BEING A PASTOR TODAY
What does it mean to be a shepherd of God's People?

The Inaugural Hobart Lecture
by
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In this inaugural Hobart Lecture, I want to begin at what I think is the beginning of pastoral theology, with the image of the Good Shepherd, the model image of the Good Shepherd, the Eternal Pastor is, of course, very securely grounded in the Scriptures both of the Old and of the New Testaments. It permeates the entire Christian tradition, from the art of the catacombs where it is a favored image to its reproduction in profusion, though often with a coloring of sentimentality, in mid-Victorian stained-glass windows. In our kind of society, the cherished words of Psalm 23, 'he shall lead me in green pastures' resonate in the ears of Christians and non-Christians alike.

The same imagery naturally functions as a paradigm for those of us admitted by ordination to a share in the ministry of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Not least it is important for the Ordinal of the 1662 Prayer Book, which appeals to shepherding imagery to communicate something of the essence of the pastoral office and ministry both of priests and bishops. In particular, the alternative Gospels appointed for the ordination of priests both focus on shepherding imagery.

First, Matthew 9:36ff with Jesus' injunction to pray to God to send labourers into the harvest, in response to his being moved with compassion for the fainting and scattered multitude who are 'as sheep without a shepherd'. I notice that your Episcopal Ordinal starts that Matthew passage a verse earlier, at 9:35 so as to include a reference to Jesus' ministry of teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of diseases and sickness, so its focus is broader than the section of Matthew set in the Ordinal of 1662, which is simply content to register a connection with the imagery of the flock and the shepherd.

Then, secondly, the 1662 Ordinal has as the alternative Gospel, John 10:1-16 which is the more extended Good Shepherd passage. This passage in particular suggests that the essential ministry of the priest as pastor may be unpacked in terms of a number of interrelated activities: the Good Shepherd knows the sheep (10:13, 14-15); he serves his sheep (10:11); he leads his sheep (10:3-4) (*cf* Psalm 23:1-2) , he feeds his sheep (10:9) (a function which is underlined in John 21 in the threefold 'feed my sheep' passage involving Peter); he cares for and guards his sheep (10:13); he rules or governs his sheep, a function that ensures that the figure of the good shepherd is not sentimentalized; and he gathers the sheep into one, seeking the lost (10.16), a role which is also underlined in the parable of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety nine to go after the one which is lost (Matthew 18:12-13; Luke 15:1-7).

These functions of the ministry of Christ the Good Shepherd are clearly intended to inform and condition our understanding of the essentials of the office and ministry of those to be ordained to the role of the

shepherd of the flock. Indeed, while the late nineteenth century debate about Anglican Orders tended to focus on whether what Rome considered to be the essential and defining function of priesthood had been lost in Anglicanism, that is to say, the priest's key role in the offering of the eucharist understood sacrificially, we could say more positively that the Anglican Prayer Book first expressed a reformed theology of sacrifice so as to underline the once and for all sacrifice of Christ. But then, very importantly, the 1662 Ordinal placed a rather narrowly focused and essentially sacramental and liturgical priestly function within a rather more rich and multifaceted ministry of pastoral care. It is the priest as pastor, gathering the flock as its shepherd, leading the flock, caring for the flock, particularly feeding the sheep, which provides the controlling imagery for an understanding of a ministry much more full and rich than that associated with the narrowly defined and sometimes almost mechanical style of ministry that we associate by stereotype with the 'medieval mass priest'. This is why that imagery of shepherding is so important. In other words, I suspect it was in reaction to the medieval stereotype of the 'mass priest' that the Anglican Ordinal developed a much more full and rounded contextual ministry of pastoral care. This is something we might encourage Cardinal Ratzinger not to forget, given his constant proclivity for reminding us of official late nineteenth century Vatican teaching on Anglican Orders - as recently in *Dominus lesus*.

But what does it actually mean for us today to be the shepherd of the people of God and to feed the flock? The very fact that we are asking the question says something about our current perception of where we are and what we are about. Perhaps there is a sense around that we are not so good at pastoral care as we should be: otherwise why ask the question?

I think there are good reasons why we might be a little less confident than we once were about our role as pastors. For a start, to a very considerable degree the role has today been usurped by a range of other caring professionals of a purely secular kind: the local general practitioner, the psychologist, psychiatrist, professional marriage counselor and civil celebrant and even radio talk-back disc jockey. At least some of these professions boast a much more specialized training, and more highly developed skills, than we clergy tend to have. I suspect that, in search of our self identity we therefore somewhat defensively tend to retreat to look for what others in the caring professions cannot do, and the question is what exactly does the shepherding that is unique to priestly identity actually involve?

If ministers of the gospel are shepherds, admitted to a share in the ministry of Christ the Good Shepherd, we are of course dealing with a metaphor, and the question is how do we unpack the metaphor in more straightforward and prosaic language. When I looked around in Biblical commentaries and other places for indications of past thought on what the ministry of shepherding might mean in more exact terms I must confess I found surprisingly little help. Even in commentaries on the 'Peter, feed my lambs' passage at the end of St John's Gospel (Chapter 21) there was very little, beyond a passing interest in the variation of words in Our Lord's threefold commission to Peter which appears to parallel his threefold denial: 'feed my lambs', 'tend my sheep', 'feed my sheep'. There is here both variation in the verbs - feed, tend, feed (*boske, poirnaine, boske*), and variation in the nouns - lambs, sheep, sheep. St Bernard argued on the basis of the Syriac, that there is an ascending scale - the lambs, the young sheep, the whole flock - but the textual warrant for that is weak and most commentators think the language is purely stylistic and not really significant theologically. So, we are left with the conventional imagery of the shepherd and sheep for pastoral responsibility and we have the job of unpacking what it might mean for us in more exact terms.

For our purposes today, let us focus on three basic activities: gathering and protecting the flock, leading the flock, and feeding the flock.

Gathering

When I took a concordance and went through every text relating to the shepherd and the sheep in the Old Testament as well as in the New, what struck me was that it is surprising how many shepherding texts refer to the role of the shepherd as gatherer and protector of the otherwise scattered flock, a theme which is picked up and brought to a climax in Mark 14:27-28 (Matthew 26:31-32) in the passage about the smiting of the shepherd and the scattering of the flock. This is followed by the promise that the Raised Christ would 'go before' his followers into Galilee for the Easter re-gathering of the flock. Some commentators suggest that the reference to Galilee here may not just be to a geographical place but that it is symbolic of the place of mission. This brought home to me the thought that the ministry of pastoral care is really not separable from
evangelism. Sometimes it is said that we Anglicans are comparatively good at pastoral care but hopeless at evangelism. But insofar as pastoral ministry involves gathering the scattered and unprotected flock into one, and, as we would say today, the building of community into the fullness of the stature of Christ, pastoral care is itself an evangelical work. In the late 1980s we often spoke of 'moving from maintenance to mission', almost as though these were polar opposites. But in fact gathering and maintaining the flock in unity and truth is an essential part of the Church's mission. In a similar way we have tended to speak of the total ministry of the whole people of God by employing the catch cry that 'the Church is not a community gathered around a minister, but a ministering community'. Once again I think it is a mistake to speak in terms of polar opposites. The Church is both a community gathered by and around a minister, as pastor of the flock, and a ministering community.

And this gathering and protecting function is one thing that certainly distinguishes what we do from those in the other caring professions. Unlike the work of those in secular caring professions ours is not just a one on one caring ministry, or a counseling work with individual family systems or whatever. It involves the gathering and building of a faith community, though I think we must be honest enough to acknowledge that in many ways it is no longer a matter of leaving the ninety and nine righteous ones in order to go out to seek the one sheep that is lost, so much these days of looking after the one or two in the pew and seeking the ninety nine lost outside.

Certainly, the gathering of the people of God as a faith community and presiding over the life of the flock, so as to maintain it in unity and truth, is one of the roles that is unique to the priest as pastor if we take the shepherding imagery of the 1662 Ordinal seriously. And my experience tells me that by and large Anglican clergy these days are comfortable enough with the gathering role of the shepherd, and particularly with the more distinctly liturgical expression of this gathering aspect of the office, presiding over the Sunday morning assembly of the community. Pastoral ministry as community building, gathering a faith community, presiding over its life and worship, and also the ministry of protecting the flock, maintaining it in safety, unity and truth, the saving truth of Christ's true humanity, all this is work that comes reasonably naturally to us. The danger is, however, that, in the face of the challenge of the modern caring professions, we have been forced as a matter of necessity to interpret the unique contribution of our gathering role primarily in terms of the gathering of the flock as this comes to focus liturgically in the eucharistic assembly. And, if it is at the eucharist, in the role of presiding over the Christian assembly where we are most clearly seen as gathering the community, then the question is: are we seeing a narrowing down, in terms of the self understanding of our role to something approximating a modern equivalent of the ministry of the medieval mass priest once again? Have we become unwittingly involved in a kind of reversion back

in the direction of the medieval stereotype from which the 1662 Ordinal sought to deliver priestly ministry? How can we, in our understanding of our unique pastoral identity as priests get beyond the narrow limits of the sanctuary? Well, let us look at the role of the shepherd not so much as the gatherer but as the leader of the flock.

Leading the flock

Apart from the challenges of other caring professions which tend to usurp much of the traditional core business of pastoral care, our contemporary emphasis on lay ministry also impacts upon our own self-understanding, particularly as leaders. The role of the clergy these days in discerning and facilitating the gifts of laity in ministry means that, as we lead and preside over the flock, we more and more see ourselves as delegators, sharing the tasks around: These days the shepherd tries to get the sheep doing as much as possible! But, if the priest as pastor is not just gatherer and protector, but also leader of the flock in this sense, I have a hunch that we have another difficulty on our hands. Somewhat unwittingly, we have allowed the shepherding role to be caste in a modern managerial form.

This has been brought home to me with some force through my recent experience in Australia, particularly in dealing with certain elements in the Diocese of Sydney, in relation to the debate about lay presidency at the eucharist.

You might think that the pastoral role of the priest broadly conceived as the leader of the flock would naturally be reflected in the liturgical expression of that role in the leading of worship, presiding over the gathered flock for the breaking and sharing of bread. However, in 1997 the Appellate Tribunal of our Church brought down a ruling which held that it was at least constitutionally possible for lay people to preside at eucharists; in other words, should the Church wish to enact a canon to go down that track, it would be legally possible to do so. I do not think our Church ever will, but the reasoning of the Appellate Tribunal is nevertheless interesting.

The Sydney argument was that clergy already delegate the ministry of the proclamation of the Word to lay preachers, so why is presiding at the eucharist somehow more important than preaching? And why cannot that role be delegated as well? Perhaps when the priest is on holidays, for example, or when there is need of an interim ministry. The Appellate Tribunal came to the conclusion that this was at least constitutionally possible on the basis of reasoning about the essentials of the office and ministry of the priest as these are expressed and defined in the 1662 Ordinal, citing precisely the reliance of the 1662 Ordinal on the biblical shepherding imagery. Starting from the reliance of the Ordinal on the shepherding imagery to express the essential nature of the pastoral office, the Appellate Tribunal began its reasoning by first noting that the shepherding of the flock was essentially a matter of leadership. But then the Tribunal went on to argue that the role of leadership continues to be exercised, in such a way that the essential integrity of the office and function of priesthood is not compromised, when the leader delegates certain functions, including presiding at eucharists. In other words, what is essential to the pastoral office as expressed in the shepherding imagery is leadership of the flock, and leadership is expressed and continues to be exercised precisely when the leader delegates specific functions to others. And so, the priest as essentially the shepherd/leader, the Tribunal said, could legitimately delegate responsibilities of presiding at eucharists to authorized lay people in the parish and still remain essentially its leader. What is essential to maintain the integrity of the leadership role of the shepherd is thus said to be expressed through a principle of delegation.

Well, what is the answer to this? Is Ordination really designed to achieve the setting apart of a person for a role of leadership of a specific kind that might be expressed through the delegation of tasks? We have certainly talked a lot in our generation about the sharing of ministry with lay people, so why not the task of presiding at eucharists along with everything else we ask them to do?

Well, as I have pointed out to my biblical fundamentalist friends in the Diocese of Sydney on a number of occasions, it is possible to follow the logical track from the image of the shepherd to the idea of leadership, for the shepherd 'goes before' to lead the flock in a very straightforward literal way. A shepherd is certainly a leader of the flock. But it is in fact very hard to trace the logical track from the biblical imagery of the shepherd as leader to the specific kind of leadership that is expressed in the delegation of tasks. Leadership is one thing, the specific form of leadership that involves the delegation of tasks is quite another. Indeed, just the opposite of a principle of delegation seems to be expressed in the biblical shepherding imagery, where suspicion is voiced with respect to the delegation of tasks to a hireling who is not the shepherd. In other words, a principle of delegation does not flow naturally or with logical necessity from the biblical imagery.

This brings home the point, that in strictly logical terms, with respect to the fundamental shepherding imagery of the Ordinal, a principle of delegation is not expressed and defined but is essentially an 'add on', and I suspect it is an entirely modem 'add on' that derives from some other source, some such source as the Harvard School of Management. This is not to say it is wrong. It is just to say that delegation, however desirable or practically useful we might deem it to be in parish ministry, however important for our own self-care and indeed for our very survival, is not somehow implicit within the Biblical imagery of the shepherd of the sheep. To understand leadership essentially in terms of the delegation of tasks you have to go elsewhere.

Insofar as the idea of leadership expressed in the specific form of the delegation of tasks may really come from some such source as the Harvard School of Management, the understanding of ministry is thus being understood by accommodation to systems of knowledge of the modem world of business management, and this, when you think about it, is a form of liberalism, the accommodation of the things of God to the wisdom of the world. Now that really disturbs my conservative evangelical Sydney friends for whom to be labeled liberal is enough to bring on a heart attack!

However, if we seek to avoid a purely managerial expression of leadership in order to define the essence of priestly ministry, by upholding the traditional leadership role of presiding over the ministry or Word and Sacrament at the eucharist as the exclusive prerogative of the Ordained, this means we are driven back to a predominantly liturgical understanding of the shepherding role of the priest as leader of the community. But once again we are back in the sanctuary! Somehow we seem headed back in the direction of the medieval stereotype in our unpacking of leadership by contrasting it with a more modern managerial model of leadership; but as soon as we move away from the narrowly cultic, liturgical or sacramental stereotype in order to think in more broad terms of leadership, we seem headed towards ideas of management. It has been said that if you go to Buddhism and look for a leader you will find a holy person; if you go to Christianity and look for a leader you will find a manager. That may be a little unfair on us, but I have a hunch that it may contain a measure of truth.

So how can we be helped to move in self-understanding of our role away from the model of leadership in terms of parish management to something else? Is there yet something else to be drawn from a consideration of the biblical shepherding imagery?

Well, let us note for starters that if your Confirmation classes were up to scratch, you will remember that the shepherd in Ancient Israel, before the enclosures of fields, necessarily led the flock from place to place in search of green pastures: he walked out front, the sheep following behind. There may be a degree of management in his care and protection of the flock, but it is not management in a static sense, like the kind of parish management we do sitting behind a computer. It is a kind of management involving, essentially, movement, the entry into nurturing green pastures. And, of course, it was drummed into us that it is important for the shepherd to lead the flock to new pastures from out front, and not to mistake him or her for the person who comes up from behind. For the one who comes up from behind is the butcher!

Every time I consecrate a new bishop and have to address the candidate with the words: "Be a shepherd, not a wolf, devour them not', I find myself wondering what this metaphorical language can really mean. How can a pastor even be imagined to be one who might somehow become a devourer of the flock? Well, perhaps there is a benign sense in which this language might be encouraging us to see ourselves out front, gently leading, beckoning the flock to move on, rather than pursuing them from behind. It is not good form in pastoral ministry to be found chasing people too aggressively or hounding them, as it were, like the modern day sheep dogs that we see in the sheepdog trials at an agricultural show, maneuvering the sheep into a pen, craftily cornering them from behind and snapping at their heels.

C. S. Lewis once warned against pursuing people, even out of the best of motives, for their own ultimate well being and good, with what we might call 'pastoral lust'. I think Lewis said: " You can sometimes tell those having good done to them by the hunted look in their eyes!" As shepherds we do not come up from behind to hound people; rather, it is a matter of leading from the front, calling them by name, gently beckoning them to move on to a better place. So there is something more of importance that can be said about the role of leading the community, other than in a purely managerial sense, insofar as the shepherd leads the flock into green pastures, into a better more life-giving place. Now I want to suggest to you that this idea of the movement of the flock is of the essence of the pastoral leadership of the shepherd. The shepherd's leading is for the purpose of feeding and nurturing the flock, and in the Biblical imagery movement is essential for this to happen. We can thus shift the emphasis from management of the flock to the movement of the flock. So, let us turn to how we might unpack the metaphor of 'feeding'.

Feeding the sheep.

The metaphor of feeding is very central to the tradition: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd', 'He shall lead me into green pastures', 'we are his people, the sheep of his pasture'. Then there is the threefold command to Peter: "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep'. We may also note Paul's words in Acts 20.28 to the elders who presided as bishops in Ephesus: 'feed the church of God'. Feeding seems somehow essential; indeed, the shepherd's first gathering and then leading of the flock is for the purpose of movement, which in turn is for the purpose of feeding. What exactly can that involve?

Well, you will understand if I am anxious not to revert back to speak simply in terms of eucharistic feeding, feeding in the form of Word and Sacrament, important as that is, for that would take us back into a narrow

liturgical or cultic mold, into the sanctuary, from which the use of the shepherding imagery in the 1662 Ordinal seems originally to have been designed to deliver us. What else may be said?

I think in this lecture it will probably be as much as we can chew, if I can put it that way, to suggest to you just one thing: If the pastoral ministry of leading and feeding the flock in the Biblical sense essentially involves movement, then I want to propose to you that the role of priest as pastor involves feeding the sheep, or nurturing the sheep, in the sense of moving people from where they happen to be to what they might become, from where they happen to be to another, better place.

I think, however, there are some subtle forces operating in society that are making it more and more difficult for us to perform that role effectively. Let me explain what I mean.

As members of modem western liberal democratic societies we are all children of the Enlightenment. We value the independence and autonomy of the individual, the freedom of the individual within reasonable limits to do his or her own thing. This is the outcome of the social and political philosophy of the Enlightenment with its appeal to natural reason to secure the individual's freedom from controlling authorities. Individual freedom of choice in turn leads inevitably to an unavoidable diversity of moral and religious viewpoint, and the ensuring pluralism dictates the need for tolerance. So, the tolerance of diversity becomes the primary virtue of the Enlightenment. You do your thing and I'll do mine, and provided you do not encroach on my space, I leave you the freedom to do your thing in yours. This means that, in our kind of society, religion is tolerated so long as it is contained within the realm of the private and not taken too seriously in public.

Now, there is a sense in which the Enlightenment value of tolerance and the liberal-minded and reasoned acceptance of a diversity of moral and religious viewpoint gives expression to a form of individualism of a very developed, even excessive kind. Sometimes, for example, the individual is portrayed over against society in a way that makes us suspicious of society. The classic expression of this negative assessment of society at large in our time is Mrs. Thatcher's famous statement that there is no such thing as society, but only individuals and their families. Certainly, society is often seen as a threat to the individual and his or her freedoms and rights. It is the role of government in such societies as ours to act as a kind of umpire so as to ensure that individual rights and freedoms are not eroded by the aggressive, the selfish and self-interested—all those who will not respect the rights and freedoms of others in their own individual quest to rise with their elbows and get on in the world at others' expense.

Apart from its expression in the social and political philosophy of the Enlightenment, our kind of society reinforces this kind of individualism, which at the same time communicates a negative assessment of society itself, by holding before us what Robert Bellah in Habits of the Heart called images of 'mythic individualism'. Bellah pointed out, for example, that the mythic hero of the last generation was the cowboy who rides into a community and does something good for the community, but at the end of the day never finds his own destiny as a member of the community. Instead, he rides off into the sunset like the Lone Ranger, leaving the community the better off for his ridding it of cattle rustlers, or stagecoach robbers or hostile Indians or whatever, but also leaving the local school teacher looking wistfully after him over her picket fence as he goes. He never becomes a member of the community he serves. Rather, his own destiny is worked out essentially as an individual. Or take the more recent mythic hero of our own generation, not the cowboy but the detective, James Bond or any number of countless equivalents. The stereotypical detective takes up a client's problem only to find that it is not the client who has the problem but the

community: society is corrupt to the core, from the local mayor down, and the detective survives heroically by resisting being drawn into it by offers of drugs or sex or a bribe or whatever. Once again he finds his destiny essentially as an individual, rather than as a belonging member of a community with others. Indeed, the community is portrayed negatively; society is full of hostile forces that are to be resisted at all costs.

Now, I suspect all this has a very inhibiting and negative impact on our role as pastors. In other words, I want to suggest that the excessive individualism implicit in the liberal minded and tolerant approach to life of modem western society, may be subversive of our role as pastors charged particularly with gathering and leading and moving the flock from where they happen to be to a better place. For a start, if in liberal democratic societies each individual is free to pursue his or her own religious practices, believe as a matter of private opinion his or her own set of religious doctrines, and adopt his or her own particular lifestyle, then it is very difficult for the priest as pastor really to get involved. Instead of leading and feeding the flock, moving them from where they happen to be to what they might become, we subliminally feel that we should simply 'butt out' of what are essentially private lives. As pastors we are marginalized in this kind of society.

At best, if our services are sought out, we are careful to follow the norms of nondirective counseling, which once again allow the individual freedom to make his or her own decisions, and so respect the independence and autonomy of the individual. As a consequence, we become listeners, rather passively operating as a sounding board, perhaps helping to clarify issues, and making suggestions that may and or may not be taken up. This reduces our role of moving people from where they happen to be to what they might become, to a somewhat minimal leading of a very timid and passive kind.

We are further inhibited in the direction of being non-directive these days by the fear of being sued for giving wrong advice. The classic Australian case of the 1980s involved a Roman Catholic priest whose services were sought by a family to help them persuade their mother to sell up the family house and move into a nursing home. This she did on the priest's advice, only to find that the land was in the process of being rezoned at the time as high-density condominium housing. She lost a huge amount of potential income and then sued the priest for giving wrong advice. The fear of litigation inhibits us in our pastoral role. As society becomes more and more litigious we have to operate with more and more caution.

But there is worse to come. I think one reason why much of the dynamic sense of movement has tended to disappear from our understanding of the role of shepherd of the community, in favour of an idea of pastoral leadership in the form of management, is because the chief thrust of liberal individualism has been to generate a view of human nature and destiny which is very static.

Alastair McIntyre in his book After Virtue (1981), which is easily the most important book I have read in the last 20 years, pointed out that because of the individualism of modern western liberal democratic societies, most of our moral debates these days are not about our responsibilities to others in community, or about our growth together to moral and spiritual maturity, but about the preservation of individual rights. And they arise out of a fundamental concern that society (once again considered negatively) might be involved in the subtle erosion of those rights. After all, being free to do as I will in modem liberal democratic society, means being free of the moral restraints of the conventionally agreed upon values of the community. This means standing loosely to the very idea of community standards or a set of shared 'core community values'. Instead, it involves the right to follow, as an autonomous, independent individual, one's own privatized set of values. Thus we must be tolerant of diversity and respect the rights of others, but when

somebody encroaches on our space or does not respect our rights, we rely on law to impose limits and protect our rights.

Since the Enlightenment of the Eighteenth century the general mood in relation to the understanding of human nature has therefore become curiously static. You either have rights or you do not; if you do, you fight to preserve them in the face of the erosion of those rights by society, and if you don't, you struggle against society to secure them. Given the need vigilantly to protect one's rights, the individual tends to survive heroically as an individual in a state of siege. And being in the grip of a static mood of resistance, there is little room for movement.

If you think back over your experience as clergy in the last generation, I think it will be clear enough that we have as a Church become intimately involved in the struggle for human rights, the rights of racial minorities, feminist rights, the rights of women to enjoy equality with men in the work place, rights of women to be ordained, or gay rights. In society at large there are groups fighting to secure gray rights (aged person's rights), taxpayer's rights, consumers rights, even animal rights. Almost the entire moral agenda is conceived in terms of rights. Very recently in Australia we have gone round and around in circles, in heated public debate about the rights of single and lesbian women to have a child by IVF, as against the rights of a child to be brought up with a father in the home. In international terms we have been concerned about the erosion of civil rights in China and Burma and Iraq, and so on. Of course human rights are important, but my point is that over the last generation we have tended to become so absorbed with rights, as to think and talk exclusively about rights. Just peruse the agenda of your General Convention.

Now, a concentration of a defensive kind on a static ethic of individual rights, can be contrasted with a more dynamic and also positively communitarian approach to ethics and moral behaviour. This does not just react negatively to society as a potential threat to individual rights, but speaks instead more positively of the value of the community of friends with whom we live. In communion with them we seek to live life well by supporting one another in pursuit of what the Prayer Book calls a 'virtuous and godly life'. The importance of our belonging together, our being gathered as a flock, is that the Christian commitment to love and care entails that mutual inter-dependence, and mutual responsibility, rather than just individual autonomy or complete independence and freedom are the values that we feel motivated to cherish and to strive to uphold. It is the non-threatening atmosphere of the gathered flock, in which people know one another as friends, sharing a common life in the unity of one heart and mind, which provides the context for working out together our corporate destiny. We do not just tolerate a boundless diversity of moral and religious commitments; rather we work together through a process of civilized conversation and debate to discern the values which we may then hold up before one another as virtues to live by and to which to aspire. Indeed, it is the virtues, by contrast with a static life of defending individual rights, that as ideals motivate us to move from where we happen to be to what we might become. In this enterprise the pastor's role as gatherer of the flock is the presupposition of the exercise of the role of leadership in the specific form, not so much of management but of movement, movement for the purpose of the nurture and feeding of souls.

A pre-Enlightenment, let us for example, say Aristotelian, approach to ethics, taught the importance for the living of life well of the virtues that the community held up for persons to aspire to: A person becomes more trustworthy, honest, caring as these virtues are publicly defended and justified, upheld and cherished and passed on in the community. But an ethic of the virtues has given way to and been eclipsed in our kind of society by a static ethic of the protection of individual rights and the tolerance of a wide diversity of individual standpoints. This is why there is little suggestion of the movement of the individual from place to

place. One is simply tolerant of difference, or else we resist the erosive pressures of society to deprive individuals of their alleged inalienable rights.

The net effect of this may be more disastrous than we think with respect to our role as pastors. For starters, we unfortunately have to acknowledge that the privatization of morality has meant that, as a society, we have become more and more reticent about the teaching of morality to the young. After all, who are you to try to tell me how to live my life? It has been said that if God had been a liberal, he would have given us, not the Ten Commandments, but the Ten Suggestions.

Indeed, there is less and less incentive even to try to work out by rational conversation and community debate, what the best or most desirable set of agreed or shared values might be for the living of life well in a community. Because one moral viewpoint tends to be regarded as being as good as another (you do your thing and I'll do mine), then, it inevitably follows that a welter of conflicting viewpoints and sectional commitments is simply tolerated. But if one lifestyle is as good as another, then it follows that just about everything must be tolerated - for who are you to say that your values are better than mine? The idea of moral truth tends to go out the window in liberal democratic society, because we are schooled instead in liberal-minded tolerance of a plethora of alternative viewpoints. It has been said that a liberal is a person who leaves the room when a quarrel begins because he is too broad minded even to take his own side in a debate!

Another outcome, in a world of moral pluralism of a highly privatized and individualized kind where the quest for moral truth is abandoned, is that protest has become the standard way of expressing a political or moral point of view. Strident assertion and marches with placards tend to replace reasoned community conversation and debate, because nobody really believes that conventionally agreed upon community standards are really possible of achievement any more. Instead of an open and reasoned public discussion, conversation and debate, we end up, not with tolerance, but with a form of intolerance as everybody shouts louder in defense of their respective rights. Or worse, people revert to the abuse of others so as to assert specific rights; the bombing of abortion centers and so on then ensues.

Now, there is obviously a role for clergy in movements of social justice. As clergy we have rightly got involved in feminist rights, and womanist rights, and gay and lesbian rights and so on. But we need to be alert to the fact that a concentration of attention on rights means that there is likely to be a diminishment of the environment in which a sense of moral growth and movement has a place, or a growth in holiness, spiritual and personal movement from where we happen to be to what we might become. When you think about it when did you last hear or preach a sermon on the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude or courage?

But, you might say, what about our contemporary interest in spiritual direction and all our talk of the spiritual journey? Surely, you might think, this involves movement. Is not pastoral ministry exercised in the course of a journey, in which the individual works on his or her spiritual life with the pastor as soul friend? And talk of the journey surely implies movement. Well, I think once again this may be a little illusory. For the most part, over the last generation spiritual direction has become over psychologized. The so-called spiritual journey has very often been conceived in terms of depth, the longest and most rewarding journey being thought of in terms of self-discovery and self-knowledge. Jung has been drawn on: 'My pilgrim's progress has taken the form of journey down a thousand ladders until I could reach out to the little clod of earth which is the real me.' When you think about it, there is in this not only an unavoidable emphasis on the

individual, the real me; there is really very little notion of movement from where I happen to be to what I might become at all. Rather, the discovery of the real me, what makes me tick, why I react in the way I do in certain kinds of circumstance, the nuances of my sexual identity, and owning and accepting myself as God sees and loves me, for he loves me exactly as I am ... as I am... This is once again, a deceptively static understating of human nature and destiny. In other words, if we speak of the spiritual journey almost exclusively in terms of self-knowledge and self-discovery, it becomes a journey we all make right where we are, instead of a journey in which we move morally from where we happen to be to what we might become.

Finally, as we think of our pastoral role in terms of moving people to green pastures, from where they happen to be to a better place by upholding the conventionally agreed upon norms of a virtuous and godly life in the community of friends, and beckoning them on, it follows that the caring role of feeding the flock cannot be divorced from teaching. When in Ephesians Paul lists various kinds of ministries, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists and so on, he speaks of 'pastors and teachers'. And as I understand it, the Greek means not some pastors and some other teachers, but some who in one composite ministry are at the same time pastors and teachers; we are to think of the interpenetration of functions in one integrated role. As pastors, in other words, we should see ourselves as having a particular responsibility for the teaching of the virtues. And this we can value as something unique to the role of the priest as pastor, something quite different from the work of others in the caring professions.

Certainly, as I read of the ministry of John Henry Hobart, it seems to me, that that was primarily what he was about. Moving from place to place himself, prodigiously ambulant, gathering and caring for the flock wherever he went, but also teaching the life of the spirit, including promotion of a life of moral virtue, all as part of the specifically feeding and nurturing ministry of the shepherd. We have in him a paradigm of ministry that, for one reason or another has tended to be lost over the last few generations, a ministry involving the gathering of the flock, the leading of the flock, and the feeding of the flock by beckoning them on, gently moving them from where they happen to be to what they might become.