

THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The God of the universe is a God of order and arrangement. This fact is exhibited in both creation and revelation. The planetary system with its delicate synchronization, the human body with the perfect adaptation of its every member and the lowliest plant employing the process of photosynthesis alike speak eloquently of this attribute of the Father. The testimony is strengthened immeasurably when we contemplate the gradation upward of the revelation of the scheme of redemption from its origin in the Divine purpose to its culmination in the crucifixion of our Lord and the subsequent proclamation of heavenly amnesty to those who acknowledge the sovereignty of the Messiah.

If order is to be maintained where two or more parts function in relationship there must be control. God is the author of three great organic institutions: the home, civil government and the church. All have been created as a blessing to mankind and to assist in their felicity. Government is an essential feature of each. In each there is authority which must be respected and rule to which subjection is commanded, if we are to merit God's approval. In the home children are to obey their parents (*Eph. 6: 1*), in the political realm we must be subject not only for wrath but also for conscience' sake (*Rom. 13: 5*) and in the church we are told to "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.*"

In all matters affecting the social relationship of God's people, a proper evaluation has been placed upon the wisdom and experience which comes from age. This is approved of God and endorsed by human reason. Thus from the first dispensation until the present the rule of elders has been sanctioned as that which best suits the needs of men in an earthly state. Every nation has progressed from a family to a clan or tribal stage and from thence to a national aspect. The patriarchal age recognized the prerogative of the father as the oldest member of his immediate family and later that of the oldest member of the clan. Abraham was called a patriarch (*Heb. 7: 4*). Of him it was said, "*He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord*" (*Gen. 18: 19*). Melchizedek was both king of Salem and priest of the most high God (*Gen. 14: 18*). The early inhabitants of Jerusalem apparently recognized his authority. The sons of Israel were patriarchs (*Acts 7: 8, 9*). Each was the head of numerous progeny constituting a clan.

The patriarchal age involved not only the family of Abraham. Thus the land of Egypt had elders (*Gen. 50 : 7*) and it was these senators unto whom Joseph taught wisdom (*Psa. 105: 22*). The word "senator" here is from the Hebrew *zaqen* which means "old, aged, bearded," and it is the word for "elders" in such passages as *Exodus 12 : 21; 17 : 5; 18 : 12*. Our word "senator" is from the Latin *senex*, meaning "old." The lands of Moab and Midian had elders (*Num. 22: 7*) as did Gibeon (*Josh. 9: 11*).

The word patriarch is a combination of *patria*, from *patro*, "father"; and *archos*, "a leader, chief" from *archein*, "to lead, rule." The term implies more than mere age. It includes a respect for the aged one as a leader, a deference to his judgment and decisions in those matters requiring an expression of such. Thus, it was a natural transition from the leadership of the aged in the clan to a recognition of the combined wisdom of the old men as a class when, the number of the people being multiplied, problems of association became more complex. The children of Israel had "elders" during their Egyptian bondage and it was to these Moses was sent from Midian (*Exo. 3: 16*) and they were to accompany him in his appeal to Pharaoh (*verse 18*). The initial revelation of liberation was given to them (*Exo. 4: 29*) as was the subsequent instruction relative to the passover (*Exo. 12: 21, 28*). The elders were chosen witnesses of the miracle at Horeb (*17: 5*).

The attainment of age or extraordinary longevity was probably the only qualification requisite for recognition among the elders of primitive times. The word is one which signifies age irrespective of other endowments. The Hebrew "*zaqen*" corresponds to the Greek "*presbyter*" and the Latin "*senex*". However, it is recognizable that there are varied degrees of experience and diverse measures of competence among those of any age group. When Jethro, father-in-law to Moses, beheld the tremendous task of judging the cases arising in Israel he suggested a tribunal composed of men who possessed four qualifications: (1) Ability, (2) Reverence, (3) Integrity, (4) Hatred of covetousness. In as much as this advice was contingent upon God's command (*Exo. 18: 23*), and yet it was followed out, it is apparent that something more than mere age became essential to deal with the intricate affairs of growing society.

After the children of Israel had departed from Sinai, God created a senate to assist Moses in more permanent fashion. The monotony of the diet of manna caused all Israel to weep in their tents and to cry for flesh to eat. The pressure became so heavy upon Moses that he declared "*I am not able to bear this people alone, because it is too heavy for me*" (*Num. 11: 14*). He requested death at the hand of God to relieve him of the responsibility. Instead God proposed the creation of a presbytery consisting of seventy men, upon whom he would put a portion of the spirit which Moses possessed, "*And they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone*" (*Num. 11: 17*). When the spirit rested upon these elders they prophesied (*Num. 11: 25*). When the judiciary was appointed at the behest of Jethro, only Moses could "*teach Israel ordinances and laws, and show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work they must do*" (*Exo. 18: 20*). With this more permanent arrangement, the seventy could also speak forth under divine impulse.

The number "seventy" was not an arbitrary one arrived at for this occasion. Prior to this, when Moses was summoned to Sinai to receive the law, he was distinctly told to take seventy elders with him (*Exo. 24: 1*), which he did, leaving them under the jurisdiction of Aaron and Hur (*Exo. 24 : 14*). It should be noted that the

elders were already recognized as officers before being granted the gift of prophecy for in selecting them Moses was instructed to take seventy men, "*whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them*" (Num. 11: 16). The word for "*officers*" is translated "*overseer*" in Proverbs 6: 7. The selection of the seventy became the basis for the Jewish Sanhedrin. This was the great court of the Jews.

Our present purpose will not justify an elaborate research into the functions of the Jewish senate. A few comments in passing, however, will not be amiss. It would seem that when the people acted as a body they did so through these appointed agents (Deut. 5: 23, 24), and these became the spokesmen of the entire Jewish church. That such procedure is recognized by heaven as being appropriate is evidenced by the divine instruction relative to those occasions when the whole congregation sinned through ignorance. Under such conditions, the congregation was required to offer a young bullock "*at the door of the tabernacle.*" However, "*the elders of the congregation*" laid their hands on the head of the bullock before the Lord, and it became "*a sin offering for the congregation.*" This did not obviate the necessity for a personal sacrifice upon the part of any individual who was guilty of sin. In any organized community men have both a personal and a related responsibility. Any organized group must act through recognized agents else there is no organization at all. The expression "*elders of the congregation*" (Lev. 4: 5) is the exact equivalent in the Hebrew of the expression "*elders of the church*" (James 5: 14) in the Greek. It is from these we draw the title for our series of articles. The wisdom of God has seen fit to recognize in all dispensations the appropriateness of a senate to lead, guide and supervise His people. This was as true of "*the church in the wilderness*" (Acts 7: 38) as in "*all the churches of the saints*" (1 Cor. 14: 33).

GOVERNMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The government of the New Testament church is that of a constitutional monarchy. The capital city, throne, and king being far removed from the locale of the subjects it became necessary that the sovereign announce His will through ambassadors. As a harbinger of His own kingdom and in preparation for His rule upon His future accession to the throne he selected, trained and commissioned certain ministers plenipotentiary and unto them committed "*the ministry of reconciliation*" in the proclamation of which they acted in His stead (2 Cor. 5: 15, 20).

In the inception of the church, all of the offices and special functions essential to its inauguration and perpetuity were invested in the apostles. They were the first prophets, evangelists, pastors or bishops, deacons and teachers. They spoke forth under divine impulse, heralded the good news, taught the obedient converts, exercised a benevolent superintendency over their spiritual welfare and administered to the temporal necessities of all such as had need. But with a full recognition of the fact that once the will of God was fully revealed and the facts involved in the revelation adequately confirmed, the work of apostles and prophets would cease, they laid their revelation as the foundation of the church and committed their previous oral teaching to writing thus forming a permanent constitutional basis for the church in which their teachings formed the final court of appeal in all questions involving the will of the absent King.

As a part of the constitution, they defined the permanent offices in the church and included the qualifications for those who desired the same. And while still among the living they installed men in those offices as the needs of the growing society demanded or required thus demonstrating to the church in all ages that responsibility and labor must be shared with others who are capable.

God did not create needs and then devise offices to meet them, but needs existed in the very nature of things and God created offices to fill them. When the existing need had been met the office was no longer required. There is a principle of divine economy which precludes the possibility of maintaining a useless appendage, or of dispensing with a useful function. The need for special revelation having ceased the apostles and prophets had no successors. But so long as the need exists, that long will the office created to fill that need continue.

Is it essential that men carry the gospel to those who have not heard it, that they baptize those who believe, band their converts into congregations, teach them all things commanded, train them in Christian discipline and exercise a watchful care over them until they are able to care for themselves? Then do we need evangelists! Is it necessary that there be shepherds to feed, lead and guide such flocks as have been established and rule by example those who may be wavering and weak? Then do we need pastors or bishops! Do we still have the poor with us, and are there hungry ones to feed and naked ones to clothe? Then does the congregation need deacons administering the charity of the congregation, and "*servicing tables.*"

If the churches of the saints are flocks in God's arrangement shepherds are required to lead them lest they be "*scattered because there is no shepherd: and they become meat to all the beasts of the field when they are scattered*" (Ezek. 34: 5). It is typical of a group, that without adequate leadership they become scattered. When our Lord "*saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*" (Matt. 9: 36). Brethren in the Lord are possessed of various temperaments and are in varied stages of knowledge of the revealed will. Some are "*weak in the faith,*" others are strong. To eliminate the need of shepherds, it would be necessary to completely transform the nature of both sheep and wolves. So long as those in the flock are sheep and some without are wolves so long must there be qualified men who will feed, lead, protect and defend, "*exhorting and convicting the gainsayers.*"

If it be urged that we have "*one Shepherd*" (John 10: 16) and that Jesus is "*the Shepherd and Bishop*" (1 Peter 2: 25), I affirm that is no more true now than in apostolic times, yet at that time "*shepherds or bishops*" were appointed in every congregation (Acts 14: 23). The term church is used to designate all of the saved in the aggregate; it is also used to designate local congregations of believers. In the first sense, Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop. He declared that "*there shall be one flock and one shepherd*" (John 10: 16) and this is true of the flock universal. Nevertheless, Peter told the elders to "*Tend the flock of God that is your charge*" (1 Peter 5: 2). Jesus is the **Chief** Shepherd (1 Peter 5: 4) but this very term implies there are lesser or under shepherds. As the Shepherd and Bishop of souls the work and functions of our Lord are no different now than when the statement was first made, yet at the very time his ambassadors were ordaining bishops in every city. There is no conflict between the oversight of local congregations by those shepherds who will receive a crown of glory when "*the chief Shepherd shall appear*" and the rule of our Lord over the whole congregation of the righteous.

It may be suggested that *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"* should rule in the church today without any administrative agents. To this we reply that it is axiomatic that no law is self-enforcing. Laws are enforced through agents and in the case of constitutional law the agents must be specified and their qualifications and obligations defined by the constitution. Any interpretation of law which is so liberal as to create new law, or new institutions and offices not specified by the law, in the ultimate is subversive of all law. The truth of this aphorism will be patent to all students of jurisprudence. If a man violates the law of the land we send a sheriff to handle the situation rather than mailing him a copy of the statutes. Let us repeat that no law is self-enforcing.

The authority of local congregations is vested in a plurality of elders when such are qualified and ordained to office. They are distinctly told to *"Take the oversight thereof"* (1 Peter 5: 2). **"Overseeing"** requires both **"over"** and **"seeing."** There can be no overseers without someone *under* them. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves"* (Heb. 13: 17). *"Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God"* (Heb. 13 : 7). The bishops are restricted in their oversight by the constitution. They may not be arbitrary or despotic, for they are not permitted to act as lords over their own heritages, but must be examples to the flock. They are not legislators and cannot bind anything on the saints which the King has not ordained. They may only execute the will of God in the local congregation over which they are appointed.

NEW TESTAMENT TERMS FOR OVERSEERS

There are six terms in the New Testament used to designate the office of the overseers in the local congregations. A proper study of these in their relationship to each other will go far toward clarifying the nature and purpose of the office. It is possible to arrange them in a series of three couplets for convenience.

1. ***Elders and Presbyters.*** The word **"elder"** is a translation of the Greek **"presbuteros"** which occurs 67 times and 62 times is translated by the English word **"elder."** It is used in both a general and specific sense. In its simplest form it means *"an aged person."* In 1 Timothy 5 1, *"Rebuke not an elder,"* the context clearly demonstrates that it refers to an older man as distinguished from younger men. In this sense age is the only consideration involved. In Acts 20: 17 the term applies to those who are overseers, as contrasted with the flock *"over the which the Holy Spirit"* had constituted them such. In this sense special qualifications are set forth which the aged person must possess. Not every aged man would possess these requisites to office, but every aged man to be appointed to the office must have them (1 Tim. 3: 1, 7; Titus 1: 5-9).

The etymology of the term demonstrates that the office of elder cannot be scripturally bestowed upon a young man. One can be old in years but young in the faith, and under such circumstances he cannot be an overseer. Thus the span of life is not the only qualification involved in being a presbyter. Experience is also a requisite. So an elder may not be a novice. This word is from **"neophutos,"** which means literally, *"a new plant, one newly planted."* The Bible does not specify a certain age for a man to qualify as bishop, for wisdom and ability cannot always be determined by birthday anniversaries. There is a time when a man is no longer regarded as young. He has become settled, sedate and sober. The world recognizes him as an older man. David said, *"I have been young, and now I am old"*

(Psa. 37: 25). Of his father, it was said, "*The man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul*" (1 Sam. 17: 12). Thus one knows when he is old and the world in general recognizes it. It is as much a contradiction of terms to talk about a young elder as it would be to talk about an aged youngster.

The term "*presbyter*" was well known among the Jews. Every synagogue had its elders and deacons. Therefore, it was unnecessary for the Holy Spirit to make any lengthy explanation as to why each local assembly should be superintended by a plurality of elders. The synagogue was so closely allied with the church in its structure and form of service that if the government of the local assembly had been left to the discretion of the saints it is almost certain that the Jewish churches would have selected elders, and the qualifications would have been much the same as those set forth in the New Testament, for these qualifications are almost identical with the ones required to be an elder in a local synagogue. As an evidence of the close relationship, James uses the word synagogue in referring to the Christian assembly (James 2: 2).

2. *Bishops and Overseers.* The word "*bishop*" occurs five times in the Authorized Version. Once it refers to Christ (1 Peter 2: 25); the other times to the elders as overseers (1 Tim. 3: 1, Titus 1: 7; Phil. 1: 1). It comes from *episkopos*, which is from epi, "over"; and *skopos*, "to inspect, view." So it refers to one who is an overseer, superintendent or inspector. The word is rendered "*overseers*" (Acts 20: 28).

Just as the Jewish Christians were familiar with the rule of elders in their synagogues, so the Greek Christians were familiar with the oversight of bishops in their civil affairs. The word "*episkopos*" was not of ecclesiastical origin. It was originally a military term, and was borrowed by the Holy Spirit because of its general significance. When the Greek version of the Old Testament was being made, the term was used to translate the word which appears in the King James Version as "*captains*" (Num. 31: 14). It is also the translation of the word for "*officer*" in Judges 9: 28. Robinson's Lexicon says "*Among the Athenians it was the title of magistrates sent out to tributary cities to organize and govern them.*"

The original term from *episkope* is translated "*looking diligently*" (Heb. 12: 15) and "*taking the oversight*" (1 Peter 5: 2). Oversight involves two things: (1) A superintending or directing; (2) A personal inspection or viewing. That the bishops are to rule or govern is indicated by the fact that they must demonstrate their fitness for office by ruling well their own households (1 Tim. 3: 4) and by the statement "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor*" (1 Tim. 5: 17). The term used for governing the physical household and the spiritual flock is the same. It is also used for "*ruleth*" (Rom. 12: 8).

3. *Shepherds and Pastors.* The term "*shepherd*" is not used directly with reference to the elders but is implied, and applied by logical inference. After instructing the elders to "*Feed the flock, taking the oversight thereof*" (1 Peter 5: 2), the apostle declares, "*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*" (verse 4). This fact is strengthened by consideration of the word for "*feed*" which is from *poimaino*, "*To tend as a shepherd.*"

The word "*pastors*" occurs once in the New Testament (Eph. 4: 11) and is from "*poimen*" which means "*a shepherd or feeder.*" Its Hebrew equivalent is eight times translated "*pastors*" in Jeremiah, and is translated "*herdsman*" 7 times and "*shepherd*" 62 times in other portions of the Old Testament. That the New Testament pastors are the elders or bishops is established by the fact that the word "*pastors*" is from the word for

"feed" which means to "tend as a shepherd" and this is the responsibility of the elders (Acts 20: 28; 1 Peter 5: 2). To hire a man to feed a flock is to make him a pastor—a hireling pastor. To this there can be no logical dispute. An to secure a stripling just out of college to act as such a pastor, when God specifically decrees this task for the aged is the height of the ridiculous.

The elders are the bishops. In Acts 20:17 Paul called the elders of the church. In Acts 20 : 28 he designates them "**the overseers**" which is from the same word elsewhere rendered "**bishops.**" He tells them to *feed* the flock, which is from the word translated "**pastors**" (Eph. 4: 11). In Titus 1: 5 the evangelist is told to "*ordain elders in every city.*" In verse 7 these are called bishops. In every instance when these terms are used with reference to a local church they are in the plural form. Nowhere do we read of "the bishop of a church" much less "the bishop of a number of churches." It was a sad day when an apostate church altered the scope of the bishop from one of a number of men over one church, to one man over a number of churches.

PLURALITY OF ELDERS

We contend for a plurality of bishops in each local congregation. We believe the New Covenant Scriptures endorse this. We offer as proof the fact that every congregation in apostolic days had a plurality of seniors duly ordained to govern. This was true at Jerusalem where "*the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter*" of circumcision (Acts 15: 6). It was true of Ephesus from whence Paul "*called the elders of the church*" (Acts 20 : 17). It was the case with Philippi where the apostle wrote "*to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons*" (Phil. 1: 1).

If it be argued that elders were to be "*ordained in every city*" (Titus 1: 5) and thus if there were several churches in such a city, the elders would govern all as a central board; we reply that Paul and Barnabas "*ordained them elders in every church*" (Acts 14: 23). Thus the command of the apostle to Titus is explained by the example of the apostle in practice.

The plurality of overseers appears evident from undesigned and casual statements of apostolic admonition. "*Obey them that have the rule over you*" (Heb. 13: 17). "*Remember them which have the rule over you*" (Heb. 13 : 7). "*Know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord*" (1 Thess. 5: 12).

That each flock had several overseers is evident from the writings of both Peter and Paul. The former says, "*The elders which are among you I exhort. . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight*" (1 Pet. 5: 1, 2). The latter said to the elders from Ephesus, "*Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*" (Acts 20 : 28). He further says, "*Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things*" (Acts 20: 30). It would have been impossible to obey the injunction, "*Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church*" (James 5: 14) on any other ground than a plurality of bishops in the local church.

We believe that so long as the local churches need superintending, guiding and feeding that long will the pastoral office be a part of God's arrangement and we believe this will continue until "*the Chief Shepherd shall appear*" (1 Peter 5: 4).

On August 4, 1880, G. Y. Tickle, speaking in the annual meeting of Churches of Christ at Huddersfield (Eng.) said: "The very fact that the choice, after all, had to be made on grounds that took cognizance only of ordinary Christian character and qualifications, proves to us that the supernatural gifts were but supplementary, and that the withdrawal of these, when it came, could not possibly affect either the permanence of the office, or the conditions upon which it was to be secured to the church." With this statement of Bro. Tickle we are in full agreement.

QUESTIONS OF QUALIFICATION

As we approach a study of the qualifications of bishops, we recognize that we tread upon controversial ground. In spite of the plain catalogue of requirements, disputes have raged almost from the shadow of apostolic days to the present. It is too much to hope that anything we say will alleviate this condition, or harmonize all of the conflicting views. This we shall not attempt, but present our own humble reasoning merely as a basis for investigation.

For the sake of convenience the qualifications can be classified as moral, intellectual and domestic. Obviously, the first category is obligatory upon every child of God. There are two extremes in the interpretation of the qualifications. One would apply them so loosely that *anyone* could be a bishop, another so rigidly that *no one could*. It should be remembered that these are qualifications for *men* and not for angels! The record says "*If a man desire the office of a bishop*" (1 Tim. 3: 1). No man has attained unto sinless perfection, and such is not a qualification of the office. That one must be exemplary in every department of Christian activity is essential (1 Pet. 5: 3). Since the degree or measure of the qualifications is not specified, with one exception, we may not legislate that all of them must be had in the superlative degree. They must all be possessed in some degree and in a sufficient degree to be exemplary to others.

Are all of the qualifications obligatory, or may a man who possesses most of them be appointed? In the qualification as given in 1 Timothy 3 the list begins and closes with the word *must!* In verse 3, "*A bishop then must be . . .*" and in verse 7, "*Moreover he must have.*" It is not a question of what he ought to be, could be, or might be, but he *must be* the kind of person described in these verses. Nor is it a question of what he should have, could have, or would have. To be a bishop, he *must have* the character prescribed. In Titus 1: 7, the same expression is used.

If no man possesses all of the qualifications, but several men taken together possess them all, can such men be appointed? Positively not! The qualifications are not for a composite body, but for individuals; not for a presbytery, but for presbyters; not for a senate, but for senators. The record does not say, "If a group desire the office," but "*If a man desire the office.*" A bishop must be the things specified (Titus 1: 7). God gives no one a right to apportion or parcel out these qualifications to all and sundry. Each man must have them all!

If a man lacks certain qualifications, but shows promise of acquiring them, can he be scripturally appointed on that basis? No! These qualifications must be possessed before, and in order to appointment. A man must be tested for fitness and then placed in office not placed in office and then tested for fitness. "*Let these also be tested first, then if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve*" (1 Tim. 3: 10), is as apropos of presbyters as of deacons. It is a sinful dereliction from God's Word to place a man

in office in the hope that he may someday become faithful. Many congregations are hampered today by a group of lazy, indolent, shiftless "elders" who were placed in that position in the forlorn hope that they might become stronger in the faith. God has made no provision for probationary pastors, or free trial elders.

May a man become disqualified while in office? Certainly! There is nothing to which a man may attain on earth that he cannot lose. This holds true even of the grace of God. It is as sensible to contend that "Once in grace, always in grace," as to contend that "Once qualified, always qualified." As an example, a man must have a good report of them that are without. This we call reputation. Now a man may gain a good reputation and then lose it, as countless thousands have done. Certainly this would disqualify one for further service as a bishop. Under such circumstances, what should one do? He should resign his office. If he does not do so, he should be requested to do it by the church. If he stubbornly refuses, he should be removed from office by scriptural process. God makes no provision that His church must rest under an intolerable stigma brought on by a disqualified, ungodly or self-willed character. To argue otherwise would be to affirm that heaven has decreed a tyrannical, Diotrephesian rule with no recourse. There can be no government without the consent of the governed, in the local church. No one can rule by force, coercion or compulsion.

The offices are placed in the church, and the church may bestow them upon certain of their number in harmony with the revelation of the King. But the office so bestowed does not become the private property of the one who receives it. He cannot will it to his son, nor designate his successor. And if he violates the trust conferred upon him, he may be requested to relinquish it by those who imparted it. The compact covenant or agreement of the church to submit to certain ones selected by them and appointed to superintend their affairs is conditioned upon the continued qualification of such persons. Failure to meet the requirements of the heavenly constitution may result in scriptural recall.

In a very appropriate description of God's people under disqualified shepherds, Ezekiel indicts the feeders as follows: *"Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them" (34 : 2-4).* What was the judgment of God with regard to these selfish, indifferent pastors? *"Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them, to cease from feeding the flock ; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock out of their mouth, that they may not be meat for them" (verse 10).*

The church was not established for the personal aggrandizement, financial increase, nor vainglory of any man or set of men, but for the glory of God. If the flock is abused by ambitious men, God has said, *"Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey" (Ezek. 34 : 22).* Any such action today must be in conjunction with the principles of New Testament law. But God does not expect his people to be bullied and bulldozed. He wants them to be free from wolves without any tyranny within, so they *"may dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezek. 34: 25).*

MORAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A BISHOP

Having arrived at the place where we are ready to consider the qualifications essential to the office of bishop, we propose first to discuss those within the moral realm. These should be characteristic of every Christian, so study them carefully.

1. *"A bishop must be blameless"* (1 Tim. 3: 2). This word from *anepileptos* literally means "not laid hold on." Its import is seen when we remember that it is the same word for "unrebukable" in 1 Timothy 6: 14. It refers to one against whom no charge can be brought and sustained by evidence, therefore, one who is not liable or subject to censure. It does not refer to "sinless perfection" in the sense in which that expression is bandied about in modern theological circles. Nor does it refer to one against whom no accusation has ever been made. Our blessed Lord was the victim of many accusations by unscrupulous men, yet was without sin. He encourages us to be happy when we are thus accused and reviled. It is not the making of an accusation against a man that demonstrates he is to blame, but the proving of it by competent witnesses. A man who is at the time a subject of rebuke or discipline cannot qualify as a pastor in a congregation.

2. *Vigilant*. This word can be rendered "temperate." It is from the Greek *naphaleon* and refers to one who is sober-minded and not a ranter, thus is in a position to be watchful, alert and on guard. A man who does not have possession of all his faculties cannot exercise watchful care against encroaching danger and is himself a source of danger.

Bishops must be alert to detect the infiltration into the flock of wolves from without (*Acts 20: 29*), and the factionism of men from within (*Acts 20: 30*). They must guard against those who turn aside families by teaching things they ought not for sordid gain (*Titus 1: 11*). They must be on guard against spiritual sickness in the flock, delinquency upon the part of those under their care, and neglect upon their own part. They must take heed both to themselves and the flock. In a constructive sense, they must discover the talents which lie latent in the members, encourage their development, train them and urge their proper integration into the ministry of the whole body.

3. *Sober*. This word is aptly rendered "sensible" in the R.S.V., for it is from *sophrona* which means "wise, rational, discreet." A man who is always acting the fool, who is guilty of undue levity, and engages in unwholesome folly cannot be placed in the eldership. It requires a serious mind and the soundest judgment. One who is flighty, irresponsible and undignified cannot fill the requirements of the King's Constitution. A man who is able to weigh all matters carefully and to allocate to all their proper sense of value with due deliberation is needed for this office.

4. *Of good behavior*. The word from *kosmion* means "orderly, systematic." It refers to the outward deportment, whereas the previous qualification dealt with the internal function of judgment. The present qualification has to do with orderly procedure and arrangement. If a man is undignified in tone, voice, dress, behavior or attitude, he will reflect against the church. The cause of our absent Lord has often been hurt seriously by the haphazard methods of those men who are charged with shepherding the flock until He appears. Confusion results where there is no comprehension of needs, disorder is the natural consequence where there is no setting in order of systematic methods.

5. *Not given to wine*. The word "given" conveys the idea of addiction to a thing. No man who is a drunkard can remain in the fellowship of the church according to 1 Corinthians 5: 11. Since a man could never become drunk unless he took a drink and

since addiction to the use of intoxicants would lead very easily to excess of wine, the bishop is forbidden to use the cup of inebriation. We do not understand that this would forbid the use of wine for medicinal purposes (*1 Tim. 5: 23*) but it would bar its use as a beverage and disqualify the man who used intoxicants for this holy office.

6. *No striker.* This has no reference to labor unions in calling out a group of workers because of dissatisfaction with an employer or wage contract. Regardless of how the New Testament principles would apply to such a condition, and that is not our subject now, the qualification given does not relate to it. A striker is one who attempts to use physical force to attain his personal ends, that is, one who smites with the fist. Such an action never determines the right or wrong of a thing. It may answer the question as to which of two opponents has the greatest brute strength, but that can as easily be determined by other and more gentle methods. Force, duress or coercion will not determine what is the truth! A man who flies off the handle under pressure is like a hammer which does the same things—he loses his head! Such an individual would wreak havoc of the church. Shepherds are to lead the sheep beside the still waters and not be guilty of roiling the waters by violence and disturbance.

7. *Not greedy of filthy lucre.* One who is eagerly desirous of sordid gain would prostitute the Cause of Christ for money. There is a fair weight of evidence to sustain the thought that elders who devoted their full time to the service of God were remunerated according. Peter tells them to "*take the oversight not for sordid gain but eagerly.*" Such instruction would be absurd unless some support might be received while in the office. It would certainly be unnecessary to tell anyone to take an office *not for gain* if there were never any money connected therewith. Moreover, the language of *1 Timothy 5: 17, 18* indicates that the elders who labored in preaching and teaching were to be supported. Under such circumstances there would be an incentive for men to desire the office, because it would produce a living.

MORAL CONDUCT AND FAITHFULNESS OF A BISHOP

In this article we continue our discussion of those qualifications of the bishop which are generally applicable to moral conduct and faithfulness. The next in order is (8.) *patience*, an attribute of great worth in those who must deal with others and help them with their varied problems. It requires a spirit of longsuffering and forbearance coupled with gentility of manner and kindly demeanor. An elder must not be rash, hasty in spirit, or ungentlemanly in disposition. He must be willing to listen carefully to another and weigh all of the facts in any case.

9. *Not a brawler.* The word from *ainachon* means one who is "not contentious or fond of fighting." A quarrelsome violent person will seriously injure the church especially if placed in a position of leadership for which he is ill-fitted because of ill-temper. There is no excuse for making faultfinding one's chief vocation on earth. A disagreeable attitude toward others who disagree with you indicates a lack of proper maturity and general maladjustment which incapacitates for serious positions of trust. The original word implies "quarrelsome over wine."

10. *Not covetous.* The term (*aphilarguron*) means "not a lover of money" and the late revision so translates it. It is not a question of whether a man has any money or not, nor a matter of how much he may possess. It is not the sum in possession but the attitude toward it. A man might fall under this condemnation who had no money while an-

other might be free from it who had much. Some men who have never had money greatly love it and eagerly pursue it, others who from birth were in more prosperous circumstances seem to care but little for the gold of this world.

11. *A good report of those without.* An elder must be a man of good reputation among outsiders. His standing in the community as a citizen must be above reproach. Hypocrites stand between outsiders and the truth. When such are placed in the leadership of the church their influence for evil is multiplied and the occasion for reproach is magnified. Often when a man's reputation has not been good he may be inclined to despair and recklessness of behavior. Under the idea that it will avail him nothing if he does live right, since his past will always be held against him, he may succumb to the seductive devices of the devil. Certainly the snare of Satan will be more liable to catch one who is thrown off guard by despondency and discouragement caused by remorse for past conduct. Placing one in a prominent position always increases the whispered accusations against him. If allowed to remain quietly and unobtrusively in the background he may safely live down his past and the outside world cease to blame him for that of which he repented.

12. *Not self-willed.* An insolent stubborn person who is always right and never makes an error in judgment in his own estimation is wholly unfitted for the sacred trust of a shepherd in the church. How much division and contention has been caused in times past by those little souls who tried to carry on this big job of riding roughshod over their brethren. An unbridled exhibition of impudence and pride to the utter disregard of the feelings of others or to purposely wound them is out of character for one of God's overseers. Humility and modesty coupled with meekness will set a far better example for the flock.

13. *Not soon angry.* This qualification has to do with the control of the emotions. Our word "anger" comes from the Latin *angorem*, "compression of the neck," from *angere*, "to choke." The Greek term also means "to press tightly." It is temper that manifests itself in action and generally in physical reaction. It may be either selfish or disinterested but in either case it renders the individual who indulges in it incapable of thinking clearly. It affects the whole person, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Thus it is certainly a harmful pastime in which to engage. One may be driven by circumstances to the point where his guard is beaten down and he finally lapses into anger against some ill either real or supposed, but an elder must be temperate in his conduct and emotions.

14. *A lover of good men.* The Greek *philagathos* means a "lover of good" and it may refer to good men or good things. Certainly the translation "good men" does no violence unless it be that an undue limitation is placed upon the meaning of the apostle. An elder must be a lover of all good men of whatever race or color. He must have an interest in the souls of all those who seek to manifest a proper spirit toward God and their fellowmen.

15. *Just.* The implication of this word is "fair, equitable, and honorable." It generally has to do with our relationship with others and implies that in all such relations we must be considerate and maintain the rights and dignity of those with whom we have dealings. Sometimes men have been placed in the eldership that have two standards, one for themselves and one for others. If members of their immediate families do those things which are unbecoming the action is hushed up or minimized; if members of other families do the same thing they are made to publicly confess their errors. Such

partiality is unfair. Sin is sin. It is so if committed by some member of my family. It is so if committed by a member of any other family. We must make no distinctions where God has made none.

16. *Holy*. This word has to do with our responsibility to God who says, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*" To be holy means to be sanctified, consecrated and fit for the Master's use. A man is not holy who is worldly. It is certainly not becoming for an elder to frequent the movie palaces with their suggestive scenes; to engage in playing cards; to tell smutty stories and double entendre jokes; to pull and puff on cigarettes, and generally to show such lack of control as to pull the moral standing of the church to a lower level than that upon which many non-members stand. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And a church will no more rise above its leadership than a stream will rise above its fountain source. If the elders are giddy the church will not be serious; if the elders are following after the pleasures of this life the members will be "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*" We should pray that men will be raised up among us who love the Lord more than anything in this world and who will seriously, prayerfully, earnestly contend for the faith setting such examples before the flock that they may safely pattern after them and some day be justified at the coming of our blessed Lord and glorious master, who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

A BISHOP'S APTITUDE TO TEACH

A bishop of the Lord's church must be "*apt to teach*" (1 Tim. 3: 2). This is the only qualification where the degree is specified. Aptitude has to do with ability. Teaching is imparting knowledge to others. The qualification does not in itself have anything to do with acquiring knowledge or the ability to learn, but rather sets forth the necessity of skill for conveying what has been learned to others. Since it is impossible to teach that which you do not know it is evident that a scriptural pastor must have a knowledge of God's revelation as a requisite to the aptitude here referred to.

There is a difference in "preaching" and "teaching" and this distinction is pronounced and maintained throughout the whole New Testament. The first has to do with proclamation. The other has to do with instruction. One has to do with the world the other with the church. One is for enlisting men as disciples (learners) the other for training them. Elders are nowhere required to be "apt to preach." Their work as elders is primarily with those who are disciples. You do not select elders first and then plant a church but you plant a church first and then select elders. You may have a flock without shepherds but you cannot have shepherds without a flock; for shepherding is a work requiring a flock to be shepherded.

Since elders cannot teach what they have not learned they must be men who have previously been taught and who have the ability to retain that teaching. "*He must hold fast to the sure word as taught*" (Titus 1: 9). The extent of previous knowledge required and degree of ability demanded in the office is expressed in the next clause "*So that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.*" Unless one has been taught to this point of proficiency he is not yet qualified as a bishop. He must be able to instruct, encourage, train and develop the members of the body and he must likewise be able to refute gainsayers "*for there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and*

deceivers" (Titus 1: 10). If elders are not capable of silencing such men with the truth they cannot meet the responsibilities of the office. They should not need to run for a hireling every time a wolf threatens.

Elders may not usurp the privileges belonging unto all of God's children. Every faithful man possessed of ability to edify should be granted the opportunity of doing so. This is a part of the training or teaching process which equips the saints for the work of service (*Eph. 4: 12*). Training requires three things to develop skills. (1) Tell them how to do it -*instruction*; (2) Show them how to do it -*example*; (3) Let them do it under supervision -*application*. This basic method of training followed by all of our great industrial plants and by the national armed services is certainly applicable to development of soldiers in the army of the Great King.

Soldiers are taught by having weapons placed in their hands and being allowed to use them until proficiency results. No army can be properly trained merely by lecturing to the recruits. Soldiers in God's army must be handed the sword of the Spirit. Then they must be shown how to study and apply it. As they develop skill they must be allowed to utilize talent in practical fashion. Elders in their teaching must recognize that the true teacher not only gives another what he has learned but seeks to draw out of the other his hidden abilities and latent talents which are natural gifts to be used in ministry for God. The task of every teacher is to prepare others to assume responsibility not to take all of it himself. Let every bishop strive to develop all of God's workers for vineyard service.

It is obvious that a newly converted individual could not possibly qualify for the tasks outlined above. For that reason the apostle declares, "*He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3: 6)*. This does not intimate that the devil will condemn him if he becomes proud. There is no condemnation which the devil can pronounce for he is under condemnation himself. The prisoner at the bar cannot pronounce judgment upon anyone else. But it was pride that caused the overthrow of the devil and those who are ensnared by it will fall into the same condemnation that the devil fell into. The word for *recent convert* is "novice" in the King James Version. It means literally "a new plant." As a new plant may be unsteady and not properly rooted so may a new convert to the faith. For that reason, only seasoned material can fit into the eldership.

MARITAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A BISHOP

On no other phase of the eldership has there been so much discussion as on the domestic qualifications. When one considers the reams of paper which have been exhausted on this angle and the wide differences in the views of scholarly writers, modesty dictates that he tread lightly. In this article I give my sincere and very humble conclusions. Wherein they differ from those expressed by the learned in theology, I ask but a careful and rational study. These conclusions are open to review by any reader whose convictions differ with those herein expressed.

An elder must be "*the husband of one wife.*" Some assert this does not teach a man must be married to qualify, but if married, must have only one wife. Others teach that only a married man may serve and a bachelor is disqualified. Still others teach that this is a prohibition of deuterogamy—the second marriage of one whose wife is

deceased. A fourth group believes the apostle was writing to prohibit a polygamist serving as bishop.

Whatever he meant he wielded a death blow to the Romanist doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy. In *Hebrews 13:4* the writer declares that "*Marriage is honorable in all.*" That he includes the bishops is evident from the qualifications given. If God intended for the pastors of the flock to remain single he could just as well have said so. Instead he says the bishop should be the husband of one wife.

It is difficult for me to see the apostle was trying to offset polygamy for it appears he would thus countenance the practice amongst the members in general. There would be no object in saying that a bishop must be the husband of *only one* wife, if the same was true regarding every Christian. I do not believe the early church tolerated polygamy or plural marriage on the part of any member.

A bachelor cannot be appointed to the office. No man can be a *husband* who is not married and the qualification is specific. A bishop must be a husband regardless of meaning of the latter qualifying and modifying phrase.

But suppose the wife of a bishop dies; must he resign? I do not so conclude for he would not be personally disqualified by what in legal circles is called "an act of God." The qualification given is for the time of appointment and its purpose is to demonstrate the ability to rule the domestic circle as an indication of ability to govern the house of God. If, after appointment and having proven his ability, his wife dies her decease would not disqualify him.

If such a bishop were to remarry would he become disqualified? It is my measured judgment that he would not, although such scholars as Alford, Wordsworth, et. al., say he would. The early "fathers" Tertullian and Hermas assume that Paul was condemning deuterogamy, but since they were inclined to asceticism it is but natural they would place such an interpretation on his words. However, since marriage is honorable *in all*, and the Scriptures nowhere speak of a second marriage as wrong, but rather grant permission therefor, it would seem to be no violation of God's plan. Paul states it as his will that younger widows marry (*1 Tim. 5: 14*) and says the woman whose husband is dead is free to marry whom she will, only in the Lord (*1 Cor. 7:39*). If marriage is honorable in all and re-marriage is honorable as well it would be honorable to a man in the eldership. I am not unmindful that the RSV translates the disputed passage "married but once," but see their footnote.

I am inclined to the view that the apostle meant simply that the bishop must be a married man, one who, having established proper and lawful domestic relations demonstrates his ability to control and manage a household. I am willing to give careful attention to any who differ from my position and to weigh all evidence which they present.

Can a man be disqualified by his wife's attitude? Yes! If the wife of a deacon must be "*serious, no slanderer, but temperate and faithful in all things*" (*1 Tim. 3: 11*) so must the wife of an overseer. It would be foolish to argue that the wife of a servant must have superior qualifications to those of a superintendent. Under no circumstance should a man be placed in the office of bishop whose wife is not faithful in all things.

FAMILY QUALIFICATIONS OF A BISHOP

Again we come to a controverted subject in connection with the qualifications of the bishops of the local congregations. I give my very sincere and humble ideas of what the Bible teaches with the hope that if I am in error brethren who are better informed will set me right. We must be ready to consider what contradicts our views and to weigh all in the light of God's revelation. Let us consider our present topic in the form of questions and answers.

1. Must a man have children in order to qualify for the eldership? My answer is in the affirmative based on *1 Tim. 3: 4 and Titus 5: 6*.
2. What is the purpose of this qualification? To guarantee the ability of a man to govern in the congregation. By properly ruling in the home (God's first social unit) he manifests his ability to govern in the church (God's last organization). "*If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?*"
3. Must a man who has all of the other qualifications have at least two children before he is appointed? No! The word is not so used legally or in the Old or New Covenant Scriptures. In legal circles: "The words 'child' or 'children' are often used interchangeably. Authoritative writers as well as the habits of educated society show that an accurate speaker may without impropriety use the term 'children' for the purpose of indicating offspring or descendants, or posterity, in whatever degree"—*Corpus Juris*.

A good example in the Old Covenant Scriptures is found in *Genesis 21: 7*, where Sarah says: "*Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.*" The word children is used despite the fact that Sarah never suckled but one child.

In *1 Timothy 5*, the church is instructed to honor widows that are real widows (*verse 3*) but "*If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God*" (*verse 4*). If a widow has only one son who is making ten thousand dollars per year can she demand the congregation support her because she does not have "children"? Would anyone be so foolish as to argue that if a widow had but one child he would not need to learn his religious duty toward his family? When the apostle said, "*Fathers do not provoke your children to anger,*" did he imply it would be right to provoke your first child until a second was born?

No one uses such reasoning in any other field of relationships. Our state law declares "Every one having children under the age of sixteen years must enroll them in school." Suppose a mother of one child argued with the truant officer that the law did not apply to her since she did not have "children" but just "a child." Would she be excused before the bar of justice?

4. How old must a man's children be before he can qualify? The Bible does not say and any attempt to specify an age limit would be speculation and unwarranted presumption.
5. Must a man's children be in the church before he can qualify? I do not think so. The King James Version says: "*Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.*" The Revised Standard Version says: "*Whose children are believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate.*" The problem can only be resolved by an understanding of the word rendered "faithful" and "believing." These are translations of

the Greek "*pistos*." There is not a thing in that word which indicates or suggests an object of belief. It means "trustworthy, faithful, of good fidelity, reliable, trustworthy." It is the word which would be used to describe children who were trustworthy and obedient to the father's will as opposed to those who were profligate or insubordinate. We think it is thus used in *Titus 1: 6*. The faithfulness is to the will of the parent.

Paul did not give two sets of varying qualifications to Timothy and Titus. To Timothy he said an elder must "*manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way.*" The "*faithful children*" in Titus are the "*submissive and respectful*" children in *1 Timothy*. The word "*pistos*" was used among the Greeks 'of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties.' The term is not a religious or ecclesiastical term. When used in the framework of the New Covenant it is true that it frequently designates believers in God. The New Testament lexicographers knowing this is true may be inclined to see that idea in the word every time it is used whether the object of the fidelity is stated or not.

6. If a man has no children of his own, but adopts and rears orphan children, may he be thus qualify? Certainly so. The requirement of children is not to test a man's physical ability of procreation, but his executive ability. A man might be able to sire offspring and his wife be sterile. So long as he has children as a part of his household and demonstrates ability to keep them in subjection he has fulfilled the constitutional requirements in this respect.

SELECTION AND ORDAINATION OF ELDERS

How shall elders be chosen? How shall they be ordained? In our discussion of these vital questions we must be governed by principles set forth by the inspired apostles as well as by their examples under guidance of the Spirit. At first the apostles combined all of the official functions essential to the perpetuity of the church in themselves. They were not only apostles but functioned as prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. As the needs of the sacred society grew and men were qualified to take over some of these services they were brought forward and appointed to discharge them. Before the apostles departed this life they arranged for all the permanent offices in the church so that when spiritual gifts ceased the church would move onward without disruption. We think all will agree with this.

If we can determine how the congregation received any of its regular officers by apostolic instruction we may be sure that it would receive them all in the same manner. Fortunately, we have just such an example. When the work of ministering to the needy became too heavy and complaints of neglect were made by some the apostles moved to remedy the condition. "*And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty'*" (*Acts 6: 2, 3*).

The circumstances here are very enlightening. (1) The apostles, although inspired, did not select the servants of the local congregation. Instead they instructed the congregation to pick its own servants. (2) The matter was presented to the whole body of disciples who were summoned for instruction. Here was no clique, faction, or special class holding a secret conclave to put in officers. Incidentally, we have authority here

for the gathering of the whole congregation to attend to business affairs essential to congregational welfare. (3) The qualifications were set forth by the apostles and the men were selected by the entire congregation on that basis. (4) The appointment was made by the apostles. It is evident that the selective power and the appointive power were distinct from each other and vested in two different parties. The selection was a nonofficial work vested in the whole congregation. Appointment to office is an official act. The people of the United States select a man to serve them as a chief executive. This is an unofficial act of the whole citizenry under the Constitution but the selectee does not serve until formally inaugurated. The inauguration is an official act. So it was with the men at Jerusalem. The congregation picked them out but they did not begin to serve until formally appointed to this duty.

It should be noted that the apostles did not specify the qualifications and ask for those who deemed themselves qualified to step forward. Such a procedure might have resulted in confusion. Those who were best qualified, moved by a becoming sense of modesty and restraint, might hesitate to thrust themselves forward, while those who overestimated their ability and would thus be least fitted for the position would be the first to present themselves. Men did not pick themselves to serve the body of disciples. The body picked the men to serve them. *"What they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose..."* (verse 5). It is true that no one can be appointed against his will or under constraint (*1 Peter 5: 2*) but neither can one select or appoint himself. The right to choose its own public servants is a constitutional prerogative of the whole body. No evangelist can select elders for a congregation. He may teach a congregation what the qualifications are. It is his duty to do that. But he cannot choose the men to serve. If the inspired apostles did not dare take that right, should not an uninspired preacher tremble at the thought of doing so?

But by what means shall the congregation indicate its selection or make its choice. The word of God gives no specific formula thus we are left free to follow any plan which does not contradict any Scripture or violate the right of any child of God. Much of the complication arises because we have forsaken God's plan with regard to church government. There is an idea extant that when a church is planted the infant body is wholly at the mercy of chance until men develop in one way or another to the point where they may be placed in the eldership, whereupon the church comes under proper oversight. This idea which leaves a church in its period of greatest danger and need without recognized supervision is in direct contravention to the New Testament plan. God knows of no such thing as a congregation without government and supervision. Our brethren in the early days of the restoration movement clearly saw and understood this.

When an evangelist plants a church he is to *"set in order the things that are lacking and ordain elders"* (*Titus 1: 5*). As the apostles planted the church in Jerusalem and assisted them in securing permanent officers, so must every evangelist worthy of the name do in the place where he labors. Let the evangelist then summon the whole body of the disciples and instruct them as to the qualifications. Then let the congregation choose men accordingly. We have followed the practice of discussing the qualifications, work and service of the elders night after night, until the congregation became thoroughly familiar with them. Then I have suggested that any member of the congregation could write down and present the name of a brother believed to be qualified. Generally a week is given for this to be done. The names are then presented to the whole congregation and the brethren are given a month to

prayerfully consider them and to file any scriptural objection which may be made to any one of them. If no objection is forthcoming a time for appointment is designated.

I have never known of any difficulty as the result of this procedure. It provides each member an opportunity to put before the church the name of any man he believes to be qualified; it grants every member the right to determine if an individual is qualified. The selection thus rests wholly with the congregation. The evangelist has nothing to do with the choosing except as he sets forth and explains the qualifications. He states the requirements of the Lord, the congregation picks out those who meet the requirements.

The first appointment of special servants for a local congregation was by apostles who *"when they had prayed, laid their hands on them"* (Acts 6: 6). The next record of appointment finds an apostle and an evangelist cooperating in the task of ordaining elders (Acts 14: 23) with prayer and fasting. Then an evangelist is assigned the duty (Titus 1: 5). Nowhere does a local congregation appoint its own officers! The Constitution of heaven is plain. We are safe when we follow it! It is always dangerous to ignore it!

A QUESTION AND REPLY REGARDING ELDER'S "FAITHFUL CHILDREN"

A brother beloved writes as follows:

"Previously I had never held any doubt as to my position on an elder's children. I taught a plurality of children, members of the body, but I am persuaded after additional study the number could be singular. In Thayer, on *pistos*, the primary meaning would not necessarily indicate those believing to be of the faith. Barnes agrees with this position, but is this not a questionable one in view of the usage of the same in so many passages (*2 Cor. 6: 15; 1 Tim. 4: 3; 4: 10; 5: 16; 6: 2; Rev. 17: 14*)? If there should be a plurality of children with all of the older ones Christians while one or more should be infants I believe he would be safe to assume the overseership. It appears to me that it is one thing to have children that would faithfully execute the father's commands and discharge duties while quite different to so lead and train them to desire an entrance into the kingdom. Would you suggest that an elderly man otherwise qualified could be a bishop even though none of his several children had obeyed Christ and they have now gone out into the world to make homes for themselves?"

Reply To Above

The reader is referred to previous issues of the paper in which I suggested that the word *pistos* translated "faithful" in Titus 1: 6 did not necessarily imply that the children under consideration be in the church. The word simply means "trustworthy, steadfast, dependable, of good fidelity." It has to do with the nature of one's reliability in whatever relationship is under consideration. It seems to me that it is the relationship of the father to the children which is under consideration and which would qualify or disqualify the father to rule in the congregation and not the relationship of the children unto God. The "*faithful children*" of Titus 1: 6 are the "*children in subjection*" of 1 Timothy 3: 4. They demonstrated their fidelity by subjection to the father and he demonstrates his ability to lead by having them that way. It is admitted that Titus 1: 6 may be somewhat obscure, but 1 Timothy 3: 4 which gives the domestic qualifications is plain and the obscure should be explained in the light of the plain and understandable passage.

There is nothing in the word *pistos* which indicates the object of one's fidelity. Thus, the word cannot be arbitrarily translated "Christian." It must be shown by contextual or supporting evidence what is embraced. The passages cited by our brother demonstrate this fact. In *2 Cor. 6: 15* "*believer*" is used in opposition to lawlessness, darkness, unbelievers and idolaters. The context shows that God is talking about His sons and daughters (*verse 18*). In *1 Timothy 4: 3*, which our brother mentions next, believers are identified with those "*who acknowledge the truth.*" In *1 Timothy 4: 10* they are mentioned as a special part of all men, for whom Jesus is the Saviour. In *1 Timothy 5: 16* it is evident that believers are members of the church. In *1 Timothy 6: 2* they are said to be brethren. In *Revelation 17: 14* they are identified with those whom the Lamb has chosen and called.

The word *pistos* was in common usage long before the Holy Spirit adopted it to convey God's message. The revelation of God did not change the meaning of the term but gave it wider scope and higher relationship. Since the New Testament scripture is by and large a revealing of our relationship to God, it is evident that the term would more

frequently occur in this setting than any other, but to say that it invariably means the same is to assert what cannot be sustained. The word is a term of relationship and that relationship must be established by the context, either adjacent or remote. The true student is interested only in arriving at the exact meaning of the inspired writer if possible.

The word *pistos* is twice translated "true" as in *1 Tim. 3: 1*, "*This is a true saying*," where Young translates, "*Steadfast is the word*." The other occurrence is *2 Cor. 1: 18*, "*As God is true*" which Young translates, "*God is faithful*." Since it is translated "faithful" children in the passage under discussion, I mention that the same translation of the term is applied to Abraham (*Gal. 3: 9*); Moses (*Heb. 3: 5*); God (*1 Cor. 1: 9*); and Christ (*2 Thess. 3: 3*). It is applied by Paul in *Titus* to the word of God (*1: 9*) and to his saying (*3: 8*). All that can be said about the children of the bishop based upon *Titus 1: 6* is that they must be "*trustworthy, and not accused of riot or insubordinate*." If either of these last accusations can be sustained, the father would not have them in subjection and could not qualify as a leader of God's house, not being able to control his own household.

My brother asserts, "If there should be a plurality of children with all the older ones Christians while one or more should be infants I believe he would be safe to assume the overseership." That is his *opinion*. He does not *believe* it because he has no divine testimony to the effect that a man may safely assume the overseership if all his older children are Christians while one or more are infants, and he cannot believe that upon which he has no testimony. If he argues that thus the man would have Christian children, he must base it upon the word *pistos* in *Titus 1: 6*, and that is the very point at issue.

He is correct in stating that it is one thing to have children who will faithfully execute the father's commands and discharge duties and quite different to lead and train them to desire an entrance into the kingdom. But what is the reason for the qualification demanding a certain kind of children? Is it to demonstrate the father's ability to lead people to desire an entrance into the kingdom, i. e., to convert non-members? Or, is it not rather to "*take care of the household of God*?" Certainly an elder is to try and convert everyone whom he can influence to accept Christ, but that is not his work *as a bishop* but as a Christian. He does not need to have children to qualify for that work. The reason he is to have obedient children is to qualify for a specific office. "*For if a man know not how to rule his own house*." When he demonstrates a knowledge of how to rule a family or household he has fulfilled the requirement of that particular qualification. He should not be kept out of the eldership by an interpretation of the qualification which is not a part of God's revelation. It is for that reason we must be sure to study diligently to see if we may determine God's mind as it has been revealed.

We freely admit that if a man acts as a Christian father and properly trains his family the presumption is that his children will obey the gospel at the proper age, yet we do not see that this is the point in the qualification. As to the final question of our brother, I can conceive of a man being in a denominational organization and rearing respectful obedient children in that organization. At the age of fifty the father learns the way of truth more perfectly. He and his wife become members of a congregation of saints. He diligently and seriously applies himself to the study of the Book and leads some others to Christ but he cannot budge his children from sectarianism. "*A man's foes shall be they of his own family*," applies in their case in matters religious although they still maintain a proper respect for their father as a man. In ten years, having arrived at the age of sixty,

the entire congregation desires him to serve as one of the bishops. Would our querist refuse to appoint him on the grounds that his children disqualify him?

These are grave matters and worthy of consideration of all. We set forth our views in reverence and godly fear. We trust that they are right but we hold ourselves ready to change if proven to be wrong. None of us will ever reach heaven by contending for an error which we know to be such. That is why we welcome the challenges to what we offer. We do not want to go to the grave teaching error. We respectfully suggest that all of our readers study these matters in the light of heaven's revelation, and may the eyes of the understanding of all of us be opened.

ANOTHER QUESTION AND REPLY REGARDING THE SELECTION OF ELDERS

A very sincere sister writes as follows:

"Your paper did not have enough Bible on how to elect elders to satisfy some. Don't you really think when you read those very strict qualifications that it is the highest office a man can hold on earth today? They were given by God. It does seem when a man desires the office and strives hard enough to attain them *he* would be one, just as we are members of the church of Christ when we obey Him. Today there are no inspired men to know the minds of men and elect them. In all truth and honesty before Almighty God don't you think it was meant to be that way?"

Reply to Above

I agree that there is no higher office in the church than to be one of several bishops in a local congregation. But the fact that the qualifications are given by the Lord and are strict does not imply that a man "grows into the office" and need not be selected and appointed. It is true that a man becomes a Christian by obedience of God's law for making Christians and one becomes an elder by obedience to all of God's law for making elders. Just as one becomes a Christian when he submits to the initiatory act of baptism so one becomes an elder when he submits to the act of appointment.

The qualifications were specified in the letter to Titus, yet Titus was told to "*ordain elders in every city.*" Why was the evangelist told to ordain them if they just developed the qualifications and automatically became bishops? On what basis can we argue that inspired men were ever needed to select officers of a local congregation? When the first public servants were selected according to *Acts 6: 1-5*, the inspired men (apostles) refused to select them. Instead they called the whole congregation, gave them the qualifications and told them to choose the men. Thus in the days of direct inspiration those who were inspired turned the work of selection over to the uninspired.

Surely men must be selected on the basis of the qualifications. Which of these qualifications demands inspirational insight? Do I have to be inspired to observe whether a brother with whom I am in intimate communion is the husband of one wife, addicted to hospitality and having aptitude to instruct? What inspiration is required to determine if a man has his children in subjection? If the congregation would have to be inspired to know when a man met the qualifications, then why would the man not have to be inspired to know when he met them?

I know when a man becomes a Christian. He becomes one when a public act is performed for him by another. Nothing is said about the action of baptism to the one being baptized. In every instance when the action of baptism is referred to, the person administering it is addressed. Now at what juncture does a man become an elder if the action of ordination performed for him by another is not essential? On what day does the church become subject to his rule. Who determines it? Who announces it? Since we are commanded to *"obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves"* (Heb. 13: 17) at what time do I start to obey and submit to a man's rule? If you say the day and hour that he becomes qualified, then how can I know when that day and hour cometh, seeing that I am not inspired? And if I can know when he becomes qualified, why could I not aid in his selection?

The querist says I did not have enough Bible on how to elect elders to *satisfy some!* I gave several scriptural quotations and my reasoning on them. I did not write to satisfy some! Even God could not give enough Bible to satisfy some! There isn't enough Bible on baptism to satisfy some, so they reject what there is, and do something else. The same holds true with some in the church.

Using the querist's words, *"In all truth and honesty before Almighty God,"* I hold that the local congregation should *"look out from among them"* (Acts 6: 3) men to serve the congregation; that these should be chosen by the whole multitude (Acts 6: 5) and appointed to office (Acts 6: 6). I believe that elders should be ordained in every city (Titus 1: 5) that is, in every church (Acts 14: 23). And just as men did not become bishops then until ordained, they do not now! If that is not enough scripture, it is certainly more than the querist cited, which was none! She gave all there was for the position suggested, for where the Lord has not given any scripture it is hard to find it! The Bible clearly teaches that the church should select from among its number those who meet the qualifications for public office, and such should be ordained by an evangelist. Inspiration is not required either to choose for office or appoint one to it!