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The Eternal Triangle: Pastor, Spouse, and Congregation

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hymns. In this Epilogue he tips his hand ecumenically by wishing that "... the LBW will be the last North American Lutheran liturgical book" (512).

Who is this man whose writings have so influenced the theology and practise of Lutheran worship in our generation? In the first chapter, he identifies his bias as "ecumenical and traditional". He also claims to be to Lutheranism what Josef Jungmann was to the Romans. One wonders how his influence on our worship will be evaluated in retrospect a century from now.

For the present, at any rate, this influence continues to be normative among us. And this book is Pfatteicher's most comprehensive demonstration of authority to date. It incorporates a phenomenal and profound level of research and synthesis, reflecting a lifetime dedicated to the study of Lutheran and ecumenical liturgy. Do you really need this book? If you are a serious student of Lutheran liturgy, the answer is yes!

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The Eternal Triangle—Pastor, Spouse, & Congregation

Robert L. Randall
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992
182 pp. \$12.00 paperback

There is ready recognition these days of the paradox that, potentially, parish ministry is both richly fulfilling for a vocation and hazardous to one's health and well-being. What I remember of my seminary days some 30 years ago resembles a romantic fascination with ministry. As students we couldn't wait to get to our first church and we envisioned how together we "would live happily ever after". In my present involvement at the seminary I am aware that, beyond the excitement, there is anxiety among students as they prepare themselves for the congregation. There is apprehension about the frequency of conflicts leading to separation and divorce in current pastoral relationships. There is a sense of being at personal risk in the parish.

As such the metaphor of the intimate but volatile nature of marital interactions in connection with parish ministry, as proposed in the book *The Eternal Triangle* by pastoral psychotherapist Robert Randall, represents a pointed and provocative image. For Randall, however, it is more than a metaphor. Following recent theories in psychoanalytic developmental psychology he believes that relational needs from early infancy are resurrected and given a "second chance" for fulfillment both in marital and pastoral interactions. These relational demands gain dominance especially in those areas where serious deficits mark prior primary care relationships.

While it is hard enough, even in our more candid moments, to acknowledge infancy urgency and neediness in marital interactions, there may be even more constraints to do so in understanding pastoral interactions. Traditionally a more lofty and theological perspective is brought to the understanding of pastoral care. However, Randall constructs a parallel process between marital and pastoral relations as these two levels mirror similar dynamics and participate in reciprocal processes according to the book's title: *The Eternal Triangle: Pastor, Spouse, & Congregation*. Even if the pastor is not married, the congregation will adopt a "pastor's spouse", since "both a masculine and a feminine presence are required by a congregation" (vii). The congregation thus seeks to return to the original family and childhood scene, and the pastor is inducted in mediating this family process and regressive ritual.

Randall is a disciple of Kohut's self psychology which focuses on early developmental interactions between the infant and his or her care-giving environment. Rather than the Freudian preoccupation with the guilt-inducing oedipal stage of transgressing parental boundaries, Kohut emphasizes the more basic human needs for personal affirmation and support. From this perspective Randall discusses the identity needs of the pastor for being personally confirmed and supported in the relational matrix of the couple dynamics with spouse and parish in the context of the larger triangle matrix which binds all three partners in reciprocal interrelationships. While this may sound like reducing pastoral ministry to complex, psychological categories, Randall succeeds in writing a highly readable and engaging explanatory guide for pastors struggling with the ambiguities of their ministry.

Personally I have found that Kohut's psychology constitutes a rich source for informing the ministry of pastoral care and counselling. Randall's Kohutian applications persuasively demonstrate that an understanding of our human beginnings is foundational to all ministry, that, also as pastors, we never outgrow the needy child within us, and that in our personal caring and pastoral relationships we are intimately in touch with the inner child in others. Rather than being too psychological, a common complaint about pastoral counselling books, I think the psychological concepts could have been more closely connected with theological images. Psychological theories provide at best a distinct language and useful metaphor of the self in relation to others, and thus can both distract and contribute to our theological reflection.

Self psychology is a recent development in psychoanalytic object-relations theory which sees people as primarily relational by nature and behaviorally characterized by their early interpersonal relationships. In a 1993 M.Th. thesis at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Paul Scuse, an Anglican priest and pastoral counsellor, presents an engaging analysis of pastoral ministry from a variety of object-relations perspectives. Like Randall's assumption this study holds that such a psychological perspective as an interpretative symbol will guide and protect pastors in their ministry. These studies are part of an expanding literature which emphasizes that a human relational systems perspective is the best survival strategy available

against clergy burnout and escalating, run-away conflicts in the congregation. Perhaps the classic “survival manual” is Rabbi Friedman’s *Generation to Generation—Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (1985), in which yet another relational triangle is expounded in the three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregation, the congregation itself as a family, and the pastor’s own family.

I gladly welcome Randall’s book into the company of those who say that the level of debilitating stress in pastoral ministry may be more the result of how we view and interpret the dynamics of ministry than of what we actually do or fail to do in our ministry. *The Eternal Triangle* offers a perspective that, in my opinion, rings true in our own experience as it focuses on the emotional process rather than the content of what makes ministry not only a joy but a pain.

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Worship Reforming Tradition

Thomas Talley

Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1990

ix + 155 pp. \$14.50

Talley is an Episcopalian who, until his recent retirement, taught liturgy at General Theological Seminary in New York City. These are essays published elsewhere between 1979–1987. Some began as public addresses, and these benefit especially from Talley’s conversational style. However, he never sacrifices scholarly precision. Historical in nature, the essays show the broad range of Talley’s liturgical interests. He unpacks a wide variety of historical issues and problems for the reader.

His theme, “worship reforming tradition”, betrays Talley’s general thesis throughout the book: that liturgy and worship over the centuries have interacted with our traditions to influence, change, and adapt them. His topics include baptism and ordination; sources of the eucharistic prayer; healing; the liturgy of reconciliation; history and eschatology in the primitive Easter celebration; the origins of Lent and All Saints; and the liturgical year.

Sometimes essays like these, in addition to being “historical”, can also be written off as “history”. Not so Talley’s collection here. His research is current enough that nothing comes through as outdated. Talley is on the frontier of liturgical research, and most of us have a long way to go to catch up with him!

He provides many fascinating nuggets within his essays, some of which indicate what history at its best can teach us. For example (69f), he describes the development of the “confessional booth”, under Charles Borromeo in Milan between 1560–1584, as a practical device to protect and