



J. W. McGarvey and the Use of the Word, "PASTOR"

J. W. McGarvey was considered to be one of the most able Bible scholars in the Restoration Movement. Here he reminds us not to

call preachers, "pastors".

In the Bible, this function of leadership has six English words and three Greek words. Elder and Presbyter (*presbuteros*), Bishop and Overseer (*episkopos*), Shepherd and Pastor (*poimen*).

Ironically, the word "pastor" appears only one time in the English New Testament. In all the other verses, this Greek word is translated "shepherds".

The word "*presbuteros*" shows the elders' **AGE**, the word "*episkopos*" his **AUTHORITY**. The word "*poimen*" his **ACTIVITY**. These words are never applied to the preacher or the evangelist of the Church but only to the eldership. Today's practice of calling men "the Pastor," "Youth Pastor," "Senior Pastor," "Assistant Pastor," and "Preaching Pastor" make words meaningless.

--George L. Faull

The Following is by J. W. McGarvey:

"The qualifications to be prescribed for one who will fill an office depend upon the duties of the office. Imperfection in the qualifications leads to proportionate inefficiency in the performance of the duties.

Seeing, then, that but few men are found possessing, in a high degree, all the qualifications for the office of a bishop, we should not be surprised that its duties have generally been more or less inefficiently performed. Much less should we, as so many have done, seek a remedy for this inefficiency in an entire subversion of the Church organization instituted by the apostles. After all that can be said to the contrary, the apostolic plan has proved itself more efficient than any of those invented by men.

Those congregations of the present day which are under the oversight of an efficient eldership, other things being equal, come nearer, in every good word and work, to the apostolic model of a Church of Christ, than any others in Christendom. And those which have a comparatively inefficient eldership will compare most favorably with those under an inefficient pastorship of any other kind. Finally, such inefficiency is not, after all, more frequently found in the eldership than in what is popularly styled the ministry.

This must be so, from the fact that the qualifications for the office, public speaking alone excepted, are more frequently found combined in three or four men, than in 'one', whether 'pastor', or 'class-leader', or whatever may be his title.

The folly, therefore, of abandoning the apostolic eldership in favor of any other organization, is demonstrated by history; while its wickedness must be apparent to every one who esteems apostolic precedents above human expedients. To seek an escape from the condemnation due for this wickedness, by asserting that the apostles left no model of Church organization, is only to add to the original crime by perverting the Scriptures to excuse it. So long as it stands recorded that Paul and Barnabas 'appointed for them elders in every Church,' and so long as the duties of these officers remain carefully prescribed in the apostolic epistles, so long will it be false to deny that the apostles left us a definite model of Church organization, and wicked in the sight of God to abandon it for any other.

I next take up the much-mystified question of the relation of the evangelist to the Church and its eldership. Who the evangelist is can be determined by the titles applied to him, and the terms used to distinguish his work.

Take Timothy as a typical example. He is called an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), and a minister (1 Timothy 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:2). He is told to preach and to teach (2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Timothy 4:11), which shows that he was a preacher and a teacher. The term 'evangelist' means one who publishes the good [197] tidings of salvation, and the term 'minister' means a servant, or one who serves in some capacity.

These two terms (minister and servant – editor) are applied to Jesus and to the apostles as well as to persons like Timothy, and the last is the distinctive title of those whom we call deacons; but neither of them is ever applied to an elder; neither is an elder once in the New Testament said to evangelize, to preach, or to serve. We may not infer from this that because a man was an elder he had not the ‘right’ to evangelize or preach, or that he rendered no ‘service’. It is to be accounted for rather on the ground that his distinctive work was ruling, not serving’ and teaching, not preaching.

Still, this circumstance is worthy of note as exhibiting quite a contrast between scriptural usage and that which has sprung up among us. **While the terms “preacher” and “pastor” are never in the New Testament applied to the same person, they are constantly so applied by some of us.**

On a moment’s reflection it is easy to see that such an arrangement, as this is wise at times, if not even a necessity. Any church, with even a good and efficient eldership, is liable to have enemies in its vicinity too strong for its elders; it is liable in the vicissitudes of its career to have less efficient elders at one time than at another; it is likely to have in reach of its ministrations a large number of the ungodly who can be won to Christ more easily by powerful preaching than by the teaching of its elders; and for any or all of these reasons, it may scripturally have in addition to the work of its elders, that of an evangelist.

Even a young evangelist, with neither the experience not the age required for the eldership, may do an excellent work under such circumstances; but let it be borne in mind that he does not, by such labor, become a pastor, or shepherd of the flock. He is still an evangelist; he is one of the flock. He is still an evangelist; he is one of the flock, and the pastors have rule over [200] him. Such was the case of Timothy at Ephesus.”

“To be an elder, bishop, pastor, then, a man must be married, and the father of believing children. If you call any one a pastor [191] who was not all these qualifications, you miscall him – you employ a scriptural term unscripturally.”

--The Missouri Christian Lectures

“Next after the three qualifications which I have discussed, I may mention as a subject of some dispute, the number of elders which each congregation should have. The universal fact of a plurality in the apostolic churches has naturally led to the almost universal conviction that the will of the Lord requires a plurality now.

Undoubtedly the work then required a plurality or we should have found at least some intimation of the contrary. **It is probable that the public teaching could in most instances have been done as well, if not better, by a single elder, the most effective one of the number; but faithful and sufficient private teaching required a plurality, and still more did the demands of faithful discipline.**

Where questions of right and wrong between men are to be decided, and the law enforced upon the wrongdoer, it has always been found best to have a plurality of rulers.

Those of the Restoration Heritage who have claimed to call Bible things by Bible names are extremely inconsistent, if not right down hypocritical. They mock the young Mormon calling himself “an elder” then they call men the same age the “Pastors of the Church”.

They are guilty of the same error as the Mormon. Such hypocrisy is inexcusable for they are no more “Pastors” than the Mormon boys are “Elders”.

“Pastors” and “Elders” is one and the same office in the New Testament. The Evangelists and the Elders share a mutual ministry and the abandoning of the name “Evangelist” for “Pastor” shows great Biblical ignorance and inconsistency.

--The Editor

In these facts and considerations there is sufficient ground for adhering to the well-established conviction of the past, that every church shall have, if possible, a plurality of elders. Consequently, no one person is the elder, the bishop, the pastor of the church, and [195] such phraseology ought to be banished from our vocabulary.”

“The term “pastor”, the Latin for “shepherd”, has come into common use from the influence of the Latin version of the Scriptures.

There is one all-sufficient reason for preferring our own Anglo-Saxon term “shepherd”. It is found in the fact that “pastor” has become perverted by sectarian usage, and designates in popular phraseology, and entirely different office from the one to whom it is applied in the Scriptures. It has become a synonym for a settled preacher, and is [18] often used for the purpose of distinguishing the preacher from those who are Scripturally called the pastors of the church. It will perhaps be impossible to recover the term from this abuse, and therefore, it is better to throw it away.

Another good reason for preferring shepherds is, that its primary meaning is familiar to the most illiterate reader, and the metaphor by which the overseer is thus styled is perfectly intelligible to every one; whereas, the term “pastor” is known to the masses only in its appropriated sense.”