

Christian Pastors Violate Biblical Principles and Pay the Price



The Pastor. He is the fundamental figure of the Protestant faith. So prevailing is the pastor in the minds of most Christians that he is often better known, more highly praised, and more heavily relied upon than Jesus Christ Himself! The unscriptural clergy/laity distinction has done untold harm to the body of Christ. It has divided the believing community into first and second-class Christians... and perpetuates an awful falsehood – namely, that some Christians are more privileged than others to serve the Lord... We believe the pastoral office has stolen your right to function as a full member of Christ's body. It has distorted the reality of the body, making the pastor a giant mouth and transforming you into a tiny ear. It has rendered you a mute spectator who is proficient at taking sermon notes and passing an offering plate. The contemporary pastor is the most unquestioned fixture in twenty-first-century Christianity. Yet not a strand of Scripture supports the existence of this office.

– **Frank Viola** and **George Barna** in 'Pagan Christianity?'

And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. – John 10:16

MIDDLE EAST, India, October 24, 2011 — There's only one kind of pastor I would trust and whose church I would join: Someone who does not allow people to call him pastor and provides clear evidence that he believes in the priesthood of all believers, acknowledging there is only one Good Shepherd.

I would rather that he not call himself a shepherd at all, but rather be willingly known for his role as the Master's sheep dog. A pastor should not be someone who thinks he is set apart as a specially anointed spiritual leader who merely pays lip service to the royal priesthood of every believer (1Peter 2) and tries to supplant the headship of Christ.

You would think that any organization would teach its members the lessons of its greatest failures, hoping they would avoid repeating them. When it comes to Christianity, however, the clergy, remains determined to ensure that the obvious, long-term failures will continue into the future.

It's as if they want to prove Einstein's definition of insanity, "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

If papal credibility is waning and widespread perversion is undermining clerical Catholic celibacy, the eminence of the pastor and the sacred-secular divide may be the single most important reason why Protestant Christianity is coming apart.

But the half a million strong American clergy will not give up its religious pedestal easily. Worse yet, the pastor system have been exported all over the world wherever Protestant denominations exist.

The Roman Catholic clergy claims exclusive “apostolic succession,” a traceable lineage back to the original bishops and to the Twelve Apostles. Since the Reformation, Protestants view the “apostolic” nature of ordained ministry only as following the apostolic teaching – the Gospel of Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the New Testament. They consider the notion of a literal “apostolic succession” extra biblical, if not spurious.

Christ's charge to the apostle Peter telling him to shepherd his sheep is seen as appointing him as a pastor by Protestants and the first pope by Roman Catholics.

I journeyed out of Roman Catholicism only to discover that the Protestant pastor is basically a married, modified Catholic priest and a territorial mini-Pope.

The word pastor usually refers to an ordained leader of a congregation and is derived from the Latin pastor which means “shepherd.” Rooted in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word (ro 'eh) is mentioned 173 times to describe the feeding of sheep, as in Genesis 29:7, or the spiritual feeding of human beings, as in Jeremiah 3:15, “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.”

In the New Testament, the Greek noun ποιμήν (poimēn) and verb ποιμαίνω (poimaino) are usually translated shepherd or to shepherd. The two words are used a total of 29 times in the New Testament, most frequently referring to Jesus. For example, Jesus called himself the "Good Shepherd" in John 10:11. The reference also appears in the familiar Christmas story (Luke 2) referring to literal shepherds.

In the five New Testament passages below, the reference is to church workers – there is no indication of pastors of our modern day version, most of whom undermine the scriptural teaching that every believer is a priest:

- John 21:16 – Jesus tells Peter, “Shepherd My sheep.”
- Acts 20:28 – the Apostle Paul summons the elders or presbyters of the church in Ephesus and tells them the Holy Spirit has made them bishops, and that their job is to shepherd the flock of God.
- 1 Corinthians 9:7 – Paul asks, referring to himself and the apostles, “Who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?”
- Ephesians 4:11 – Paul writes, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.”
- 1 Peter 5:1-2 – Peter tells the elders among his readers that they are to, “shepherd the flock of God among you.”

Notwithstanding the use of the term pastors in Ephesians 4:11, according to Viola and Barna, “There is not a single verse in the entire New Testament that supports the existence of the

modern-day pastor! He simply did not exist in the early church. Remove the pastor and most Protestant churches would be thrown into a panic. Remove the pastor, and Protestantism as we know it would die. The pastor is the dominating focal point, mainstay, and centerpiece of the contemporary church. He is the embodiment of Protestant Christianity.”

Christ was in regular conflict with clergy, but Christianity continues to hone priestcraft in some of America’s finest schools of Christian learning, which thus perpetuate the myth of the superman pastor. Outstanding seminaries routinely exalt programs for pastors and minimize those that do not lead to “full time ministry.”

The pastor pays a heavy price for his self imposed superhuman role, damaging not only himself but the body of Christ, as Viola and Barna point out: “The one-man ministry is entirely foreign to the New Testament, yet we embrace it while it suffocates our functioning. We are living stones, not dead ones. However the pastoral office has transformed us into stones that do not breathe.”

Startling statistics on pastors by the FASICLD (Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development), after over 18 years of researching pastoral trends indicate that pastors are in perhaps the single most stressful and frustrating profession, more than medical doctors, lawyers, or politicians.

According to Barna and Viola, 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches. Here are some other startling facts:

- Fifty percent of pastors' marriages will end in divorce.
- Fifty percent of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living.
- Seventy percent of pastors constantly fight depression.
- Almost forty percent polled said they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry.
- Seventy percent said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons.

An extensive new survey of more than 35,000 Americans age 18 and older by the *Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* reveals that more than one-quarter of American adults have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion – or no religion at all. Among Americans ages 18-29, one in four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion.

The 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey confirms that the United States is on the verge of becoming a minority Protestant country; the number of Americans who report that they are members of Protestant denominations now stands at barely 51%.

The impotence of following a religion called Christianity could not be more obvious.

What is exasperating is that despite pointing out how millions are being misled, Viola and Barna refuse to declare that institutional Christianity is an outright falsehood.

That only Christ matters.