglican pastoral care does not restrict itself to the care of individuals. It also is deeply committed to a tradition of social justice, the appropriate conservation of nature, and the just transformation of society (Owen, 1980).

Anglican pastoral care, then, is much more than a profession of a select few. It is an art form lived out in a historical and contemporary community with a lay and

ordained ministry. The latter is specific and highly focused; the former is general and all-pervasive. Ordained ministry includes the deacon, who serves the powerless and reminds us all, in concrete and symbolic ways, to do so also (Barnett, 1979); the priest, who is committed to a ministry of Word and sacrament, central to which is reconciliation in its many real and sacramental forms (Terwilliger and Holmes, 1975); and the bishop, an overseer who reminds the community of its unity and universality, fosters sound teaching about the faith, and speaks at times as a prophet. While the laity participate in all of this, they also remind the community of an art form of Christian caring that includes education in the faith, spiritual direction, moral and ethical discernment, the care of persons in special need, the participation in the sacraments, and the pursuit of justice and social transformation.

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