PARALLEL GUIDE 30
The Pastoral Epistles

Summary

The two letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus have been called “the Pastoral Epistles” since the eighteenth century. Attributed to Paul, but not necessarily by him, the letters reflect Paul’s theology, at least to a point, and they are written with a pastoral concern.

Learning Objectives

• Read 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus in their entirety

• Discover the pastoral issues addressed in the three Pastoral Epistles

• Learn the historical context of the Pastoral Epistles

• Learn the arguments about authorship

• Explore the problems these epistles pose for us today in a social context which is quite different from that of the first century

Assignment to Deepen Your Understanding

1. How do you respond to the social issues raised by the Pastoral Epistles?

2. These epistles seem to point to a style of church organization and order of leadership. What have we inherited today from this style and how is it usually interpreted? How would you interpret it?

3. What do you think may have been the relationship of the authors of the Pastoral Epistles and the Fourth Gospel?

Preparing for Your Seminar

Be prepared to discuss the issues which the Pastoral Epistles raise for the church today. How can we interpret them in today’s culture in ways that may actually be more in keeping with Paul’s intentions? How do these epistles differ in intent from other writings we attribute to Paul?

Works Cited

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1997), ch. 29.

G.E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983).

Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

Howard Clark Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs:

Prentice Hall, 1973).

Linda M. Maloney, “The Pastoral Epistles,” in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Searching the Scriptures 2:*

A Feminist Commentary (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 361-80.

David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, SBL.DS 71 (Chico: Scholars, 1983).

Frances Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Chapter 30
THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The Pastoral Epistles (hereafter PE) are among the most important New Testament texts for the church and among the most misused texts in the church. To explain what we mean by this requires a slightly different approach. First, we examine the historical and literary context of the letters; then we present an exposition of the major issues in the letters related to that context. Finally we walk briefly through each letter, focusing on its structure and theology.

Your first step should be to read the section below, "Historical and Literary Contexts." Next, read all three PE (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), which are quite brief, at one sitting. Then return to this chapter and read the sections entitled "Issues in the Letters" and "Outlines of the Letters."

Historical and Literary Contexts

Along with the New Testament books called "Catholic Epistles"(chapter 32), the PE are the last books of the New Testament to be written, and so represent the final "stage" of New Testament Christianity. At the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, the church began to understand its greatest challenge as that of living "in the world." (You can see how relevant to us these letters are.) Founded religions, like Buddhism and Christianity and Islam (religions that trace their origins to one "founder"), face two great crises: the death of the founder and the death of his or her associates. By the beginning of the second century, Christianity had faced or was facing both. It responded by creating written and authoritative documents and by developing a body of "orthodox belief" (creedal statements come much later) and a structure of authority modeled on that of the empire in which the church lived.

What exactly was the historical and social context of the church around 100 CE? The changes since the time of Jesus' death (ca. 34 CE) were remarkable. The ministry of the apostle Paul had flourished, with the result that the ethnic composition of Christianity was shifting from primarily Jewish or Semitic to primarily "pagan" or Greco-Roman. By 70 CE Jerusalem had been razed, and the geographic home of both Christianity and Judaism had been destroyed. As a result, the Council of Jamnia (ca. 85 CE) sought to redefine Judaism. In that process the council effectively excluded Christians from the synagogue. The eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry were dead—many had been martyred—and this fact created an enormous dilemma. With the first followers—the apostles and disciples of the "historical Jesus"—gone, who had authority in the church and how did they get it?

The reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 CE) created an empire-wide scandal (from the Greek: skandalon, stumbling block) for early Christianity. He chose for himself the title Dominus et Deus. Obviously Christians could not call Domitian "Lord and God," and so they were persecuted throughout the empire, and especially at its borders, in places like Asia Minor where Pauline Christianity flourished and where emperor worship was especially encouraged. Even in the face of this persecution, the parousia, the return of Christ in glory, did not happen. How, then, was the church to survive in a hostile empire? This question is addressed in the PE with

their emphasis on church unity in the face of perceived "heresy," church order, and "social acceptability."

As a careful reader you probably already have this question in mind: If the PE were written very late in the first or early in the second century (which is more or less the scholarly consensus), how could Paul have written them? The answer, of course, is that Paul himself probably did not. But this should not greatly trouble us, because his disciples probably did write them. (Whoever wrote the canonical books of the New Testament, they remain authoritative even if problematic for us today.)

We cannot be certain, but it is the tradition of the church that Paul was probably martyred after his Roman imprisonment, about 60 CE. Although some scholars think Paul wrote the PE during that imprisonment or on a subsequent trip to Spain before a second and final imprisonment in Rome, those scenarios seem unlikely. The PE use Paul's words with quite different meanings from those the apostle himself gave them. Roughly twenty per cent of the vocabulary of the PE is not found elsewhere in the New Testament and about thirty percent of the words are not Pauline. According to conventional scholarship, of the 306 words in the PE that do not appear in Paul's uncontested letters, two-thirds of them are used by early-second-century writers like Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna.

This suggests that the PE are pseudonymous documents, probably written early in the second century in Asia Minor by a close disciple of Paul. He (we use that pronoun advisedly) knew the Pauline view of Christianity very well and adapted it to the changed circumstances of his generation. This is very much what our preachers do each Sunday when they apply the biblical texts in their sermons. (Attributing the documents to Paul would not have been considered plagiarism by their author or recipients, and they would not have considered the practice dishonest in any way.) To attribute work to one's teacher was the highest form of compliment in the literary world of the first century. It honored the teacher and gave one's own work authority. To attribute Paul's authority to the PE was crucial because the letters are interested in preserving correct doctrine and the apostolic tradition. The writer of the PE understands himself as a defender of the faith delivered to Paul.

There is an important difference between the way Paul views the transmission of the faith and the way the writer of the PE does. Paul uses the verb paradidōnai, which implies handing on what is received, to describe the process of transmission (1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3). For the apostle it is an active process. The writer of the PE uses the noun parathēkē to describe what is handed on, a word that means something that is deposited (like a bank deposit) or entrusted to one's care (See 1 Tim. 4:11; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14). It is easy to see the difference; one is an active and one a static view. Further, in the PE the word "doctrine" appears fifteen times, usually with the adjective "sound." In the PE the teachings of the apostle Paul are becoming a more or less fixed body of doctrine that the church is to preserve. The rhetorical strategy the writer chooses is to portray Paul at the end of his career offering his advice to Timothy and Titus who will preserve his normative tradition. Thus the term "Pastoral Epistles"; they seem to be from one to others, as an older shepherd gives advice to younger ones.

This is the context of the PE within the church. In them we see the church moving from its early and simpler form toward a more defined body of doctrine and a more complex pattern of organization. It did so not only in response to the problems of founded religions as mentioned above, but in relation to its position in the empire. If the church were to survive in an empire that had begun systematically to persecute it, then it would have to have at least nominal conformity to the social patterns of that empire (or so the writer of the PE seems to think). On at least one level the PE are intended to help Christians "fit in" in the empire. And that is the point at which the letters have been dangerously interpreted after the second century, in part because

women seem to be the particular focus of the writer's instructions about "fitting in."

Before we go on to look at these issues in detail, we need to address one more contextual feature of the PE. One way the writer of the PE spoke to the need for conformity in the empire was to write in literary forms his Greco-Roman readers would have recognized. The writers of two other contested Pauline letters, those to the Colossians and the Ephesians (which with the PE are sometimes called the "Deutero-Pauline Writings") also use this technique. (For a detailed study of the practice see G.E. Cannon's book, The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians.) The PE contain vice and virtue lists drawn from ethical codes of the time (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:2-4; Titus 1:7-10), household codes (forming the basic structure of 1 Timothy and evident in Titus 1:5-9; 2:1-10) and hymn fragments (1 Tim. 2:5-6a; 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:11-13). The latter are particularly interesting as they give us glimpses of early Christian worship. Use of familiar forms of literature is a useful homiletical technique. We hear it when our preachers illustrate the difficult points in their sermons with well-known material (such as well-loved hymns or fragments of prayers).

Issues in the Letters

In view of this context, the crucial concerns of the PE are best understood in terms of three issues: the church's unity in the face of perceived heresy, the church's order or structure, and the church's "social acceptability."

Unity in the Face of Perceived Heresy

In the mind of the writer of the PE, one of the forces of cohesion in the Christian community is a shared, authoritative doctrine. Beset from without, in order to survive the church must have internal unity, and that unity is best advanced by common doctrine. But the teaching and the doctrine available to Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century were anything but common, as the letter to the Colossians indicates. False teaching, perceived as heresy, is a major concern of the PE. We say "perceived heresy" for two reasons: first, there were as yet no commonly accepted authoritative structures to decide orthodoxy for the whole church; second, in the last thirty years the work of feminist biblical scholars and scholars who use sociological analysis of the New Testament have suggested that groups accused of "heresy" might not have been so much "wrong" as "losers" in the process of forming Christian doctrine. "Heresy" is a polemical word better avoided when considering this very early stage of church history.

Unfortunately we do not know exactly what the "false teaching" was that so worried the Pastoral writer. Some modern scholars suggest it was an early form of Gnosticism. Scholars who hold this view see behind 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 3:4-9 an restrictive attitude toward sex and believe the disproportionate number of instructions to women hints of Gnostic influence. The prominence of women was felt to be particularly damning. Apparently because some Christian women felt increasingly marginalized, they turned to ascetic forms of religion for standards of self-worth more consonant with what they understood their circumstances to be as "one in Christ"

(Gal. 3:28). By the latter part of the second century women held prominent positions in Gnostic sects, but also in some places in the "orthodox" church, especially in Asia Minor, where we think the PE were written. Women in parallel sorts of leadership roles in the church were a particular affront to Greco-Roman sensibility.

Other scholars believe the false teaching alluded to in the PE shows elements of syncretized Judaism like that which was apparently also evident at Colossae. They note particularly the reference to a "circumcision party" in Titus 1:10, and several references to "myths" and "Jewish myths" (Titus 1:14), and to midrashic interpretations of scripture. Furthermore, the abstinence from certain foods and wine suggested in 1 Timothy

4:3 seems to reflect Jewish practice.

The bottom line is that we do not know who the false teachers were. One reason is the rhetorical form chosen by the writer of the PE. In his attempt to steer the Christian community away from false teaching he borrows a form of criticism found in popular Hellenistic philosophy: name-calling (see 2 Tim. 3:1-9). The false teachers are called deceivers, quibblers, full of vice, unable to practice what they preach, predatory with regard to women and other "weak" members of the community. The writer of the PE casts aspersions on the doctrines of the false teachers by criticizing their behavior. It makes for a sharp attack, but leaves subsequent generations with little sense of the content of the false teaching.

The second major issue in the PE is church order which is reflected in the writer's discussion of offices of ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-5:22 and Titus 1:5-16). The matter of ministry in the New Testament is particularly complex because the terminology describing it is not used consistently from book to book. Ministries developed differently in different geographic regions in which the church took root, and there existed at least two different "forms" of ministry: the "charismatic" in which one was "gifted" for service in the church and the "institutional" in which one was given an office for service in the church. The two forms coexisted in the early period.

The PE represent a turning point in the church's understanding of ministry. They seem to prefer the "institutional" form to the "charismatic." In part to meet the challenge of false teaching, church leaders began to organize functions of ministry into recognized channels of authority. In his classic New Testament text, Understanding the New Testament, Howard Clark Kee makes three key points about this development.

Church Order

1) It grew from a loose organization to a structured form with a hierarchy of offices and a single bishop as head of the local church.

2) This was instituted as a result of the conflict with "heresies." A primary function of ministry became to keep the church's doctrine pure. "Ordination" became legitimization by apostolic authority. It ensured careful preservation of the "deposit."

3) The different stages of development of offices of ministry did not happen at the same time everywhere, and the terminology is not used consistently in the New Testament; this makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about ministry at this stage of the church's development.

We can think in terms of a centralized, local ministry, with the offices of bishop, deacon, elder, and widow. "Bishop," episkopos, was used in parallel literature of an administrative officer in a civic or cultic society. The bishop was the church official concerned with the administration of local congregations (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). The deacon, diakonos from the verb diakonein, "to serve," was intended to meet the outward needs of the church (see Acts 6:1-6 for a possible origin of the order). When deacons are discussed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, it is clear that the order included women (1 Tim. 3:11 should be translated "women," not "wives," making the conditions applicable to women deacons as well). Indeed, Paul himself commended the woman deacon, Phoebe, in Romans 16. Elder, presbyteros, is a term that comes into ecclesial usage from Judaism. Elders were apparently respected older members of the Christian community whose work could include teaching and preaching (1 Tim. 5:17-22 and Titus 1:5-6; cf. Acts 15 and 21:18). The widow, chēra, was not only one of the older women in need of financial support, but a member of an order of women who served the church. They are discussed in 1 Timothy 5:3-16 along with the other ministries in 1 Timothy 3-5.

As you read these texts, note that the writer gives us more information about qualifications for the office than

about their function, what they actually did. He assumes his audience knew what bishops, deacons, and widows did. We do not. It was not until the church orders of the third to fifth centuries (such as the Apostolic Constitutions and the Didascalia) that duties of office were systematically spelled out. In texts like 1 Timothy 5:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; 2:20-22; and Titus 2:2-10 the church was organized like a Greco-Roman family with mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, slaves, and a public and private life. Sociological studies of the early church that focus on the household codes (Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:21-6:9), house churches, and the household imagery in the New Testament have traced how the church developed from a household entity to a public organization. In the process its systems shifted from private, domestic ones to public ones in the imperial mode. Not surprisingly, as structures of the church became more public, women were excluded from the influence they had when "church" was domestic. This issue is related to that of the tenuous position of the church in the empire.

"Social Acceptability"

It should be noted that, under Roman law, there were at least two forms of religion: legal and illegal. Judaism, for example, was a legal religion endowed by the Roman state with privileges such as the right to collect a religious tax for maintenance of the Temple in Jerusalem, the right of its males to be exempted from military service, and

the right to conduct marriage under Jewish law rather than Roman. When Christianity became a religion distinct from Judaism (sometime around or just after 85 CE), it became an illegal religion. That in itself is probably enough to account for the many passages in the PE in which the writer seems concerned with what those outside the church think of it (1 Tim. 2:1-4; 3:7, 13; 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:1-10). The qualifications for offices in the church were primarily moral virtues of which the Greco-Roman world would approve, because the church did not want to appear a threat to normal social patterns in the empire; that posed a special problem for the church.

In his book The Household of God, David C. Verner articulates the problem very clearly. In simple terms, the household provided the basic structure of the church in its earliest period. The household structure was that of the Greco-Roman world, which was patriarchal. Inheritance passed through the legitimate male line and males were heads of households. But this was not, at least in theory, the pattern for Christians for whom there was to be neither male nor female, Greek nor Jew, slave nor free (Gal. 3:28). In short, Christianity challenged the sexual, racial, and economic structures of the Greco-Roman world. Patria defined the social order, and what threatened patria threatened the empire.

Many of the tensions we see within the church in the PE can be related to the position of Christian women in society. The traditional sexual roles they held in patriarchal households were associated with preservation of the social order. To defy them was, ultimately, to be subversive in a political sense. Strong women leaders in the church appeared de facto as subversive. Little wonder the Pastoral writer aims so many of his instructions and limitations at women (1 Tim. 2:8-15; the context of this passage is worship; see also 3:11; 5:3-16; 2 Tim. 3:6-7; Titus 2:3-5). Much as we may dislike such passages, the writer probably meant them. He wants his community to "look good" in the wider Roman world. That needs to be taken into account when we interpret the texts today. Few modern commentators pay much attention to 1 Timothy 2:8, which teaches men to pray with upraised hands, or to 1 Timothy 2:9 and its "fashion advice," but many fasten on 2:11-12, take them out of context, and generalize from them that women should always be silent and without authority in the church. That seems inconsistent with what Paul taught and practiced. The Pastoral writer is also inconsistent for he asserts that women cannot have authority in the church and then gives qualifications for their offices of deacon and widow. Elsewhere he writes that women cannot teach but commends Timothy's mother and grandmother from whom he learned the faith. (For a real theological blooper, cf. 1 Tim. 2:15 with Titus 3:4-7.)

It is poor exegesis to take the PE at literal, face value. At the very least modern interpreters of the PE need to think about them in their historical Sitz im Leben (setting in life). We need to understand that the rhetoric of the letters is not descriptive but prescriptive. That is, the writer is not so much describing what is as seeking to change what is going on. The surprising number of texts that deal with women in the PE is directly related to the church's serious concern with what we have been calling social acceptability. The question that may be most fruitful for us to reflect on is whether or not the injunctions the writer of the PE felt were necessary to preserve

the church in the second century should be understood to be normative and prescriptive for the church in very different historical and social circumstances.

Obviously the PE treat matters other than false teaching, church order, and social acceptability, but these seem to be focal and can serve as touchstones as we outline the letters.

The First Letter of Paul to Timothy

First Timothy is not easily outlined. If there is a principle of organization, it is to frame all imperatives to Timothy and his community with polemic against the false teachers. The following outline is merely suggestive. Other patterns are equally plausible.

Outline

1:1-2—Opening formula
1:3-11—Attack on false teaching
1:12-17—Thanksgiving and prayer
1:18-6:19—Body
1:18-20—Warning to Timothy against specific false teachers
2:1-15—An instruction on worship
3:1-13—Church order
3:14-16—Pauline instructions to Timothy
4:1-5:2—A comparison of false teachers with Timothy
5:3-20—Church order
5:21-6:2a—General imperatives
6:2b-19—A comparison of false teachers with Timothy
6:20-21a—Final imperatives to Timothy
6:21b—Closing

The Text

The text exhibits at least two important differences from a letter written by Paul. The thanksgiving (1:12-17) is not in its usual place, but follows polemic against the false teachers. The body of the letter (1:18-6:19) is made up of paraenetic (advisory) material, the sort of practical instruction that usually appears at the end of a Pauline letter.

The salutation (1:1-2) provides customary information on authorship—apparently Paul—and destination—Timothy, a loyal child in contrast to the false teachers?—and contains the usual "grace wish." The author of the PE knows Timothy was prominent in Paul's work in Asia Minor. He was from Lystra, the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16). He traveled extensively with Paul (1 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 16:21) and co-authored the following letters: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, and Colossians. Timothy is,

in short, a likely candidate to receive the mantle of Paul's work in his native area.

The letter opens with an attack on the false teachers (1:3-11) which, at the outset, tells us what is most pressing in the author's mind. Mention of myths, genealogies, and the Law have led some to suggest that the false teachers represent some sort of syncretistic Judaism. (There is also a list of vices in verses 9-10.) The thanksgiving

(1:12-17) expresses gratitude that God has called the author "to his service" in spite of his past life. It contains accurate references to Paul's biography (vv. 13-14), a Pauline christology (v. 15), and a doxology (v. 17), thus adding to the authentically Pauline feel of the letter.

It is difficult to trace a logical progression of thought in the body of the letter (1:18-6:19). The material is almost entirely practical advice or imperatives to Timothy, who initially is warned against apostates Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:18-20). Chapter 2 is an extended teaching on prayer and worship. It falls into three parts:

1) Verses 1-7, which command prayer for secular authorities (vv. 5-6a are probably a hymn fragment that reflects the early church's christology);

2) Verse 8 is an instruction on how men should pray; and

3) Verses 9-15 are an instruction on how women should pray.

All three reflect the "social acceptability" issue in one way or another. There is a disproportion between instructions to men and women. The Pastoral writer thinks women are the "problem," and his advice on prayer and worship has for centuries been taken out of context and used to oppress Christian women. One particular difficulty has been that the Greek word hesychia in verses 2:11-12, which normally means "in peace" or "undisturbed," is usually translated "in silence." Ironically, what the author may be suggesting is that women should be allowed to study undisturbed, not that they should be "silenced" in the church. Verse 15 is also problematic, since it reflects an unorthodox christology: that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient for the salvation of women, who must do something to be saved. This is not the Pauline gospel of grace. It certainly reflects the author's desire that the church appear seemly in its environment.

The next block of material, verses 3:1-5:20, has two sections dealing with the qualifications for leaders in the Christian community (3:1-13 and 5:3-22). (For discussion of this material see the section on church order above.) The "filling" in this "sandwich," which is essentially an excursus on false teaching, continues the attempt to make the letter seem authentically Pauline (3:14-15). It contains another hymn fragment (3:16b), another warning against false teaching (4:1-5), and specific instructions to Timothy (4:6-5:2). This latter contrasts what Timothy is to "have nothing to do with" (vv. 7-8), with things he "must insist on and teach" (4:11-5:2). The instruction to treat older women as mothers (5:2) probably leads the writer to think about widows (5:3-16), and that brings him back to the matter of qualifications for office.

The third block of material in the body, verses 5:21-6:19, alternates generalized imperatives (5:21-6:2a; 6:11-19) with an attack on the false teachers (6:3b-10). The technique again contrasts the false teachers with Timothy, the "man of God" (6:11). There is also a hint that the community Timothy serves and to which this letter is implicitly addressed is affluent. The warnings in verses 6:7-10 and the instructions in verses 6:17-19 are directed to the rich. The letter closes not with the greetings

and travel plans that characterize the end of a Pauline letter, but with a warning to Timothy about false teachers (6:20-21) and an unusually short "grace wish."

The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy

The following is a suggested outline for 2 Timothy:

Outline

1:1-2—Opening formula
1:3-7—Thanksgiving and prayer
1:8-4:18—Body
1:8-18—Paul's ministry
2:1-4:5—Imperatives to Timothy
4:6-18—Paul's circumstances
4:19-21—Greetings
4:22—Closing

Many scholars think that 2 Timothy is the most likely to have been written by Paul because the form of the letter is the most Pauline of the PE, and it reflects Pauline thinking and what we know of Paul's life. The salutation (1:1-2) is standard. Paul is the apparent author and Timothy the recipient. The grace wish is identical to that in 1 Timothy. This standard salutation is followed, as in Paul's letters, with a thanksgiving prayer (1:3-7) that expresses Paul's longing for Timothy, his admiration for Timothy's mother and grandmother, and a reminder to "rekindle the gift of God that is within you" (v. 6). This phrase introduces the theme of the letter, a technique also found in Paul's authentic correspondence. The body of the letter (1:8-4:5) concludes with personal greetings (4:6-21) and a grace wish (4:22), again following the pattern of an authentic letter of Paul. Like the letters to the Galatians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy, the body of 2 Timothy opens with an exhortation rooted in Paul's biography (1:8-18). It implicitly compares Paul's call with that of Timothy (vv. 8-14). It warns against those who have turned away from true (i.e., Pauline) teaching (vv. 13, 15) and commends Onesiphorus who assisted Paul (vv. 16-18). The language of verses 13-14 reflects the view of tradition we noted as characteristic of the late first and early second-century church. The remainder of the letter (2:1-4:5) is an exhortation to Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" and in "what you have heard from me" (2:1-2). Timothy's success as a pastor depends on his holding to Pauline teaching. More explicitly than in 1 Timothy, in 2 Timothy the guise of the older, wiser pastor warning and teaching the younger is evident. "Paul" teaches Timothy things he is too young to have experienced. The writer uses the masculine metaphors of soldier, athlete, farmer, and householder to encourage Timothy in the way he should go. Another christological hymn (2:11b-13) concludes a section on christology (2:1-13). As in the letter to the Colossians, the practical exhortation here finds its justification in christology. References to specific persons (2:17; 3:8) and to Paul's experiences (3:11) sharpen the historical sense of the letter.

While most of the imperatives in the body are general, commending virtues (2:22) and condemning vices (3:2-5) as occurred in Greco-Roman ethical teaching, the specific teaching on scripture in verses 3:14-17 is noteworthy. After alluding to the tradition (14-15—which Timothy learned from his female relatives, 1:5), the author explains that scripture, which would be the Septuagint (the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek), is literally "breathed through by God." In the Christian community it is for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. This is one of the earliest statements of the place of scripture in the Christian life.

As in many of Paul's letters, 2 Timothy closes with a description of Paul's plans and circumstances (4:6-8, 16-18), with instructions about specific persons (4:9-15) and greetings (4:19-21; all the people in v. 21b have

Latin names, which some scholars see as evidence that this letter was written in Rome). In the "grace wish" that closes the letter (4:22), the "you" in Greek is plural, indicating that the author intends the letter for a wider audience.

The Letter of Paul to Titus

Outline

The following is a suggested outline for Titus:
1:1-4—Extended opening formula
1:5-3:15a—Body
1:5-2:10—Household code for the church
2:11-3:11—Christology and imperatives
2:11-14—Christology
2:15-3:3—Imperatives
3:4-8a—Christology
3:8b-11—Imperatives
3:12-14—"Paul's" requests
3:15a—Greetings
3:15b—Closing

Like 1 and 2 Timothy, the letter to Titus is concerned with practical matters rather than the great themes of Pauline theology. It is cast as a Hellenistic letter with an opening formula (1:1-4), body (1:5-3:15a), and closing (3:15b). The extended salutation (1:1-4) is reminiscent of Romans 1:1-7. Titus (like Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:2) is Paul's loyal child, hinting to the careful reader that what follows is concerned with less loyal persons. Titus has no thanksgiving/prayer section. The only genuinely Pauline letter that omits a thanksgiving is Galatians. Here, as there, the suggestion is that Paul is not, at the moment, thankful for the community addressed. Titus may be loyal, but not everybody in his community is.

As was the case with 1 and 2 Timothy, it is difficult to outline the body of Titus (1:5-3:15a). We can divide the material into three sections.

1) Verses 1:5-2:10 are essentially a household code, an instruction for the members of the household, the oikos, of the church: elders/bishops, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves. The excursus on the disobedient (1:10-2:1) is apparently triggered by the reference to "sound doctrine" in verse

1:9. That phrase (1:9 and 2:1) marks out an inclusion in which the insubordinate are explicitly attacked.

2) Verses 2:11-3:11 alternate christology (2:11-14; 3:4-8a) with imperatives for action (2:15-3:3; 3:8b-11). Some form of the phrase epephanē. . . tou theou (God has appeared) followed by a reference to God as savior (2:11; 3:4) introduces both christology sections and emphasizes what seems to be the theological center of Titus, a christology that links God and Jesus Christ in their soteriological function. The term "savior" appears seven times in the letter both as a title for Jesus and as a description of what God does for us. The writer of Titus understands that salvation comes as a gift from God alone and is mediated by Jesus Christ: ". . . he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water [or washing] of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior . . ." (3:5-6). The writer of Titus is clearly giving theological motivation for the practical imperatives he enjoins.

3) The letter closes with the author's plans (3:12-14) and greetings (3:15a), but the greetings are general and

do not name individuals. Did the author not know anyone in the Cretan church, which he had obviously visited since he “left [Titus] behind in Crete” (1:5)? The closing formula is unusually brief (3:15b) and omits any reference to Jesus Christ. Only in the letter to the Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus does “grace” appear in a closing formula without “Jesus Christ” or “the Lord Jesus.”

Conclusions

The polemical tone of the PE and their own historical life setting make them difficult books to interpret. They often seem more interested in ethical instruction understood in the light of Greco-Roman social mores than in declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they are theological, their theology is focused on christology (see 1 Tim. 2:5-6a; 3:16b; 6:13-16; 2 Tim 1:8-10; 2:8-13; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8) yet they deserve a place with the hymns in Paul’s letters (Phil. 2:6-11 and Col. 1:15-20) as some of the church’s earliest non-narrative christology.

Within the church, false teaching is of particular concern to the writer of the PE. The content of that false teaching is only alluded to, but the false teachers themselves are sharply condemned by the writer. Throughout he seems to think that women are specifically prone to that false teaching. His primary way of dealing with the false teaching is to remind his recipients to hold fast to the “sound doctrine” of those from whom they originally heard it (Pauline teachers) and to set up authoritative offices (bishop, deacon, elder, widow) in the church to maintain it.

The author of the PE is concerned with how the church is viewed by outsiders in the larger community. He teaches Christian men and women to assume the roles acceptable in the Greco-Roman world, certainly a concern for the church’s survival that became a matter of accommodation to “the world.” For example, Christian women were asked to give up the gender equity (not, notice, gender uniformity) that was theirs in Christ and to behave like proper Roman matrons. We can rightly ask if that

was God’s will for all women in all ages, or a compromise with culture. Should we not ask how much accommodation to contemporary customs is too much?

At about the same time that the PE were written, the final version of the Gospel According to John was redacted. Jesus in his “high priestly prayer” in John 17 twice declares that his disciples “do not belong to the world” (17:14, 16). They are sent *into* the world, but they are not to be *of* it. Probably the provenance of both John’s Gospel and the PE was Asia Minor.

End of Chapter

Two crises back

Also the fact that Jesus hadn't come back.

And so they were persecuted back

Nonsense. Nobody wanted to call Domitian "Lord and God," which is one reason why he was murdered. Nothing to do with Christianity, one way or the other.

They remain authoritative back

Do you want us to study this material or to bow down in front of it?

Paul martyred around 60 AD back

This is crucial. If Paul died then, or even say twenty years later, no way could he have written a document that seems to have come from the early second century. Not really even if he had lived to be an exceptionally old man, and died of natural causes. So there isn't much warrant for associating the Pastorl Letters with him at all.

Pseudonymous documents back

Pseudonymous is actually a pretty kind word for it. If the "letters to Timothy" were written a couple of generations after Paul's death, containing instructions to Timothy as though he were still a young disciple, then forgeries might be a closer term.

Systematic persecution back

Not systematically.

And here is the central problem. By the early second century Christianity was a capital offense, but we really don't know why, or for how long this had been the case. We know from Pliny the Younger's correspondence with the emperor Trajan (c. 112 AD) that Christianity was a capital offense by then. There had been trials of suspected Christians in the past, but Pliny didn't know much about the precedure. He didn't see much harm in what he discovered about Christians, except for their "inflexible obstinacy" in the face of governmental authority. The Romans had never heard of civil disobedience...

Trajan's attitude is, for a Roman, enlightened. Christianity was certainly very illegal, but Pliny should not go looking for Christians, and should pay no attention to anonymous denunciations. In other words, "Don't ask, don't tell." His attitude is actually quite similar to the recently-changed policy about homosexuality in the U.S. armed forces. Decent people will ignore Christianity, but if someone is ill-natured enough to bring a documented case forward, then the government must act.

Literary forms back

This is actually true of all Pauline writings.

Name-calling back

Which is, as we all know, the lowest form of debate.

Widow back

Widow as an office?

Phoebe back

But don't forget Phoebe was two generations earlier

Two forms of religion back

That about covers the waterfront, doesn't it? But actually the Roman government didn't maintain any sort of registry of illegal religions. Illegal religions were few. To be illegal, your religion had to be perceived as a threat to the state.

That obviously meant the Druids, who sacrificed Roman soldiers whenever they could. And more importantly, it meant any cult that was seen to be threatening the *Pax Deorum*, the "Peace of the Gods." Roman society was polytheistic in this period, and superstitiously afraid of anything that might upset its gods. Any religion (Judaism excepted) that claimed to be the one and only was likely to be stamped on. And Christians, who refused to make even a token obeisance to the emperor's genius, fit well into that mold.

But how and when their empire-wide proscription started, we just don't know. I've always thought there was some big scandal, now lost to history. Perhaps a former co-religionist denounced an influential Christian and a Roman citizen who appealed his case to an emperor? But really, we don't know.

Did not want to appear a threat back

So otherwise they would have emphasized the cannibalism and incest, of which they were accused?

Christianity challenged back

No it didn't, it threatened the *Pax Deorum*.

Specific instructions to Timothy back

In other words it's a forgery.

Onesiphorus who assisted Paul back

Forty or so years earlier