



Soft Shepherd or Almighty Pastor?: Power and Pastoral Care

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In *Soft Shepherd or Almighty Pastor?* contributors seek to go beyond the taboo on "power" within pastoral contexts. They not only discuss fundamental theological and philosophical questions about power but also develop ways to prevent power abuse in pastoral context. Power is considered as omnipresent and is analyzed in its positive and negative aspects. Not only the classical associations of "power over" or "domination" are discussed in relation to ecclesial and pastoral situations, but also forms of power linked to "service" and "care". A sacrificial spirituality might also be dangerous. *Soft Shepherd or Almighty Pastor?* gathers ten contributions, all of which reflect on the complexity of power issues, also in relation to sexual abuse. The authors argue that dealing adequately with power requires renewed forms of theological thinking, especially about ministry.

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Editorial Review

Review

"From the evocative title to the final chapter, this collection provokes deep reflection on the multiple forms of power, powerlessness, and empowerment within pastoral relationships. I am especially impressed with the analysis of social, intercultural, and spiritual dimensions. The conference organizers and book editor have done an excellent job choosing just the right contributors, and just the right issues, to make this critical reading for ministers and those who teach them."

--Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Religion, Psychology, and Culture, The Divinity School, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

"It is the taboo surrounding power that makes power so powerful' (Gärtner). The taboo on power in pastoral counseling is broken powerfully in this book. Courageous pastoral care requires an honest encounter with the complexities of power in oneself, pastoral relationships, and structural dynamics. With this rich variety of perspectives, the caring pastor can navigate carefully through the maze of power to find a morally and emotionally sound way of caring well."

--Yolanda Dreyer, Head of Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

"These essays in practical theology enrich and broaden the ongoing discussion of power and its roles in ministries of care and counseling. Students, scholars, and practitioners will be better equipped to understand and respond to the complex relationship of power and compassion. The book features the most recent insights from Europe and the United States into the ways neoliberal market assumptions shape power in spiritual care."

--Duane Bidwell, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Spiritual Care, and Counseling, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA

"This excellent book provides rich and nuanced discussions of the negative and positive role of power in pastoral and religious contexts. The often disguised and strategic use of power in pastoral situations is perfectly exposed without neglecting its receptive and agentic aspects. The book provides readers with a good introduction to an often neglected and much discredited topic. It will be particularly valuable for the education and training of pastors and religious leaders, but practical theologians and those with a more general interest in the use and abuse of power in communal and cultural settings will also benefit from this stimulating book."

--Jaco Dreyer, President of the International Academy for Practical Theology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa --Wipf and Stock Publishers

About the Author

Annemie Dillen is Associate Professor of Pastoral and Empirical Theology at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium. She is the coeditor of *Prophetic Witness in World Christianities* (2011) and *Children's Voices: Children's Perspectives in Ethics, Theology and Religious Education* (2010).

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