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From the Selected Works of Miroslav Kis

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Book Review of Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy, by Gaylord Noyce

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Occasional blatant inaccuracies occur, though these rarely detract from the main point. For example, Kedar states that Latin eventually became dominant over Greek in the Roman Empire (pp. 299, 301). That was true only in the Western Empire. The longer-lived Eastern Empire remained Greek. However, since Kedar’s material rarely leaves the confines of the Western Empire, the problem is quite minor. Incidentally, Kedar demonstrates that Jerome did have a good grasp of Hebrew and was not tied to Origen’s Hexapla.

Bar-Ilan’s article on scribal practice is heavily weighted to rabbinic sources, which is inevitable since rabbinic sources contain the bulk of available information. Likewise, Mulder’s article on transmission passes quickly over the pre-Masoretic period to concentrate on the Masoretes and other late text history. The reader, however, should be wary of depending on one strand of what was probably a highly varied tradition.

Another difficulty is Alexander’s use of the Genesis Apocryphon as an example of a targum. The Apocryphon is no more expansive than many targums; but it changes the narrative to the first person, making the work pseudonymous, a dramatic departure from targumic method. Confusion here has hampered both targumic and pseudepigraphical studies.

In spite of its shortcomings, Mikra provides a good, comprehensive guide to the present state of research, including unsolved problems. Read critically, it will serve well as a useful reference work and a source for dissertation ideas.

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Since 1929, when N. B. Harmon published his Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette, few substantial works have appeared on the subject. There are several reasons for this: 1) The nature of ministry is hard to define. Some consider it a profession much like that of law or medicine, while others see it as transcending professionalism. 2) The wide range of skills expected from a minister requires an ethic in business, counseling, communication, leadership, and administration, in addition to that of personal life. 3) Finally, ministry as a vocation differs from church to church and from tradition to tradition.

If we keep these and many other factors in mind, we will soon recognize the value of the contribution made by the author of Pastoral Ethics. Gaylord Noyce, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Yale University Divinity School, makes a valiant effort to transcend the diversities and divisions within Christian ministry without reducing tensions and ending up with generalities and vagueness.
Early in the book the author states that a starting point for understanding ministerial ethics must be in function rather than in rules. We know that medicine is about healing and that jurisprudence deals with law and order, but what is ministry all about? What is its purpose? “And what kind of personal intention and competence are therefore appropriate to it?” (p. 29). Above all else, Noyce replies, the church is called to “help the Christian community increase its faith and its will and ability to love God and neighbor” (p. 30). The minister is an auxiliary in that calling.

With integrity and loyalty to God first, and secondarily to the mission of the church, the minister’s first task is to lead the church from within and not from above (p. 32). In this capacity he will beware of such abuses as autocracy, partisanship, and requesting professionals to do “small jobs” for the church free of charge.

The second task of the minister is to preach. Five sensitive concerns must be kept in mind here: 1) faithfulness to the true goals of preaching, which are proclamation, edification, and invitation; 2) responsibility to and with the scriptures; 3) integrity in the use of copyrighted material; 4) respect for the listeners, demonstrated by using factual data and avoiding displays of moral or doctrinal self-righteousness; and 5) faithfulness in addressing unpopular issues.

As a shepherd, the minister will be involved in counseling and care. While he or she does not usually hold a counseling degree or license, the role of pastoral counseling is indispensable. Pastoral care will always include didactic, moral, and God-conscious dimensions (p. 73). These are fostered by a unique contractual agreement between a pastor and a parishioner in which the “client” counts on spiritual guidance, confidentiality, truth-telling, and safety with the opposite sex. Any abuse of these expectations is substandard and serious.

The minister’s remuneration must be fair. Sacrifices, claims Noyce, should be voluntary rather than externally imposed. Unfair wages often result in moonlighting, searching for fees and honoraria, dubious fund-raising and handling of money, clergy unions, and the like. Before such practices are deplored as immoral, their causes must be dealt with.

Noyce also urges more interfaith clergy relations. Such relations are beneficial for every professional and, in addition, may enlist a more holistic reaction of the church to social and community issues.

After a very perceptive look at the minister’s personal life, the author discusses professionalism in ministry in a “brief postscript.” He calls for a more positive definition of the word “professional.” We must distinguish between a technician and a professional. While a technician is directed by a supervisor, a professional is self-disciplined; while the former follows the manual, the latter integrates information for making informed decisions; while a technician is concerned with things material, a professional cares for persons and personal values. In brief, a professional minister is com-
mitted to augmenting faith and love, and for that reason he or she will spare no effort to acquire competence.

The book stands out in many ways. For one thing, each chapter shows remarkable breadth of coverage. First, each covers its topic in a general way. It then proceeds to indicate by subsections each division of the issue that is relevant to ministry. Each sub-issue is next 1) discussed as an issue in itself, and 2) applied to the pastor as a professional. Furthermore, Noyce demonstrates an amazing knowledge of various traditions and expectations for ministers within them. The kind of ecumenism which seeks to understand others and learn from their experience brings richness to a scholarly work.

The reader will at times take exception to the author's positions. A case in point might be the minister's involvement in politics. Active political life is a right of everyone, and a minister is no exception, claims Noyce. It seems, however, that this statement stands in tension with his call for a nonpartisan leadership, freedom of the pulpit, and accessibility by all in need.

While the arguments are presented clearly and with conviction, the tone of reasoning will not overwhelm those who disagree. Ministers, teachers, scholars, church administrators, and lay leaders will consult this book with great profit.

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The Vision of Daniel 8 is a dissertation on the history of the interpretation of selected concepts in Daniel 8 from 1700 to 1900 (in spite of the erroneous "1800" in the subtitle). The dissertation has no thesis, but is of a descriptive nature. Nuñez covers the trends in the development of prophetic interpretation during this period. The research focuses on the animal symbols of the two-horned ram, the he-goat, its first horn, the subsequent four horns, and the little horn and the cultic expressions of the "2300 evenings and mornings," the "daily," the "transgression of desolation," and the phrase "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

Nuñez analyzes the history of interpretation in terms of exegetical and historical arguments, theological and philosophical presuppositions, and hermeneutical principles. In addition, he classifies the commentators into various schools of prophetic interpretation. His overall goals are to provide the modern interpreter of Daniel 8 with insights into the hermeneutical