

Preface

THIS VOLUME CONTAINS A selection of papers presented at the expert seminar on power and pastoral care in Leuven, “*Soft Shepherd or Almighty Pastor?*” *Power (im)balances in Pastoral Care*, 5–8 January 2012, complemented by a few new chapters written for this volume.

After my introductory chapter on various meanings of power in relation to church, theology, and pastoral work, there are nine other chapters. The volume is divided into four main parts, each reflecting a different aspect of power. The first part deals with fundamental philosophical and theological reflections on power and pastoral care. This part opens with the contribution of Machteld Reynaert, titled “A Web of Power.” She shows the complexity of power and thus stimulates awareness that power is everywhere and needs to be recognized. The second chapter is a reflection of Roger Burggraefe and Anne Vandenhoeck about power and compassion in pastoral work, inspired by Michel Foucault. In the third chapter, Stefan Gärtner offers his fundamental reflections on power and pastoral care under the title “Beyond the Almighty Pastor: On Three Forms of Power in Pastoral Care.”

The second part of this volume deals with aspects of interculturality. The relations between power and cultural identity, intercultural relations and prejudices are deepened in two chapters, one of Carrie Doehring (“Self-Affirming Prejudice and the Abuse of Pastoral Power”) and one of Emmanuel Lartey (“‘When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong’: An African Christian Reflection on the Ambiguities, Paradoxes, and Challenges of Pastoral Power”).

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The third part deals explicitly with power and sexual abuse, although the contributions in this part also offer insights that go much further than sexual abuse. Didier Pollefeyt reflects on the use of power in pastoral guiding, centered around the theme of intimacy. Cristina Traina reflects on the role of eros, under the title “A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing: Dealing Honestly with Pastoral Power.” Both authors offer also insights for dealing in an adequate way with power in order to avoid power abuse. In the concluding, fourth part, specific issues in relation to pastoral work form the starting point of reflections on power. Jana Binon speaks about empowerment in relation to persons with a psychiatric disorder. The concept of human flourishing is central in this contribution. Axel Liégeois concludes with a specific reflection on preventing power abuse in pastoral settings. He explores the role of informed consent and its complexities in pastoral counseling. Each author has his or her specific terms and ideas about power and pastoral work. As a whole, these contributions offer a complementary view alongside one another for consideration.

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