

The Office of Bishop and Duties

The chief officers in New Testament churches were called bishops, or elders, or pastors. "That the appellations 'bishop,' 'presbyter' (or elder) and 'pastor' designate the same office and order of persons, may be shown from Acts 20:28..." (Strong). To the same effect are the words of many others, including those of Conybeare and Howson and passages quoted by Giessler (Church History, Vol. 1, p. 90). See Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1, 8; Titus 5:7; 1 Peter 5:1, 2.

The first plausible objection to the identity of elders and bishops was advanced by Calvin on the basis of 1 Tim. 5:17. But instead of showing that the terms designate two offices, this passage merely shows that the one office involved two kinds of work, teaching and ruling or overseeing. Some occupants of the office were more successful in one than in the other, with teaching being regarded as the highest function of the office. The following passages show that teaching and ruling belonged to the same individual: Acts 20:28-31; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 13:7; 1 Tim. 3:2.

The plurality of elders or bishops in New Testament churches was incidental, and is not incumbent on all churches; that is, a plurality of elders is not essential to the existence of a New Testament church. It was the size and scarcity of the churches, and the great expanses of destitution that gave rise to a plurality of elders.

I. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE BISHOPS

These qualifications are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They are:

1. BLAMELESS

By this it is not meant that the bishop must be morally perfect. No man in the flesh is. It means that he must be above serious reproach. This requirement it explained and amplified in both of the passages given above, as follows:

"Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7).

"For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry; no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre" (Titus 1:7).

If the public does not have a high regard for the moral integrity of a man, he should never be made a bishop.

2. PROPER CONJUGAL RELATIONS

He is to be the husband of one wife. Of course this means that he is to be husband of but one at a time. He must not have two living wives. This neither requires that a preacher be married—though, in most cases, it is best that he should; nor forbids him to marry again if his wife dies.

3. VIGILANCE, SOBRIETY, AND GOOD BEHAVIOR

These are given together in 1 Tim. 3:2. They are given in the Revised Version as meaning that the bishop is to be temperate, sober-minded, and orderly. And this version leaves out the reference to wine in the next verse. Temperance means self-control in everything. It involves total abstinence from that which is harmful or evil.

4. HOSPITALITY

Hospitality refers to entertainment of visitors in the home. In New Testament days hospitality was "a service specially necessary...when the Christian traveler was exposed to peculiar difficulties and dangers, and a duty, therefore, which was often insisted on" (Harvey, on Titus). Hospitality may not be so urgently necessary today, but it is nonetheless beautiful and beneficial.

5. APTNESS TO TEACH

This includes both love for teaching and ability in it. This requires knowledge and the ability to impart it.

6. PEACEFULNESS

The qualifications that follow aptness to teach are given in the better translation as follows: "...no brawler, no striker, but gentle, not contentious." The bishop is not to have a disposition that tends to stir up strife. He is not to be by nature violent and combative, but a man of a gentle, forbearing spirit, adverse to quarrelling and dispute. See 2 Timothy 2:24. Yet he must contend for the faith, and fight evil.

7. LACK OF COVETOUSNESS

He must not be a lover of money, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. He must not put money above faithful discharge of the will of God.

8. DISCIPLINARY ABILITY

The test of this is the way in which he controls his own children, and the Scripture says if he cannot control them, he cannot care for the church of God.

9. A SEASONED CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

The bishop must not be a novice, that is, one newly come to the faith. He must possess a considerable degree of Christian maturity.

10. SOUNDNESS IN THE FAITH

For the eight foregoing qualifications we have followed the epistle to Timothy, and have not tried to list everything mentioned in both epistles, talking it that in Timothy we have, in a general manner, all that is included in Titus. But the last stipulation in Titus we wish to notice. It reads as follows:

"...holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that they may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

This means that the bishop is to be one who holds to the Word of God in spite of all temptation to forsake it.

II. THE DUTIES OF THE BISHOP

The duties of the bishop are as follows:

1. TO RULE THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 5:17; Heb. 13:7,17. The ruling here, however, is not autocratic ruling (2 Pet. 5:3), but only the rule of oversight and leadership. In our consideration of the church we have shown that the church is a democracy, receiving and excluding members, and managing its own affairs. And we have pointed out that "ruling elders," in the modern sense are not authorized by 1 Timothy 5:17.

2. TO TEACH

1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:7. This is the principal work of the preacher. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. If he fails in this, he has failed in all. Everything else is secondary to the work of teaching.

3. TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

Ephesians 4:11. In this passage we have the bishop called a pastor. This means that he is a shepherd. He is to have the same interest in and unselfish devotion to his flock as was the case with the ancient shepherd and his sheep. He is to feed them, shield them from danger, comfort them in distress, and strengthen them when weak.

4. TO ADMINISTER THE ORDINANCES

It seems in keeping with the nature of the bishop's office to consider the administration of the ordinances as a peculiar function of bishops. And, as we have remarked before of baptism, so we may now say of both baptism and the Lord's Supper, that we have no certain indication that any but bishops ever administered them.

[1] The bishop is not an official priest. The word in the Greek for priest is entirely different from the ones translated bishop, elder, pastor. New Testament churches had no official priests. All believers are priests. See. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10. Here is the pitifully weak attempt once made by a leading Catholic to justify the priesthood: "The very word 'priest' in our language is derived from the New Testament word 'presbuterous.' Presbuterous became presbyter; presbyter became priester; priester became priest. This is sufficient indication of the office and proof that the Catholic priesthood is 'scriptural'"

[2] Let those who think that the requirement that a bishop "be blameless, the husband of one wife" demands that he be a married man, reflect upon the fact, first of all, that such a demand would require the immediate resignation of a pastor whose wife dies. Moreover, let these note, in the second place, that Titus 1:6 adds, "having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly." If the foregoing

requirement means that a bishop must be married, then this one means that it is not enough for a man to be married—he is not to be ordained as a bishop until he has children and they are saved. Let's try to be consistent, brethren.

What symbols are associated with the Bishop?

Crosier: The shepherd's staff used on ceremonial occasions. It symbolises being the shepherd of the people in the diocese.

Mitre: The triangular headgear, also worn by the Pope. There are three kinds depending on the liturgical season, and it is removed whenever the bishop is about to pray.

Pectoral Cross: The large ornamental cross worn as a necklace.

Ring: A ring worn on the third finger of the right hand. Some people kiss the bishop's hand as a sign of their love for him and the recognition that he is a living icon of Christ in the midst of the Church.

Zucchetto (Skull Cap): Bishops wear a purple zucchetto while cardinals wear red and the Pope wears white.

Coat of Arms: A bishop chooses symbols appropriate to himself and his diocese. The arms of the diocese may occupy the left side whilst his personal arms occupy the right.

Motto: In order to motivate the faithful and to set himself a specific direction, a new bishop will select a set of meaningful words, often written in the official language of the Catholic Church, Latin, on the bottom of the Coat of Arms.

As a Bishop Remember:

Be above reproach

Be the husband of one wife

Be temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, and peaceful

Not be a heavy drinker, violent, or covetous (a lover of money)

Be a good manager of his children and household (If he can't do this, how can he manage the church of God? [1 Tim 3:5])

Not be quick-tempered or self-willed

Be a lover of good, holy, and self-controlled

Not lord his position over his flock.

Shepherd his flock and be an example to them.

Be eager to serve.

Hold fast the faithful word so he can exhort others in sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Not be a new convert (so he does not become conceited and fall into condemnation).

Have a good reputation with those outside the church (so he will not fall into reproach or be disgraced).

As you can see, this is quite a long list. The primary reason for this is that it is a crucial and very important job, and only a few men, God-ordained and anointed through the Holy Spirit, are qualified for it.

Please Note: Not all has the calling and not everyone can do the job that is asked by God and only those who are truly have the calling to this special Holy Orders of being a bishop as well as a true Line of Apostolic Succession as pass down with laying of hand starting with Jesus Christ.

There are many people that are not truly a full fledge bishop of the Apostolic Succession Lines and just want the title and self made without any training in their background. This is bad because there is a protocol that has to be in place. A person has to start at the beginning and must go through Biblical Seminary Classes and qualify to go into ministry and lead their flock of the church.

Protocol:

Deacon

Priest

Bishop Elect

Bishop

Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing they are not of the Lord.