

“Husband of One Wife”:

Exegetical and Historical Notes on Clergy Divorce and Remarriage

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The Texts

I Timothy 3:1b-7	
<p>¹ ... Εἴ τις ἐπίσκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. ² δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίλημπτον εἶναι, μῖα γυναικὸς ἀνδρα, νηφάλιον σώφρονα κόσμιον φιλόξενον διδακτικόν, ³ μὴ πάροινον μὴ πλήκτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπεικῆ ἄμαχον ἀφιλάργυρον, ⁴ τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου καλῶς προϊστάμενον, τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, μετὰ πάσης σεμνότητος ⁵ (εἰ δέ τις τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου προστῆναι οὐκ οἶδεν, πῶς ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται;), ⁶ μὴ νεόφυτον, ἵνα μὴ τυφωθεὶς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου. ⁷ δεῖ δὲ καὶ μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀνειδισμὸν ἐμπέσῃ καὶ παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου.</p>	<p>¹ ... If anyone aspires to the office of bishop [or overseer], he desires a noble task. ² Therefore, it is necessary for a bishop to be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, apt to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, ⁴ presiding well over his own household, having his children in submission with all dignity ⁵ (for if someone does not know how to preside over his own household, how will he care for God's church?), ⁶ not a recent convert, lest he become puffed up and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ And it is necessary also [for him] to have a good testimony from those outside, lest he fall into disgrace and a snare of the devil. (trans. TMW)</p>
I Timothy 3:12	
<p>¹² διάκονοι ἔστωσαν μῖα γυναικὸς ἀνδρες, τέκνων καλῶς προϊστάμενοι καὶ τῶν ἰδίων οἴκων. ...</p>	<p>¹² Let assistant ministers [deacons?] be husbands of one wife, presiding well over [their] children and their own households. ... (trans. TMW)</p>
I Timothy 5:9	
<p>⁹ Χήρα καταλεγέσθω μὴ ἔλαττον ἐτῶν ἑξήκοντα γεγονυῖα, ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή, ...</p>	<p>⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, the wife of one husband, ... (trans. TMW)</p>
Titus 1:5-9	
<p>⁵ Τοῦτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους, ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διεταξάμην, ⁶ εἴ τις ἐστὶν ἀνέγκλητος, μῖα γυναικὸς ἀνήρ, τέκνα ἔχων πιστά, μὴ ἐν κατηγορίᾳ ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα. ⁷ δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, μὴ αὐθάδη, μὴ ὀργίλον, μὴ πάροινον, μὴ πλήκτην, μὴ αἰσχροκερδῆ, ⁸ ἀλλὰ φιλόξενον φιλάγαθον σώφρονα δίκαιον ὄσιον ἐγκρατῆ, ⁹ ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, ἵνα δυνατὸς ᾗ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν.</p>	<p>⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might put in order what was lacking and ordain presbyters [=pastors] in every town, as I charged you: ⁶ if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having believing children, not open to an accusation of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For it is necessary for a bishop [or overseer] to be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, righteous, holy, disciplined, ⁹ holding firm to the faithful Word in accord with the doctrine, so that he may be able both to give instruction in sound teaching and to expose those who contradict [it]. (trans. TMW)</p>

Qualifications for the Office of the Ministry in Context

The two main Pauline passages cited above (I Timothy 3 and Titus 1) describe the man qualified to hold the office of the holy ministry in parallel and complementary terms. In each case, a general qualification introduces a list that develops the theme in more detail: the man must be

ἀνεπίληπττον “irreproachable” (I Tim. 3:2)¹ or ἀνέγκλητος “blameless” (I Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6, 7).² Both adjectives are “alpha-privatives”—that is, they negate an undesirable quality by prefixing the Greek letter alpha (as in the English “amoral” and “atheist”). The first, ἀνεπίληπττον “irreproachable”, implies the avoidance of public scandal, as Jesus, for example, deftly dodged the spies sent by the chief priests to “catch Him out” (ἐπιλαμβάνω) saying something for which they might charge Him before the governor (Lk. 20:20, 26). Likewise, the second, ἀνέγκλητος “blameless”, suggests complete innocence of anything for which one could be “charged” (ἐγκαλέω), as the town clerk declared Paul to be during the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:38, 40). Again, Claudius Lysias declared Paul to be innocent of the “charges levelled” (ἐγκαλέω) against him by the Jews (Acts 23:28-29).

At a deep theological level, all Christians are innocent, blameless, beyond all charge in the eyes of *God*, chiefly on the day of judgement (Rom. 8:33; I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22). Thus, one might argue that no more is being demanded of the pastor than of any Christian: that he be forgiven. This *Gospel*-based irreproachability is certainly a fundamental qualification for the ministry, as Paul will later write explicitly about the assistant ministers (διάκονοι), that they must be “holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (I Tim. 3:9). The minister cannot proclaim a forgiveness that he himself has not first received. Yet if Paul were merely saying that men aspiring to the office should be forgiven, there is no clear reason why he would create such an explicit list of qualities and skills. This is language of the *Law*, not the *Gospel*; it indicates qualifications for holding office that must be judged according to a certain (divine) standard. The pastor is to display the blamelessness that the *Gospels* and *Acts* mark in Christ and His apostles. The adjectives “irreproachable” and “blameless” serve as a title or summary of the more specific qualifications for the office that follow. This function is suggested by the repetition of the word ἀνέγκλητος “blameless” at the beginning of the qualifications for διάκονοι “assistant ministers [or deacons]” (I Tim. 3:10), and its double repetition at the head of the list in Titus (1:6, 7) for the qualifications of πρεσβύτεροι “presbyters” / ἐπίσκοποι “bishops”.

As with Christ and Paul in the texts cited above (Luke 20; Acts 19, 23), Paul indicates that blamelessness before *men* is also required.³ With his closing words to Timothy concerning the “bishop”, Paul indicates that there is a *public* character to this blamelessness: “it is necessary also [for him] to have a good testimony from those outside” (I Tim. 3:7; cf. Tit. 1:6).⁴ This explanatory sentence parallels the opening term “irreproachable”, forming an *inclusio* or frame around the list of qualifications for the office. While these qualifications certainly refer to sinful actions that would cause the minister to expect God’s condemnation, they also refer to qualities that might cause the Christian message to be brought into disrepute in the world, whether by scandal or by simple contradiction of word and deed (inability to “practise what you preach”). Thus, “sober-minded”, “respectable”, “not vio-

¹ Derived from the verb ἐπιλαμβάνω “to catch [someone in something]”, the adjective ἀνεπίληπττος “not catch-able [in wrong]” occurs in the NT only here and I Tim. 6:14, where Paul charges Timothy to keep his mandate ἄσπιλον ἀνεπίληπττον “unstained, irreproachable” until the coming of Christ. In classical literature it is used of an irreproachable moral life.

² Derived from the verb ἐγκαλέω “to bring charges against, accuse”, the adjective ἀνέγκλητος “not chargeable” refers both to the Christian who by grace does not have his sins charged against him before God (I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22) and to pastors who are to be “not chargeable” before men (I Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6, 7).

³ Compare the similar lists in *Polycarp to the Philippians* 5:2; 6:1. E.g., “blameless before the face of His righteousness, as being the servants of God and Christ, and not of men” (5:2); and “providing for that which is becoming in the sight of God and man” (6:1).

⁴ The καί “also” may indicate that blamelessness before God is required first, and that blamelessness before men is *also* required. If this is true, then the standard is objective and unchanging, not subject to social fashion.

lent”, “not a drunkard”, etc., are (non-exhaustive) examples that illustrate the ways in which the pastor will maintain a good testimony for the Christian church from those outside.

It is therefore not surprising that Paul’s lists bear a certain similarity to contemporary secular lists of virtues and vices.⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson finds their sobriety compelling:

Such characteristics are not terribly exciting, and when authentic faith is identified with sudden conversion or a single spasm of heroism, these virtues might be mistaken for that “bourgeois morality” often associated with the Pastorals. ... Fidelity to one spouse, sobriety, steadiness, and quiet sanity may seem negligible qualities to the romantically or erratically inclined, but those who are leaders within churches find that failure in such virtues does, in fact, erode and often destroy the fabric of trust that is essential for credible leadership. And for those who have found such qualities all to rarely in ecclesiastical leaders, this list of desiderata seems like pure gold.⁶

The chief concern is not with *illegal* activities for which a minister might be literally “charged”—presumably, avoidance of such things goes without saying. Nor is their *sinfulness* the chief factor, even though Paul is surely concerned that God’s favour be upon the ministry. But Paul highlights certain activities and qualities that—while certainly contrary to God’s Law and the fruits of the Spirit—might lead the public to “charge” the minister with incompetence, scandal, or hypocrisy, and therefore despise his message. Thus, these are not simply the characteristics of an average Christian. Rather, they are qualities specifically relevant to the public reputation of a man holding high office.

Some of the listed qualifications form a notable exception to this criterion and bring the divine aspect again into view. Firstly, while a pastor who cannot teach might lead outsiders not to take Christianity seriously, it would hardly be considered a “chargeable” offence. Rather, διδασκαλικόν “apt to teach” is a qualification particularly suited to the duties of this specific office, as Paul expands to Titus: “holding firm to the faithful Word in accord with the doctrine, so that he may be able both to give instruction in sound teaching and to expose those who contradict [it]” (Tit. 1:9). Likewise, while it is hardly discreditable for a Christian to be a “neophyte”, Paul insists that a new Christian is unsuited to the pastoral office. One might also include “hospitable” in this category, as well as “not a lover of money” (both of which might be related to his responsibility for church funds). For, “it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy [πιστός]” (I Cor. 4:2). And this is about being “God’s steward” (Tit. 1:7).

Secondly, while having rebellious or unbelieving children (I Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6) might conceivably cause dishonour to the pastor in his community (cf. I Tim. 5:8), it would not in itself be a charge that would disqualify his message in their eyes. As Paul himself interprets it, good management of his own household indicates his ability to lead the church—and likely is an indication of his family’s external obedience to the Fourth Commandment. Defiance of the divine order in the family is not a good indicator of submission to God’s order in the church, especially since “household” is a prime image of the church (I Tim. 3:15).

Thirdly, in a society in which divorce and remarriage was common, legal, and unremarkable, where a man could not be charged with adultery for visiting prostitutes or having sex with his slave

⁵ MARTIN DIBELIUS and HANS CONZELMANN, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1972), 50-51, 158-60, note and reproduce a striking parallel in Onasander’s *De imperatoris officio*. The list gives the virtues desired in a general, though none is particularly distinctive of a soldier. J. N. D. KELLY, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (London: A. & C. Black, 1963), 74, cautions that such parallels have been greatly exaggerated, and one should not simply think that Paul has borrowed a generic list: “Every one of the qualities demanded was appropriate to an overseer, and some of them had a direct relevance to his functions.”

⁶ LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 224.

girl, the qualification “husband of one wife” would appear to set a standard greater than simply “avoiding disapproval from the contemporary society”.⁷ In other words, while “irreproachable” certainly *includes* the judgement of outsiders that Christian leaders satisfy certain public standards so that the church’s message not be hindered by their conduct, the overall content of these lists in I Timothy and Titus suggests that certain *divine* standards appropriate to a holy office are also at stake. Thus, contrary to commonly expressed opinions that Paul lays down no qualifications for the office that are higher than what is demanded of any Christian,⁸ in a certain respect this is *precisely* what he does. While all Christians are expected not to be drunkards and lovers of money, for example, such failings would not *disqualify* them from being Christians.⁹ Indeed, forgiveness is extended to them. Likewise, a Christian need not be “apt to teach”, and to be inept would not even be discreditable; but the pastor is held to a different standard on account of his office. It is in this context that “husband of one wife” needs to be examined. While “husband of one wife” is certainly a standard expected of every (male) Christian, *failure* in this standard might nonetheless have more dire consequences for the one who aspires to the pastoral office, as is the case with the other qualifications Paul lists.¹⁰

Interpreting μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα “husband of one wife”

Parallels in Classical Literature

One should certainly not be surprised at the liberal attitudes towards divorce and remarriage that prevailed in the Græco-Roman world. Seneca commented sarcastically: “Is there any woman that blushes at divorce now that certain illustrious and noble ladies reckon their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands, and leave home in order to marry, and marry in order to be divorced?”¹¹ The implied criticism in this remark reflects his view that the morality of

⁷ It is significant that contemporary virtue lists like Onasander’s (above) make no reference to the candidate’s marital status.

⁸ E.g. SYDNEY H. T. PAGE, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 50 (1993): 113, “the remarriage interpretation assumes that higher expectations were made of church leaders than of other members of the believing community. This is a questionable assumption because the other items in the lists of qualifications for leaders generally refer to qualities which were to be exhibited by all Christians.”

⁹ MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN, “The Pastoral Office and Divorce, Remarriage, Moral Deviation”, *Concordia Journal*, 6.4 (1980): 145, comments sensibly: “St. Paul is quite explicit in saying that ‘neither the immoral, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. 6:9). If this type of person will not inherit the kingdom, what right do we have to permit him to be entrusted with the pastoral office?” At the same time, the list of qualifications in the Pastorals refers not only to moral qualities and violations of the God’s Law, but to a distinct set of *virtues* and *skills*.

¹⁰ C. H. DODD, “New Testament Translation Problems II”, *The Bible Translator*, 28.1 (1977): 115, addresses this distinction:

The objection is raised, that if the bishop is expressly enjoined to respect monogamic marriage, by implication the layman is permitted concubinage or polygamy. But it is to be observed that the author is not laying down a specially high standard to be enforced upon bishops in office, but indicating the kind of person who should be considered as a candidate for ordination. The description is in no sense specifically Christian: the virtues are those of the man who would be generally recognized as a respectable citizen of unimpeachable character (ἀνεπίλημπος)—and recognized as such by pagans no less than by Christians. (Dodd, 115)

¹¹ SENECA, *On Benefits*, 3:16.2; quoted from the Loeb edition in SYDNEY H. T. PAGE, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 50 (1993): 109.

the Roman empire had declined markedly. This worrisome development threatened the future of the empire.

Christianity was born within a Roman society in which family stability and moral discipline had given way to flagrant decadence. ... In the first century after Christ, Caesar Augustus attempted to stem the declining birth rate through legislation that gave bonuses for families having children and severe penalties for immorality, with no success.¹²

Augustus’ “conservative revolution” had extended beyond constitutional restructuring to religious reformation—he restored at least 82 temples and built many more new ones, believing that the civil wars from which the empire had just emerged could be traced to neglect of the gods. His reformation then addressed sex and family life. Seeking to renew a citizenry decimated by war, his legislation targeted the unmarried and childless through a system of rewards and punishments designed to encourage large families. This included penalties against widows and divorcées who failed to remarry promptly (though an *adulterous* woman was forbidden to remarry).¹³

Christian opposition to both divorce and remarriage of divorcé(e)s thus stood in opposition to the cultural pressures of the day. At the same time, Paul’s charge that pastors should be “husband of wife” and enrolled widows “wife of one husband” was consistent with a “higher morality” idealised by men like Cicero and Seneca, whose adverse reactions to moral decline arose not from simple pragmatic or political fears. This higher moral ideal was frequently expressed in epitaphs that gave special honour to those who had remained faithful to one spouse alone for their entire mortal lives.¹⁴ While occasional epitaphs refer to a *man’s* faithfulness to one wife,¹⁵ not remarrying after divorce or death, this ideal was most often achieved by (or expected of!) *women*. Such morally distinctive women were referred to as *μόνανδρος* or *univira* “[**wife**] of one husband”. Citing extensively from classical epitaphs, Gordon Williams demonstrates that expressions of this ideal were characterised by three features: (i) the ideal of faithfulness to one man; (ii) the ideal of wifely obedience to a husband; and (iii) the marriage bond conceived of as eternal.¹⁶ Thus, neither “husband of one wife” nor “wife of one husband” would be expressions unfamiliar to a first-century Christian audience.

¹² CARL VOLZ, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 77.

¹³ See ROBIN LANE FOX, *The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 426-36. Ironically, Augustus himself fathered only one daughter and no sons. DAVID INSTONE-BREWSTER, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 227, n. 37: “The *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 B.C.E. permitted a private prosecution of any fertile woman who did not remarry within eighteen months (if she was divorced) or two years (if she was widowed).”

¹⁴ The standard lexicon of the Greek New Testament, BAUER-DANKER-ARNDT-GINGRICH, s.v. εἷς, 2b, summarises: “numerous sepulchral ins[criptions] celebrate the virtue of a surviving spouse by noting that he or she was married only once, thereby suggesting the virtue of extraordinary fidelity [classical references follow]” Cf. “the exemplary conduct of Hannah [Anna] Lk 2:36”

¹⁵ The Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60-7 BC) spoke of the ancient Romans’ preference for a man’s marriage “to one wife [εἰς γυναῖκα μίαν]” (*Antiquitates Romanae*, 2:24.5). He proceeds to claim that for 520 years no Roman marriage was ever dissolved. Though theoretically virtuous, *male* fidelity was not considered realistic. While Augustus made adultery a public crime in 18 BC, a man nevertheless could not be punished for having sex with a slave, a prostitute, or “a low-grade woman of infamy” (FOX, 434). FOX, 435, notes a woman of high standing who registered herself as a prostitute so that she could continue to take lovers with impunity! The Christian view contrasts starkly.

¹⁶ GORDON WILLIAMS, “Some Aspects of Roman Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals”, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 48.1/2 (1958): 23.

Williams contends that the higher ideal of the *univira* was rooted in religious practice, “for only *univirae* were permitted to perform certain rites”.¹⁷ In other words, the higher moral purity of priestesses was held up as a model for the pious Roman laywoman. In language closely approximating Paul’s words, Diodorus of Sicily (Greek historian active 60-30 BC) writes that the Egyptians made a similar distinction between priests and ordinary laymen: “In accordance with the marriage-customs of the Egyptians the priests have but one wife, but any other man takes as many as he may determine [γαμοῦσι δὲ παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις οἱ μὲν ἱερεῖς μίαν, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων ὅσας ἂν ἕκαστος προαιρῆται]” (1, 80, 3). The standard lexicon notes that the phrase μία γυνή “one wife” appears quite frequently in ancient literature, and comments on Diodorus that “the phrase γαμοῦσι μίαν simply means that the priests married only once, not that they lead a strictly moral life, a concept for which Greeks never use the expression μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ or anything like it.”¹⁸ The latter comment takes to task those exegetes who have tried to avoid the literal meaning of the phrase without any linguistic data to support their interpretation (see below).

Interpretations in the Church Fathers

While the specific issue of pastoral divorce and remarriage is only rarely discussed by the Church Fathers, the matter of divorce among the laity, and their remarriage after divorce or widowhood, is a frequent topic as early as Hermas (late 1st or early 2nd c. AD). With respect to remarriage after *divorce*, there was little variance from the traditional view, “that Jesus forbade all divorce except in the case of adultery, and that he forbade all remarriage. This view can be traced through the Church Fathers, Church canon law, and the writings of the Reformers.”¹⁹ The attitude towards remarriage after *widowhood* was more varied. Although it was both permissible and common, there was a persistent ascetic tendency already in the 2nd century that placed a higher value on remaining single after the death of one’s spouse—corresponding to the Roman honour accorded to the *univira*.

Doubtless, Christians did suffer divorce, and probably sometimes availed themselves of the legal opportunities to remarry. The question is whether they could have remained in communion with the Church when they did so. Synodical canons from the 3rd and 4th centuries often set terms of penance for the spiritual rehabilitation of those who wished to remarry—but it is unclear from the texts whether such remarriage was after widowhood or divorce. It is conceivable that even the widowed were sometimes expected to go through penance before remarrying, inasmuch as such remarriage was considered a sign of spiritual weakness. At the same time, even those Fathers opposed to it conceded that remarriage of the widowed was not in itself sinful. Thus, it is also possible that these canons give evidence that divorced lay Christians did sometimes remarry, after an appropriate period of penance. (See the “testimonies” below.) This provision for the laity provides the background against which one must read the higher standard to which the clergy were held.

With respect to divorce among the laity, all ancient Christian authors held to the “exception clause” interpretation—that the only legitimate ground for divorce was a partner’s adultery. (Desertion by an unbelieving spouse is rarely discussed prior to the Reformation era.) But it is important to note that *remarriage* of divorced Christians was a distinct issue with two parts. Firstly, no Christian was permitted to remarry after an *illegitimate* divorce. Secondly, even remarriage after “*legitimate*” (exception clause) divorce was discouraged until the death of the partner (to facilitate recon-

¹⁷ WILLIAMS, 23: “see, for example, Livy 10, 23, 5 ff. (sacrifice at the shrine of Pudicitia), Servius on *Aen.* 4, i66 (perform the function of *pronuba*), Val. Max. 2, 1, 3 (awarded special mark of honour).”

¹⁸ BDAG, s.v. εἷς, 2b.

¹⁹ DAVID INSTONE-BREWER, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 238. Note that Instone-Brewer himself dissents from this tradition and believes that Christians may remarry on the grounds of “four biblical causes” (see below).

ciliation). Such reticence to permit remarriage among the *laity* explains why no ancient Christian writer even considered the possibility that a man who had been divorced and remarried might hold the *pastoral office*. Among Church Fathers in the first four centuries, debate over the meaning of “husband of one wife” thus admitted of only two possibilities:

- (1) Paul forbade a man who had remarried *after divorce or widowhood* to hold the pastoral office; or
- (2) Paul forbade a man who had remarried *after divorce* to hold the office, but *not* a man remarried *after widowhood*.

From the early post-apostolic era until the early fourth century, the *first* interpretation was dominant. Tertullian (writing before his more rigorous Montanist period) serves as a stereotypical example of this position. He *recommends* to (but at this stage does not *command*) the laity that they remain single after the death of their spouse on the grounds that this is the *rule* for clergy and the order of widows:

How detrimental to faith, how obstructive to holiness, second marriages are, the discipline of the Church and the prescription of the apostle declare, when he suffers not men twice married to preside [over a Church], when he would not grant a widow admittance into the order unless she had been “the wife of one man”; for it behooves God’s altar to be set forth pure.²⁰

C. H. Dodd summarises:

There seems, then, to be no doubt that the dominant view in early times was that the intention of 1 Tim 3.2, Tit 1.6 was to exclude from the episcopate any person who had contracted a second marriage after the death of his first wife. The only point in dispute was whether this was or was not intended to apply to marriages contracted before baptism.²¹

Some historians have argued that this interpretation reflects a growing asceticism in the second century that was foreign to Paul. They note that Paul himself encouraged younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14). Yet Paul elsewhere affirmed the opposite position, that the unmarried and widowed should remain single in view of the imminent return of Christ (1 Cor. 7:8).

Such conflicting considerations found even within Paul’s writings led Theodore of Mopsuestia in the fourth century (followed later by Theodoret) to champion the *second* interpretation. On the basis of the legal loophole opened by the *Apostolic Constitutions* (below), that a widower who had remarried *prior* to his ordination could hold office, Theodore argued that remarriage of a widowed pastor *after* ordination could not be absolutely prohibited nor would it bar him from the episcopal rank. He cites Paul’s own approval of second marriages for the widowed (Rom. 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:9).

Theodore then introduces a novel interpretation of Paul’s words: Paul means that a candidate for the office should have lived an upright married life (not polygamous or adulterous). He writes:

Paul laid down this maxim to the intent that a person to be promoted to the episcopate should be such an one as, having married a wife, had lived temperately with her, keeping to her alone and limiting to her his natural appetite. Thus, if a man has lived after this fashion, and having lost his first wife has lawfully married a second, and has lived with her also after the same manner, he ought not, according to the legislation of Paul, to be hindered from advancing to the episcopate.²²

Theodoret subsequently appeals to Theodore’s position, writing: “the apostle meant that a man cohabiting temperately with one wife only was worthy of ordination to the episcopate.”²³ Both authors

²⁰ TERTULLIAN, *To His Wife*, 1:7.

²¹ DODD, 114.

²² THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA, as cited by DODD, 113.

²³ THEODORET, as cited by DODD, 113. Dodd proceeds to cite Chrysostom on both sides of the question.

concede, however, that they are running against the majority, traditional position. (See Hippolytus, below, who contends that Pope Callistus [AD 217-22] was the first to allow remarried widowers to hold office—or any minister to marry after ordination.) It is important to observe, though, that these authors are only admitting the possibility that a remarried *widower* might be ordained, so long as he had been faithful to his first wife; they do not address the situation of a *divorced* or *divorced-and-remarried* candidate (as many modern writers have misapplied Theodore's view). Nor can one drive a wedge between the pastor's past and present life on the basis of these testimonies. The conclusion that Paul is only concerned with faithfulness within a pastor's *existing* marriage without regard for any *previous* marriage—or the opposite, that he is only concerned with his *past* history and not with his *ongoing* conduct—cannot be justified on the basis of these patristic authorities.²⁴

The Church Fathers' silence on the possibility that a *divorced-and-remarried* man might be ordained (or remain in office) is inconvenient to modern churchmen seeking an answer to a modern question, but it is not difficult to explain. The fact that the point of dispute was exclusively the remarriage of *widowers* (accompanied occasionally by the question of whether a single man might marry after ordination) would suggest *a fortiori* that the ordination of a *divorced* or *divorced-and-remarried* man was entirely out of the question in their minds. If remarriage after divorce was permitted to the laity only in certain circumstances—after the death of the former spouse, and/or after a number of years of public penance—it is highly unlikely that it would even come under consideration for the ordained. Thus, it is not even discussed. And as the Western Church moved increasingly towards the norm of an unmarried, celibate priesthood, even the question of remarriage after widowhood faded from consideration—until, of course, the Reformation.

Testimonies

The following quotations are not to be read uncritically (as they are themselves somewhat diverse), but offer data in support of the various positions outlined above and below.

Patristic Testimonies concerning Clerical Remarriage

(Tertullian, *To His Wife*, 1:7; written *before* his rigorous Montanist period; remarriage after widowhood is not a sin, but is discouraged; for the clergy it is forbidden.) Therefore when, through the will of God, the husband is deceased, the marriage likewise, by the will of God, ceases. Why should you restore what God has put an end to? Why do you, by repeating the servitude of matrimony, spurn the liberty which is offered you? ... [I Cor. 7:27-28] ... For even if you do not “sin” in re-marrying, still he says “pressure of the flesh ensues.” Wherefore, so far as we can, let us love the opportunity of continence; as soon as it offers itself, let us resolve to accept it, that what we have not had strength (to follow) in matrimony we may follow in widowhood. The occasion must be embraced which puts an end to that which necessity commanded. How detrimental to faith, how obstructive to holiness, second marriages are, the discipline of the Church and the prescription of the apostle declare, when he suffers not men twice married to preside [over a Church],

²⁴ Thus, for example, Sydney Page and David Instone-Brewer contend (quite contrary to the above quotation) that Theodore and Theodoret have no interest in a candidate's marital history (see below). Note the contrary opinion of BDAG (above), who contend that “husband of one wife” never means simply “that they lead a strictly moral life”. DODD's opposite interpretation is just as questionable, involving a peculiar over-interpretation of the verb tense: “The candidate for orders, therefore, must have behind him a good record of behaviour within the canons of everyday morals. Nothing is said of the peculiar sanctity which may be expected of him in the ministry: it is the life he *has lived* (ἐξήκέναι, vixisse, in Theodore) that is in question” (116). Surely Paul does not mean that a pastor could *later* become a drunkard, a brawler, an adulterer, a polygamist, etc., without consequences!

when he would not grant a widow admittance into the order unless she had been “the wife of one man”; for it behooves God’s altar to be set forth pure.

(Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, 11; here Tertullian attests to the fact that pastors could be married only once, but argues that this standard proceeds from what applies to the whole “priesthood of all believers”.) Grant, now, that you marry “in the Lord,” in accordance with the law and the apostle—if, notwithstanding, you care even about this—with what face do you request (the solemnizing of) a matrimony which is unlawful to those of whom you request it; of a monogamist bishop, of presbyters and deacons bound by the same solemn engagement, of widows whose Order you have in your own person refused? ... How does he make monogamy the base of his disposition of the whole Ecclesiastical Order, if this rule does not antecedently hold good in the case of laics, from whose ranks the Ecclesiastical Order proceeds?

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 9:7, challenging the morally lax innovations of his nemesis, Pope Callistus [AD 217-22]) About the time of this man [Callistus], bishops, priests, and deacons, who had been twice married, and thrice married, began *to be allowed* to retain their place among the clergy. If also, however, any one who is in holy orders should become married, *Callistus permitted* such a one to continue in holy orders as if he had not sinned. And *in justification*, he alleges that what has been spoken by the Apostle has been declared in reference to this person: “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” [Rom. 14:4] But he asserted that likewise the parable of the tares is uttered in reference to this *one*: “Let the tares grow along with the wheat;” [Mt. 13:30] or, in other words, let those who in the Church are guilty of sin *remain in it*. But also he affirmed that the ark of Noah was made for a symbol of the Church, in which were both dogs, and wolves, and ravens, and all things clean and unclean; and so he alleges that the case should stand in like manner with the Church. And as many *parts of Scripture* bearing on this *view of the subject* as he could collect, he so interpreted.

(Synod of Elvira, Spain, c. AD 306, Canon 18) Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, if—once placed in the ministry—they are discovered to be sexual offenders, shall not receive communion, not even at the end, because of the scandal and the heinousness of the crime.²⁵

(Synod of Neocaesarea, c. AD 315, Canon 1; a presbyter could be married before ordination, but if he married after ordination he had to step down from office.) If a presbyter marry, let him be removed from his order; but if he commit fornication or adultery, let him be altogether cast out [i.e. of communion] and put to penance.

[Nicaea reputedly considered and rejected a requirement of clerical celibacy (*NPNF* 14:51). The **commentary in *NPNF*** is significant:] Socrates, Sozomen, and Gelasius affirm that the Synod of Nicæa, as well as that of Elvira (can. 33), desired to pass a law respecting celibacy. This law was to forbid all bishops, priests and deacons (Sozomen adds subdeacons), who were married at the time of their ordination, to continue to live with their wives. But, say these historians, the law was opposed openly and decidedly by Paphnutius, bishop of a city of the Upper Thebaïs in Egypt, a man of a high reputation, who had lost an eye during the persecution under Maximian. He was also celebrated for his miracles, and was held in so great respect by the Emperor, that the latter often kissed the empty socket of the lost eye. Paphnutius declared with a loud voice, “that too heavy a yoke ought not to be laid upon the clergy; that marriage and married intercourse are of themselves honourable and undefiled; that the Church ought not to be injured by an extreme severity, for all could not live in absolute continency: in this way (by not prohibiting married intercourse) the virtue of the wife would be much more certainly preserved (viz. the wife of a clergyman, because she might find injury elsewhere, if her husband withdrew from her married intercourse). The intercourse of a man with his lawful wife may also be a chaste intercourse. It would therefore be sufficient, according to the ancient tradition of the Church, if those who had taken holy orders without

²⁵ Elvira, Canon 33, prescribes celibacy to married clergy—but the later canons of this council are dubious. In any case, the attempt at enforced celibacy is rejected at Nicaea (below).

being married were prohibited from marrying afterwards; but those clergymen who had been married only once as laymen, were not to be separated from their wives (Gelasius adds, or being only a reader or cantor)."

(Apostolic Constitutions, [c. AD 375], 2:2) Such a one a bishop ought to be, who has been [γεγεννημένον] the "husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), who also has herself had no other husband.

(Apostolic Canons [c. AD 400], 17) He who has been twice married after baptism, or who has had a concubine, cannot become a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any other of the sacerdotal list.

(Apostolic Canons, 61) If any accusation be brought against a believer of fornication or adultery, or any forbidden action, and he be convicted, let him not be promoted to the clergy.

Patristic Testimonies concerning Remarriage in General

(Hermas, Mandates, 4:1.6, 8) And I said to him, "What then, sir, is the husband to do, if his wife continue in her vicious practices [adultery]?" And he said, "The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he put his wife away and marry another, he also commits adultery." ... "In case, therefore, that the divorced wife may repent, the husband ought not to marry another, when his wife has been put away. In this matter man and woman are to be treated exactly in the same way."

(Justin Martyr, First Apology, 15) [Justin cites Mt. 5:28-29, 32; 19:11-12, and concludes:] And so those who make second marriages [after divorce] according to human law are sinners in the sight of our Teacher.

(Athenagoras of Athens [c. AD 133-90], A Plea for the Christians, 33:2; this follows upon a statement that marriage and its joys are limited to the production of children, and that celibacy brings one closer to God.) A person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage; for a second marriage is only veiled adultery [εὐπρεπής μοιχεία]. "For whosoever puts away his wife," says He, "and marries another, commits adultery" [Mt. 19:9], not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again. For he who deprives himself of his first wife, even though she be dead, is a cloaked adulterer, resisting the hand of God, because in the beginning God made one man and one woman, and dissolving the strictest union of flesh with flesh, formed for the intercourse of the race.

(Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 3:12 [82]) And if from sympathy the apostle allows a man a second marriage because he cannot control himself and burns with passion, he also does not commit any sin according to the Old Testament (for it was not forbidden by the Law), but he does not fulfil the heightened perfection of the gospel ethic. But he gains heavenly glory for himself if he remains as he is, and keeps undefiled the marriage yoke broken by death, and willingly accepts God's purpose for him, by which he has become free from distraction for the service of the Lord.

(INSTONE-BREWER, 244) Clement, like Hermas, said that remarriage should be avoided in order to allow reconciliation, but he did not state whether or not remarriage was allowed after reconciliation became impossible.

(Tertullian, On Monogamy, 9; written later, AD 211-15, in his Monatanist period; he now declares remarriage of widows to be against God's Law.) Therefore if those whom God has conjoined man shall not separate by divorce, it is equally congruous that those whom God has separated by death man is not to conjoin by marriage; the joining of the separation will be just as contrary to God's will as would have been the separation of the conjunction.

(Synod of Elvira, Spain [c. AD 306], Canon 9) Further a baptized woman who leaves her adulterous baptized husband and marries another is forbidden to marry him; if she does she shall not

receive communion until the death of her former husband unless, by chance, the pressure of illness demand that it be given.

(Synod of Neocaesarea [c. AD 315], Canon 3.) Concerning those who fall into many marriages, the appointed time of penance is well known; but their manner of living and faith shortens the time. [*NPNF* 14:80 notes: “In later times digamists were condemned to one year’s penance, and trigamists from two to five years.” But it is not clear whether this refers to remarriage after divorce or death.]

(Synod of Neocaesarea [c. AD 315], Canon 7) A presbyter shall not be a guest at the nuptials of persons contracting a second marriage; for, since the digamist is worthy of penance, what kind of a presbyter shall he be, who, by being present at the feast, sanctioned the marriage? [Note that clergy are not “performing” marriages at this time, but only blessing them. Van Espen comments in *NPNF* 14:82, “The present canon again shews that although the Church never disapproved of, nor reputed second or still later marriages illicit, nevertheless the Fathers enjoined a penance upon digamists and those repeating marriage, because by this iteration they shewed their incontinence. As he that contracted a second marriage did not sin properly speaking, and committed no fault worthy of punishment, therefore whatever was amiss was believed to be paid off by a lighter penance” The commentator seems to believe that the text refers only to the remarriage of the widowed, but the text is not completely clear.]

[Canon 8 of Nicaea demands that Cathari (Novatian) presbyters who come into the catholic church must be willing to commune with people who have been married twice. *NPNF* 14:20 note: “like the Montanists they rebaptized Catholics who apostatized to them, and absolutely rejected all second marriages.”]

(Synod of Laodicea [AD 343-81], Canon 1) It is right, according to the ecclesiastical Canon, that the Communion should by indulgence be given to those who have freely and lawfully joined in second marriages, not having previously made a secret marriage; after a short space, which is to be spent by them in prayer and fasting. [The Ancient Epitome of Canon I explains, “A digamist not secretly married, after devoting himself for a short time to praying shall be held blameless afterwards.”]

[Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians (7:15)*, is the first father to say explicitly that remarriage is permitted after an unbelieving spouse leaves. Essentially, he does not believe the marriage to an unbeliever was valid in the first place. This is annulment. He later argues that a *man* who divorces a wife for adultery is allowed to remarry, though the *wife* is not. (See *INSTONE-BREWER*, 250-51.)]

(INSTONE-BREWER, 252-53; emphasis original) Most of the Church Fathers taught that a marriage could be ended only by the death of one partner. Some Fathers, such as Jerome and Chrysostom (both about 350-410 C.E.), upheld this orthodox position even when they were presented with very **difficult pastoral circumstances**.

(Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus in the early fifth century, *Against Heresies*, 69; in INSTONE-BREWER, 253) He who cannot keep continence after the death of his first wife, or who has separated from his wife for a valid motive, as fornication, or some other misdeed, if he takes another wife, or the wife takes another husband, the divine word does not condemn him nor exclude him from the Church or the life; but she tolerates it rather on account of his weakness.

(INSTONE-BREWER, 253; emphasis original) Augustine was already writing on remarriage in 290 C.E. and wrote a two-volume work in 419 C.E., *To Pollentius—On Adulterous Marriages*. He established the theological basis for the teaching that adultery is the only ground for divorce and that such a divorce does not permit remarriage because the marriage bond can be broken only by death. He taught that the **indestructible** or ontological **nature of the marriage bond is due to**

the sacramental nature of marriage. Like baptism, which is our marriage to Christ, human marriage is irreversible.

(Augustine, *On Faith and Works, Ancient Christian Writers, 48:43, in INSTONE-BREWER, 255*) [Yet Augustine also writes:] The man who leaves his wife because of adultery and marries another is not, it seems, as blameworthy as the man who for no reason leaves his wife and marries another. Nor is it clear from Scripture whether a man who has left his wife because of adultery, which he is certainly permitted to do, is himself an adulterer, if he marries again. And if he should, I do not think that he would commit a grave sin.²⁶

(INSTONE-BREWER, 256-57, summarises the Fathers; emphasis original) When the NT texts on divorce are read outside the context of the first century, they appear to teach that divorce is allowed only for adultery and for desertion by a nonbeliever, and that remarriage before the death of a former partner involves sin. Ascetic beliefs, which characterize almost all the Fathers, minimized the problems with this “plain” meaning of the text. ... The Fathers had little incentive to seek ways to help divorcés remarry, and they were happy to recommend the separation of marriage partners rather than divorce. ... There were **a few dissenting voices**. The clearest of these is Ambrosiaster, who said that Paul allowed remarriage of a man who had divorced an adulterous partner. Although he was the only Father to specifically teach this, we know from incidental references to remarriages that this practice was fairly widespread. ... Some of the Fathers expressed **unease about the sinfulness of an innocent divorcé who remarried**.

(INSTONE-BREWER, 255-56; emphasis original) Aquinas built on Augustine’s view of marriage as a sacrament. ... Aquinas **confirmed the full sacramental character of marriage**. This was the final foundation for understanding marriage to be ontologically indissoluble. From this basis it was possible to state conclusively that any reference to divorce in the NT referred only to separation, and that the freedom of 1 Corinthians 7:15 did not include the freedom to remarry. ... While canon law was strengthened [at Trent] with regard to the indissolubility of marriage, there was a parallel development in the use of annulments to end marriages. A growing number of “impediments” to marriage were identified that could be applied retroactively.

Testimonies concerning Remarriage in the Reformation Era

(INSTONE-BREWER, 259; emphasis original) Erasmus also took a new look at the divorce texts and tried to interpret them in the context in which they occurred. He suggested that the divorce saying of Matthew 5:32 should be **interpreted less legalistically**, in line with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. ... He concluded that Paul allowed divorce with remarriage after desertion by an unbeliever, and that Jesus’ exception allowed remarriage after divorce for adultery.

(LUTHER, *The Estate of Marriage* [1522], AE 45:30-33) I know of three grounds for divorce. The first, which has just been mentioned and was discussed above, is the situation in which the husband or wife is not equipped for marriage because of bodily or natural deficiencies of any sort. ... The second ground is adultery. ... The third case for divorce is that in which one of the parties deprives and avoids the other, refusing to fulfil the conjugal duty or to live with the other person.

(LUTHER, *The Sermon on the Mount* [1532], AE 21:94) Those who want to be Christians should not be divorced, but every man should keep his own spouse, sustaining and bearing good and ill with her, even though she may have her oddities, peculiarities, and faults. If he does get a divorce, he should remain unmarried. We have no right to make marriage a free thing, as though it were in our power to do with as we pleased, changing and exchanging.

²⁶ Instone-Brewer argues that the idea of marriage persisting till death was a theoretical construction necessary to explain why remarriage was adulterous, but that in practice it was not considered inviolable. In other words, though remarriage while the former spouse still lived was considered sinful and therefore prohibited, it was in practice forgivable.

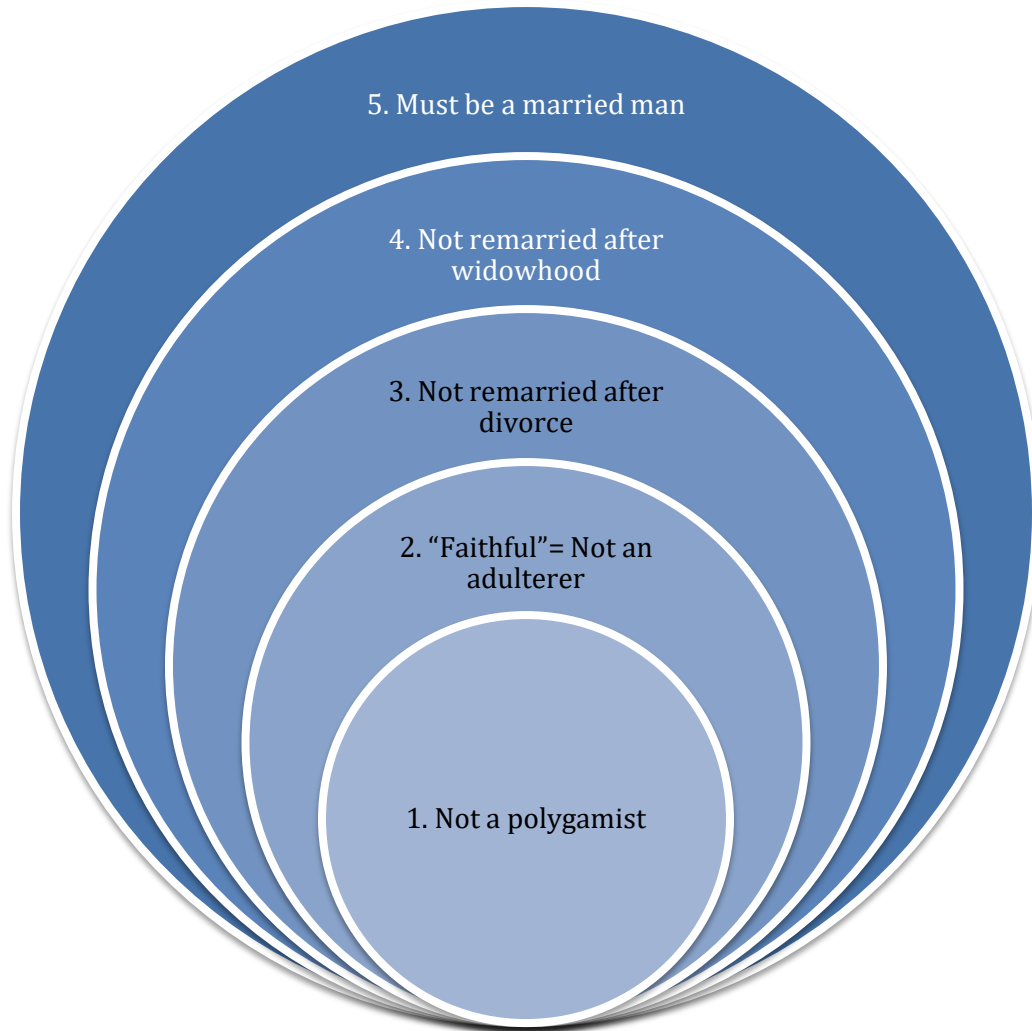
(LUTHER, *The Sermon on the Mount* [1532], AE 21:96) But you ask: “Then is there no legitimate cause for the divorce and remarriage of a man and his wife?” Answer: Both here [Mt. 5:31-32] and in Matthew 19:9 Christ sets down only one, called adultery; and He cites it on the basis of the Law of Moses, which punishes adultery with death (Lev. 20:10). Since it is only death that can dissolve a marriage and set you free, an adulterer has already been divorced, not by men but by God Himself, and separated not only from his wife but from this very life. By his adultery he has divorced himself from his wife and has dissolved his marriage. He had no right to do either of these, and so he has brought on his own death, in the sense that before God he is already dead even though the judge may not have him executed. Because it is God that is doing the divorcing here, the other partner is set completely free and is not obliged, unless he chooses to do so, to keep the spouse that has broken the marriage vow.

(LUTHER, *The Sermon on the Mount* [1532], AE 21:97) An additional cause for divorce is this: when one spouse deserts the other, that is, when he runs away out of sheer peevishness. For example, if a pagan woman were married to a Christian man, or as happens sometimes nowadays, if one spouse is an Evangelical and the other is not, is divorce legitimate in such a case? ... Where these causes are not present, other faults and foibles should not be a hindrance to marriage, nor a reason for divorce, things like quarrels or other trouble. But if there is a divorce, says St. Paul, both partners should remain unmarried.

(*Book of Concord, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 78) And, indeed, since they have framed certain unjust laws concerning marriages, and observe them in their courts, there is need also for this reason to establish other courts. For the traditions concerning spiritual relationship [the prohibition of marriage between sponsors] are unjust. Unjust also is the tradition which forbids an innocent person to marry after divorce. Unjust also is the law which in general approves all clandestine and underhanded betrothals in violation of the right of parents. Unjust also is the law concerning the celibacy of priests.

Considering the Options

Although we have cited a considerable amount of patristic testimony concerning divorce and remarriage in general, the present study cannot hope to deal with the exegetical questions that arise with respect to every relevant biblical (or patristic) text. The general patristic citations have been provided chiefly to set the question of clergy divorce and remarriage into its historical context. The question that concerns us is the meaning of the phrase “husband of one wife” with respect to those who hold the office of the ministry. On the basis of the above summary of the classical parallels and patristic interpretations, together with modern re-evaluations of the exegesis, one might summarise the possibilities in five groups. As Walter Lock notes in his classic commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, the progression of options below (with the exception of the last) is *cumulative*. In other words, “not divorced and remarried” (3) presumes also that he is also “not an adulterer” (2) and “not a polygamist” (1). The logic of this observation is necessary to understand patristic conclusions cited previously: for those Fathers who believed a pastor could not remarry after *widowhood*, it went without saying that he could not remarry after *divorce*. But this is a one-way street: those who allowed for a *widower* to remarry, did not necessarily believe (and sometimes expressly denied) that a *divorced* man could remarry and hold the pastoral office. We might, therefore, picture the interpretative options as a series of overlapping sets:



1. "Husband of one wife [at a time]" = "not a polygamist"

As is clear from the OT, polygamy was practised in most societies of the Ancient Near East, including the Jews. It was not completely eradicated in Judaism of the New Testament period, though it was rare.²⁷ In the Roman empire it was illegal for all but the Jews.²⁸ Thus, it is conceivable that a prohibition of polygamy is what Paul has in mind with the emphasis on *one wife*.²⁹

²⁷ Herod the Great is a notable example. The Mishna presumes the practice in several places. JUSTIN MARTYR, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 134, takes contemporary Jews to task: "it is better for you to follow God than your imprudent and blind masters, who even till this time permit each man to have four or five wives"; JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 17:14, testifies: "for it is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time."

²⁸ Jews were excepted from a Roman law against polygamy enacted in AD 212. In AD 393 the Christian Emperor Theodosius finally made polygamy illegal even for Jews—suggesting it was still practised at that time. See GEORGE W. KNIGHT III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 158.

²⁹ No modern commentator concludes that a prohibition of polygamy is the *primary* or *exclusive* referent of the phrase. The *God's Word* translation, "He must have only one wife", could be read as supporting this interpretation—"have" rather than "have had".

In light of the extreme rarity (indeed illegality) of polygamy in the Græco-Roman communities to which Paul was writing, however, this interpretation must be viewed with great scepticism. More to the point, as argued in the contextual discussion at the beginning of the present study, the qualifications Paul adduces go beyond what was required for every Christian. A rejection of polygamy— forbidden to all Christians—would therefore go without saying for their pastor. As A. T. Hanson comments, “Anything approaching polygamy would have been abhorrent to the strict moral standards of the church of the time. Even if the phrase is interpreted to mean ‘not keeping concubines’, it is particularly inappropriate.”³⁰ The final nail in the proverbial coffin is the parallel phrase applied to widows: “wife of one husband” (I Tim. 3:9). Polyandry was unheard of in any relevant ancient society and could not be the basis of this criterion.

2. “[A faithful] husband of one wife [now]” = “not an adulterer”

That Paul means only to say that the pastor must be “entirely chaste and faithful to his present wife” is probably the most common interpretation of the phrase among recent interpreters. C. H. Dodd³¹ claims support for this view in the fourth-century exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia (see above and below). Sydney Page³² and David Instone-Brewer³³ offer representative contemporary arguments in favour of this view. The *New English Bible*, a bell-weather of modern exegesis in the 1960s, reads, “faithful to his one wife”.

Certainly “husband of one wife” includes “faithful to his present wife”, but there are a number of serious objections to the idea that it means nothing more. Firstly, it offers no cogent explanation for the particular phrase Paul uses: “husband of one wife”. Kelly objects, “but this is to squeeze more out of the Greek than it will bear.”³⁴ As noted previously, the standard lexicon of NT Greek rejects it outright in commenting on a similar phrase from Diodorus: “the phrase γαμοῦσι μίαν simply means that the priests married only once, not that they lead a strictly moral life, a concept for which Greeks never use the expression μᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνὴρ or anything like it.”³⁵ The NT authors know how to forbid fornication and adultery (e.g. Mt. 5:27-32; 19:9; I Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3), while commending chaste and decent behaviour (e.g. I Thess. 4:4; Tit. 2:5; 3:5; I Pet. 3:2; Rev. 14:4).³⁶ If Paul wished to say “faithful to his wife” or “not an adulterer”, he could easily have done so.

Secondly, Instone-Brewer defends this view in a contradictory manner. He first contends that the Pastorals would not have prohibited remarriage for widowers and divorcés when Roman law required it. Subsequently he interprets the phrase as prohibiting the accepted Græco-Roman practice of keeping a mistress. Although Paul is concerned to meet and exceed the standards of contemporary Græco-Roman society, these are not Paul’s ultimate standards on moral issues. In fact, offering no linguistic or historical support for his interpretation, the most Instone-Brewer can say is that “it is *much more likely* that this phrase meant that the leaders of the Church were expected to have high

³⁰ A. T. HANSON, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 78.

³¹ C. H. DODD, “New Testament Translation Problems II”, *The Bible Translator*, 28.1 (1977): 101-16.

³² SYDNEY H. T. PAGE, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 50 (1993): 105-20.

³³ INSTONE-BREWER, 227-28.

³⁴ KELLY, 75.

³⁵ BDAG, s.v. εἷς, 2b.

³⁶ SYDNEY PAGE suggests the phrase “husband of one wife” could be a shorthand summary of I Cor. 7:2, “each man should have his own wife [τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα] and each woman her own husband [τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα].” But it is quite bizarre of him to demur: “on the basis of the NT and comparable literature there appears to be no obvious way of expressing the positive idea of marital fidelity in Hellenistic Greek” (119).

moral standards.”³⁷ Instone-Brewer has difficulty accepting that pastors might be held to a different standard than lay Christians, and so is compelled to maintain his support for remarriage under certain circumstances even in this context. Sydney Page, likewise, can say no more than that marital fidelity would be a behavioural criterion more “observable” by outsiders than a history of previous marriages,³⁸ but offers no real explanation for the language Paul chooses to express this.

Thirdly, this interpretation falls prey to the same objection that was made to polygamy. Faithfulness to one’s wife, to the exclusion of consorting with prostitutes and mistresses, was a standard to which all Christians were held, upon pains of excommunication. “The Christian husband has nothing to do with any but his own wife”, writes Tertullian.³⁹ It would therefore go without saying that the pastor must avoid adultery. In other words, “faithfulness to one’s wife” is not a higher or distinct standard to which aspirants to the pastoral office would be held, as are most of the other qualifications in the list.

Finally, the evidence from Theodore of Mopsuestia must not be used to support a position beyond or contradictory to that which he himself held. Theodore only drew the conclusion that a remarried *widower* might hold the office, so long as he had been faithful to his first wife; he did not contend that a remarried *divorcé* might hold the office or that *only* his present-day sexual life had to be pure.⁴⁰ Certainly Paul expects an aspirant to the pastoral office to be faithful to his wife; the question is whether the phrase, “husband of one wife” means *only* this or something *more than* this.⁴¹

3. “Husband of one [living] wife” = “not divorced and remarried”

The crucial preliminary question in response to this proposal is whether Paul would have permitted remarriage after divorce for *any* Christian. Much debate surrounds the interpretation of Jesus’ words, which condemn divorce and remarriage as adultery (Mt. 5:32; Mk 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18), while apparently permitting divorce on the grounds of adultery (Mt. 19:9). But whether Jesus meant that such a “Scriptural divorce” made *remarriage* permissible (as was the case with Moses’ certificates, Deut. 24:1-2), or simply that the *divorce* was justifiable, is unclear.⁴² St Paul likewise judges that the Christian whose unbelieving spouse abandons him or her is “not enslaved” (I Cor. 7:15)—but it is debated whether he means that the believer is simply free of responsibility for the spouse

³⁷ INSTONE-BREWER, 227, emphasis added. Referring back to this inadequate discussion he later he claims, “we have found that it [the phrase “husband of one wife”] meant someone who was faithful to one partner (i.e., had high sexual morals, in contrast to the norm of the Greco-Roman empire)” (313, emphasis added). This is called *petitio principia* “begging the question”, assuming to be true what has not, in fact, been proved.

³⁸ PAGE, 115. He subsequently makes the same error as Instone-Brewer: “If the underlying schema presented what non-Christians perceived to be virtuous, it is more likely that it would have referred to marital fidelity than to abstinence from remarriage, since Graeco-Roman society did not disapprove of second marriages as such” (116). To be blameless in the eyes of the Græco-Roman world set a minimum not a maximum standard, which Paul exceeds on the basis of God’s Word.

³⁹ TERTULLIAN, *Apology*, 46.

⁴⁰ GORDON D. FEE, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), who adopts Theodore’s view, rightly concludes: “It would, of course, also rule out polygamy and divorce and remarriage” (80). PAGE, 114, finds this “surprising”. KNIGHT, 159, agrees with Fee that “wrongful divorce and remarriage”, at least, is excluded by Theodore’s language of “promiscuous indulgence”.

⁴¹ Thus, the evidence cited for the “faithful” interpretation by proponents like Sydney Page is entirely relevant, but does not in any way prove that remarriage after divorce should be excluded from consideration.

⁴² SCHARLEMANN, 145, poses the distinction clearly: “While a divorce may be allowable under certain circumstances, remarriage is quite another issue, since that is what not only tears apart but also defiles what God has joined together to last for good.”

who abandons him/her, or whether in addition Paul grants the right to remarry.⁴³ To these two “Scriptural grounds” for divorce (adultery and abandonment), Instone-Brewer contends that the OT adds failure to provide “food”, “clothing”, and “conjugal relations”⁴⁴ (Ex. 21:10-11), which together with “faithfulness” constitute the four obligations of the marriage covenant.⁴⁵ He argues that both Jesus and Paul would have taken for granted that these, too, justified divorce—though this is an argument from silence.

The patristic quotations above demonstrate that the early church clearly and unanimously held: (1) that adultery was the only ground upon which a Christian might seek divorce; and (2) that remarriage after divorce on any grounds was sinful prior to the death of the spouse (since it rendered reconciliation impossible; see I Cor. 7:11). Other issues such as abandonment as a ground for divorce, and the remarriage of the “innocent” party, are scarcely discussed prior to the Reformation period. Men such as Erasmus and Luther, on the basis of their study of Paul, favoured these reforms of marriage practice, arguing, for example, that an adulterous spouse was “as good as dead” (since the OT punishment for adultery was death). But no Reformation era theologian supported remarriage by the adulterous spouse or remarriage by either party after divorce on “unscriptural” grounds.

At the same time, it is clear that remarriage did take place in early Christianity. Various councils discuss the terms and length of “penance” imposed upon those who remarried. This refers to a period of years in which the person was prohibited from receiving the Lord’s Supper; after the penance was fulfilled, absolution was granted and the remarriage was allowed. Unfortunately the texts are almost always *unclear* as to whether this dispensation would be granted to a guilty candidate (an adulterous spouse or a person who had divorced on other grounds), to the “innocent” party of divorce, or only to the widowed. On balance, only the latter two seem likely, though one presumes there may have been unusual cases where guilty parties who remarried were admitted back into Communion after penance.

The possible divorce and remarriage of a *pastor* is only rarely discussed in a context in which all divorce and remarriage was considered sinful. Yet it is precisely in this context that the present (third) interpretation of Paul’s phrase makes the most sense. If remarriage after penance was open to Christians under certain circumstances, it would be necessary to specify a prohibition against it if clergy were to be held to a higher standard. This interpretation would be consistent with the meaning of the other qualifications in these Pauline lists: most are qualities *desirable* in every Christian, virtues towards which Christians ought to strive; but whereas absence of these qualities would not lead to a Christian’s excommunication, it could lead to the man’s being barred from the pastoral office.

⁴³ SCHARLEMANN, 147, opines that the Western Church has taken Paul’s words out of context:

In short, the apostolic discussion did not intend to offer *desertio malitiosa* as a second reason for divorce. As Heinz Wendland puts it in *Das Neue Testament Deutsch*, “With a high degree of sensitivity Paul insists that the continuation of mixed marriages depends on the attitude of the unbelieving spouse.” [p. 52] The verses involved serve rather to underscore the indissolubility of marriage. Under any circumstances, the apostolic directives do not extend to the question of remarriage.

⁴⁴ The noun *נְתָן* occurs only here in the OT (possibly also Hos. 10:10). It is related to the verb *עָנָה* “to answer”, and would seem to mean “what one has a right to receive”. In the present context it has been interpreted to mean “sexual relations”, implying the right to love, intimacy, and perhaps even children. Or it may simply mean “cohabitation”. (The LXX *ὀμιλία* includes the same range of meaning.) This “right” or “obligation” may be what Paul has in mind when he adjudges that the abandoned spouse is “free” (I Cor. 7:15). The right to marital cohabitation has been denied.

⁴⁵ INSTONE-BREWER, 303. Instone-Brewer’s position is that the Christian is free to divorce and remarry for any of these reasons.

This interpretation is nearly universal in the conciliar decrees and patristic writers of the early church prior to the period when full celibacy was imposed on Roman Catholic priests. This weight of tradition cannot be ignored when exploring what Paul himself might have meant when he first penned these terms to Timothy and Titus.⁴⁶ Indeed, the pervasiveness of divorce and remarriage among both Jews and Gentiles in Paul's world make it even more likely that he would contrast the qualities desired in a pastor with these common failings. In addition, the fact that sexual standards among Romans was rising (at least among certain influential writers and thinkers) suggests that, if Paul were concerned that the pastor be "irreproachable" and have "a good testimony from those outside" (I Tim. 3:2, 7), he would at least set the bar as high as they would.⁴⁷ The only credible alternative interpretation is the stricter view held by some ascetics in the second and third centuries (#4, below).

4. "Husband of one wife [ever]" = "not even widowed and remarried"

A persistent—though not universal—opinion in the early church was that even widowers aspiring to or holding the pastoral office were forbidden to remarry. The esteem in which Roman society held the virtuous widow who could be called *univira* ("[wife of] one man") lends some support to this view. Jews often expressed the same admiration. The lengthy widowhood of Anna is an example of her great piety (Lk. 2:36-37). The young and beautiful Judith's stalwart celibacy and refusal to remarry after the death of her husband is presented by the apocryphal writing as a key element of her holiness and exceptional virtue (Judith 16:22). If this is what Paul meant, it would have raised no eyebrows among his readers, Greek or Jewish. The requirement that widows be "wives of one husband" (I Tim. 5:9) provides an apparent parallel to widowed pastors' remaining unmarried—though only in the former case is widowhood explicitly mentioned. Paul's advice to younger widows to remarry (I Tim. 5:14) is only an apparent argument against, for the result of their remarriage would be that they would be disqualified from enrolment in the order of widows (a fact that interpreters routinely overlook). Likewise, Paul's balanced advice that widows/widowers remain single unless they burnt with desire—in which case they should remarry (I Cor. 7:8-9, 39-40)—proves no more than that he believed *lay* Christians could remarry after the death of their spouse (cf. Rom. 7:2-3). The view that "husband of one wife" forbids even widowed pastors to remarry is less common today than in the early church, but is held by such respectable commentators as J. N. D. Kelly, Ceslas Spicq, and Jerome Quinn.

Nevertheless, there are weighty reasons to conclude that this interpretation goes one step beyond Paul's intention. Firstly, most 2nd and 3rd century writers (see above) argue on the basis of a higher morality to which they urged all Christians, suggesting that denying one's sexual urges was morally superior and that remarriage for a widower gave evidence of a lack of spiritual fortitude, a certain self-indulgence. Behind these thoughts one perceives a certain unbiblical, Gnostic asceticism that is uncomfortable with a positive view of the body and its sexual functions within a God-pleasing marriage. The prohibition of all second marriages was a mark of puritanical heretics such as the 3rd century Novatians. Secondly, these same writers almost unanimously concede that remarriage for a widower was not sinful in the same way as remarriage for a divorcé. Thirdly, there is persistent opposition to this interpretation that culminates in the exegetical work of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

In light of Jesus' and Paul's expressed opinion that death brings an end to marriage on earth, and that the NT contains not a hint that remarriage for the widowed might itself be sinful, it is wise to avoid giving unqualified support to this final interpretation. If "husband of one wife" almost certain-

⁴⁶ HANSON, 78, and LOCK, 37, settle on this interpretation of Paul. Hanson adduces also the support of Jeremias, Holtz and Bartsch, and the qualified support of Spicq and Brox. The *New American Bible* "married only once", and *New Revised Standard Version* "married only once", adopt it.

⁴⁷ LOCK, 37.

ly excludes divorce and remarriage (#3), a prohibition of remarriage after widowhood seems to go beyond Paul’s intention. Nonetheless, in this self-indulgent and sexually-charged world, the model given by a pastor who is content with the one wife the Lord gave him is not without its value.

5. “Husband of [not more or less than] one wife” = “must be a married man”

While no church (or patristic writer) ever held this view absolutely, Eastern Orthodox churches traditionally expect presbyters (priests) to be married men, and hold the *presbytera* (priest’s wife) in high esteem. Marriage is forbidden after ordination, however, in line with the opinion of many early Fathers. At the same time, only that small pool of priests who remained unmarried were normally eligible to advance to the office of bishop.

Certain features of the Pauline texts are supportive of the view that he expected a pastor to be a married man. Experience and success in governing his household is held up as a qualification for the office (I Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6), and Paul speaks out against those who would forbid marriage (I Tim. 4:3). Younger widows are expected to remarry (I Tim. 5:14).

Yet, this interpretation does not satisfactorily explain Paul’s phrase *μῶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα* “husband of one wife”, with its emphasis on *one*. If he wished to mandate marriage, there were clearer ways for him to express it. Furthermore, the parallel phrase referring to the order of widows, *ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή* “wife of one man” (I Tim. 5:9), clearly does *not* mean that she must be currently married, but must refer to the number of previous marriages she has contracted. In fact, younger widows who remarried were barred from enrolling in the order of widows (I Tim. 5:11). Elsewhere, Paul advises “unmarried and widowed people” to remain single as he is (I Cor. 7:8). He could scarcely mandate marriage if he were unmarried (or widowed) himself. Furthermore, if “husband of one wife” meant he *must* be married, then “having his children in submission” (I Tim. 3:4) would mean that he *must* have children. Presumably, then, “husband of one wife” is conditional: *if* he is or has been married, it must be only to one wife.⁴⁸

While the interpretation that Paul required pastors to be married must be rejected, there are certainly no grounds in his writings to support mandated celibacy for the office (as advocated as early as the third century, and eventually made law in the Western Church). This is true despite the high value that both Jesus (Mt. 19:12) and Paul (I Cor. 7:7-8) placed on celibacy for those who have the gift.

Conclusions

A sober analysis of the linguistic data, the context of the phrase in the Pastoral Epistles, and the tradition of the early church, suggests that option #3 (including #1 and #2) is the correct interpretation of the phrase that holds pride of place among the qualities Paul seeks in the man aspiring to the office of the holy ministry: “husband of one wife”. The councils and fathers of the church are unanimous in understanding it to prohibit remarried pastors (though disagreeing over whether it applies to widowers). Not until the mid-twentieth century did any mainstream church dissent from this tradition.⁴⁹ While evaluating the other qualities listed entails a certain amount of subjectivity (how

⁴⁸ Onasander’s *De imperatoris officio*, 1:12, includes among the qualifications for a general: “I should prefer our general to be a father, though I would not refuse a childless man, provided he be a good man. For if he happens to have young children, they are potent spells to keep his heart loyal, availing to bind him to the fatherland”. See DIBELIUS/CONZELMANN, 159.

⁴⁹ Even the apostate Church of England held the line until as late as 1990, when remarriage after divorce was first officially permitted to priests and deacons. Remarried bishops were not permitted until 2010! See *Marriage after Divorce and the Ordained Ministry: A Statement from the House of Bishops*, GS Misc 960 (2010); <<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/39749/gsmisc960.pdf>>.

much wine is too much? how angry is too angry?), it is hard to equivocate over the mathematical precision of “one wife”. The leaders of the contemporary church are burdened with the question of whether a score of 100% is required on Paul’s test, whether failure in one point entails failure in all. The question of whether forgiveness may substitute for passing the test may be debated. But evasion of Paul’s words or equivocation over their meaning is no commendation of a theologian.

Martin Scharlemann does not allow such disagreement to distract him from the compelling conclusion:

While authorities are divided on this issue, the weight of the evidence, both from the use of the language that occurs here (compare this with what is said to widows at 5:9!) and from such early church documents as The Apostolic Constitutions (vi, 17) and Apostolic Canons (16 or 17) strongly suggests that what is forbidden here is not bigamy so much as digamy; that is, having one wife at a time in succession.⁵⁰

His summary discussion points seem to be an accurate depiction of Paul’s intent, and are consistent with the near-universal practice of the Christian church prior to the mid-twentieth century:

- II. Divorce and remarriage in the instance of pastors are extremely grievous matters when viewed in the light of God’s expectations of married people in general and of pastors in particular. Therefore,
 - A. A pastor who has been divorced, except in cases of unchastity on the part of his wife, or her leaving him for reasons other than his unchastity, ought not to remain in office nor be reinstated to the office of pastor;
 - B. In case the divorce results from a pastor’s own acts of fornication he disqualifies himself from being fit for the pastoral office;
 - C. If a pastor remarries he is in special violation of the Dominical Word that such an individual commits adultery.⁵¹

He is under no illusion that holding to this Scriptural line will be easy. But faithfulness to Scripture necessarily imposes a cross:

It is as true today as it ever was that the person who does not accept the cross which goes with following Jesus is not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:38). This is a consideration which needs heavy underscoring today in our flabby culture; namely, that the kingdom of God, particularly the pastoral office, exacts a high price. That must be said rather loudly at a time when decisions are made more in terms of human considerations, valid as these may be, up to a point, rather than in the white-hot glare of the demands of God’s heavenly rule. ... It would be my personal opinion that we are living in a day when it is imperative to operate unambiguously with principles derived from the Biblical revelation. It would appear that churches have already accommodated themselves far too much to the cultural and social values of our day.⁵²

If one asks of Paul the reasons for holding the pastor to such a high standard, he offers in the immediate context only one clear answer: “it is necessary also [for him] to have a good testimony from those outside, lest he fall into disgrace and a snare of the devil” (I Tim. 3:7). This summary statement seems to contain two complementary ideas: firstly, the pastor needs to demonstrate in his life that he “practises what he preaches”. If he teaches the Word of Christ, “whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her” (Mk 10:11), yet violates this teaching in his own life, the Christian message suffers the charge of hypocrisy. Secondly, if he violates these qualifica-

⁵⁰ SCHARLEMANN, 144.

⁵¹ SCHARLEMANN, 148.

⁵² SCHARLEMANN, 147-48.

tions with impunity, the pastor will gain an inflated self-importance, a sense of invulnerability, leading him to believe he is above the Word of God, and drawing him into the devil’s trap (cf. I Tim. 3:6).

In Titus 1 Paul expands upon “apt to teach” by emphasising the pastor’s role in teaching: “holding firm to the faithful Word in accord with the doctrine, so that he may be able both to give instruction in sound teaching and to expose those who contradict [it]” (Tit. 1:9). Paul holds himself up before Timothy as an example in faith and life: “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness” (II Tim. 3:10). “Pay close heed to yourself and to the doctrine; persist in them; for by doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers” (I Tim. 4:16). The pastor’s life and teaching are inseparably bound. “For if the pastor be unblameable as to any wickedness, he will compel his own disciples, and by his very mode of life press them to become worthy imitators of his own actions.”⁵³ The pastor’s own marriage is at the very centre of the life through which he displays God’s Word.

At the heart of that Gospel Word is the mysterious nature of marriage as a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21-33). This rich Pauline image builds on the OT image of God’s marriage with His people Israel. Though Israel be a faithless, adulterous Bride, wandering after other gods, YHWH never abandons her. He does not seek a second, more pleasing wife, but keeps true to His first love. He forgives her ever and again. Christ is a Bridegroom of the same divine order. He has one wife, the Church. She has one husband, Christ, as Paul writes: “I betrothed you to *one husband* [ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ], to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2). All suggestions that Jesus (also) had an earthly wife are not only blasphemous slanders from a hostile secular world, but are gross misreadings of the NT story. Following Christ’s own institution (e.g. Lk. 10:16, “He who hears you, hears Me”), Paul sees the pastoral office as *iconic*: the pastor presents Jesus to his flock in both words and deeds. Thus Paul can say, “be imitators of me as I am of God” (I Cor. 11:1; cf. 4:16). The pastor can no more take a second wife than God can.⁵⁴ Here, perhaps, lies the explanation for why pastoral remarriage may be more fatal to his ministry than his suffering a divorce (as damaging as even that can be). For, the pastor whose wife is unfaithful or abandons him, while he may not be entirely guiltless, may yet serve as an icon of God, who experienced the same faithlessness from His Bride. Remarriage, however, destroys the icon, and replaces it with the image of a God who is not true.

The pastor’s marriage not only offers a true (though imperfect) Gospel picture of Christ’s marriage to His Bride, the Church; it also illustrates the blessed estate envisioned by the good Law of God from creation itself. Certainly the pastor is a sinner who remains ever in need of forgiveness. He proclaims the Gospel when he admits that he is a sinner and demonstrates repentance and faith in the Word of absolution. But Paul, nevertheless, does not see his own pre-Christian life as a persecutor of Christ’s Body as a high qualification for office, quite the opposite (I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8)! The mercy he was shown offers Gospel hope to the Christian, but is not held up as a model for the pastor (I Tim. 1:13). Indeed, it caused his early ministry significant grief (Acts 9:13; cf. Gal. 1:23). Thus, Paul does *not* include in the list of qualifications for the office of the ministry the kind of thing our Lord said of the sinful woman: “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she

⁵³ *Apostolic Constitutions*, 6.

⁵⁴ JEROME D. QUINN, *The Letter to Titus*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 35 (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 87:

What about a second marriage for a Christian, after the death of the first spouse? The question surfaces very early in the Pauline tradition (1 Cor 7:39-40). There are circumstances in which a second marriage is advisable (1 Tim 5:11-14 specifies one set; there may be others). There is a circumstance in which it is not to be countenanced, namely, in a candidate for the public ministries. The presbyters, the bishop and his deacons, the widows have specific roles for the community of believers, roles that publicly and permanently shape their whole way of living. *One of these roles is their witness by their one Christian marriage to the permanent union of Christ and the church.* [Emphasis added.]

loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little" (Lk. 7:47). He who did not believe that he was suited for the office given him (I Cor. 15:9) does not include his own scandalous behaviour in the list of qualifications for the office on the grounds that he was "forgiven much". In other words, there is no biblical support for the dubious psychological judgement that a divorced-and-remarried pastor may be more qualified to help those who suffer the same tragedy. Quite the opposite: his own failings may perpetuate the misunderstanding that God's Law is not really to be taken seriously, that it is, after all, quite out of the reach of mortal men. While in this life it will always remain true that no fallen man can keep God's Law perfectly, it is a Law written not for angels but for men. The pastor must be able to say with Moses, "this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deut. 30:11, 14). The iconic nature of the pastoral office and the holy example of his family life help to affirm this truth about God's holy Law in the Christian's eyes.

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Appendix

In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 14:72-73, the editor writes the following excursus after the 19th canon of Ancyra:

Excursus on Second Marriages, Called Digamy.

To distinguish contemporaneous from successive bigamy I shall use throughout this volume the word "digamy" to denote the latter, and shall thus avoid much confusion which otherwise is unavoidable.

The whole subject of second, and even of third and fourth marriages has a great interest for the student of early ecclesiastical legislation, and I shall therefore treat the matter here (as I shall hope) sufficiently and refer the reader for its fuller treatment to books more especially upon the subject.

The general position of the Church seems to have been to discourage all second marriages, and to point to a single matrimonial connexion as the more excellent way. But at the same time the principle that the marriage obligation is severed by death was universally recognised, and however much such fresh marriages may have been disapproved of, such disapproval did not rest upon any supposed adulterous character in the new connexion. I cite a portion of an admirable article upon the subject by an English barrister of Lincoln's Inn.

(J. M. Ludlow, in Smith and Cheetham, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, sub voce Digamy.)

Although among the earlier Romans⁵⁵ there was one form of marriage which was indissoluble, viz., that by *confarreatio*,⁵⁶ still generally a second marriage either after death or divorce was by no means viewed with disfavour. ... Meanwhile an intensifying spirit of asceticism was leading many in the Church to a condemnation of second marriage in all cases. Minucius Felix (*Octavius*, c. 31, § 5) only professes on behalf of the Christians a preference for monogamy. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-220) seems to confine the term marriage to the first lawful union (*Stromata*, Bk. ii.). ... It would seem, however, that when these views were carried to the extent of absolute prohibition of second marriages generally by several heretical sects, the Montanists (see Augustine, *De Hæresibus*, c. xxvi.), the Cathari (*ib.*, c. xxxviii.), and a portion at least of the Novatianists (see Cotel., *Patr. Apol.*, vol. i., p. 91, n. 16) the Church saw the necessity of not fixing such a yoke on the necks of the laity. The forbiddance of second marriage, or its assimilation to fornication, was treated as one of the marks of heresy (Augustine, *u. s.*; and see also his *De Bono Vid.*, c. vi.). The sentiment of Augustine (in the last referred to passage) may be taken to express the Church's judgment at the close of the fourth century: "Second marriages are not to be condemned, but had in less honour," and see also Epiphanius, in his *Exposition of the Catholic Faith*.

To these remarks of Mr. Ludlow's, I may add that St. Ambrose had written (*De Viduis*, c. xi.), "We do not prohibit second marriages, but we do not approve marriages frequently reiterated." St. Jerome had spoken still more strongly (Ep. lxxvii., *Apol. pro libris adv. Jovin.*), "I do not condemn digamists, or even trigamists or, if such a thing can be said, octagamists." It does not seem that the penance which was imposed in the East upon those entering into second nuptials was imposed in the West. The *Corpus Juris Canonici* contains two decretals, one of Alexander III. and another of Urban III., forbidding priests to give the nuptial benediction in cases of reiterated marriage. In the East at second marriages the benediction of the crown is omitted and "propitiatory prayers" are to be said. Mr. Ludlow points out that in the "Sanctions and Decrees," falsely attributed to the Council of Nice and found in Mansi (vol. ii., col. 1029) it is expressly stated that widowers and widows may marry, but that "the blessing of the crowns is not to be imparted to them, for this is only once giv-

⁵⁵ Footnote in original: "The reader may recall the words of Dido: Ille meos, primusqui me sibi junxit, amores / Abstulit; ille habeat secum servetque sepulcro." The quotation is from Virgil, *Aeneid*, book 4: "He who first linked me to himself has borne away my heart; may he possess it still, and retain it in his grave."

⁵⁶ A particularly solemn rite of marriage.

en, at first marriages, and is not to be repeated. ... But if one of them be not a widower or widow, let such one alone receive the benediction with the paranympths, those whom he will.”