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THE QUALIFICATION AND DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN BISHOP.

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There are two words in the New Testament necessary to be considered in reference to the above subject. They are "episcopos," and "presbiteros." The first signifies an officer, the second an officer. The former occurs four times, the latter five times, in the New Testament. In the first epistle to Timothy, viz. 1, the Apostle Paul says: "If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." In this scripture, "episcopos" is used, and not "presbiteros." In Acts, xx, 28, the Apostle Paul charges the Ephesian elders to take heed unto themselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. In this scripture the word translated overseer, is "episcopos," the same word in the four other times used, translated bishop. It thus appears that one word is used to designate the office, and another the officer, as above stated. Again, it is stated in Acts xx, 28, that Paul "called the elders of the church," and that in the address which he made to those elders, he declared that the Holy Spirit had made them bishops (oversors) over the flock. This will lead us to inquire, who these elders were, before the Holy Spirit made them bishops. This inquiry in itself will suggest that elder and bishop are not to be used as synonymous terms. The term elder is here to be regarded as a generic; the term bishop as a specific. It is true, an elder may become a bishop; but he is not a bishop simply because he is an elder. It is even further true, that a man may be an elder before he can become a bishop. All citizens of the United States are not presidents thereof; yet all presidents must be citizens before they can become presidents. That a man must be an elder before he can become a bishop, may, therefore, be set down as the first qualification of a Christian bishop. That there is at least one scripture which speaks of "ordaining elders," is not called in question. But that will be fully considered in due time. For the present, however, let us turn our attention to the distinctive scriptural use of the term elder.

The first occurrence of the word elder in the Bible, is in Genesis x, 21, where Shem is called the brother of Japheth the elder; the second occurrence is Genesis xv, 23, where it is said of Jacob and Esau, the elder shall serve the younger. There are various other scriptures, ranging from Genesis to Peter's first epistle, applying to, and including, both male and female, where the term elder is used simply to indicate that one person spoken of is older (elder) than another, without any reference to their respective ages. They may have been old men, as was sometimes the case when applied to elders in Israel; they may have been unborn babes, as was the case when applied to Jacob and Esau, and yet the term elder equally applied to both. It thus appears that the primary use of the term elder

only indicates chronological order, without regard to the number of years, or even days, involved in that chronology.

The term in the plural form, next claims attention—elders. This first occurs in Genesis 1, 71, where it is applied exclusively to the house of Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. The special use of the term, therefore, as relating to office or officers, is of Egyptian origin, and was borrowed and adopted by the Israelites during their sojourn as slaves in that land. A few scriptures will suffice to show the use of the term, after the people of Israel were delivered from bondage, and had a law of their own: Deut. xxi, 10: Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel. Deut. xxi, 28: Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes and all the officers of your tribes. Numbers xi, 16: The Lord said to Moses, gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people and officers over them: From these scriptures it is clear that elders and officers were separately spoken of. It also appears that the same men called elders were sometimes, but not necessarily, the officers. To make this clear, let us again examine Numbers xi, 16. It appears that Moses had entered into complaint before the Lord, because he had placed upon him alone, all the burden of ruling and judging Israel. So heavily did this responsibility press upon him, that Moses besought the Lord to kill him; rather than require so much at his hands. Upon this complaint, the Lord commanded the seventy elders to be brought to the tabernacle to stand with Moses; and the Lord further said: I will come down and talk to thee there; and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

The above is doubtless the most clearly expressed case in the Old Testament, of a special act or degree on the part of God, setting apart or ordaining certain men called elders, to become co-operants in the government he was then establishing among his own people. Yet, in all this, we find no reference to the age, either relative or absolute, of these seventy elders. Tracing this word to New Testament usage, we shall expect, of course, to find it substantially the same as in the Old, unless there be some decree to the contrary. Observe, therefore, in Matt. xxvi, 20, chief priests and elders; Mark xv, 1, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders. Luke xii, 52, Jesus said to the captains and elders. Acts iv, 5, their rulers and elders were gathered together. Acts iv, 8, ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel. These scriptures abundantly show that from Genesis at least to the fourth chapter of Acts, the term elder has been used:

1. To express simply seniority in age, without regard to the

number of years or days involved.

2. To refer to either male or female.

3. Has not been used to designate an office, unless expressed or clearly implied there had been some act of appointment to, or ordination for, that office.

We are now ready to consider the question first proposed with regard to the Ephesian elders, viz.: Who were they before the Holy Spirit made them bishops? Elders, according to both Old and New Testament usage, were men who, not by virtue of any office already held, nor necessarily by virtue of their age, but by virtue of superior qualification in character or position, were regarded proper persons to become, by ordination, bishops in the Christian Church. Such were, therefore, the Ephesian elders, and accordingly the Holy Spirit made them bishops. When, therefore, we read of "ordinary elders in every city," it is not to be understood that certain men were ordained to be, or to become, elders, but that certain elders were ordained to become bishops.

The more fully to understand this, let us examine the word *elders*. There are no less than *thirteen* terms in the Greek of the New Testament, which among a great variety of other translations, are also translated *elders*. There will only be considered here, those which relate to the ordaining of elders: they are *cheirotono*, Acts xiv, 23; *titheini*, Acts xv, 28; and *kathistemi*, Titus i, 5. The term in Acts xv, 28, in that instance, however, translated *have made*, though elsewhere it is translated *ordain*. The meaning of these words, is as follows: In Acts xiv, 23, where they had ordained their elders in every church, *cheirotono*, is used, and signifies to raise up and extend the hand; to vote by holding up the hand; to sanction by a vote. In Acts xv, 28, where it is declared of the Ephesian elders, that the Holy Spirit *hath made* them bishops, *titheini*, is used; and signifies to cause; to make; to put; to place; to establish; to adopt, etc. In Titus i, 5, *kathistemi*, is used, and signifies substantially the same with *titheini*, as to place; to appoint; to institute. These various terms, with their numerous significations, clearly indicate in their proper use, both action and passion; that is, they imply the necessity of two classes of persons, the active, to perform and the passive to receive.

1. All concede the importance of beginning at the beginning; and if the first qualification of a Christian bishop can not be found, it would be in vain to seek for a character harmonious in all its parts. David cannot wear Saul's armour; and, perhaps, one of the great, if not the greatest, hindrances to the cause of truth among us, is that we have been trying to make Paul and Peter out of unlettered, narrow-minded, money-loving men, under the pompous title of the eldership!

2. It has been quite generally maintained that the elder is the officer, and the eldership the

office, neither of which can be true, if the terms and their use and meaning, have been correctly set forth above.

3. The idea of age—seniority in years—has generally been made a test question in selecting officers in the church. Inasmuch, that men are often chosen for elders, so called, who possess no other qualification; while men, by far their junior in years, are by so far their senior in every other respect, and are really the true elders.

What other qualifications are required for a Christian bishop will be easily arrived at, because they are specially laid down by the apostles Peter and Paul. We, therefore, turn our attention, to what they say upon the subject.

By examining the twentieth chapter of Acts—the third and fifty chapters of first Timothy—the first chapter of Titus, and the fifth chapter of the first epistle of Peter, there will be found at least thirty distinct specifications concerning the office and character of a Christian bishop. These will first be presented in the order in which they occur, beginning with Acts, and ending with Peter.

1. Take heed to yourselves.
2. Take heed to the flock of God.
3. Feed the Church of God.
4. A bishop must be blameless.
5. A bishop must be the husband of one wife.
6. A bishop must be vigilant.
7. A bishop must be sober.
8. A bishop must be of good behavior.
9. A bishop must be a lover of, and given to hospitality.
10. A bishop must be apt (i.e., qualified) to teach.
11. A bishop must not be given to wine.
12. A bishop must be no striker (literally one who strikes or quarrels).
13. A bishop must not be greedy of filthy lucre.
14. A bishop must be patient.
15. A bishop must not be a brawler.
16. A bishop must be one who ruleth his own house well.
17. A bishop must have his children—not warts—in subjection.
18. A bishop must not be a novice.
19. A bishop must be of good report of them without.
20. A bishop must be one who rules well.
21. A bishop must not be self-willed.
22. A bishop must not be soon angry.
23. A bishop must be a lover of good men.
24. A bishop must be just.
25. A bishop must be holy.
26. A bishop must be temperate.
27. A bishop must be one holding fast the faithful words.
28. A bishop must be able both to exhort and convince the gain-sayers.
29. A bishop must be taking the oversight of the flock willingly.
30. And bishops must be examples to the flock.

These thirty specifications naturally divide themselves into

two classes: Qualifications and Duties. These, in turn, again subdivided into two classes: positive and negative qualifications, and positive and negative duties. By positive and negative, it is meant, that it is oftentimes as great a qualification for a given work, to lack one thing, as to possess another; and oftentimes as high a duty not to do some things, as to do others. Dismissing for the present the duties, we return to the qualifications. These, as already stated, arrange themselves under two heads: things to possess, and things not to possess. There are twenty specifications of these two classes, and of the twenty, thirteen are positive, and seven negative. To get now a Christian bishop, with his qualifications, let us first select a man who is already an elder, in the proper use of that term: ordain him to the bishop's office, then arrange the twenty specifications in the order they best make up a character say to the world, here is a man.

1. Not a novice.
2. Not soon angry.
3. Not self-willed.
4. Not given to wine.
5. Not a brawler.
6. Not a striker.
7. Not greedy of filthy lucre.
8. The husband of one wife.
9. That he is of good behavior.
10. That he is vigilant.
11. That he is sober.
12. That he is patient.
13. That he is temperate.
14. That he is just.
15. That he is holy.
16. That he is a lover of, and given to hospitality.
17. That he is qualified to teach.
18. That he is able, both to exhort and convince the gain-sayers.
19. That he is of good report among them without.
20. And that he is blameless.

Present these things to the world, and they complete the character of a bishop, so far as qualifications can go. Of course, it is not expected that these qualifications will be separately discussed; nor, indeed, could it be done within the limits of a single discourse. One thing, however, may be noted before passing to the question of duties: It has generally been held almost, if not altogether, impossible to find a man possessing all these qualifications. In many instances, this is doubtless true, though it must not be put beyond the limits of Christian attainments to find them all centered in one man. But the difficulty, to whatever extent it may reach, may be generally, if not always, remedied. It is not to be supposed, in the above classification, that the apostles are so much describing the officer, as the office. Find, therefore, a man possessing the seven negative, and one positive qualification, and he may be a Christian bishop. Find another man, with the seven negative, and one positive qualification, and he may be a Christian bishop. Find another man, with the seven negative, and another of the positive, and he may be another bishop. Continue thus until all the qualifications are brought into a

quisition, and the character is complete; or in other words, the bishop's office is filled. This doubtless gives the true solution of the vexed question, usually called the "plurality of the eldership."

We now turn our attention to the

DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN BISHOP.

The apostles Paul and Peter give, as before stated, ten specifications under this head. These have already been subdivided into two classes, positive and negative; the doing and the not doing. Perhaps, however, the terms would better suit the classes, if they should be called primary and secondary duties; the primary relating to himself, the bishop; the secondary relating to his flock. Of those relating to himself, we have five specifications, as follows:

1. Take heed to yourselves.
 2. Rule your own house well.
 3. Have your children in subjection.
 4. Hold fast the faithful word.
 5. Be examples (examples) to the flock.
- Of the duties which relate to the flock, and those without, we have also five specifications, as follows:

1. Be a lover of good men.
 2. Take heed to the flock.
 3. Take the oversight of the flock willing.
 4. Feed the Church of God.
 5. Rule well.
- As it is often found difficult to find one man possessing all the qualifications of a bishop, so it may be equally difficult to find one capable of discharging all the duties. And, as in the qualifications, all of the first class must be possessed before a man can become a bishop; so in the duties, all that relate to the bishop himself, must be discharged, before a man has any right to attempt the discharge of those relating to the flock.

It is probably true that the relation between the internal feeling or disposition and the countenance of the sons and daughters of our race, has never been more clearly and amusingly expressed than by a Chinaman's words to the artist who had hired him to sit for a painting. It seems that he did not like his contract and looked very sour; whereupon the artist said, "John, smile; if you don't look pleasant I'll not pay you." "No use, no use," said the washerwoman, "If John looks ugly all the time, he looks ugly." The moral is that young people and all others who wish to look handsome must never indulge ugly feelings; for if they feel ugly much of their time they will look ugly.

As faith came by hearing and hearing came by the word of God in primitive times, the same is true now. But it is also true that faith now comes by seeing, forasmuch as the divine testimony is written out and may be read. However, whether by hearing or seeing, faith, in the scripture sense, comes by the word of God. If this be true, is it possible to believe anything to be the will of God which is not mentioned in the Bible!