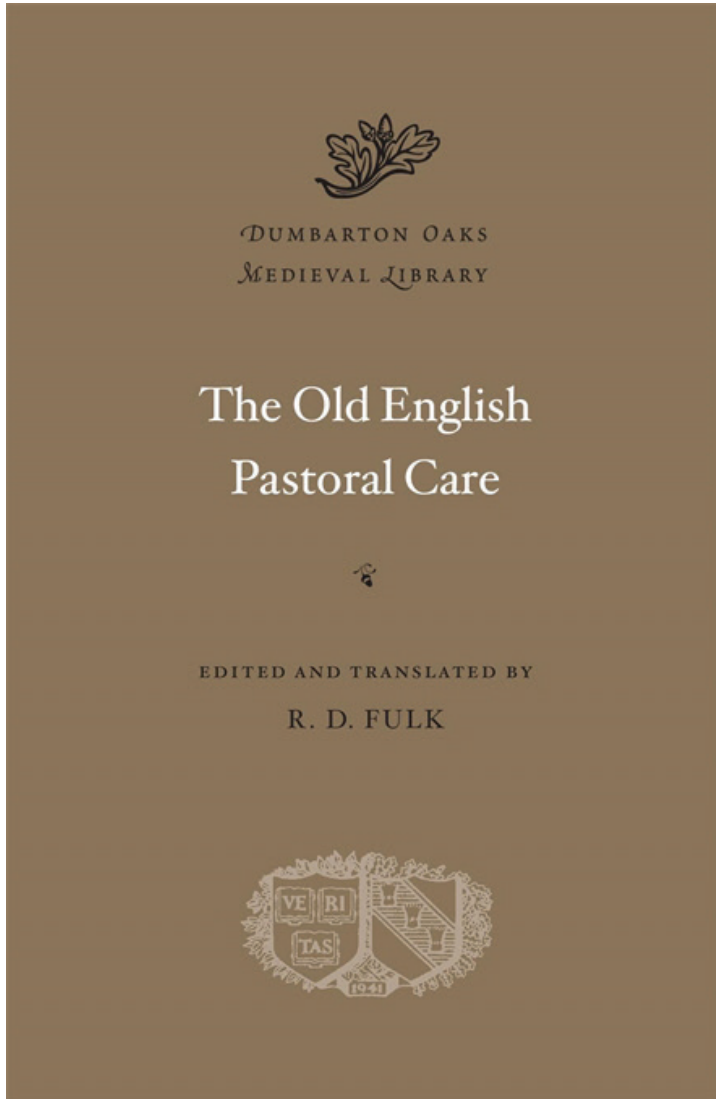


# The Old English Pastoral Care

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY R. D. FULK



*The Book of Pastoral Rule*, or *Liber regulae pastoralis*, by **Pope Gregory the Great**—the pontiff responsible for the conversion of the English to Christianity beginning in 597—is a guide for aspiring bishops. Pope Gregory explains who ought and who ought not seek such a position and advises on what sort of spiritual guidance a bishop should provide to those under his direction.

*The Old English Pastoral Care*, a translation of Gregory's treatise completed between 890 and 896, is described in a prefatory letter by **King Alfred the Great** as his own work, composed with the assistance of his bishops and chaplains. It appears to be the first of the Alfredian translations into Old English of Latin texts deemed necessary for the revitalization of the English Church, which had been ravaged by the depredations of Scandinavian invaders during the ninth century and by the decline of clerical competence in Latin.

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Inside

# The Old English Pastoral Care



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THE OLD ENGLISH  
PASTORAL CARE

## DEDICATORY LETTER OF GREGORY

**Þ**u leofusta broður, suiðe freondlice ond suiðe fremsumlice ðu me tældesð, ond mid eaðmode ingeðonce ðu me cid-desð, forðon ic min mað, ond wolde fleon ða byrðenne ðære hirdelecan giemenne. Ðara byrðenna hefignesse, eall ðæt ic his geman, ic awrite on ðisse andweardan bec, ðy læs hi hwæm leohte ðyncen to underfonne; ond ic eac lære ðæt hira nan ðara ne wilnie ðe hine unwærlice bega; ond se ðe hi unwærlice ond unryhtlice gewilnige, ondræde he ðæt he hi æfre underfenge.

<sup>2</sup> Nu ic wilnige ðætte ðeos spræc stigge on ðæt ingeðonc ðæs leorneres, suæ suæ on sume hlædre, stæpmælum near ond near, oð ðæt hio fæstlice gestonde on ðæm solore ðæs modes ðe hi leornige. Ond forðy ic hi todæle on feower: an is ðara dæla hu he on ðone folgoð becume; oðer hu he ðæron libbe; ðridra is hu he ðæron lære; feorðe is hu he his agene unðeawas ongietan wille ond hira geðæf bion, þy læs he for ðy underfenge his eaðmodnesse forlæte, oððe eft his lif sie ungelic his ðenunga, oððe he to ðriste ond to stið sie for ðy underfenge his lareowdomes. Ac gemetgige hit se ege his agenra unðeawa, ond befæste he mid his lifes bisenum ða lare ðæm ðe his wordum ne geliefen. Ond ðonne he god weorc wyrce, gemyne he ðæs yfeles ðe he worhte, ðette sio unrotnes, ðe he for ðæm yflan weorcum hæbbe, gemetgige

## DEDICATORY LETTER OF GREGORY

**D**earest brother, in friendly and kindly fashion you re-proved me, and with humble intent you chided me for having hidden myself and for having wished to escape the burden of pastoral care. The oppressiveness of those burdens, all that I remember of it, I will write of in this present book, to prevent their seeming to anyone light to assume; and I likewise advise that no one covet them who will take them up without caution; and let whoever desires them rashly and improperly tremble at ever having assumed them.

Now I intend for this discourse to ascend in the mind of <sup>2</sup> the learner as if on a certain ladder, step by step, nearer and nearer, until it stands firmly on the sunny uppermost floor of the mind that studies it. And therefore I divide it into four parts: one of the parts is how he shall attain the office; the second how he should conduct his life in it; third is how he should teach in it; fourth is how he should wish to recognize his own vices and contend with them, so that he not lose his humility on account of taking office, or his life in turn be incommensurate with his duties, or he be too inflexible and too stern for the assumption of his teaching duties. But let the fear of his own vices temper it, and by the example of his life let him affirm his teaching to those who may not believe his words. And when he does a good deed, let him remember the bad that he has done, so that the discomfort he feels for those evil acts may temper the satisfaction

ðone gefean ðe he for ðæm godan weorcum hæfde, ðy læs he beforan ðæs dieglan deman eagum sie ahafen on his mode ond on his ofermettum aðunden, ond ðonne ðurh ðæt selflice his godan weorc forleose.

3 Ac monige sindon me suiðe onlice on ungelærednesse: ðeah ðe hi næfre leorningcnihtas næren, wilniað ðeah lareowas to beonne, ond ðyncet him suiðe leoht sio byrðen ðæs lareowdomes, forðon ðe hi ne cunnon ðæt mægen his micelnesse. From ðære dura selfre ðisse bec—ðæt is from onginne ðisse spræce—sint adrifene ond getælde ða unwaran ðe him agniat ðone cræft ðæs lareowdomes ðe hi na ne geleornodon.

which he might have had in the good deeds, to prevent his being high-flown in his mind and conceited in his pride before the eyes of the unseen judge, and through that self-regard vitiate his good works.

But many are quite like me with respect to want of learning: though they were never disciples, they wish nonetheless to be teachers, and the burden of teaching seems to them very light, because they cannot recognize its immensity. From the very door of this book—that is, from the beginning of this treatise—the unwary who appropriate the craft of teaching without having learned it are expelled and reproved.

## BOOK ONE

### Chapter 1

#### 1. Ðætte unlærde ne dyrren underfon lareowdom.

**F**orðon ðe nan cræft nis to læranne ðæm ðe hine ær geornlice ne leornode, for hwon beoð æfre suæ ðriste ða ungelæredan ðæt hi underfon ða heorde ðæs lariowdomes, ðonne se cræft ðæs lareowdomes bið cræft ealra cræfta? Hua nat ðæt ða wunda ðæs modes bioð digelran ðonne ða wunda ðæs lichaman? Ond ðeah ða woroldlecan læcas scomaþ ðæt hi onginnen ða wunda lacnian ðe hi gesion ne magon, ond huru gif hi nouðer gecnawan ne cunnan ne ða medtrymnesse ne eac ða wyrta ðe ðærwið sculon. Ond hwilon ne scomað ða ðe ðæs modes læceas beon scoldon, ðeah ðe hi nane wuht ongitan ne cunnon ðara gæstlecena beboda, ðæt hie him onteoð ðæt hie sien heortan læcas. Ac forðon ðe nu eall se weorðscipe ðisse worolde is gecierred, Gode ðonc, to weorðscipe ðæm æwfæstum, ðæt ða sindon nu weorðoste ðe æwfæstoste sindon, forðon licet suiðe monig ðæt he æwfæsð lareow sie, ðe he wilniað micle woroldare habban. Be ðam Crisð selfa cleopode, ond ðus cwæð: “Hi secað ðæt hi mon ærest grete ond weorðige on ceapstowum ond on gebeorscipum, ond ðæt hie fyrmest hlynigen æt æfengiefum, ond ðæt ieldesðe setl on gemetengum hi secað.” Forðon hie sua on

## BOOK ONE

### Chapter 1

#### 1. That the untutored not presume to undertake teaching.

**B**ecause no craft is to be taught by someone who has not already learned it, why are the uneducated so presumptuous as to undertake the responsibility of teaching, when the craft of teaching is the craft of all crafts? Who does not know that the wounds of the spirit are more perplexing than the wounds of the body? And yet mundane physicians are ashamed at setting out to heal wounds they cannot see, and especially if they neither recognize nor know how to deal with either the complaint or the herbal remedies to be applied. And sometimes, though those who would be physicians of the soul are at a loss how to interpret spiritual precepts at all, they feel no compunction at taking it on themselves to be healers of the heart. But because all the esteem of this world is now converted, thanks be to God, to esteem of the pious, so that now those are most revered who are the most devout, many pretend to be pious teachers because they wish to have grand worldly honors. Christ himself cried out against such and spoke thus: “They aim to be approached first and paid homage in marketplaces and at banquets, and to be the first to recline at suppers, and they claim the foremost seat at assemblies.” Because they thus

ofermettum ond mid upahafenesse becomað to ðære are ðære hirdelecan giemne, hi ne magon medomlice ðenian ða ðenunga, ond ðære eaðmodnesse lareowas bion; ac so tunge bið gescinded on ðam lariowdome ðonne hio oðer lærð, oðer hio liornode. Suelcum monnum Dryhten cidde ðurh ðone witgan, ond him suelc oðwat, ða he cuæð, “Hie ricsedon—næs ðeah mines ðonces. Ealdormen hi wæron, ond ic hie ne cuðe.” Ða ðe sua ricsieað, hi ricsiað of hira agnum dome, næs of ðæs hiehstan deman, ðonne hi ne beoð mid nanre sylle underscotene ðæs godcundlican mægenes, ne for nanum cræfte gecorene, ac mid hira agenre gewilnunge hie bioð onbærneðe, ðæt hie gereafiað sua heane lariowdom suiðor ðonne hi hine geearnien. Hie ðonne se eca ond se diegla dema up ahefeð suelce he hi nyte, ond geðafiende he hit forbireð for ðam dome his geðylde. Ac ðeah hi on ðam hade fela wundra wyrren, eft ðonne hi to him cumað, he cuið, “Gewitað from me ge unryhtwyrhtan; nat ic hwæt ge sint.” Eft he hie ðreade ðurh ðone witgan for hira ungelærednesse, ða he cuæð, “Ða hierdas næfdon ondgit: hie æfdon mine æ, ond hi me ne gecniowon.” Se ðe Godes bebodu ne gecnæð, ne bið he oncnawen from Gode. Ðæt ilce cuæð *sanctus* Paulus: “Se ðe God ne ongit, ne ongit God hine.”

- 2 Unwise lareowas cumað for ðæs folces synnum. Forðon oft for ðæs lareowes unwise misfarað ða hieremenn, ond oft for ðæs lareowes wise unwise hieremonnum bið geborgen. Gif ðonne ægðer bið unwise, ðonne is to geðencanne hwæt Crisð self cuæð on his godspelle; he cwæð, “Gif se blinda ðone blindan læt, hi feallað begen on ænne pytt.” Be ðæm ilcan se sealmscop cuæð, “Sien hira eagan aðistode

attain to the dignity of pastoral care in pride and with self-aggrandizement, they cannot adequately perform the duties and be teachers of humility; but in instructing, the tongue is abused teaching one thing when it has learned another. The Lord reprimanded such people through the prophet and charged them with such when he said, “They ruled—not, however, by my consent. They were princes, and I did not know them.” Those who so rule govern by their own authority, not that of the highest judge, when they are not sustained by any foundation of divine strength, nor chosen for any achievement, but they are inflamed with their own desire, so that they thus usurp the high office of teacher more than they earn it. The eternal and unseen judge then makes them eminent as if he did not know them, and patiently he allows it for the dignity of his forbearance. And though they may work many wonders in that office, when at length they come to him, he will say, “Depart from me, you malefactors. I do not know who you are.” Again he censured them through the prophet for their want of learning when he said, “These shepherds have no understanding: they had my law, and they did not know me.” Whoever does not know God’s commandments is unknown to God. Saint Paul said just the same: “Whoever does not recognize God, God does not recognize him.”

Ignorant teachers arise on account of the people’s sins. 2 For that reason followers often are led astray on account of the teacher’s fatuity, and often foolish followers are spared because of the teacher’s wisdom. If both are foolish, then what Christ himself said in his gospel is to be kept in mind: he said, “If the blind lead the blind, the two will fall into one and the same pit.” About the same the psalmist said, “May



ðæt hi ne geseon, ond hiora hrygc simle gebieged.” Ne cuæð he ðæt forðy ðe he ænegum men ðæs wyscte oððe wilnode, ac he witgode sua sua hit geweorðan sceolde. Soðlice ða eagan, ðæt beoð ða lareowas, ond se hrygc, ðæt sint ða hieremenn, forðan ða eagan bioð on ðam lichoman foreweardum ond ufewardum, ond se hrygc færð æfter ælcra wuhte; sua gað ða lareowas beforan ðæm folce, ond ðæt folc æfter. Donne ðam lareowum aðstriað ðæs modes eagan, ðe beforan gan scoldon mid godum bisenum, ðonne gebigð ðæt folc hira hrygc to hefegum byrðenum manegum.

## Chapter 2

11. Ne eft ða gelæredan, ðe swa nyllað libban swa hie on bocum leornedon, ðæt hi scoldon ne underfon ða are ðæs lareowdomes.

**M**onige eac wise lareowas winnað mid hira ðeawum wið ða gæsðlecan bebodu ðe hi mid wordum lærað, ðonne hie on oðre wisan libbað on oðre hi lærað. Oft ðonne se hirde gæð on frecne wegass, sio hiord, ðe unwærre bið, gehrist. Be suelicum hirdum cwæð se witga, “Ge fortrædon Godes sceapagærs ond ge gedrefdon hiora wæter mid iowrum fotum, ðeah ge hit ær undrefed druncen.” Sua ða lareowas: hi drincað suiðe hluter wæter, ðonne hi ðone godcundan wisdom leorniað, ond eac ðonne hie hiene lærað; ac hie hit gedrefað

their eyes be dimmed so that they cannot see, and their back always bent.” He did not say that because he wished or intended it of any person, but he prophesied as to how it should chance to be. In truth, the eyes are the teachers and the back is the followers, for the eyes are in front and upward in the body, and the back comes behind each creature; thus, the teachers go before the people, and the people behind. When the mind’s eyes, which should lead with good examples, grow dim in teachers, the people bend their back to many heavy burdens.

## Chapter 2

2. And, in turn, that the educated who will not live as they have learned in books should not assume the dignity of teaching.

**M**any learned teachers likewise by their actions wage a struggle against the spiritual precepts that they teach with their words when they live in one fashion and teach in another. Often, when the shepherd walks in perilous ways, the herd, which is less wary, topples over. About such shepherds the prophet said, “You trampled the grass of God’s sheep, and you sullied their water with your feet, though you had already drunk it unsullied.” Thus the teachers: they drink very pure water when they learn divine wisdom, and also when they teach it; but they foul it with their own vices

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