

As with any doctrine that is new or old one must go directly to God's Word to objectively look at all aspects of its teaching. The doctrine must prove itself to be consistent with the teaching of God's Word. The doctrine that is under consideration has come to be associated with Karl Ketcherside, possibly because of the prominent position that he assumed in propagating it in the 20th Century. Ketcherside is not the one who started this teaching, but was a champion for its cause until he turned from it to an opposite extreme in the brotherhood. The doctrine teaches that an evangelist works in a congregation without elders and takes the oversight of that congregation until they are mature enough to have their own elders.

Students of the Bible must first look at the scriptures that are in use by those who are proponents of the stated doctrine. After understanding the points that the proponents are making from the scriptures, each of the verses should be studied independently.

The first scripture noticed in this study is Titus 1:5. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:" In this scripture, Paul speaking to Titus says that he was to "set things in order" in the congregations in Crete. The proponents of this point out from the "setting in order" that Paul was telling Titus that he was to "take charge" of the things in that congregation, or to rule or oversee them. A scripture that they use to back up that position is found in Titus 2:15 where it says, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." The supposition being, since he was to "take charge" he is here told to do it with "authority."

Proponents of this doctrine also point out that the word "evangelist" as used in Ephesians 4:11 is an office. From this they gather that they have the authority to preach and rule over a congregation that does not have elders but only to those congregations. They will point out Thayers definition which says, "A bringer of good tidings, an evangelist." Thus, it is concluded that since an

evangelist is a bringer of good tidings that once the word is proclaimed and a congregation is matured then an evangelist must move on to another place to proclaim the good news to another immature congregation.

In the arguments there is much attention given to the difference in "teaching," "preaching" and the word "minister." Holding that teaching is done by the elders of a congregation, preaching is done by evangelists and members and that minister refers to all Christians. They hold that this would leave it unscriptural for a preacher to use it to describe the work that he does.

For this student, as I read the Wallace-Ketcherside debate there are numerous comments made that make it seem as though the proponents of this doctrine are trying to fight the false idea that the preacher is the "pastor." This is certainly a false teaching that is prevalent in the denominational world and one that must be dealt with.

In looking at these arguments it is important to consider each individually to see if it is consistent with the scriptures.

The first point to notice is the charge that was given to Titus that he should "set in order the things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5), and in Titus 2:15 what was being done was to be done with authority. In considering this point, keep one important thing in mind. If it is possible to take a word in a passage two different ways, then we must be very careful to not force a conclusion one way or the other. It must agree with all other passages on the subject and the immediate context. In this passage Titus was told to set in order things that are lacking in the congregations of Crete. To set things in order can logically be taken two ways, one would be to instruct in the proper way that is to be followed, the other could be to force ones will on another. When we couple this passage with the context and with the reference in chapter 2 we can see that it is dealing with instructing in the proper pattern. Also, keep in mind that Paul was clear where Titus' authority lay. In Titus 2:15 he clearly states that his authority was to "speak, and exhort, and rebuke." We must be careful to not add to what

God has said. He did not say to rule!

In a comparable passage Timothy was told to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." (1 Timothy 1:3) The word used in that passage denotes one who is "to transmit a message along from one to another, to declare, announce". (Thayers, 479) The use of this word in connection with the words that are used to describe the work of a preacher, teacher, or evangelist should make it abundantly clear that any authority is in being a teacher of what has been revealed by Christ. While the words for the shepherds of the Lord's church are entirely different.

The word "evangelist" is another point that is used to uphold this doctrine. The definition in Thayers of this specific word, which is a noun describing one who evangelizes, does lend itself to believing that this is one who teaches only the message of Christ, ("a bringer of good tidings, an evangelist" Thayer p.257) but when with a study the verb that it comes from, it is easy to see that it is a word that also includes "what relates to this salvation". (Thayer p.256) Hence all the things which a Christian would be taught from beginning to maturity would be included in the work for which an evangelist would be responsible. Therefore, to use this word as proof that an evangelist is only to teach the lost and an immature congregation is a misuse of the word. To carry this idea to its logical conclusion would make it wrong for an evangelist to teach people who have obeyed the Gospel.

Much attention is also given to the difference of the words "preacher," "minister," "teacher" and "evangelist." When we look at these words in their respective it is clear that they are simply various words to describe the work of teaching the message of the Bible. Similar passages can be found like 1 Timothy 2:1 where several terms are used to express praying to God. These words for a preacher or evangelist are just the same. Timothy, the evangelist is referred to by each of these words (Note 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:11). Paul was said to be a teacher of the Gentiles (1 Timothy 2:7) and Jesus said that

we were to teach the non-Christian as well as the Christian. (cf. Matthew 28:19,20 with Mark 16:15) Hence, to say that preaching is done by all Christians and teaching is for a mature congregation is not consistent with the scriptures.

In a study of those who teach this doctrine it seems that it stemmed from a refutation of the “pastor” system in the denominational world. It is true that this system is an unscriptural organization of the church. The problem comes when we try to refute this doctrine by bringing in a doctrine that does exactly what we are trying to refute. When an “evangelist” is given the rule over an immature congregation we create a one man rule, or “pastor” system in the Lord’s church.

We must fight the one man “pastor” system. It can be present in any congregation of the Lord’s church. We see the desire of man to be in charge throughout history. (Adam and Eve, the Pharisees, Diotrefes and a strong personality elder which gave rise to the Catholic church of today.) This situation can arise in any congregation of the Lords people. This problem can come up in a congregation that has no elders. There can be problems with men who are not qualified to be elders who will try to take charge and have their way in the work of the church. They are often immature men who will have a strong personality that want things their way and will take charge because of their influence. At times a person, man or woman will whine and complain to have things their way and the congregation will give in. This tends to become a pattern. Guess who is in charge then?

There can be difficulties in congregations which have elders. It is normal to have one elder who has a stronger personality than the others. There is no doubt that God had good reasons to give us the qualifications for elders. When a strong personality man is appointed who has these qualifications he will not connive to get his way in the work of the church, but will humbly lead with the other elder or elders.

There can also be difficulties with a preacher or preachers in a congregation. It is readily admitted

that a preacher has much influence in a congregation. This would be the same in a Mutual Edification congregation with any man that gets up and delivers a message. A preacher is to teach with authority. This can go to the preacher’s head and cause him to feel he has power that God has not given him. As a preacher of the Gospel for over 20 years, I can see how easy it would be to take control. I have always preached in congregations without elders and often these congregations had immature men who did not know the scriptures. Each situation must be approached delicately and with great wisdom. Members must be instructed in what God teaches, especially when they do not know what is right. But the authority to teach does not bring with it an authority to oversee. Preaching the Gospel provides many difficulties and temptations to step over the line of teaching, and start overseeing. The best way to overcome this is to teach humbly what God has said and strive to point the student to Christ and not to self. Help the student gain a desire to be a servant of Christ. When this is achieved, a Christian’s in a congregation will continue to grow and mature even when it is necessary for a preacher to move on for some reason.

As we look at this doctrine, we can see that it may have started because of abuses that were found in the religious world or in the Lord’s church, or it possibly came because of a misunderstanding of God’s Word. It is important however to remember that we must not make a rule that God has not made even to combat an abuse of God’s Word. Instead we should just go back to what God has intended. God has made proper rules and guidelines. Let’s just follow what he has given.

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
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**“They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables”**

“Preachers Are The Authority In The Church”

by
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