Chapter 1

A Study of Cats: Wild and Domestic

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Wild Cats

Beeley expresses the purpose of this book as extending the impact of effective church leadership beyond the membership of the church: “… the vitality of the church holds enormous potential for the well-being of the many societies in which we live” (p. xi). This purpose is pursued by systematically exploring the foundational dimensions of pastoral leadership—spirituality of the leader, service to parishioners, the role of scripture and theology, and finally ministry of the Word. Though the non-Anglican Protestant reader may struggle with some of Beeley’s practical theology of his Anglican tradition the counsel he draws from the church fathers is profoundly helpful.

Leopards

Rodin ([Rodin, 2010, p. 34](#_ENREF_3)) reports that the development of people capable of sustaining effective church leadership is given priority by the early church and is clearly connected to the dramatic growth experienced during this period. The pastors, “those who shepherd God’s flock on behalf of Christ,” (p. 6) are presented as stewards with leadership responsibility for the care of God’s people. The bishop (supervisor of pastors) is also described as being a pastor who cares for his people rather than as an “administrative official” (p.7). This was accomplished by the bishop assuming “servant-like authority and authoritative service” whereby they “exercise their authority not by throwing their weight around, but by helping to build others up” (p.12).

Lion Habitat

The “reputation of the pastor is won by the fruitful lives of those they serve.” Beeley quotes the counsel of Ambrose to pastors who should demonstrate their effectiveness not through self but rather, “‘Show your virtue in your spiritual children” (p.15).

This focus on generative service to people marks comments assembled by Beeley regarding the role of the pastor and bishop in the early church and reveals a strong likeness to the servant leadership model encouraged in church leaders today.

This provides a challenge to the practice of evaluating pastors on the quantitative basis of growth productivity rather than on the basis of disciples created through training and equipping. It appears through the testimony of the church fathers that the early church may have been more attuned to the concept of growth through the development and multiplication of leaders through discipleship than we are today.

Lion Food

It was also interesting to consider Beeley’s report that the early church practiced a “profoundly social” (pp.19, 73) selection process in choosing their pastors and bishops. This was done through a relational process of observation of the person and discernment of their giftedness that recommended them to positions of leadership. Multiple reasons are given to support the idea that, “the candidate’s inward sense of calling is much less important compared to the discernment of the community” (p.20). Though not dealt with in the book revelation piques my curiosity as to when that community component faded from common practice.

From the country's leading presidential historian, The Bully Pulpit is a masterful and deeply insightful study of presidents – freshly told through the decades-long and complicated friendship of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Like with Lyndon Johnson, the Kennedys, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln, Doris Kearns Goodwin meticulously and with great perception and compassion captures an epic moment in history, when in 1912, Roosevelt and Taft engage in a brutal fight for the presidency - a fight that destroys both their political futures, while seriously weakening the progressive wing of the Republican Party, and dividing their wives, their children, and their closest friends. ([Kearns, 2013](#_ENREF_2))

Cheetah

This book strongly emphasizes the need for pastoral leadership to be buttressed by authentic biblical spirituality. Nanzianzus is colorfully quoted in support of this emphasis, “Who would think of teaching a musical instrument, Gregory asks, without first learning to play? Or who would presume to captain a ship who hasn’t first handled the oar, taken the helm, and had some experience of the wind and the sea?” (p.31). The trust invested by the people in their leader is directly related to the Godly spirituality demonstrated by the leader. The character of the leader is critical to effective leadership.

Cheetah Habitat

The delivery of the ministry task is couched in the language of healing—The Cure of Souls. As such, according to Beeley’s report of the church fathers, the pastor’s primary role is the process of bringing the members to a place of wholeness and peace with God. “Gregory the Great reminds us that pastoral guidance must be exercised in great humility by leaders who attend first of all to their own spiritual condition before God, ‘for the hand that would cleanse others must itself be cleansed, or it will soil everything it touches’” (p.73). This emphasis of the prerequisite spiritual fitness of the pastoral leader is consistently emphasized throughout the book.

Cheetah Food

The final two dimensions: scripture and theology, and ministry of the Word were collectively the most outstanding contribution of this book. The counsels from these ancient sources bear a powerful testimony to the centrality of the Word in the life and leadership of the pastor. The effective pastor must be and remain a committed student of the Word and follow a discipline of theological study as a condition of being entrusted with the authority of spiritual leadership. Beeley again quotes Gregory the Great:

Domestic Cats

No one presumes to teach an art that one hasn’t mastered through study. How foolish would it be therefore, for an inexperienced person to assume pastoral authority when the cure of souls is the very art of arts? Who doesn’t realize that the afflictions of the mind are even more hidden than the internal wounds of the body? And yet, how often do people who are completely ignorant of spiritual precepts show no fear in proclaiming themselves physicians of the heart, when anyone who is ignorant of the power of medicine would be embarrassed to be a physician of the body? (p.77)

Tabby

For the pastoral leader the application and distribution of the Word through teaching and preaching is, according to Nazianzus, “’The first of all our concerns’” (p.105). Integrity in the use of scripture, professionalism in its presentation are matters of highest importance if we would remain consistent with the counsel of those who pastored in the centuries immediately following the ministry of Jesus on this earth. ([Banks, 2008, p. 71](#_ENREF_1))

Calico

My criticism of this book would fall in the area of sensitivity to the broad readership it will likely attract. Use of the more generic term of “pastor” rather than “priest” would allow a more inclusive understanding and even application of the content Beeley is recommending. The preface could have contained an explanation of the ecclesiastical context from which the book is written and how it impacts issues related to church authority, personal authority of the pastor, the pastor’s role or lack of it in the forgiveness of sins of congregants, etc. This would have eliminated the need for non-Anglicans (excluding Roman Catholic and Orthodox) to interpret content unique to that religious setting and to find a common understanding on the critical dimensions of pastoral leadership.

I would recommend Leading God’s People as helpful reading for church leaders who would better understand the heritage of an age long past wherein faithful men served as bishops and pastors and who led the church during difficult times as it transitioned doctrinally and organizationally. Reading and benefitting from Beeley’s work will require an understanding of the unique characteristics of the Anglican tradition from which he writes but spiritual leaders should know that there is wisdom to be gleaned from this book.

My favorite quote follows:

“No exhortation can encourage the laity, no reproof can correct their sins if the person who is supposed to be a protector of souls becomes the executor of earthly affairs” [Gregory the Great] (p. 103).

Banks, S. P. (2008). Dissent and the failure of leadership. Cheltlenham, UK ; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Kearns, D. (2013). Teddy Roosevelt Bully Pulpit Retrieved September 17, 2013, from <http://www.doriskearnsgoodwin.com/books.html#the-bully-pulpit>

Rodin, R. S. (2010). The steward leader:Transforming people, organizations and communities. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic.