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Can You Hear My Pain Now?—Making Pastoral Theology Relevant in a Modern World

Foreword

by Professor Gerald R. McDermott

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When he saw the crowds, he was moved with pity for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matt 9:36

Remember that at one time you were without Messiah, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in this world. Eph 2:12

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Pastoral theology is an attempt by leaders in God’s Church to be like Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. The word “pastoral” comes from the Latin and Old French and means a shepherd who leads his flocks to places where they can eat.

Jesus saw that the crowds were afflicted from without (harassed) and tormented from within (helpless). So is the worldwide Body of Christ today. More and more it is persecuted by enemies who want to destroy it, even in the global North where until recently it was the principal bulwark of civilization. It is attacked from within by two great heresies. The first is against the doctrine of creation, which holds that marriage is the union of man and woman. The second is against the doctrine of salvation, which holds that Jesus Messiah (Christ) offers salvation from eternal suffering apart from God, and that this eternal suffering is real.

In this dark world where many are alienated and without God and hope, pastoral theology offers both God and hope. Orthodox pastoral theology knows that Jesus responded to harassed sheep by providing both healing and teaching (Matt 9:35). Orthodox pastoral theologians know that the Church must appeal to both mind and heart, for neither intellectualism nor sentimentalism satisfies. It knows that it is not enough for people to find God’s forgiveness (justification) without also pursuing holiness (sanctification). It recognizes that Lone Ranger Christianity (me and Jesus) is a perversion of the gospel and risks losing the true Jesus. It uses the great wealth of the historic Church to bring enlightenment and healing to sick and benighted souls. It points people toward not only the Word but also the Sacraments of the church. There they will find true community with genuine healing and restoration.

This book will help provide the healing which this world and Church so desperately need. May the Triune God use this volume to help pastors ministering to God’s sheep.

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