

GOSPEL HIGHWAY

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Against "Parity": Part 2

by B. S. Poh

We are making a critique of the book "In Defence Of Parity: A Presentation Of The Parity Or Equality Of Elders In The New Testament". We have commented on the book in general, and have given a detailed analysis of the first two chapters, by Greg Nicols, one of the contributors of the book. It is with a heavy heart that we continue analyzing the remaining chapters. But continue we must, lest we are mocked for not being able to finish what we have begun.

Chapter 3 "A Contemporary Reaction to the Parity of the Eldership", by Sam Waldron

Chapter 3, which purports to present my view of the eldership, turns out to be an exercise in mud-slinging and nit-picking. Poh follows Owen to a fault. Poh contradicts himself. Poh makes astounding claims. Poh is full of inconsistency and ambivalence. Poh uses derogatory language. Poh is unfair to historical facts. Poh misrepresents other people's views. In short, Poh is a very, very bad boy! Waldron seems bent on presenting me and my view in a bad light. After reading the chapter, the reader will still be no clearer as to my view of the eldership. Is my view that difficult to understand? Is my presentation of it in the book, "The Keys of the Kingdom" so difficult to grasp? If so many people have found no difficulty reading my book, why should Waldron find it so confusing? I suggest that the answer lies in Waldron himself!

It is distressing to find so many points that need answering. We will single out only a couple of them as examples. Waldron claims that I have read the 1689 Confession of Faith through the lens of the Savoy Platform and John Owen, citing pages 121-126 of my book (p. 55). A quick check will show that, in those pages, I was arguing from the First London Confession of 1644 and the related Separatist Confession of 1596, and not from the Savoy Platform. Furthermore, he throws a low kick, saying, in parenthesis, "and by the way ignoring differences between the 1689 and the Savoy Platform". But I have taken into consideration the differences between the 1689 Confession and the Savoy Platform in the relevant parts of my book (pp. 100, 128, 317).

Waldron also claims that I have the tendency to define office in terms of function when, in fact, that is my quarrel with the advocates of "parity" (p. 114 of my book) - namely that they tend to define office in terms of function! In his presentation of the "parity" view, Greg Nicols has himself listed the practical implications of "parity" and "diversity" in terms of functions - visiting and counseling the flock, interviewing prospective members, setting church policy, etc. (pp. 19-22, 45- 48). Stating it mildly, Waldron appears to have forgotten my extended treatment of the concept of "office" (pp. 90-93), and its practical implications (pp. 169-174).

Waldron ends the chapter by identifying a number of points of disagreement between his view and my view, which he claims will be addressed in the subsequent chapters. These points all revolve around whether there is a distinction between the teaching elders and ruling elders.

Ch. 4. "An Exegetical Defense of the Parity of the Eldership in the New Testament", By S. Waldron

In this chapter, Waldron makes a study of the words "shepherd" and "teacher" by considering various passages in turn. We first make some observations about his methodology.

Waldron's methodology

Firstly, Waldron employs the method of *repeated assertion* to strengthen his case. The assertion is constantly made that there is no distinction between pastor-teachers and the other elders. The converse

of the statement is also constantly asserted, namely that all elders or bishops are pastors. This is done from the very outset of the chapter when he shows in a diagram the English translation of the terms "poimen", "episkopos" and "presbuteros", followed by the "official distinction" of these terms. Under the "official distinction", the assertion is made, in capital letters, "ALL SIX OF THESE ENGLISH TERMS DESIGNATE ONE AND THE SAME OFFICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT". This is followed by the equations. "The Pastors=The Bishops=The Presbyters," and, "The Shepherds=The Overseers=The Elders". But assertions do not constitute proof, and the mere repetition of the assertions will not add material value to the assertions themselves.

Secondly, Waldron considers the relevant passages in isolation from one another, drawing conclusions from them without regard to the whole. In the exegesis of any Bible passage, one would normally engage in analysis by dissecting the passage according to its natural divisions and then studying the constituent parts in detail. This is a legitimate, useful, and necessary procedure. However, whatever conclusions that are drawn from each of the parts must take into account the context of the whole passage. This every careful Bible expositor knows. A parallel may be drawn here. In studying all the relevant passages on the eldership in the New Testament, we must draw conclusions that are consistent with the totality of the New Testament teaching on this matter. This, I believe, Waldron has failed to do.

Thirdly, Waldron engages in a species of "arguing from the silence of Scripture", which is fraught with danger. One can think of the argument that since there is no explicit statement in the Bible that God is one, and yet there are three persons who are completely God, it follows that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true! An example will be seen in his treatment of Ephesians 4:11 below.

The contents

We move on to the contents of the chapter. There are two main sections. The first deals with the word "poimen" (pastor) and its relatives, and the second with the word "didaskalos" (teacher) and its relatives. The passages considered in the first section include Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 9:7; and 1 Pet. 5:2. The passages considered under the second section include, among others, James 3:1; Romans 12:7; 1 Timothy 3:2; and 1 Timothy 5:17. It will not be necessary for us to comment on all of Waldron's treatment of the passages, for each of them ends with the refrain, "No distinction is made between the office of teaching elder and the office of ruling elder". Instead, we will consider his treatment of Ephesians 4:11, which he recognizes as the only passage in the New Testament in which the noun, "poimen", occurs in relation to an ecclesiastical office.

Waldron admits that the "pastor-teachers" in Ephesians 4:11 are the only permanent office (not just a vocation) in the church (p. 65). He goes on to make the amazing assertion, "There is clearly no explicit contrast instituted here between pastor-teachers and 'ruling elders' in this passage. This passage provides no evidence by itself for a distinction between pastor-teachers and other elders in the church. It cannot, therefore, be a proof-text for that position which posits such a distinction." Waldron would want us to conclude from Ephesians 4:11 that the "pastor-teachers" are a reference to all the elders of the church. But the stark fact is that the passage makes no mention of elders. By his own arguments, we could say there is clearly no explicit mention that these pastor-teachers are elders, and therefore they cannot be elders of the church at all! We will not resort to such argumentation, however, and contend only on legitimate principles.

The fact that the "pastor-teachers" are mentioned together with the apostles, prophets and evangelists in the same verse show that it is a vocation *and* an office. The subsequent verses confirm that it is the office and vocation of *preaching* that is in mind here. Elders who are not fulltime in the ministry of the word are excluded from this catalogue of officers. Who exactly are this category of church officers called "pastor-teachers"? Do they occupy an office different from that of elders? If they do, there will be three permanent offices in the church - those of pastor-teachers, elders, and deacons - since the other two offices are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. This conclusion, however, will not tie up with the facts that: (i) the qualifications of only two offices are listed in 1 Timothy 3; and, (ii) only two categories of officers are mentioned as officers in the church, in passages such as Philippians 1:1. If there are only two permanent offices in the church - namely those of elders and deacons - who are the "pastor-teachers" of Ephesians 4:11 (and, we would include, the "teachers"

of passages such as Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28; and James 3:1)? Are they one and the same as the elders? If they are one and the same as the elders, then, either: (i) all the elders are fulltime preachers, or, (ii) some elders are fulltime preachers while others are not. We know, however, that there may be elders who are not fulltime preachers but who nevertheless are rulers in the church (Acts 20:34-35; 1 Tim. 5:17). We conclude, therefore, that some elders are fulltime preachers while others are not. The pastor-teachers of Ephesians 4:11 must be elders who are fulltime preachers.

Since the noun "pastor" is used only here, and that in reference to the office and vocation of teaching, it is surely legitimate for us to conclude that the teaching elders are the "pastors and teachers" of the church. We are not oblivious to the fact that the verb "to pastor" is used in reference to the basic duty of all elders in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. We have no problem with that at all because the church is described as the flock of Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). The Lord Himself had described His followers as sheep (e.g. John 10:27), and referred to them collectively as a flock (Lk. 12:32; Jn. 10:16). The task of taking care of His flock is therefore that of "shepherding" when seen in relation to the object (the flock), and that of "overseeing" when seen in relation to the subject (the elders). The chief way by which the flock is shepherded is through the ministry of the word ("My sheep hear My voice...", Jn. 10:27), and that is the task of the undershepherds, the pastors of the church (Jer. 3:15). The responsibility of the elders, therefore, encompasses the two basic areas of ruling and teaching - the two "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (cf. Mt. 16:19; 1 Pet. 2:25). All the elders execute the rule of the church, led by the pastor (or one of them, if there are more than one pastors), and the pastor(s) execute the task of teaching, under the responsibility of the whole eldership. And remember that we are not excluding the ruling elders, and for that matter, other gifted brethren in the church, from preaching as and when the occasions require, according to their ability.

We see, then, that reserving the title of "Pastor" for the teaching elder is not a mere matter of terminology, as Waldron and his colleagues make it out to be (pp. 29-32, 74). I have, in the early part of my book, said, "Other churches, some of them influential, believe in the 'equality of elders' and carry this to an extreme, calling every elder 'pastor'." If it were a mere matter of terminology or form of address, I would not have been too bothered. It is what lies behind the practice of calling all elders "pastors" that is worrying. The name used bespeaks the system of eldership practised. This I have made clear in the paragraph in which that sentence occurs, and in the subsequent unfolding of my book.

Chap. 5. "A Careful Exposition of 1 Timothy 5:17", by S. Waldron.

This is the longest chapter in the book - longer than the two chapters by Nicols combined. Waldron begins the chapter well by stating that, in regard to 1 Timothy 5:17, "We must allow it to speak for itself in its native context. We must not manipulate it early in the interpretive process so as to make sure that it raises no questions about deeply held convictions" (p. 76). He opens up the text under two headings: (i) Its Historical and Grammatical Interpretation; and, (ii) Its Practical and Ecclesiastical Implications.

Financial support

As one proceeds in the study of the chapter, it becomes clear that three main points stand out. The text itself reads, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine." The first point Waldron establishes is that "double honour" means "ample material or financial support", "given as a mark of the value and esteem of the church" (pp. 79, 80). The text, and the verses following it, come immediately after the earlier section, namely verses 3-16, in which the apostle discusses the "honour" that must be shown to true widows. In that earlier section, the apostle refers to the financial support of the widows. In the later section, the apostle refers to the financial support of the elders. The church appeared to have been unduly concerned about the support of widows, while exhibiting a tendency to neglect the support of the work of the gospel.

The situation of the church implied in 1 Timothy 5 could have developed from the original state of affairs indicated in Acts 20:17-38, in which the elders seemed to have worked in their secular vocations and were not financially supported by the church. Based on the Acts 20 passage, Waldron repeats the assertion that there was a plurality of elders in the one church in Ephesus, and that the elders were also called overseers and shepherds (p. 82). (We have made the point that the Acts 20 passage does not call

the elders "shepherds", but describes their work as that of shepherding.) The conclusion made is that the text of 1 Timothy 5:17 is not contrasting between honouring all the rest of the elders and double honouring well-ruling elders. Rather, the contrast is between honouring widows and double-honouring well-ruling elders. The well-ruling elders are to be counted worthy of being given ample material or financial support.

Well-ruling elders

I have no problem with Waldron's first point. My problem is with his second point, which is that there is an implicit contrast in the phrase "well-ruling elders". The contrast is not between elders who rule well and elders who rule badly, for that would imply that all who are not worthy of double honour would be viewed as ruling badly. Rather, the contrast is between elders who rule well and elders who are generally good and qualified. Waldron refers to the definition of the word "well" given in one lexicon (Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich): (1) beautifully, finely, excellently, well; (1a) rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame, well, truly; (1b) excellently, nobly, commendably; (1c) honourably, in honour, (1c) in a good place, comfortable; (1d) to speak well of one, to do good; (1e) to be well (of those recovering health). From this, he says, "Clearly, this definition shows that the word is susceptible of conveying a superlative force. The well-ruling elder is, then, the excellently ruling elder" (p. 85). He further claims that the usages of this word in the New Testament "appears to have this force", citing a number of passages. He concludes by saying, "It is better, then, to recognize in the adverb, well, a superlative or comparative sense which is intended to contrast not good and bad, but good, better, and best" (p. 86).

One cannot help wondering whether the word "well" carries a superlative or comparative sense. Waldron first says that it carries a superlative force. He then expands it to "a superlative or comparative sense". He has made it so elastic that it now contrasts good, better, and best! We would challenge the very first premise that the word is meant to be a contrast, regardless of whether it is a contrast between good and bad, or between good, better, and best. The more natural sense is that it is descriptive. It is an adverb ("kalous") which describes the verb "to rule" ("proestemi"). Together, the two words function as an adjectival phrase, qualifying "elders". All the elders are meant. They all are well-ruling men. If there is any contrast at all, it is between the well-ruling elders and the widows mentioned in the earlier section of the passage (1 Tim. 5:3-16). Widows are worthy of honour. Well-ruling elders are worthy of double-honour.

All the Bible passages cited by Waldron in which the word "well" occurs actually shows that it is used descriptively and not comparatively (pp. 85-86). It describes the action performed. It does not compare the action, much less the person performing the action, with another. We reproduce here a random selection of his list, with the word marked in bold.

Matthew 15:7 - You hypocrites, **rightly** did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

Mark 7:9 - He was also saying to them, "You **nicely** set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

Luke 20:39 - And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken **well**."

1 Timothy 3:13 - For those who have served **well** as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

James 2:3 - and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here **in a good place**," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool." (The word "fine" is wrongly marked in bold when it should be the phrase "in a good place", which in the original was just "well". Instead of "in a good place", a better translation would have been "comfortably".)

Elders who labour in the word and doctrine

Waldron assigns very little space to making the third point, namely that there is a contrast between the well-ruling elders who engage in the public ministry of the word and those who do not. The nature of

this contrast, which we believe is important, is not discussed. He is therefore able to combine this point with the second one, saying, "Paul's reference to well-ruling elders is not only implicitly contrasted with a larger circle of qualified elders, but it is also explicitly contrasted with a smaller circle within the circle of well-ruling elders" (p. 87). Financial support is to be focused in the inner circle, radiating outward as the necessity and ability of the church makes this appropriate.

In a brief exposition of 1 Timothy 5:17-18 in his earlier work (A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, p. 324-325), Waldron had mentioned only the first and third point, with no mention of the second. There were only two concentric circles - the outer circle which encompasses all elders who rule well, and the inner circle of elders who (are gifted to) work hard at preaching and teaching. In the present book, there are three concentric circles - the outer circle of qualified elders, the inner circle of well-ruling elders, and the innermost circle of elders who work hard at preaching and teaching. There is a contrast between the outer circle and the inner circle, and there is another contrast between the inner circle and the innermost circle.

We believe that it is incorrect to place the first contrast, if there is a contrast at all, together with the second contrast because the two are essentially different. The first contrast concerns the *manner* of rule - some elders rule well, while others rule exceptionally well. Put it to their differences in gifts, education, circumstances of life, and experience if you like (as Waldron does, pp. 86-87), and the contrast is still in the manner, or quality, of their rule. The second contrast, on the other hand, concerns the functions, or *type* of rule - some well-ruling elders work hard in preaching, while the others work hard in ruling only. Those well-ruling elders who have the additional task of preaching publicly are to have the priority in financial support compared to those who work hard only in ruling. Since the two sets of contrast are essentially different, how can they be placed together as though it is a mere matter of "good, better, and best"? A comparison is valid only in the same basic realm, involving the same basic characteristic. For example, we cannot say, "the orange is big, the pear is bigger, and the apple is sweetest!" Although the subjects of comparison are all fruits, the characteristics - namely, size and sweetness - do not match. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the subjects of comparison are the elders, but the characteristics - namely, how well they rule and what tasks they perform - do not match.

We have, for the sake of argument, assumed that there is an implicit contrast in the expression "well-ruling elders", as claimed by Waldron, and that has ended in difficulty. As argued out above, I do not see any *implicit* contrast between the elders in that expression "well-ruling elders". However, that is a relatively small matter compared to the contrast *explicitly* established by the word "especially". Waldron himself calls this an "explicit contrast". Any lexicon will show that "malista" ("especially") is the superlative of the adverb "mala", and carries the meaning "most of all, above all, especially, particularly, (very) greatly" (BAG). As used in 1 Timothy 5:17, it is clearly *comparative*, and not merely descriptive. It makes a comparison between two categories of elders. The comparison, moreover, shows forth the *priority* of one category of elders over the other. Furthermore, it is clearly *distinctive* - showing that the elders who "labour in the word and doctrine" are to be distinguished from those who do not "labour in the word and doctrine".

Waldron comes close to acknowledging these facts, but does not come far enough. He denies that the text teaches the so-called three-office view (p. 91). This, however, is irrelevant to the debate between us, for I hold to the same view as him in this. We equally reject the view that there is an office of minister or pastor which is higher in rank or authority than that of elder. Waldron, and his colleagues, however, have a habit of confounding issues with mere terminology. In denying the three-office view, Waldron objects to any special title being given to the privilege or function of the vocational pastor. We have already dealt with this point when discussing Ephesians 4:11 in Waldron's earlier chapter (chap. 4). The next point to be considered is, Does the text imply a distinction between ruling and teaching elders? Here, Waldron wavers. Again, he reduces the issue to a mere matter of terminology, raising irrelevant points along the way, and concludes that "the ruling/teaching elder distinction does not adequately account for the diversity of Paul's conception" (p. 92). He would, however, admit to a distinction between the vocational pastor and the non-vocational pastor (p. 93). Of course, to Waldron, the term "pastor" means "elder".

It is clear that, in this lengthy exposition of 1 Timothy 5:17, Waldron is attempting to make out a

case for the idea of "diversity in the eldership". His attempt consists of three steps: (i) diverting as much attention as possible to the matter of financial support when, in fact, this is not the problem between us; (ii) stretching the meaning of "well-ruling elders" to cover the idea that there is great diversity of gifts and functions among the elders; and, (iii) toning down the force and implications of the word "especially". That there is a diversity within the eldership no one will deny. It is such a general and obvious truth, which applies not only in the eldership but also in the church (1 Cor. 12). But is that all that may be gleaned from 1 Timothy 5:17, after such an expanded treatment?

Chap. 8. "The Call to the Ministry and the Parity of the Eldership," by Jim Hufstetler

In this short chapter, Hufstetler raises two main points: (i) the propriety of using the term "Absolute Equality View" in reference to his "parity" view of the eldership, and (ii) differences on the doctrine of the call to the ministry of the word. Hufstetler defines what he means, and does not mean, by the word "parity" (pp. 128-129). We hear him loudly and clearly. I believe I have correctly understood his position. Much of what he says I can agree with. However, there are differences between our views on these two main points, which we must address.

Propriety of the name "Absolute Equality"

First, the propriety of the term "Absolute Equality View" as a description of the "parity" view. In my book, "The Keys of the Kingdom" (pp. 139-152), I showed that the controversies over the eldership in Presbyterianism have crystalized into three distinct views: the Presbyterian View, the Independent View, and the Absolute Equality View. These views are also seen among Reformed Baptists today. Waldron claims that I have not been really fair to historical facts by adopting such a classification, since various great Presbyterians had held to what I called the Independent View (p. 56). The essential characteristics of Presbyterianism, however, are: (i) a gradation of church courts consisting of committees of individuals; and, (ii) the local church being ruled by elders. Differences on the eldership does not constitute the essence of Presbyterianism. The question of fairness does not, therefore, arise.

In the Independent View, there is an equality of office among the elders. All the elders share the same office of rule, and they rule as a body. This view does not preclude a distinction between the minister of the word and the ruling elders. The minister is an elder who shares the rule, in equality, with the other elders. He has the added responsibility of preaching the word of God regularly. This added responsibility does not arise from the mere fact that he happens to be more gifted in public ministry. Rather, he is specially called by God to fulfil that responsibility. There are differences of opinion on the doctrine of the call, but all who hold to the Independent View of eldership sees the responsibility of the office of elders as extending over two distinct departments - that of ruling and that of teaching. These have been known, traditionally, as "the keys of the kingdom of heaven". The minister wields the two keys of teaching and ruling, while the other elders wield only the key of ruling. Put another way, the minister executes the duties of teaching and ruling, while the ruling elders execute only the duty of ruling. Having the *responsibility* of office is to be distinguished from the *execution* of the duties connected with that office.

In the Presbyterian View of the eldership, the ruling elders are not presbyters of the New Testament sense. Only the minister is such an elder. The other elders are only representatives of the congregation in the board of elders (i.e. the eldership). The minister is, therefore, of higher rank than the ruling elders. This is a three-office view, in which the minister, the elders, and the deacons constitute the church officers.

In the Absolute Equality View, there are two offices in the church - that of elders and that of deacons - just as in the Independent View. There is equality of office among the elders, just as in the Independent View. However, no clear distinction is made between the minister and the ruling elders. All the elders are equally eligible to all the duties that pertain to their office. The differences in gifts, training, opportunities, or desire for service, may result in one of them (or more) to be appointed fulltime in preaching. The ministry is therefore a mere matter of vocation, arising from providential circumstances.

Since the Independent View holds to the equality of office among the elders, although making a

distinction between the minister and the ruling elders, together with a distinction between the functions of teaching and ruling, an appropriate description has to be given to the other view of eldership which also holds to the equality of office among the elders. Both hold to "parity in eldership", but each sees it in a different way. The Absolute Equality View obviously carries "parity" to a higher degree, and hence the appropriateness of the word "absolute".

Then, we consider the view of John Owen on the eldership. In his discussion on the pastors of the church, which to Owen meant the teaching elders, he said: "...I will not deny but that in each particular church there may be many pastors with an equality of power, if the edification of the church do require it. ...And the *absolute equality* of many pastors in one and the same church is liable unto many inconveniences if not diligently watched against" (emphasis added; Works, Vol. 16, P. 105). Owen was advocating that one of the many pastors in the church should have the "precedence for the observation of order" (ibid., p. 105), and warned against the danger of "absolute equality".

Commenting on 1Timothy 5:17, John Owen said this: "There are, therefore, two sorts of duties confessedly here mentioned and commanded; - the first is ruling well; the other is labouring in the word and doctrine. Suppose that both these, ruling and teaching, are committed to one sort of persons only, *having one and the same office absolutely*, then are some commended who do not discharge their duty, at least not comparatively unto others; which is a vain imagination. That both of them are committed unto one sort of elders, and one of them unto another, each discharging its duty with respect unto its work, and so both worthy of honour, is the mind of the apostle" (emphasis added; Works, Vol. 16, p. 122).

Of interest here is not only Owen's defence of the distinction between the teaching elder and the ruling elder, but also his use of the phrase "having one and the same office absolutely". Owen held to the view that there are two offices in the church - that of elders and that of deacons - and there are two sorts of elders - one sort having the authority to teach and rule, while the other sort having the authority to rule only (ibid, p. 42). Owen also believed that the first sort are further distinguished into pastors and teachers - but that is another story. To Owen, failure to distinguish between the two sorts of elders is tantamount to having one and the same office *absolutely*.

Finally, we note again that there are differences of opinion and practice among those who hold to the principles of "parity/equality" and "plurality/diversity". Hufstetler and his colleagues might want to emphasize diversity, sensing now the dangers and weaknesses inherent in "plurality". They might be able to avoid those dangers and weaknesses in their own churches, but there is no guarantee that the dangers and weaknesses will not surface in the future generations of believers. A comparison with Antinomianism is in order. There are theoretical Antinomians who object to the term "Antinomianism" being applied to them, for they would never condone lawlessness. In theological discussions, however, we use the term "Antinomianism" to describe those who deny the continuing relevance of the moral law in the Christian life - with no negative connotation implied or intended. I use the term "Absolute Equality View" advisedly, with no negative connotation implied or intended.

On the doctrine of "the call"

We proceed to the next main point raised by Hufstetler, namely, differences on the doctrine of the call. Hufstetler objects to the suggestion that those who hold to "parity" have difficulty reconciling their view with the doctrine of the call to the ministry. He first criticizes my view, before putting forward his. The criticism, however, is directed at the *conclusion* that I have made from Scripture, rather than at the arguments that I have offered in proof of my position. Furthermore, my treatment of the doctrine was necessarily brief, in each place that it occurred, being secondary to the subject at hand. Nevertheless, sufficient material was presented to show that the ministry of the word has the priority in the divine economy. Following the older writers, I cautiously went as far as Scripture would permit by saying that it is not wrong to speak of the "office" of teaching elders and the "office" of ruling elders (pp. 117 & 145 of my book) - a point criticized by Waldron (p. 63). We have seen already that Ephesians 4:11 lists pastor-teachers together with apostles, prophets and evangelists - men who were not only vocational preachers, but also church officers. Dipping randomly into John Owen, we find him saying, "These works of teaching and ruling may be distinct in several officers, namely teachers and rulers; but to divide them in the same *office* of pastors,..." (Works, Vol 16, p. 48, italics added); and, "Unto the

call of any person unto this *office* of pastor in the church... (ibid, p. 49, italics added). Owen looked upon the pastor as occupying an "office", although he has made it clear at the outset that, strictly speaking, there is only one office of elders, encompassing two categories of elders.

Hufstetler ends the chapter by declaring his view of the call, which is in fact different from the traditional view. Says Hufstetler, "The call to preach, or the call to the ministry, is not a call to a different office but is a vital and even primary function which is filled by every elder. Every elder is called to the ministry in the best sense of that word. All are called to serve Christ and His church. Some men may exercise a public ministry of the word while others exercise a less prominent ministry. This difference does not make the one with more public gifts to preach more of a pastor than elders who do not regularly preach the word publicly" (p. 132). Hufstetler ignores altogether the fact that there are strong advocates of the "parity" (i.e. the Absolute Equality) view who hold to the traditional view of the call to the ministry. (Need we name them?) He is able to avoid any contradiction with the idea of "parity" only by redefining the doctrine of the call! He is actually carrying the idea of "parity-and-diversity" to its logical conclusion - namely, to reduce the glory and uniqueness of the ministry of the word, accorded to it by Scripture, to just a vocation like other mundane vocations.

The difference between the Absolute Equality View and the Independent View cannot be clearer!

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