THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

A Commentary on the Greek Text

by

GEORGE W. KNIGHT III

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CARLISLE
To all those who made this work possible
and especially
to my beloved wife, Virginia
QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS AND DEACONS: 3:1-16

This chapter gives the qualifications for two groups of officers, bishops and deacons, and then gives the pastoral reason for the instructions of this letter (Paul's delay and the need for such instruction now, vv. 14, 15) and the theological perspective that necessitates such instructions and permeates them (the church is the household and dwelling place of the living God, committed to uphold and practice God's truth, vv. 15, 16).

A number of questions arise concerning the identity of these two groups of officers: Who held these offices? What were their functions? How were the two offices related to each other? Are they mentioned elsewhere in the NT, and, if so, how are the various references to them related and what picture of the NT situation do they give? Although these questions must be addressed further in the detailed examination below of this section of the letter, it will be helpful to have a general perspective on these two offices as a working hypothesis. Three factors present some means of identification and differentiation: (1) the names, (2) the further delineation of the bishop's task in Titus 1, and (3) the differences in the qualifications between the ἐπίσκοπος and διάκονοι.

The name of the office of ἐπίσκοπος, "bishop," "overseer," indicates that oversight is a major aspect of the position. This is further delineated in the parallel passage, Tit. 1:5ff. Therefore, the πρεσβύτερος spoken of in 1 Tim. 5:17 as ruling (προεστότες) and teaching are ἐπίσκοποι. These same two functions of ruling and teaching distinguish the ἐπίσκοποι and the διάκονοι (plural in 1 Tim. 3:8 in contrast to singular ἐπίσκοπος in v. 2) in the descriptions of the functions of the two offices here in 1 Timothy 3. It is said of the ἐπίσκοπος, but not of the διάκονοι, that he must be "able to teach" (διδασκόντως, v. 2), and it is specified (in a rhetorical question) that the ἐπίσκοπος will "take care of the church of God" (v. 5). In Titus 1 also it is said that the ἐπίσκοπος/πρεσβύτερος must "be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (v. 9), i.e., give spiritual instruction and exercise spiritual authority or oversight. It is also said that the ἐπίσκοπος as well as Titus must silence false teachers who are "upsetting whole families" (v. 11) and "reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith (v. 13). This picture of the ἐπίσκοπος as one who exercises oversight in the church particularly in ruling and teaching is reflected in Acts 20:28 ("to shepherd the church of God"); cf. also the mention of ἐπίσκοπος in Phil. 1:1 and the description of Christ as ἐπίσκοπος in 1 Pet. 2:25).

διάκονοι seems to be used here in a more technical sense than elsewhere, since it goes beyond the more general sense of one who serves the church as a minister. That latter role is expressed here by ἐπίσκοπος, and here the διάκονοι are distinguished from the ἐπίσκοπος. The position of the διάκονοι is so characterized by service, as its main function, that the word has become a technical term for those carrying out such service (cf. H. W. Beyer, TDNT I, 88-93; see Acts 6:1-7).

So the working hypothesis, provided primarily by the self-defining terms, is that the ἐπίσκοπος is an "overseer," one carrying out a ministry of oversight, while διάκονοι are "servants," those carrying out a ministry of service (cf. also the mutually exclusive description in Acts 6:2-4). See the Exxursus: Bishops/Presbyters and Deacons below for an analysis of the NT as a whole on this subject.

Dibelius-Conzelmann and others, particularly those of the history of religions school, have asked whether the lists of qualifications of bishops and deacons in this chapter might represent a common stylized list that was used in the non-Christian world to describe all sorts of leaders and that was not drafted by Paul with the particular offices in mind. Dibelius-Conzelmann give examples of such lists of qualifications, especially the description of the military general in Onasander (= Onosander), De Imperatoris Officio (pp. 374ff. in the LCL edition translated by Members of the Illinois Greek Club), quoted at length by Dibelius-Conzelmann, 158-60. Of the eleven qualifications in Onasander's list, two words are also found in 1 Timothy 3 (σωφρόνος in v. 2, ἀφλάχυνος in v. 3, both of the bishop) and three are similar to terms used in 1 Timothy 3 (self-restrained [ἐγκατάσπαστος], being a father [though entirely different considerations are adduced], and "a man of good reputation").

On the other hand, several items in Paul's list of qualifications for the bishop are directly related to that ministry ("able to teach," v. 3; ability to govern the church proven by governing of one's family, vv. 4, 5; and "not a new convert," v. 6) and other elements that are distinctly Christian (references to the διάκονος, vv. 6, 7; the distinctly Christian element of gentleness expressed by a cluster of terms, three negative and one positive, v. 3; in the list for deacons, faith and conscience, v. 9, standing and confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus, v. 13). Furthermore, the lists for the bishop and the deacons share certain distinctive concepts that are appropriate for the particular ministry of that group and do not appear to be a mere echoing of some existing list.

As one analyzes these lists, one gains the distinct impression that they
are not stylized but that the aspects are appropriate to leadership in the church in general and to the specific office in particular. Those aspects of similarity with lists in the non-Christian world may be explained by the fact that leadership, whether in different religions or in the military or in the church, must have certain common characteristics, as is evident in part from the similar items in the list for the bishop and the deacons. Paul self-consciously incorporates an awareness and appreciation of that fact when he says of the bishop that “he must have a good reputation with those outside” the church (cf. his earlier recognition of the non-Christian’s awareness of certain things that are right, Rom. 2:14, 15). It would have been strange for one who earlier appealed to the instruction that the natural order provided (1 Cor. 11:14) not to have had some overlap in his list with those drawn up outside the church. What is most noteworthy, however, is the distinctiveness of his lists in spite of this fact and their distinctly Christian character (see above) and appropriateness to the officers of the church.

Also against considering these lists as merely borrowed from the secular milieu is their basic similarity in essence with the primitive list in Acts 6:3, which in effect is explicated in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Furthermore, there are differences among the similarities among the four lists in the FE three in 1 Timothy 3 (for the bishop, for deacons, and for “women”) and one in Titus 1. A mere borrowing cannot explain the uniqueness and particular appropriateness of the lists respectively for the bishop and for the deacons. The lists seem to be constructed from a distinctly Christian and ecclesiastical perspective (for this same evaluation see also Ridderbos and Spicq, contra Brox).

BISHOPS: 3:1-7

3:1 Does πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, “the saying is faithful” (on the formula’s meaning see 1:15), refer to what precedes or to what follows (for a fuller treatment of this question see Knight, Faithful Sayings, 50-54; see also Spicq; the punctuation apparatus of UBSGNT). The argument most often presented for referring the formula to what precedes in 2:15 is the claim that sayings attached to the formula elsewhere are always concerned with salvation (note σωθησαν in v. 15). This argument is sometimes coupled with or replaced by a view that 3:1 cannot be, or is not worthy of being, designated by the formula (though Scott argues similarly against 2:15). The criterion of soteriology would be decisive were it certain, but here the very question whether it constitutes such a criterion is under discussion, even if it is true that most or all of the other texts are soteriological (cf. the contexts of 1:15; 4:9 [preceding or following?]; Tit. 3:8; 2 Tim. 2:11).

What is clear is that 3:1b is recognized as a “saying” by most, even by those who take πιστὸς ὁ λόγος as referring to what precedes. That it is a “saying,” perhaps coupled with prejudice against the significance of the saying, most likely explains the weakly attested textual variant ἀνθρωπονομικός/humanus, “human,” “common,” “popular,” for πιστὸς (ἀνθρωπονομικός in D*; humanus in itd, m, mon g, Ambrosiaster [manuscripts according to Jerome], Augustine, Sedulius Scoto), which thus provides some early testimony that 3:1b was considered to be the saying connected with the formula in 3:1a (Westcott-Hort, in their “Notes on Select Readings”). (It is sometimes argued [e.g., Wohlenberg, Eaton, and Lock with hesitation; cf. NEB] that ἀνθρωπονομικός is the original reading, that it can explain πιστὸς but not vice versa, and further that what follows is manifestly a “common” proverb. But this is complicated by the fact that the saying’s key term ἐπισκόπηται is found only rarely in secular sources and then not in the sense of “office” [as pointed out by Weiss, Zahn, Introduction, §37, n. 6; see Knight, Faithful Sayings, 56, 58ff.]; Both manuscript evidence and internal considerations show πιστὸς to be the correct reading.)

To say that the saying in 3:1b could not have arisen in the early church or that Paul would not use this formula to refer to it is to misunderstand both. That there was a lively and deep interest in church order is evidenced not only by 1 Timothy 3 itself (vv. 14, 15), along with 5:17ff. and Tit. 1:5ff., but also by many passages throughout Acts, Paul’s letters, and other NT letters (cf. Acts 6:1ff.; 14:21ff.; 20:17ff.; Rom. 12:6ff.; 1 Cor. 12:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12ff.; Heb. 12:7; 1 Pet. 5:1ff., etc.). Furthermore, the “saying” in 3:1b seems much too abrupt an introduction to the verses that follow without the formula, but seems in place with the formula. Therefore the verdict must be entered with most Greek NT editors (except Westcott-Hort, the “corrected” edition of UBSGNT, and NA26), the text of most modern English translations, and most commentators that πιστὸς ὁ λόγος refers to 3:1b (so also Ellingworth, True Saying). The formula is used here, then, both to cite a “saying” concerning the office of bishop and to commend the saying’s evaluation of this office and thus to introduce Paul’s presentation of the qualifications for the office. The saying itself, in the form of the conditional sentence, commends the office as a good work and therefore seeks to encourage men to seek the office (for a fuller discussion of the saying see Knight, Faithful Sayings, 55-61). The terms of the first clause are quite general (ἐν τῷ, “if any man”). The effect is to recommend that “anyone” meeting the qualifications listed afterward aspire to the office, with the understanding given in the second clause that such an aspiration is desire for a “good” task or assignment.

That the verb ἐπισκόπηται in the first clause is indicative signifies that the condition is assumed to be true (BAGD; Robertson; Burton, Syntax, 100ff.). ἐπισκόπηται (Lk. 19:44; Acts 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet 2:12; genitive with ἐπισκόπηται, Robertson, Grammar, 508; BDF §171.1), the key word in the
LSIM) in terms of his Christian life in general and in terms of the characteristics that follow in particular. By God’s grace the pattern of the bishop’s life conforms to both the general and specific characteristics and he is not objectively chargeable.

Following this overarching characteristic, the specifics for a bishop are now delineated. The items focus on two areas: (1) personal self-discipline and maturity, and (2) ability to relate well to others and to teach and care for them. These two are intertwined, although there seems to be a tendency to move from the personal to the interpersonal. V. 2 begins with items of self-discipline and maturity such as “husband of one wife, temperate” and ends with “hospitalable, able to teach.” V. 3 begins with “not addicted to wine” and ends with “not a lover of money,” while the center section speaks of gentleness in relating to others. V. 4 makes the managing of one’s household and children with dignity a requisite since this will indicate (v. 5) how a man can take care of the church. V. 6 returns to the question of personal maturity and mandates that a bishop not be a new convert, lest he become conceited. V. 7 ends with the emphasis on how a man relates to and is regarded by those outside the church. In the last two, the danger of the devil using either as an occasion for sin is emphasized. In effect the list spells out the brief and essentially twofold requirement laid down in Acts 6:3: “full of the Spirit and of wisdom,” the personal, and “of good reputation,” the interpersonal.

The list in Tit. 1:6-9 has essentially the same pattern but is arranged somewhat differently. It begins by joining marriage and the family together (v. 6), then states what a bishop should not be (v. 7), affirms with a positive list what he should be (v. 8), i.e., “just and devout,” and ends by enlarging on the concepts of teaching and caring for the church (1:9). Not in the list in Titus are the requirements that a bishop not be a new convert and that he have a good report from those outside the church. The following list correlates the words and phrases of 1 Tim. 3:2-7 and Tit. 1:5-9 in the order of 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy

| ἀνεπίληπτος | ἀνεγκλητος | / ὃς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου |
| μαῖς γυναικὸς ἀνήρ | μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνηρ |
| νηφάλιον | ἀγαθὴς καὶ ἀγάπης |
| σώφρονον | ἀποκαλεῖν | ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ |
| κόσμωσις | πιστῶν λόγων | ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ |
| φιλοξένος | ἀντιγραφὲς τούτο τῷ κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν |
| διδασκαλικὸς | πιστῶν λόγων | ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ |

Titus

| ἀνεγκλητος | / ὃς θεοῦ οἰκονόμου |
| μαῖς γυναικὸς ἄνηρ |
| νηφάλιον |
| σώφρονον |
| κόσμωσις |
| φιλοξένος |
| διδασκαλικὸς |

The first specific characteristic in the 1 Timothy list is μαῖς γυναικὸς ἄνηρ, literally “a man of one woman,” or “a husband of one wife.” ἀνήρ and γυνή, the common NT words for “man” and “woman,” take on the meanings “husband” and “wife” in contexts such as here. Various interpretations have been proposed for this phrase from the patristic period until today (for a summary of the patristic discussion including a synopsis of the elaborate discussion by Theodore of Mopsuestia see Dodd, “NT Translation Problems II”). It has been suggested that it requires that a bishop (1) be married, (2) have only one wife his entire life, (3) be monogamous, or (4) be faithful in the marital and sexual realm.

With regard to (1), it is exceedingly doubtful that Paul intended that these words and the words about “children” (plural, vv. 4, 12) be understood as mandating that only a married man with at least two children could be an officer in the church. Probably he wrote in terms of the common situation, i.e., of being married and having children, and then spoke of what should be the case when this most common situation exists in an officer’s life. Paul, like Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1), regarded himself as a fellow elder or bishop and wrote of his singleness and his apostolic ministry without regarding them as mutually exclusive (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1ff., especially v. 5; see also 7:7, 8). In fact, he commended singleness, using himself as an example, as a state where one would have more freedom to serve the Lord (1 Cor. 7:22ff.).

With regard to (2), it would be strange for the apostle of liberty, who considered widows and widowers “free to be married . . . , only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39) and who used this principle of freedom to illustrate his teaching
having contracted a monogamous marriage is faithful to his marriage vows, excluding alike polygamy, concubinage and promiscuous indulgence” (Dodd, “NT Translation Problems II,” 115). “Promiscuous indulgence” would encompass Jesus’ words on wrongful divorce and remarriage in Mt. 5:32; 19:9.

This characteristic, like the others, is the result of God’s grace in Christ (cf. especially 3:6, 9) and thus has reference to a man’s status and conduct from the time of his conversion. So just as one is called on to look back on a widow’s earlier life (when she was living with her husband) to ascertain her marital and sexual fidelity in having been “the wife of one husband” (5:9), so also (cf. 5:22, 24, 25) for the bishop (3:2) and deacon (3:12): One must look back over his life from the time of his conversion to ascertain his marital and sexual fidelity in having been “the husband of one wife.”

Since two words in this list could refer to use of alcohol, i.e., νηφάλιον (here) and σαρκόνιον (v. 8), it is unlikely that both are meant literally. So even though νηφάλιος (also in 3:11; Tit. 2:2) does mean “temperate in the use of alcoholic beverages,” it probably means here, as is also the case with “sober” in English, “sober in the sense of clear-headed, self-controlled” (BAGD). Since both this word and σαρκόνιον have the nuance of “self-controlled” (cf. also ἀγαθὸς in Tit. 1:8, which is coupled with σοφός), different aspects of self-control are probably emphasized in each. For νηφάλιον it is the sober, clear-headed aspect.

σοφός (also in Tit. 1:8; 2:2, 5) represents a word group that is not frequently used in the NT (σοφία in Mk. 5:15; Lk. 8:35; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 5:13; Tit. 2:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; σοφιστικός in Tit. 2:4; σοφιστικὸς in 2 Tim. 1:7; σοφία in Tit. 2:12; σοφιστικός in Acts 26:25; 1 Tim. 2:9, 15; see U. Luck, TDNT VII, 1097-1104). This particular term denotes “the prudent, thoughtful” aspect of self-control (BAGD).

κομος (also in 2:9) is used in classical Greek (LSJM) and in the inscriptions (MM) to describe a person as “orderly” (cf. κομήτα, κομής), “well-behaved,” or “virtuous,” which is the sense that it bears here: that which causes a person to be regarded as “respectable” by others (see Trench, Synopsis, 344-46). To be “hostile” (ἰνδονός, Tit. 1:8 of the bishop; 1 Pet. 4:9 of Christians in general) is the duty of all Christians (see also ἱνδονός, Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; cf. 3 Jn. 5ff.) and must be evident, as is true of the other characteristics, in a heightened way in the bishop. He who must teach others and take care of and exercise oversight over them must be open and loving to them.

The key to διδασκάλια (2 Tim. 2:24), “skillful in teaching” (BAGD), is found in the parallel Tit. 1:9, where that responsibility is spelled out: “that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” The other NT occurrence of this word (2 Tim. 2:24) is also explicated by the statement following it, “with gentleness correcting those on the law (Rom. 7:1-3), to deny this freedom to a potential church officer whose spouse has died. Likewise, the freedom to remarry granted to the “innocent” party when a marriage has been terminated as a result of sexual unfaithfulness (as I believe Mt. 19:9 should be understood) or when an unbelieving spouse has abandoned a believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:15) does not seem to be restricted so that they could not apply to a potential officer. Only if the phrase under consideration could only be understood in the sense of (2) above would this evidence be excluded. An interpretation, however, that included those other considerations would do more justice to the totality of the evidence.

With regard to (3), polygamy, which existed among Jews of the NT age (see Str-B ad loc. for documentation; they cite, among many others, Josephus, Ant. 17.14; B.J. 1.477), is certainly ruled out by the sense of the phrase. In AD 212 the lex Antoniana de civitate made monogamy the law for Romans but Jews were excepted. In AD 393 Theodosius enacted a special law against polygamy among Jews, since they persisted in the practice (Hillman, Polygamy, 20f.). Two Greek marriage contracts have been found that seem to be concerned to prohibit polygamy: “it shall not be lawful for Philiscus to bring in another wife besides Appolania” (92 BC); “Ptolemaeus . . . shall not . . . insult her nor bring in another wife” (13 BC, both in Hunt-Edgar, Select Papyri 1, 7, 11).

The question remains, however, whether the phrase is intended to exclude only polygamy or all violations of marital and sexual fidelity (4). Two considerations make it doubtful that polygamy is exclusively in view: The first is the insight obtained (pace Str-B) from the occurrence of the counterpart phrase ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνὴ in a similar context, 1 Tim. 5:9 (the only other NT occurrences of this kind of phrase are μᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνθρωπος here, in 3:12 [ἀνδρός in v. 12], and in Tit. 1:6 [ἀνὴρ]). The phrase in 5:9 affirms marital and sexual fidelity in monogamous terms, but does not imply polyandry as the intended contrast, since polyandry was not practiced in the first-century Greco-Roman world. Doubtless the phrase in 5:9, following after 3:2, 12 and in a similar list of qualifications, is used in a similar way as its counterpart in 3:2, 12. The implication is that the phrase in 3:2, 12 is therefore not intended to exclude only polygamy. Furthermore, that men could have sexual relations with women other than their wives seems to have been accepted among Greeks and Romans, so that this would be an issue important to address.

The second consideration in favor of (4) is that this statement (3:2) positively affirms sexual fidelity couched in monogamous marital terminology (“husband of one wife”). It is analogous, therefore, to the command “You shall not commit adultery,” which is also couched in marital language but which encompasses other sexual sins, as the outworkings of that command in the chapters following Exodus 20 evince. “The natural meaning of μᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνθρωπος is surely, as Theodore [of Mopsuestia] says, ‘a man who...
| ABBREVIATIONS | \begin{tabular}{l}
NTD & Das Neue Testament Deutsch  
NTF & Neutestamentliche Forschungen  
NTS & New Testament Studies  
ÖBS & Österreichische Biblische Studien  
P. Oxy. & Oxyrhynchus Papyri  
RB & Revue Biblique  
RevExp & Review and Expositor  
RNT & Regensburger Neues Testament  
RSV & Revised Standard Version  
RV & Revised Version  
SB & Sources bibliques  
SB et T & Studia Biblica et Theologica  
SBLDS & Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series  
SBT & Studies in Biblical Theology  
SNTSMS & Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series  
SNTU & Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt  
TEV & Today's English Version (Good News Bible)  
THKNT & Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament  
TJ & Trinity Journal  
TLZ & Theologische Literaturzeitung  
TNTC & Tyndale New Testament Commentaries  
TSK & Theologische Studien und Kritiken  
TZ & Theologische Zeitschrift  
WBC & Word Biblical Commentary  
WUNT & Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament  
ZNW & Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft  
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At 08:05 PM 8/1/2004 -0600, you wrote:

Similarly in the New Testament, indications are that plural marriage was not permitted among the early Christian Church as well.

Are you committed to devoting only on short paragraph to the New Testament evidence (or lack thereof) and context? By not raising or addressing any alternative interpretations to the "divorce" and "husband of one wife" injunctions, the paragraph "spins" the argument in your direction that polygamy was "not permitted" without actually proving it.

I would suggest 3 short paragraphs. In the first I would make a tentative "not permitted" position. Show that there is some ancient evidence indicating that Jews could be polygamous (if you do not float this, someone else, perhaps from a pro-polygamy position will), but note that the New Testament is relatively silent on the subject. Passages dealing with Christ's teaching on divorce (Matt. 19:8-9 and parallels) and Paul's on the qualifications of bishops (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6), however, may well indicate that polygamy was not being practiced within the Christian community.

Then have one paragraph on each of the injunctions, noting the different possible interpretations and why you have chosen to view them as prohibiting polygamy. Otherwise you leave yourself open to having an opponent write that you have not interpreted the passages correctly, whereas if you acknowledge the possibilities and then demonstrate which one is most likely you a) elevate the scholarly level of the discourse [above what the fundamentalists ever even try to do], and b) forestall arguments raised against you.

It is possible that Christ's teachings on divorce precluded the practice of polygamy among His followers.

I Christ taught: "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery..." (Matt. 19:8-9; italics added.) It appears that if men at that time were free to marry polygynamously, the reason for a divorce would be unimportant as a man sought to marry a second time. If the divorce was proper, the new wife would assume the role as the new first wife. If the divorce was improper, the new wife would become a polygamous wife. Christ's teachings do not seem to allow this possibility.

I would not leave this argument in a note. I also have yet to follow it. First, the proposition in Greek is a good Future More Vivid Condition, if x happens, then y will happen. If a man puts away his wife (except for sexual immorality), then he commits adultery. The subsequent marriage is deemed adulterous because of the unsanctioned divorce, not because it is a polygamous marriage. Your reading seems to suggest "If a man keeps his first wife (does not put her away, let alone for cause) and marries another, then he is committing adultery."

Second, I do not see the logic of your statement "It appears that if men at that time were free to marry polygynamously, the reason for a divorce would be unimportant as a man sought to marry a second time. Why would it be unimportant? Why do Christ's teachings not allow for the possibility. This is particularly a problem since Christ's audience consisted of Pharisees...the law of Moses did not prohibit polygamy and we have evidence that Jews of that period could be polygamous.

Where I do begin to to get the sense of your logic is that if a man divorces then any and each subsequent marriage would be adulterous, so doesn't that then at least imply that there could not be further marriages? To this I would venture that divorce (or failure in a marriage) suggests that the individual is not qualified for any further marriage, whereas success might leave the option, at least, open. This raises a further, knotty problem. Imagine an early, polygamous Christian or Jew. The man divorces one of the wives, thereby invalidating himself for any further marriages. What does this suggest regarding the state of the other current marriages. Hmmm.

And Paul clearly taught that bishops were to be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6).

Here I think that your audience would be benefited from hearing the three or four interpretations that Knight summarizes. The copies I gave you laid them out pretty clearly, and maybe you could devote a sentence to each and then explain why you prefer the one you do. Knight explains why there is a problem with interpreting these verses as being aimed against polygamy and suggests some others. As you know, I am partial to the "married only once" (meaning not remarried if the wife dies), and there is something to interpreting this as a positive requirement that a man needs to be married. This of course still has application in the modern church, since bishops are in almost all instances not called unless they are married (to one person, of course), and a man over 30 generally is not a temple ordinance worker unless he is married or a widower.

Peter held the sealing keys so eternal marriages could be solemnized and there were attempts to live some of the higher principles like the law of consecration (Acts 4:32). Nevertheless, there is no mention of plural marriage, which might have been noted in secular histories at least if it were practiced among the early Christians.

This is where the Josephus references to Jewish polygamy might be useful, because you can argue that this "secular history" notes it among the Jews but says nothing about Christians.

Polygamy would have been a novelty to be explored by those who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21).

Careful with this since it refers to Athenian citizens and metics (resident aliens, translated "strangers") and their interest in philosophy. Would Paul, as the first missionary to Athens and eager to share the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel, especially, and apparently by his practice elsewhere, limited to his fundamental Christ message, even bring up plural marriage, assuming that it was being practiced in establish Christian communities such as Jerusalem? And even if Paul or someone told them, would polygamy be a novelty? As I have mentioned, it was not allowed for Roman citizens by law, and it was against Greek culture (although the Macedonian royal family had practiced it, witness Alexander the Great's father, Philip, who had 6 or 7 wives), but in the empire there were cultures that admitted or tolerated polygamy, including, as we have since learned, the Jews themselves.

Just thinking aloud here to help you cover your bases... the "not permitted" or "allowed" possibilities according to your thesis are both possible given the want of evidence. The fundamentalists are in a more difficult position, because if it were "commanded," then there would be some indication of it in the text.
Now the New Testament Data:

1. The clearest verse comes from Jesus in His teaching on divorce:

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." (NIV Matt 19:8-9, pp. Mark 10.1-12)

The key thing to note here is that this argument fails if polygamy is acceptable! Jesus' point is that improper divorce does not nullify a marriage, and if the first marriage still stands, then a "second" marriage is adultery—and NOT simply 'polygamy'! This is very clear.

"The saying is hyperbolic—that is, it has exaggerated, intensified force: because God does not accept divorce as valid, any man who divorces his wife is not really divorced, and if he marries someone else, he commits adultery. No one else in antiquity spoke of divorce in such strong terms. (Because most Jewish teachers allowed polygamy, they would not have seen marrying a second wife as adultery, even if they had agreed that the man was still married to the first wife. But Jesus eliminates the double standard; a man consorting with two women is as adulterous as a woman consorting with two men.) [BBC, in.loc. Mark 10:11]

"The school of Shamai ... did not permit divorce except for the wife's unfaithfulness (whether successful or attempted), but they did not consider remarriage afterward adulterous. Jesus is more consistent: if one divorces one's spouse without valid grounds, the marriage is not truly dissolved and subsequent marriage is adulterous." [BBC, in.loc. Mt 19:9]

2. Paul, in Romans 7, actually uses the same principle, but applies it to the wife:

So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. (Rom 7)

Notice that a polyandrous relationship would also be adultery.

3. There is another, more general argument expressed in the New Testament, concerning the example of godly leaders.

It is clear (as the questioner notes) that those in Church government/leadership are to be monogamous (the 'husband of one wife' clause shows up in both statements of elder/deacon qualifications: 1 Tim 3.2 and Titus 1.6).

But these leaders are told to be examples to the flock, and the believers are told to follow the example of the apostles, disciples, and leaders. [Phil 3.17; 4.9; 1 Thess 1.6,7; 2 Thess 3.7,9; 1 Tim 4.12; Tit 2.7; 1 Pet 5.3; 1 Cor 4.6, 1 Cor 11.1]

Therefore, in the absence of other NT instruction, ALL believers are to emulate the purity and scripturally-mandated characteristics of our elders—including the monogamous one (2nd in each list!).

In fact, one measure of the 'godliness' of a widow, worthy of welfare support from scarce church funds, was that she be a "wife of one husband" (the exact same phrase turned around)—1 Timothy 5.9. The reference to polyandry shows that monogamy was important for general believers as well.

The NT data is rather clear—for both forms of polygamy: polygyny and polyandry—that monogamy is important to God's will, and that entering into polygamy is committing adultery.

[This, the commentators quickly point out, does not mean that existing polygamous marriages in foreign cultures are supposed to be dissolved through multiple-divorce! That is not the same thing, according to most, as entering into one as a Christian.]

We might also point out that the post-NT church was likewise anti-polygamy:

1. Justin Martyr (c.160) rebukes the Jews for allowing polygamy:

"Your imprudent and blind masters [i.e., Jewish teachers] even until this time permit each man to have four or five wives. And if anyone sees a beautiful woman and desires to have her, they quote the doings of Jacob." [ANF, vol. 1, p. 266]

2. Irenaeus (c.180) condemns the Gnostics for, among other things, polygamy:

"Others, again, following upon Basilides and Carpocrates, have introduced promiscuous intercourse and a plurality of wives..." [ANF, vol. 1, p.353]

3. Tertullian (c.207) was also explicit:

"Chapter II.-Marriage Lawful, But Not Polygamy. We do not indeed forbid the union of man and woman, blest by God as the seminary of the human race, and devised for the replenishment of the earth and the furnishing of the world, and therefore permitted, yet Singly. For Adam was the one husband of Eve, and Eve his one wife, one woman, one rib. (ANF: Tertullian, To His Wife)

4. Methodius (c.290) was clear on the issue, arguing that it had stopped at the time of the Prophets:

"The contracting of marriage with several wives had been done away with from the times of the prophets. For we read, 'Do not go after your lusts, but refrain yourself from your appetites'...And in another place, 'Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.' This plainly forbids a plurality of wives." [ANF, vol. 6, p.312]

5 The Pseudo-Clementine Literature boasts about how St. Thomas taught the Parthians [i.e., an Iranian culture] to abandon polygamy:

"But I shall give a still stronger proof of the matters in hand. For, behold, scarcely seven years have yet passed since the advent of the righteous and true Prophet; and in the course of these, inert of all nations coming to Judaea, and moved both by the signs and miracles Which they saw, and by the grandeur of His doctrine, received His faith; and then going back to their own countries, they rejected the lawless rites of the Gentiles, and their incestuous marriages. In short, among the Parthians-as Thomas, who is preaching the Gospel
amongst them, has written to us—not many now are addicted to
polygamy; nor among the Medes do many throw their dead to dogs;
nor are the Persians pleased with intercourse with their mothers, or
incestuous marriages with their daughters; nor do the Susanan women
practise the adulteries that were allowed them; nor has Genesis been
able to force those into crimes whom the teaching of religion
restrained. (ANF 8: "Book IX: Chapter XXIX.-The Gospel More
Powerful Than 'Genesis.'"

6. The Council of Neocaesarea a.d. 315 (circa) refers to a
'purification period' for polygamists. By that time, sinners had to 'sit
out' of Church activities until they had demonstrated reformation. If a
sin showed up on this list of canons, it was considered a 'bad
sin'—and polygamy shows up here:

"Ancient Epitome of Canon III. The time (for doing penance and
purification) of polygamists is well known. A zeal for penance may
shorten it." [ANF]

7. Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea, mentioned it a number of times in
his letters, generally concerning the period for exclusion from church
for polygamists, calling it 'limited fornication'(!):

"IV. In the case of trigamy and polygamy they laid down the same
rule, in proportion, as in the case of digamy; namely one year for
digamy (some authorities say two years); for trigamy men are
separated for three and often for four years; but this is no longer
described as marriage at all, but as polygamy; nay rather as limited
fornication. It is for this reason that the Lord said to the woman of
Samaria, who had five husbands, "he whom thou now hast is not thy
husband." He does not reckon those who had exceeded the limits of a
second marriage as worthy of the title of husband or wife. In cases of
trigamy we have accepted a seclusion of five years, not by the
canons, but following the precept of our predecessors. Such offenders
ought not to be altogether prohibited from the privileges of the
Church; they should be considered deserving of hearing after two or
three years, and afterwards of being permitted to stand in their place;
but they must be kept from the communion of the good gift, and only
restored to the place of communion after showing some fruit of
repentance. [ANF: (Canonica Prima.)] To Amphilochoius, concerning
the Canons. Letter CLXXXVIII written c.347."

Good question, friend.

What must be understood is that God's allowance of something and
even His requirement of it in exceptional circumstances is NOT
incompatible with it being "wrong" in the vast majority of cases.

Obviously, polygamy was 'authorized' (the Mosaic law specifically
refers to it) and 'demanded' (especially in the case of levirate
marriage), but this doesn't mean that it is something God wants us to
do, except in extreme situations (e.g., the provision of a
supportless-widow of kin, in a specific society tied to a
genealogically-based land inheritance economy).

A good way to illustrate this is from a very similar marital
topic—divorce.

Divorce was "authorized" in the Mosaic Law (Deut 24), and
"demanded" in the case of the returned exiles (Ezra 10). But it is
crystal clear that divorce is:

Hated by God (Mal 2.16)
Prohibited by Jesus, except in extreme situations (Matt 19).
Permitted by God because of human failings (i.e., hardness of
heart—Mt 19.8).

What this means for OUR discussion is that one must look at the
more "principle-like" statements about a topic, for guidance as to
what the will and heart of God is about a subject, rather than the
exceptions in history (e.g., permissions, extreme circumstances). The
statements of principle about polygamy (discussed above)—like the
statements of principle about divorce—indicate the behavioral norm
that we are to follow. The exceptions in history to those overarching
statements of principle and life are just that—exceptions, called forth
by either extreme situations or called forth by our own moral
weakness (e.g. hardness of heart).

Hope this helps your study,

Glenn Miller
July 23, 1999

The data for the NT seems rather clear. Although it was already a
minority practice (outlawed in many countries), the stance of Jesus,
Paul, and the early church is emphatically condemnatory towards it.
Monogamy is upheld as God's design, His will, and His expectation
for His people.

Pushback: Glenn, I just read your reply to a reader regarding
polygamy in the New Testament. I must differ with you. The Bible is
most certainly clear that polygamy is not only authorized, but in
many cases it was demanded by God. How do you explain your
position of saying it is adultery?
Eric D. Huntsman

From: Eric D. Huntsman [eric_huntsman@byu.edu]
Sent: Thursday, July 29, 2004 4:11 PM
To: 'Brian C. Hales'
Cc: 'eric_huntsman@byu.edu'
Subject: RE:

Brian,

I will probably see you in Choir before you read this, but I am bringing a copy of the comments of a good commentary on 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6.

Also, I was mistaken about Second Temple Period Jewish polygamy. We do have a references for Josephus (Joseph. AJ 17.14; BJ 1.477) and know of explicit exceptions for Jews from Roman prohibitions against polygamy. Also, in the commentary I stumbled upon a good treatment of the subject that you will want to look at: E. Hillman, Polygamy Reconsidered, Maryknoll, 1975.

Hope you will find this useful. I have scanned your chapter and found it interesting but have yet to make particular comments about your NT paragraph, since this is a new question to me to which I have not yet given much thought. My first impression, however, is that the most prudent course may be to state that the New Testament text says little about polygamy and then mention the different scholarly approaches to the "husband of one wife" passages in 1 Tim and Titus. I do think that you need to acknowledge, even reference, the statements of Orson Hyde et al. about Christ's supposed polygamy but then note that this was their opinion and not derived from any explicit references in the NT text. A sentence or two about the historical context of the assertions by some nineteenth century LDS leaders could then return the NT argument to the state of being inconclusive.

Let's keep talking about this,
Eric

---Original Message----
From: Brian C. Hales [mailto:brianhales@msn.com]
Sent: Tuesday, July 27, 2004 6:01 PM
To: eric_huntsman@byu.edu
Subject:

Hi Eric,

I appreciate your help with this. My publisher (Greg Kofford Books) is awaiting this chapter. If you don't have time to look it over - I'll understand.

I copied off the surrounding sections and then put the paragraph dealing with the NT polygamy in bold-italics. It is attached as a WP document. If you need it in the WORD format, just let me know.

7/29/2004
Husband of Only One Wife

KJV Titus 1:6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

NAU Titus 1:6 namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

NIV Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

NBJ Titus 1:6 that is, each of them must be a man of irreproachable character, husband of one wife, and his children must be believers and not liable to be charged with disorderly conduct or insubordination.

NRS Titus 1:6 someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.

L45 Titus 1:6 wo einer ist untadelig, eines Weibes Mann, der gläubige Kinder habe, nicht berüchtiget, daß sie Schweigel und ungehorsam sind.

BGT Titus 1:6 εἰ τίς ἔστιν ἁγίοις, μαῖας γυναικὸς ἄνδρος, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἁσωτίας ἢ ἁνυπότακτα.

GNT Titus 1:6 εἰ τίς ἔστιν ἁγίοις, μαῖας γυναικὸς ἄνδρος, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἁσωτίας ἢ ἁνυπότακτα.

VUL Titus 1:6 si quis sine crinme est unius uxoris vir filios habens fideles non in accusatione luxuriae aut non subditos

The Latin translation of μαῖας γυναικὸς ἄνδρος, unius uxoris vir, seems analogous to the Roman concept of the univira, the woman who only married once and would remain a widow after her husband's death (when political marriages among the Roman upper class would encourage remarriage). Hence the New Revised Standard's translation, "married only once."

JV 1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

NAU 1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

NIV 1 Timothy 3:2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
1 Timothy 3:2 That is why the presiding elder must have an impeccable character. **Husband of one wife,** he must be temperate, discreet and courteous, hospitable and a good teacher;

NRS 1 Timothy 3:2 Now a bishop must be above reproach, **married only once,** temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher,

L45 1 Timothy 3:2 Es soll aber ein Bischof unsträflich sein, **eines Weibes Mann,** nüchtern, mäßig, sittig, gastfrei, lehrhaftig,

BGT 1 Timothy 3:2 δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνδρα, νηφάλλων σωφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδακτικόν,

GNT 1 Timothy 3:2 δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνδρα, νηφάλλων σωφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδακτικόν,

VUL 1 Timothy 3:2 oportet ergo episcopum inreprehensibilem esse **unius uxoris virum** sobrium prudentem ornatum hospitalem doctorem