

# Special Studies

by

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## MUST ELDERS BE MARRIED?

"*Mias gunaikos andra.*" These are words of Paul. They were written to both Timothy and Titus. They constitute one qualification for an elder. What do they mean? The King James Version translates them "the husband of one wife." The Revised Standard Version says "married only once." Does the expression mean that marriage is essential to being a bishop? Almost before the last apostle died this was a matter of controversy. It has continued to be so in every generation since. This question bothered the reformers of the nineteenth century, both here and abroad.

On Wednesday, August 4, 1880, the annual conference of Churches of Christ in Great Britain met at Huddersfield. Brother G. Y. Tickle presented a paper on "The Eldership." Later, he published it in *The Christian Advocate*, of which he was editor. Here is an excerpt from the printed version:

"I respectfully submit that there is nothing in the directions given to either Timothy or Titus to make it imperative that they should be married men, and that they should have children. . . . The *one*, as opposed to plurality, is evidently the emphatic word. But it may be asked, Does it not even in that case include the injunction that he must be a married man? Most assuredly not. If the apostle has before him a man with a plurality of wives and intends to exclude *him* from the eldership on that ground, you have no right to say that is equal to having a single man before him who is to be excluded simply on the ground of his being unmarried or a

widower—for to be consistent the language must exclude both."

At the same time, Bro. David King was editor of the *Ecclesiastical Observer*. He took exception to the speech made at the conference. This provoked Bro. Tickle to write in the next edition of his paper as follows:

"When we presented our paper on 'The Eldership' to the Annual Meeting we did not expect, and had no desire that it should escape the sifting of a full and fair criticism. We know that it is only by such means that the question can be lifted out of the ruts which a superficial exegesis has sunk for it, and be made to move forward on broad apostolic lines. That the Editor of the *Ecclesiastical Observer* should allow the whole of our positions, some of them so widely divergent from those he has accepted so many years as unassailable, to pass unchallenged, was not at all to be expected. We have felt, therefore, no surprise either as to the points of his attack, or to the manner in which the attack has been made, but we are bound to say we have never known the Editor so rash and heedless as he has shown himself in this critique on our paper."

After another rebuttal by Bro. King, the controversy was suspended by Bro. Tickle in these words:

"We do not think it would be profitable to enter into further controversy on this subject. D. K. intimates that he is not satisfied with the reply in our last issue. We were not altogether satisfied with his attack and are not at all satisfied with his rejoinder. If we answered in the same vein, we are sure dissatisfaction would be increased on both sides. So we prefer to let the matter rest where it is, in the hope that the brethren may be enabled to look away from the men and their

little contention to the question in its different phases and on its merits, carefully weighing all that has been advanced in the way of argument in the balances of truth and right reason."

Interest in the issue has been heightened in some sections of the disciple brotherhood in this country in the last two years. A Pennsylvania reader posed the following question to a fellow editor:

"If a man has all the qualifications to be an elder except that he has no children, his wife being childless and thus he has no children through no fault of his own, would that in itself bar him forever to serve as elder?"

The reply as published went far beyond the original question, for it would appear that the querist assumed that an elder must be married. But the editor responded in these words:

"If brethren generally will be gracious enough not to hang me on Haman's gallows, I would like to say that I think we have stretched the domestic qualifications for bishops out of proportions. Paul's stipulations to Timothy and Titus deal with a 'normal' situation, and normally men old enough to be bishops are married and have children. But does Paul draw the line on bachelors or childless married men? I think not. Our straight-laced interpretations would bar even Paul himself from being an elder. The 'husband of one wife' qualification literally means 'a one-woman man,' which is likely a moral restriction against polygamy. Most all scholars take this view, if that means anything. The 'Church of Christ' stands almost alone in its idea that bishops must be married men, an interpretation that is linguistically weak. With such a liberal view I would, of course, say No to the above question. I am always amazed at brethren who think a man must be a husband and father in order to oversee a church, and yet believe that an evangelist who sets the church in order and trains men to be bishops can be either single or childless."

I was not disturbed by this reply. But I must admit that I was amazed at the reaction of many. They actually became emotionally upset and agitated. Instead of bringing forward proof to sustain their position and to show any fallacy in the reasoning of the editor, they began to whisper that he was unsound and unsafe. Some quit taking his paper on the ground that they did not want to read anything which disagreed with their position. My attitude is just the opposite of that. I have long ago determined that I do not

learn by reading after those in perfect agreement with me. Those who are not, present things to challenge my thinking. They force me to re-evaluate my convictions. I am thus made to test all things so that I may retain what is good. Accordingly, when I read such an article I invariably follow a three-point program. First, I read it over very carefully to ascertain just what the author intends to convey; secondly, I examine such proofs as he presents by the proper criterion; thirdly, I formulate my own convictions in the light of my personal investigation.

For several months in *MISSION MESSENGER* I have been conducting a survey of the eldership. Having considered the moral qualifications of the presbyters, I have arrived at the place where I must deal with the domestic requirements. The first question is whether or not a man must be married to qualify. Strictly speaking, the question is what Paul intended to convey in the expression "*mias gunaikos andra*." That is what should concern us. We ought not to be interested primarily, in whether these words confirm a qualification we have set up. We must seek to find what qualification they set up. Since I am dealing at such length with an issue which may appear to my readers to be of minor importance, I offer as justification the fact that I am of the sober opinion that we can never restore the church of God to its ancient order without restoring the polity ordained by the holy apostles. Any matter related to the government of the congregation of saints is important. This particular one has taken on added importance at this time.

I am deeply indebted to, and appreciative of, the great scholars who have done so much in clearing the ground for those of us possessed of humbler intellects. I doubt that any person now living has a more profound respect for scholarship than the writer. Yet, I recognize that the mere fact that the "Church of Christ" stands almost alone in its idea that bishops must be married men, is not in itself, proof of either correctness or error in thinking. I shall seek to be objective and not concerned with the idea of any

"church." What did the inspired envoy of the Lord say, and what did he mean?

"*Mias gunaikos andra.*" In generations past men of great learning have held conflicting views. These words have been said to have the following connotations:

1. To forbid concubinage.
2. To forbid polygamy.
3. To forbid remarriage after divorce.
4. To forbid digamy, or deuterogamy (a second marriage after the death of the mate).
5. To demand that elders be married men.

At the outset, it must be admitted that most all scholars positively reject the last as being a proper interpretation. There are some notable exceptions to which we will later call attention. But it is likewise true that a careful poll of the same scholars may prove that a majority of them reject the idea that Paul was opposing polygamy by his statement. They believe rather that he was opposing deuterogamy, that is, a second marriage after death of a companion.

Goodspeed translates: "Only once married." James Moffatt: "He must be married only once." The Berkeley Version: "One wife's husband," with an added footnote: "If married at all." The New Testament in Plain English has "Married only once." The Revised Standard Version reads: "Married only once," with the footnote: "Greek *the husband of one wife.*"

On the original language itself, Kenneth S. Wuest, in his book on *The Pastoral Epistles* has this to say:

"The two nouns are without the definite article, which construction indicates character or nature. The entire context is one in which the character of the bishop is being discussed. Thus one can translate 'a one-wife sort of husband' or 'a one-woman sort of man.' We speak of the Airedale as a one-man dog. We mean, by that, that it is his nature to become attached to only one man, his master. Since character is emphasized by the Greek construction, the bishop should be a man who loves only one woman as his wife. It should be his nature to thus isolate and centralize his love."

Edmund J. Wolff, D.D., Professor of Church History and New Testament Ex-

egesis in the Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, says:

"Public sentiment at the time looked with disfavor upon the contraction of marriage after the death of one's consort. It was held to be unseemly, if not immoral. To forego a second wedlock was regarded as a mark of high moral strictness. Even the heathen deemed it unbecoming for a widow. It, therefore, behooved one about to step on the high pedestal of pastoral oversight to conform to public sentiment—as long as it was not sinful, and to set an example of self-restraint."

Henry Alford, D.D., one time Dean of Canterbury, concurs in this view as shown by his statement:

"The view then which must I think be adopted is that . . . St. Paul forbids second marriage. He requires of them pre-eminent chastity, and abstinence from licence which is allowed to other Christians. How far such a prohibition is to be considered binding on us, now that the Christian life has entered into another and totally different phase, is of course an open question for the present Christian church at any time to deal with. It must be as a matter of course understood that regulations, in all lawful things, depend, even when made by an Apostle, on circumstances: and the superstitious observance of the letter in such cases is often pregnant with mischief to the people and the cause of Christ."

The reader is no doubt familiar with Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament. In espousing the above position, the author says:

"The opposition to second marriage became very strong in the latter part of the second century. It was elevated into an article of faith by the Montanists, and was emphasized by Tertullian, and by Athenagoras, who called second marriage 'a spurious adultery.'"

Among the commentators who believe that the apostle was forbidding second marriages are Bloomfield, Wiesinger, Van Oosterzee, Huther, Ellicott, Wordsworth, and Faussett. There are a number of others who dissent from this view, among them H. H. Harvey, D.D., of Hamilton Theological Seminary, who declares:

"It seems clear, therefore, that the disqualification here intended is not remarriage after the death of a wife, but polygamy, or the having at the same time more than one living wife."

To complicate this explanation, Alfred Plummer, M.A., D.D., affirms that:

"Polygamy in the Roman Empire must have been very rare. It was forbidden by Roman law, which did not allow a man to

have more than one lawful wife at a time, and treated every simultaneous marriage, not only as null and void, but infamous. When it was practiced, it must have been practiced secretly. It is possible that when St. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, not a single polygamist had been converted to the Christian faith. Polygamists were exceedingly rare inside the Empire, and the Church had not yet spread beyond it."

As to the rarity of polygamy in the days of the apostles we have the testimony of E. F. Scott, Professor of Biblical Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

"This has sometimes been taken to imply that only married men were eligible, but a rule of this kind would be contrary to the whole passage, which deals with character rather than status. Neither can it be polygamy which is forbidden, for this was never practiced in the civilized regions of Asia Minor. Perhaps Moffatt is right in translating *he must be married only once*. . . . But perhaps the meaning is simply that a bishop must show an example of strict morality. As a man of mature years he would presumably be married, and in the married relation, above all others, he must be above reproach."

Edward Hayes Plumptre, D.D., Professor in King's College, London, suggests another alternative:

"A third explanation is, perhaps, more satisfactory. The most prominent fact in the social life of both Jews and Greeks at this period was the frequency of divorce. This, as we know, Jewish teachers, for the most part, sanctioned on even trifling grounds (Matt. 5: 31, 32; 19: 3-9). The apostle, taking up the law which Christ had laid down, infers that any breach of that law (even in the case which made marriage after divorce just permissible) would at least so far diminish a man's claim to respect as to disqualify him for office."

Walter Lock, D.D., in The International Critical Commentary, reaches about the same conclusion:

"To be unmarried would incur no reproach: such a requirement (marriage) would be scarcely consistent with the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 19: 12) and of St. Paul (1 Cor. 7: 7, 8); so the writer is only thinking of the character of a bishop, if married; as in verse 4 he deals only with his children, if he has children. . . . It also implies, and was probably meant to imply, not divorcing one wife and marrying another."

Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph.D., D.D., in Popular Commentary of the Bible, offers the following:

"That a pastor lead a chaste and decent

life, confining his attentions to his wife, if he have one, as he normally will, not living in concubinage or bigamy, or rejecting a woman to whom he is lawfully betrothed for another."

N. J. D. White, D.D., in The Expositor's Greek Testament sets forth the view:

"It does not mean that the episcopus must be, or have been married. What is here forbidden is digamy under any circumstances."

Nothing is more apparent to the researchist than the wide area of disagreement among the scholars. They are not agreed upon what the apostle meant. They are not even agreed upon what he did not mean. It is true that a majority take the position that Paul did not intend to set up the married state as requisite to office. On this point, we quote from R. C. H. Lenski, who says:

"The emphasis is on *one* wife's husband, and the sense is that he have nothing to do with any other woman. He must be a man who cannot be taken hold of on the score of sexual promiscuity or laxity. It is plain that Paul does not say here that none but married men may enter the ministry, that every pastor must be married."

John Peter Lange, in his comments upon the passages under consideration, says:

"The view that Paul speaks here only of the married state, as a *conditio sine qua non* for the episcopoi, or that he merely discourages anything unusual, immoral, or illegal in the married life of such officers, does not fully explain his language."

Scott's Bible agree with the thought expressed by Lange and others, with the words:

"Some have inferred from this text, that stated pastors ought to be married, as a prerequisite to their office; but this seems to be a mistake of a *general permission*, connected with a restriction, for an *express command*."

A. S. Peake, M.A., D.D., lends the weight of his opinion to the same view, saying of the passages:

"Sometimes wrongly interpreted as alluding to polygamy or adultery, or of forbidding celibacy."

Professor T. Croskery, D.D., in The Pulpit Commentary, also declares:

"It does not necessarily compel pastors to marry, like the Greek church. . . . It seems to mean that the pastor was to be 'the husband of one wife,' avoiding the polygamy that was then common among the Jews, and the system of divorce still so common in that age,

and remaining faithful to the wife of his choice."

We need to be careful, lest we leave the impression that all of the commentators and historians are united in the view that Paul did not set up marriage as a qualification. Carlstadt, the illustrious contemporary of Luther, and the fiery reformer, who advocated that a destructive process was the only method of reform, was a notable exception. This man, who was anxious to introduce into ecclesiastical and civil affairs an unconditional adherence to the obvious and literal construction of the Scriptures, steadfastly contended that the bishops should be married men.

Thomas M. Lindsay, D.D., Principal of Glasgow College, in his book, "The Church and The Ministry in the Early Centuries," says:

"Titus is told that a presbyter or elder must be a man who is above suspicion, who is a faithful husband, and whose children are Christians of well-regulated lives."

In a footnote on the same page is contained the following explanation:

"A faithful husband' appears to be the best translation of *mias gunaikos andra*, one who acts on the principles of Christian morality and is not led astray by the licentious usages of the surrounding heathenism."

But Macknight in his work on "The Epistles" dissents from this view, in this language:

"The direction I have been considering does not make it necessary, to one's being a bishop, that he be a married person. . . . But the apostle's meaning is, that if such a person be married, he must, as was observed above, have only one wife at a time."

Albert Barnes concludes that the apostle intended to prohibit polygamy, but writes:

"This need not be understood as requiring that a bishop should be a married man."

In the face of all of this contradictory material what is the honest student to do? What did the apostle actually mean by the terms he used? It is possible we

may not be able, at this late date, to definitely determine, in the absence of more complete testimony. Certainly we should not be arbitrary or dogmatic in our personal views. We need to proceed with caution and becoming humility, lest we advance an interpretation, then make of it a creed, and proceed to disfellowship others because they will not bow to our will. There is a difference between what the apostle said and what men think that he meant.

It is an easy matter for us to ignore the results of research and investigation and cling to a traditional view without regard to its validity. But this is not an honest approach to the revealed word of heaven. One of our greatest difficulties is that, having taught a thing for so long, we become lifted up with pride. We feel that we cannot change for this would be an admission of error! Or, perhaps, we learn better, but conclude that silence is the better part of valor. If we remain still and say nothing on the issues that are raised, we can retain the plaudits of the masses; whereas, if we speak out boldly we may be hated and hounded as troublemakers of Israel.

The writer does not feel that he should suppress his honest views in order to please men. In the next issue those views will be clearly set forth and the reasons given for them. Those reasons may not satisfy all of our readers. They may be deemed as insufficient to justify the conclusion reached, but they will be presented in kindness and love, and those who differ will not be castigated nor driven out by the editor. It is our very fervent prayer that you shall read this review again very carefully and save this issue until the next appears. In the meantime, we believe that there is one thing of which all may be certain, and that is that the enforced celibacy of the Roman Church is contrary to the word of God.

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In our first article on this subject, published in MISSION MESSENGER last month, we reviewed the positions taken by various scholars. We urge you to read it as

a preparation for this second article. It will demonstrate the great differences that exist as to the meaning of the language used by the apostle. It will also

show that only a small minority of scholars entertain the view that marriage is a requisite for the eldership.

Those of us who have always contended that a bishop must be married should face up courageously to the difficulties which must be met in the defence of that position. Let me cite but a few. Jesus speaks with commendation of those who "have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19: 12). I understand this to refer to those who desist from marriage to advance the kingdom. Is it logical that one who deprives himself of marriage for the sake of the kingdom, should be deprived of an office or function in that kingdom, on the basis that he is not married? Again, we learn from the scriptures that continency is a gift (Matt. 19: 11) and that it is a special gift from God (1 Cor. 7: 7). Shall a man be barred from the eldership because he exercises this gift, or, if he desires the office of bishop, must he deny the gift of God?

The expression "husband of one wife" as relates to the bishop, is on par with the expression "wife of one husband" as pertains to the widow in 1 Timothy 5: 9. It is generally conceded, we believe, that the latter expression means that a widow is not to have married again after the death of her husband. In view of this, is it not implied that Paul, instead of setting up marriage as a qualification, was simply stating that no twice married man could qualify? If it be agreed that "husband of one wife" is a correct rendering, is the emphasis to be placed upon "husband" or "one." If we were laying down a qualification of marriage for a position, would we say that a man had to be the husband of *one wife*? If Paul intended to establish marriage as a requisite to office, why did he not use the word for "married" since he was familiar with it and employed it frequently?

On the other hand, we should not feel that this is the only position beset with problems. Those who settle upon other meanings also have difficulties which they must meet. Certainly the language em-

ployed by the apostle meant *something*, and it meant just *one thing* when written. It is not a fair or wise approach to say that it could have included a number of various things, for this spirit would do despite to all interpretation, and it is the resort of shallow thinkers and surface reasoners who do not handle the word skilfully.

In presenting my own view as to the question in our heading, I must admit that I do so with some reluctance which I did not feel five years ago. Always before, when writing upon this topic, I have been bold, forward and positive. I merely stated my position derived from years of traditional teaching. It never occurred to me that any person would be so rash as to question it. I admit that I did not strive to find out what the apostle meant, for I thought I already knew. Now that I am again faced with the necessity of declaring my thoughts I find myself both humbled and hesitant. Yet I cannot be true to my readers without expressing my feelings.

My conclusion is that a bishop should be a married man. This is in opposition to the world's scholarship. It may seem presumptuous to array myself against the battery of great reasoners whose opinions I have cited. Surely I must present the bases for arriving at such a conclusion. I know these will be attacked and sifted, and they should be. It may be proven that they are inadequate and insufficient to justify my position. I submit them in all honesty and sincerity. They are my own. I have not consulted with others on the matter. No one else need be charged with them. My only justification in disagreeing with the scholars is that "God hath chosen the foolish to confound the wise." Here are the reasons which lead me to believe that bishops should be married.

1. The primitive community of saints, being Jewish, was patterned after the synagogue in government. It is my personal feeling that the synagogue, which was a spontaneous production of the Babylonian exile, was used of God to

cushion the shock of transition from Judaism to Christianity. This theme I hope to develop in a future book if God spares my life. At the present, it is sufficient to say that all scholars of note agree that the congregation in Jerusalem was a Messianic synagogue, with its permanent form of government developing along the lines with which the people were familiar. Out of the great bulk of material before me, I present statements from two writers of note.

The first quotation is from Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D., Dean of Westminster, in his "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church," Vol. 3, Page 409:

"And thus, inasmuch as the synagogue existed where the Temple was unknown, and remained when the Temple fell, it followed that from its order and worship, and not from that of the Temple, were copied, if not in all their details, yet in the general features, the government, the institutions, and the devotions of those Christian communities, which springing directly from the Jewish, were in the first instance known as 'synagogues' . . . and afterward by the adoption of an almost identical word 'Ecclesia,' assembly house."

The second quotation will be found in "The Temple Dictionary of the Bible" by W. Ewing, M.A., and J. E. H. Thomson, D.D., under the article "Synagogue."

"It is not difficult to trace the foundation and practice of the Apostolic Church to the Synagogue system, and to see that we have nothing to do with the Temple worship, which was meant to be unique and to be devoted to the sacrificial ritual. . . . Every detail of the Primitive Church organization is synagogal—the equality of elders and rulers (Acts 20: 17, 28), the episcopal power vested in the presbyters, the daily ministration (Acts 6: 1), the matter of collections, the use of the word angel (Rev. 2: 1) for the presiding elder, and the general order of Christian worship: all are synagogal and presbyterian."

It should not be necessary to tell the serious student that the last word in the quotation has no reference to a denomination in the Protestant world, but to a form of government.

The Jewish disciples were familiar with the rule of elders in the synagogue. (See MISSION MESSENGER, June 1957, page 8). It is conceivable that when the apostles visited a synagogue and reasoned from the Jewish Scriptures, proving that Jesus

of Nazareth was the Messiah, the entire synagogue might be converted, in which case there would be no necessity of a change of government, worship or procedure, except the addition of the Lord's Supper. But the Jews had a high regard for the married state and the home. For that reason they taught that a priest should be neither unmarried or childless, lest he be unmerciful.

Dr. Alfred Edersheim, D.D., Ph.D., in an article on "Marriage Among the Hebrews," says:

"Thus viewed, marriage was considered almost a religious duty, that is, not from lust, nor for beauty, nor yet merely for wealth. For whatever woman was, either for good or bad, she was always superlatively. Stringing together several portions of Scripture, it was argued that an unmarried man was without any *good* (Gen. 2: 18), without *joy* (Deut. 14: 26), without *blessing* (Ezek. 44: 30); without *protection* (Jer. 31: 22), without *peace* (Job 5: 24); indeed, could not properly be called a man (Gen. 5: 22)."

The same writer in his "Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ" has this to say:

"We can understand how, before the coming of the Messiah, marriage should have been looked upon as of religious obligation. Many passages of Scripture were at least *quoted* in support of this idea. Ordinarily, a young man was expected to enter the wedded state (according to Maimonides) at the age of sixteen or seventeen, while the age of twenty may be regarded as the utmost limit conceded, unless study so absorbed time and attention as to leave no leisure for the duties of married life. Still it was thought better even to neglect study than to remain single."

In the same book, the author, himself a Jew who came to believe in the Messiah, has this to say about those who had charge of the conduct of public worship, as well as of the government and discipline of the synagogues:

"They were men learned in the law and of good repute, whom the popular voice designated, but who were regularly set apart by 'the laying on of hands,' or the 'Semichah,' which was done by at least three, who had themselves received ordination. . . . The special qualifications for the office of Sanhedrist, mentioned in the Rabbinical writings, are such as to remind us of the directions of St. Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 3: 1-10)."

Our next authority is C. D. Ginsburg,

LL.D., who writes in "Early Attendance at the Sanctuary" as follows:

"It was deemed most desirable that he who acts as the mouthpiece of the people should be able to sympathize with the wants of the people, and should possess those moral and mental qualifications which became so holy a mission. The canon law, therefore, laid it down that 'even if an elder or sage is present in the congregation, he is not to be asked to officiate before the ark; but that man is to be delegated to officiate who has children, whose family are free from vice, who has a proper beard, whose garments are decent, who is acceptable to the people, and who has a good and amiable voice, who understands to read properly the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, and who knows all the benedictions of the service' (Mishna Taanith, 2:2). How strikingly this illustrates the apostolic injunction, 'A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, and modest . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity, . . . not a novice, . . . he must have a good report of them that are without' (1 Tim. 3:1-7, with Titus 1:1-9)."

It would not have been necessary to set forth marriage as one of the qualifications for the presbyters who were selected by the congregation at Jerusalem and appointed to administer the affairs of the community of saints. The brethren who constituted that community were all Jews. They regarded themselves as a synagogue of disciples of the Nazarene. Their superintendents and administrators selected by popular voice would be married men. And we believe that this pattern would be followed in other congregations, even those remote from Palestine. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 2:14).

2. The whole tenor of the teaching seems to indicate that a presbyter will be a married man. It may be argued that a definite rule of marriage based upon the mere statement "*mias gunaikos andros*" is linguistically weak, but we do not think it will be seriously disputed that the context relates to one who is domestically situated as the head of a household. And just as a gem loses part of its luster out of the setting designed for it, so it is sometimes difficult to appreciate fully a pas-

sage isolated from the general frame in which it is placed.

Edward Hayes Plumptre, D.D., Professor in King's College, London, has this to say:

"Both this verse and verse 4 appear to take marriage for granted. It is obvious that in a community much exposed to the suspicions or the slanders of the heathen, this would be a safeguard against many of the perils to which a celibate clergy have always been exposed."

Much along the same vein is the statement of J. R. Dummelow, M.A., Queen's College, Oxford, who says the expression probably means that a presbyter must be faithful to his wife, "a man of one woman." He adds, "In any case the presbyter or bishop is contemplated as a married man."

3. The Holy Spirit presents an analogy in which the home, or household, sustains a relation to the congregation of God, and it is in ruling the first that one demonstrates his ability to govern the second. A presbyter must "rule well his own house." He must have "his children in subjection with all gravity." The purpose of this qualification is not to determine his ability to beget offspring but to afford a demonstration of his ability to govern them. The argument is that "If he know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God?" The word for house is *oikos* "the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household." A part of this family are children. In ruling them, the candidate for the eldership shows his ability to govern. If he is not married and has no children how can he demonstrate this ability? How can the congregation know he will be able to take care of the church of God if they have never seen a demonstration of his ability in a household? Can a congregation select a man to govern the church of God who has not demonstrated ability to rule his own house, including his children?

But what about the argument that by setting up marriage as a qualification, Paul would render himself, Barnabas, and Timothy, disqualified for the office? We propose to allow David King to answer this.



"We consider that either polygamy or celibacy disqualifies for the eldership. It has been urged that celibacy cannot do so, as, in that case, Paul and Timothy would have been disqualified; certainly they would, and there is no evidence they were not. No one can produce proof that they were qualified for the elder's office, and nowhere are we taught that the qualifications for an apostle, an evangelist, and an elder are the same. On the point now immediately under notice, nothing could be more fitting than that apostles and evangelists, whose work largely required them to move from place to place, and generally rendered impossible a settled home, should be unmarried; while on the other hand, nothing is more seemly and desirable than that overseers in one church, whose duties require settled residence and involve frequent interposition between husband and wife, parents and children, should themselves be married men, who have given evidence that they understand and rightfully deport themselves in that relationship. No one can fail to see that such, other circumstances being equal, could not but present a fitness for the office which the unmarried are without. This is our conclusion after years of thoughtful investigation, and after reading, perhaps, all that can be said on either side."

What should be our attitude toward brethren who honestly differ from us and who think that we make a rigid interpretation without proper justification? Here is how Brother King resolved that issue.

"Still the fact remains, that thoughtful, learned, pious brethren conclude that it is not certain that the intention is wider than the exclusion of the polygamist, and, therefore, they decline to reject an unmarried man who is, in all other respects, qualified. Now, we are not prepared to say that these brethren must of necessity be wrong. That they are wrong we have little or no doubt, but the impossibility of their being right is not here affirmed. How then shall the difficulty be met? Each church must meet it for itself, and the understanding of the majority must prevail. Not that the church shall decree what the interpretation shall be; but that each member determine for himself, whether the person, or persons, named has, or have, the required qualifications; each to determine this according to his own understanding of the terms, and the declared will of the majority must be taken as the church-recognition or non-recognition of the fitness of the men submitted for their judgment. But just here comes in an important consideration, which to some extent should influence the decision. There is perfectly safe and certain ground. If only those are ordained who possess the other qualifications and who also are married, everyone will know that the re-

quirements are fully met. Thus perfectly safe and reliable ground invites to occupation."

What course shall I pursue personally? Since starting this series I have learned of a group of brethren in another part of the world who do not consider marriage as a necessary qualification. They will not reject a man who is otherwise qualified but has never married. Suppose I should visit them and labor among them, as I have been invited to do. Would I seek to divide them over this issue? Indeed I would not! If asked to explain my position I would offer my interpretation in meekness and humility. I would avoid becoming dogmatic or arbitrary. I would not tell them that I could not worship with them, nor serve under an eldership, with one or more constituents unmarried. I could not conscientiously appoint such a brother to office with my present attitude, but I would not make an unwritten creed of my interpretation and divide brethren into "a married elder faction," and "an unmarried elder faction." If I have not grown much in knowledge in recent years I trust that I have at least grown in grace.

To any of my brethren, at home or abroad; to those who fellowship me and those who do not; I would like to say that I will be pleased to read anything you have to say on this issue which may help to throw additional light on the matter. I do not solicit your personal opinions, for I have more of my own than I know what to do with. But if there is some scripture I have overlooked, or some point of logic or reasoning I have failed to see, you will be my friend if you point out my shortcoming, and call my mistakes to my attention. I want to be right above all things else. I am willing to learn from any person who can teach me.

God willing, I shall deal with the questions concerning the children of bishops in my next issue. I trust that you will look forward to that, and that God may bless us all with a deeper insight into His revelation of truth.

## ELDERS AND CHILDREN

The question of whether or not elders must have children in order to qualify has long been discussed. The editor humbly submits his views on this issue in the form of questions and answers.

**1. Is it your position that a man must be married to qualify as an elder?**

Yes, and I gave my reasons for so thinking in the November edition of this paper. I admit there are difficulties presented by this position, but it seems to fulfill the requirements better than any other. Those who desire to study the opposite view, and all should do so, may see it set forth by Bro. Ralph Graham, in *Bible Talk*.

**2. Do you think that an elder must have children?**

Yes, I do, because he is contemplated as the head of a family, or household, and he must demonstrate his ability to take care of the church of God by ruling his own family well (1 Tim. 3:5). In connection therewith, it is said he must have his children in subjection with all gravity.

**3. Does the term children imply a plurality, or could a man with one child serve, if he possesses the other qualifications?**

The word "children" does not necessitate a plurality. It is used in its common application, and neither legally, naturally, or in the Old and New Testaments does it convey the idea of a compulsory plurality.

**4. Can you illustrate what you mean by "legally" and "naturally"?**

Yes. In this state, there is a law which stipulates that "All parents having children under the age of sixteen years must enroll them in school." Could parents having only one child evade that law? Indeed not!

In normal conversation we use the term "children" in the same fashion. If the Parent-Teachers Association invites to a

meeting all parents who have children enrolled in the school, it certainly would not be limited to those who had two or more in school.

**5. Give us examples in the Old and New Testaments to illustrate your view.**

A good case in point is that of Sarah, at the birth of Isaac. "And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age" (Gen. 21:7). Here the term "children" is certainly equivalent to "a son."

In 1 Timothy 5:4 "any widow who has children" is to be supported by them. This certainly would not eliminate one son or daughter from any obligation, for that would contradict verses 8 and 16 where the singular is employed. Such examples could be multiplied far beyond our space to accommodate them.

**6. If a couple having no children of their own, adopt children, would this satisfy the requirements?**

Certainly it would. The qualification is not based upon a man's physical ability to beget offspring, but upon his ability to rule or govern the family circle. A wife might be sterile even though her husband was not. If a couple adopts children and they demonstrate ability to rear them in subjection, the qualification is met.

**7. Then why could not a man qualify by teaching public school and governing children?**

Because the relationship sustained in a school is different than that in a home, and the government of a congregation is analogous to that of a home. There is more to "ruling a household" than maintaining youngsters in subjection. That is but one phase of it. An elder will be called upon to counsel and advise in domestic difficulties involving husbands and

wives, parents and children, employers and employees, etc. It is to qualify him to deal objectively with all such cases that he must be the head of a household so he may know "how to care for the church of God."

**8. Do the scriptures teach that an elder's children must be members of the church, in order for him to qualify?**

I do not think so. I believe that the statement "having faithful children" in Titus 1:6, is misunderstood by a lot of people. Of course, I may be in error about it myself, but I merely give my view of it, after making very careful and earnest study, as objectively as I know how to do so.

**9. Do not most of the modern translations imply that the expression means "children who are Christians"?**

Yes. Some of them even use the expression. For instance, *The Twentieth Century New Testament* says, "Whose children are Christians." But this is not a translation. It is a commentary. It expresses what the translators thought the apostle meant, not what he said. There is no word for "Christian" in the text, and it is not a translation to use this word for the term that does appear.

**10. Does not Thayer in his lexicon say the term means one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the author of salvation?**

Actually, Thayer does not say that. He merely translates the words of Prof. Grimm to that effect. Strictly speaking, belief in Jesus is not included in this word at all. It simply means "trustworthy, of good fidelity," and relates to one who can be relied upon. There is not one thing in the term itself to indicate belief in any specific person, proposition or thing.

**11. Then why did the lexicographers assign it a specific application?**

That is easily understood. The term *pistos* appears in a New Testament framework or background. In many cases, it has to do with a state of conviction rela-

tive to Jesus as the Messiah. The lexicographers of New Testament usage would obviously slant their thinking in that direction in any case of question, I think they have done so here. They thought the contextual usage justified it; I do not think so. The term is applied to God, Christ, servants, stewards, and the word, as well as to children.

**12. Do you have some justifiable basis for disagreeing with these authorities?**

That all depends upon who is to be the judge of what constitutes a justifiable basis. The Bible says "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes," but it also says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." I think that I am correct in my conviction that a man may be appointed to the eldership before his children are old enough to accept the gospel and assume the responsibility of the Christian life.

**13. On what ground do you reach that conclusion?**

First, let it be remembered that the strict meaning of the term *pistos* is "trustworthy, reliable." Qualifications relating to the children were written by the apostle to Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete. I do not think they differ. Whatever was required of children in one place would be required in both. If an expression used in writing to Titus is obscure or ambiguous, it may be explained in the language to Timothy, or vice versa. The statement to Titus is "having faithful children," and to Timothy, it is, "having his children in subjection." I conclude, then, that faithful children are children in subjection to the will or rule of the father. Faithful children are those who are trustworthy and reliable because they are in subjection to paternal government. Paul defines what he means when he says "Faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." This is the negative attribute, while trustworthy is the positive.

**14. Is it not to be presumed that children who are reared by Christian parents will obey the Lord when they get old enough?**

That does not necessarily follow. God said, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1: 2) and I do not think that earthly parents are any better than God. The fact that God's children rebelled against him is no reflection against the way in which he nourished and brought them up. We need to be careful in assuming that a profligate child is always a reflection against the parents, lest we reflect against the fatherhood of God.

**15. If a man had one or more children, under subjection, yet none were old enough to become Christians, I take it you would ordain him as elder.**  
Of course, that is not the only qualification. But if a man was fully qualified otherwise, and his children were under

subjection and obedient to his discipline, I would appoint him as elder, if the congregation selected him. The qualification is not the ability to get your children into the church, as desirable as that may be, but to govern and control the family circle. I know a man who reared his family in a denominational influence, and they were always very close as a family. All became members of the denomination. When the father was somewhat advanced in years, he and his wife became convinced that denominationalism was wrong, and obeyed the pure gospel. The children, all being married, would not leave the denomination in which they were reared. But this faithful, godly man could qualify as a bishop over the flock of God.