

Sharing Life, Sharing Faith Discussion #8

I. Office of the Holy Ministry (The Pastoral Office)

Thesis VIII: The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church, and from it stem all other offices in the church. ¹ (C.F.W. Walther)

A. The Pastoral Office is distinct from the “Priesthood of All Believers”.

It is important that we distinguish the Pastoral Office from the man who holds that office. Being ordained into that Office recognizes that the holder of the office publicly provides the gifts associated with that Office.

The vocation of pastor is a special office indeed. Not that it is more meritorious than any other vocation. God acts and is hidden in other vocations as well. But the pastoral office serves not just the world but God's spiritual kingdom. Christ is active in the pastor's work in a saving way, giving the pastor's works and ministry eternal consequences. Christ proclaims His forgiveness of sins through the lips of a pastor. It is Christ who is preaching, baptizing, presiding at His Supper, and in the deepest sense "ministering" to His people, through the earthen vessel of the pastor. This is not just mystical symbolism but a plain fact.² (Dr. Gene Edward Veith)

B. The Pastor's responsibilities to the Congregation

1. He must know the doctrine of God

A proficiency in the biblical languages also find its place. Because languages differ from one another, any translation to a different language loses at the very least some nuances. Therefore, to be a competent exegete, one must be able to read the text in the language used by an author and understood by his original readers.³ (Dennis A. Hutchinson)

2. He must be able to teach God's doctrine to others

As far as knowledge of the Christian doctrine and aptitude to teach are concerned, they must be thoroughly familiar with the "sound", that is, pure doctrine and be able to handle both thesis and antithesis, that is, be able to teach the congregation the truth and to refute heretics.⁴ (CFW Walther)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
(Titus 1:9)

3. **He must be a spiritual “shepherd”.**

The word pastor means shepherd. The pastor is someone who tend the often unruly and oblivious sheep that make up the congregation, feeding them with the Word and Sacraments, protecting them from the wolves of false teachers, seeking the lost, leading his flock to the green pastures of everlasting life. Of course, Jesus Christ Himself is the real Shepherd - The Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, the One whose voice the sheep recognize; so He is our true pastor. But just as our Heavenly Father makes use of earthly fathers, the Lord as our Shepherd makes use of earthly shepherds. Christ carries out His shepherding, in large measure, through the vocation of the pastor.⁵
(Gene E.Veith)

4. **The Church holds the “keys” to the Kingdom of God.**

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-18)

One of the Pastor’s special gifts is to discern the spiritual condition of his parishioners. As such, he is empowered to make judgments based on this special gift. This is a very serious responsibility, and he must take care to do so in a godly manner, and not based on his own feelings.

Thesis VI: A. The ministry of the Word is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call, which God Himself has prescribed.⁶ (CFW Walther)

The keys are an office and authority given to the church by Christ to bind and loose sins -- not only the crude and notorious sins but also the subtle, secret ones that only God knows.⁷ (Book of Concord, Smallcald Art. 7)

Because absolution or the power of the keys is also a comfort and help against sin and a bad conscience and was instituted by Christ in the gospel, confession, or absolution, should be no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church -- especially for the sake of weak consciences and for the wild young people, so that they may be examined and instructed in Christian teaching. However, the enumeration of sins ought to be a matter of choice for each individual: each person should be able to determine what and what not to enumerated. As long as we are in the flesh we will not lie if we say, "I am a poor person, full of sin."... Because private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, we should not neglect it but value it highly, just as all the other offices of the Christian church.⁸
(Book of Concord, Smallcald Art. 8)

C. **The Congregation’s responsibilities to the Pastor**

A congregation should support their Pastor financially so that he can live comfortably without having to worry about money matters.

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? In the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. **(I Corinthians 9:7,14)**

Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor. **(Galatians 6:6)**

The responsibilities of the congregation go beyond merely monetary compensation and support. In order for a teacher to teach, he must have students. In order for a shepherd to do his job, he must have sheep who know his voice and follow him.

Now, I'm a Pastor. Eight years ago, a little more than eight years ago, you called me to teach you, and to preach to you. You called me because you knew that, as a Pastor in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, I would teach you, by my own ordination vows, that which has been revealed to us in the scriptures, and in the Lutheran Confessions. And I've tried faithfully to be that Pastor for you. And I will continue to try to teach you, and guide you in accord with that word, and with those confessions.

But I cannot be your theologian for you. You must hold within yourselves your own theology, your own knowledge, your understanding. That which is taught you in the scriptures. I am not your surrogate. I am here to help you, but I can't be you. Therefore, the responsibility for each and every Christian is to know the good confession of the faith which God gives us in His inerrant and infallible gracious Word. To come to the Lord's Table and to receive that measure of grace, that forgiveness of sins, that gift of God's strengthening for you. It is yours. I cannot wear your strength for you. I can only bring God's strength to you. And so it is essential that people study, that people worship, that people hear the Word. **(Rev. Richard A. Bolland)**

When a congregation calls a Pastor, they promise to trust and respect him and the office he holds. You may not agree with everything your pastor says, but you owe it to him to hear him out, and if necessary, talk it out with him in a respectful manner.

Be loyal to your mentor. If you have a good mentor stick with him. Don't shop around for answers you like. If he says you are making a certain mistake, you then have to listen. Even if you disagree, you are not allowed to dismiss what he says. You owe your teacher respect. You've accepted that responsibility. This doesn't mean that you follow the mentor blindly. You don't have to agree, but you are obligated to try to understand his position. Work through the issues together and figure out who's making a mistake. That is the power of having a mentor, because the message eventually penetrates your wall of defense.⁹ **(Rabbi Noah Weinberg)**

II. Islam¹⁰

A. History of Islam

The religion of Islam was founded by Muhammad, who was born in Mecca (Makka) around 570AD. The Arab culture at the time was polytheistic and many people were engaged in idol worship.

Muhammad was very religious, and developed the idea that God would judge all people for the good and bad they've done, sending the bad ones to hell, and giving eternal paradise to those obedient to His law.

In 610AD, Muhammad claimed to have had a vision of the Angel Jibril (Gabriel), who gave him a revelation from Allah, which is recorded in the Q'ran (96:1-5) "Recite in the name of the Lord who created humans from clots of blood. Recite, for your Lord is merciful. He has taught the use of the pen, taught humans what they do not know." After this time, he became a self-styled prophet, writing the revelations of God in the book of the Q'ran. As the sect grew, new "revelations" were needed in order to settle questions of law and social order.

Muhammad and his followers settled in Medina, where they routinely carried out raids (razzias) against the caravans traveling in the area in order to get money, food, and support. These razzias were sanctioned by Allah, according to the Q'ran.

Refer to Pastor Bolland's study, "Islam: The Way of Submission to Allah" for a more detailed history of Mohammed and his times.

B. Beliefs

1. **The Unity of God** -This is the primary tenet of the faith. God is One in His person, He is One in His attributes, and He is One in His works. There is one and only one God. The idea of the Trinity is rejected.
2. **The Unity or Brotherhood of the Human Race** - all people have a common ancestor and a common heritage.
3. **Islam is the last, greatest, and only true religion**
4. **Mohammad is the last, greatest, and true prophet.** Other prophets include Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, and Jesus, but only Mohammad had it completely right. Therefore, anything that he has revealed supercedes any previous prophet.
5. **The Q'ran is the last, greatest, and true scripture.** The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are therefore incomplete and unreliable, possibly corrupted, but they do contain the word of God.
6. **The mission of Islam is to bring about peace in the world and to establish a brotherhood of all religions.** This brotherhood, of course, will teach the true

faith of Islam in its perfection, correcting all the errors and misconceptions of all other religions. To dedicated followers of Islam, the ends usually justify the means in their quest to achieve this “brotherhood”.

7. **Life After Death** - Death is not the end of life, but only the door to another, higher form of life. Those who do good, will be rewarded with eternal life with Allah, while those who do evil will be punished in eternal hell. This will be decided on the Day of Resurrection and Judgment. Judgment is solely on works, and depends on which was more prevalent, good ones or bad ones.

8. **The Five Pillars of Islam**

- a. **Shahada - Confession of Faith** “There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet”
- b. **Salat** - Ritual prayer, which must be done five times a day, at sunrise, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and sunset. In Muslim communities, the “Call to Prayer” is sounded by loudspeaker, or sometimes even door to door via a megaphone mounted on a truck, and no one is exempt. There is no choice in the matter.
- c. **Zakat** - giving of charity, or alms. It is required that everyone give 1/40th of his income to the needy, and also to give more in support of the Muslim faith, as they are able.
- d. **Ramadan** - It is required that Muslims refrain from eating food, drinking water, or having sexual relations between sunrise to sunset during the entire month of Ramadan (sometime in the fall). In Muslim countries, this fast is also imposed on non-Muslims, with severe penalties for violation.
- e. **Hajj** - once in every Muslim’s life, he must make a pilgrimage to Mecca to circle the Kaaba, the black stone which is supposedly from Abraham’s tent.

C. **Does Islam teach violence? The Sixth Pillar of Islam - Jihad - or Holy War**

Not all Muslims require this sixth Pillar, but many do, especially the more extremist groups such as Al-Qaida, Al-Aksa Martyr’s Brigade, etc. (this includes the groups which spawn the terrorists). In this Holy War, the ends truly justify the means when bringing about this “brotherhood” of all religions.

Note that “good works” in Islam are not necessarily what we think of when we think of “good works”. People in the West, primarily of Christian and Jewish backgrounds, think in terms of “loving God”, and “loving our neighbor” when we define “good works”. However, this is not a tenet of Islam, and Muslims don’t think in those terms, nor do they understand this idea. In Islam, “good works” can include anything up to and including the murders of hundreds or even thousands of people through acts of terrorism, all in the name of Allah. Indeed, Islam teaches that to murder an infidel, to fight against false

faiths, will earn one a higher degree of honor and reward in heaven. They are truly “on a different page”.

To be fair, it must be noted here that, to many Muslims, Jihad is referred to as an “inner struggle to be godly”, not an actual war or act of terrorism.

Refer to handout from last month - Quotes from the Q’ran

D. Witnessing to Muslims

1. **Be a friend and ask questions in order to understand.** Muslims always seem to say that the West doesn’t understand them, that Islam is misrepresented, and that Muslims are usually stereotyped unfairly. Learn to appreciate them as people, and listen with sincere interest.
2. **As with cultic groups, do not attempt to tear down their faith by proving Islam to be false. Rather, share the Christian message with them, focusing on the person of Jesus Christ.** The best way to begin to share this message is to offer to give them a copy of the New Testament so they can also understand what Christians believe. Remember, the Word of God is one of the Means of Grace. Encourage them to read it and ask questions.
3. **Affirm the unity of God.** This is an area which Muslim generally do not understand Christianity. As the Bible says in Deut. 6:4, we believe that God is one. But clarify who the One God is, and how He has revealed Himself to us (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), what He expects from us (law) and what He has done for us (gospel). Explain that the term “Trinity” (Tri-Unity) does not mean that we believe in three gods.
4. **Talk about the Sonship of God,** what that means, and what it doesn’t mean. Explain that it does not mean that God had a human wife and produced Jesus through that union, which is what many Muslims think it means. Rather, explain that the one God revealed Himself on earth by becoming a man, for humanity’s redemption. It may help to use the words of John 1:1-3, which refers to Jesus as the “Word”. The Q’ran also calls Jesus the Word of God. This may help them to understand how God’s “Word” could become flesh.
5. **Speak of Jesus’ death and resurrection.** Muslims do not believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Point out to them that the cross was not a defeat, not the end of the story, but actually was His glorious victory over sin, death, and hell.
6. **Talk about the Bible.** As with the cultic groups, Muslims are taught that the Bible has been corrupted at some point. It may help to point out the history of the church, the tens of thousands of copies of the manuscripts that are essentially identical. There are also specific passages in the Q’ran that speak of the integrity of the Torah and the New Testament, including the following:

2:113 Verily, with the truth have We sent thee, a bearer of good tidings and a warner: and of the people of Hell thou shalt not be questioned.

3:3-4 God! nought that is in earth or that is in heaven, is hidden unto Him. He it is who formeth you in your mothers' wombs. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise! He is is who hath sent down to thee "the Book." Some of the signs are of themselves perspicuous; -these are the basis of the Book - and others are figurative. But they whose hearts are given to err, follow its figures, craving discord, craving an interpretation; yet none knoweth its interpretation but God. And the stable in knowledge say, "We believe in it: it is all from Our Lord." But none will bear this in mind, save men endued with understanding.

10:95 And if thou art in doubt as to what We have sent down to thee, inquire at those who have read the Scriptures before thee. Now hath the truth come unto thee from thy Lord: be not therefore of those who doubt.

III. Scenario - Discuss the following quotes from the Q'ran. How would you respond to each of them? Respond as if you were speaking to a Muslim. Hint: Keep in mind the lessons on rightly dividing law and gospel.

11:113 And truly the Lord will repay every one according to their works! for He is well aware of what they do.

11:116 And observe prayer at early morning, at the close of the day, and at the approach of night; for the good deeds drive away the evil deeds.

14:4 And in order that He might speak plainly to them, we have not sent any apostle, save with the speech of his own people; but God misleadeth whom He will, and whom He will he guideth: and He is mighty and wise.

9:30-33 The Jews say "Ezra is a son of God"; and the Christians say "The Messiah is a son of God". Such the sayings in their mouths! They resemble the saying of the infidels of old! God do battle with them! How are they misguided. They take their teachers, their monks, and their Messiah, son of Mary, for lords beside God, though bidden to worship one God only. There is no God but He! Far from His glory be what they associate with Him! Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths: but God only desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it. He it is who hath sent His Apostle with the guidance and a religion of the truth, that He may make it victorious over every other religion, albeit they who assign partners to God be averse from it.

2:62 Verily those who believe, those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), the Christians and the Sabians any who believe in Allah and the last day, and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; They will not be overcome by fear nor grief.

5:48-51 Verily, We have sent down the Law (Towrat) wherein are guidance and light. By it did the prophets and professed Islam judge the Jews; and the doctors and the teachers judged by that portion of the Book of God, of which they were the keepers and the witnesses. Therefore, O Jews! fear not men but fear Me; and barter not away My signs for a mean price! And whoso will not judge by what God hath sent down - such are the infidels. And therein have we enacted for them, "life for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose,

and ear for ear, and tooth for tooth, and for wounds retaliation.” Whoso shall compromise it as alms shall have therein the expiation of his sin; and whoso will not judge by what God hath sent down - such are the transgressors.

And in the footsteps of the prophets caused We Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow, confirming the Law which was before him; and We gave him the Evangel with its guidance and light, confirmatory of the preceding Law; a guidance and warning to those who fear God. And that the people of the Evangel may judge according to what God hath sent down therein. And whoso will not judge by what God hath sent down - such are the perverse.

IV. Journal Sharing

V. Next Month

- A. The Nature(s) of Christ**
- B. Native American Belief and Practice**
- C. Scenarios**
- D. Journal Sharing**

¹ Walther, C.F.W., “Church and Ministry”, Translated by J. Mueller, © 1987 The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO, pg. 22

² Veith, Dr. Gene Edward, “God at Work, © 2002, Crossways Books, Wheaton, IL, pp 122-123

³ Hutchinson, Dennis A., “Impact of Historical Criticism on Preaching”, from “The Jesus Crisis – The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship”, ©1998 Robert L Thomas and F. David Farnell, Kregel Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, pg. 339

⁴ Walther, C.F.W. , Op Cit.

⁵ Veith, Dr. Gene Edward, Op. Cit., pg 124

⁶ Walther, C.F.W., Op. Cit. pg 22

⁷ Book of Concord, Smallcald Articles VII:1, Kolb and Wengert Edition, © 2000, Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN pg. 321

⁸ Ibid, Smallcald Articles VIII:1-2, pg 321

⁹ Weinberg, Rabbi Noah, Dean of Aish HaTorah,
http://www.aish.com/spirituality/48ways/way_10_Honor_the_wise_person.asp

¹⁰ Information from this section taken from:
Bolland, Rev. Richard A., “Islam: The Way of Submission to Islam”, as published in this manual pg. 17-28, and
Hahn, Ernest, “How to Respond to Muslims”, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO