

A most interesting — and not insignificant — phenomenon of recent years has been the capture of the term "pastoral" by the progressives. All that is doctrinal, dogmatic, dismal and darkly reactionary has been left in the hands of the conservatives. All that is good and gentle is "pastoral," and that is the exclusive progressive domain.

If a document does not fit the progressive pattern, it is called "not pastoral." This is a key word, telling the progressives that the document deals in absolutes, speaks as if these had some authority over men's minds, and reflects a conformity to truth. "Pastoral," on the other hand, now connotes a certain amount of flexibility, a large dose of subjectivism, a live-and-let-live attitude toward "pluralism" of belief and thought.

Many bishops have been put into an absolute fright at the thought of being not "pastoral." I saw that part of the

phenomenon working very well at the recent Region VII meeting of the U.S. Hierarchy held at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Ill. There in that great enclave, like some ancient, medieval monastery or hierarchical estate, in buildings constructed long before the false division between that which is pastoral and that which is doctrinal was conceived, the Bishops heard much of the first draft of the *National Catechetical Directory* condemned as being "not pastoral." That meant it had — in the minds of these progressive experts — too much to say about what Catholics believe, and in conceptual and propositional terms, if you will. The language of the "pastoral" outlook is always in personalistic tones — that is to say open to any interpretation one cares to put upon it. The language of things "pastoral" is sticky, gooey, mushy, like the pabulum of our high-chair days. It goes down easy — without chewing. It is spoon-fed by the "experts," directed by the "middle management," as Bishop William McManus termed them — the superintendents of schools and the directors of religious education.

The "pastoral" world is like "Home on the Range," where never is heard a discouraging word. It is existentialism in discreet action — not giving birth exactly, for that is painful, but dividing itself like a vast growing mushroom or fungus. You can lean back into what is "pastoral," close your eyes, and before long you are enveloped, you disappear, along with all conflicts and solid things to which you might have ignorantly clung.

Now, the word pastoral properly means that which pertains to a shepherd. It was the Good Shepherd Who taught exactly what those things are — fidelity, courage, outspokenness. The Good Shepherd spoke with authority. He spoke about salvation and damnation, the former for those alone who heeded preachers of His doctrines, and the latter for those who would not listen to, or accept that doctrine.

He spoke about wolves who attack the sheep, when the hireling flees in terror, and about the true shepherd who remains with the flock. He spoke about the sheep recognizing the voice of the shepherd and following him alone. He spoke about thieves entering the sheepfold over the rear wall, while only the shepherd himself entered to lead the sheep to safe pastures.

In a word, the Good Shepherd of the New Testament doesn't fit at all what is today meant by being "pastoral." Rather, His words and actions fit exactly what is meant by the term "doctrinal." I hope the Bishops will consider that and see the significance of the calculated, and to date, successful attempt to corrupt a word that stands for the duty of the shepherd.

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