

THE
PASTORAL
EPISTLES

Studies in Exegetical Theology



ANNANG ASUMANG



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Foreword

Dr Annang Asumang's *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in Exegetical Theology* is a brilliant and timely addition to scholarship on the Pastoral Epistles. This work brings together the rare blend of an African scholar and churchman who loves both Word and the church. Asumang's extraordinary ability to integrate an uncompromising commitment to the truth of Scripture with a gracious, magnanimous, and evenhanded style of engaging scholarly debates is as rare as a Japanese engineer who speaks Zulu.

The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in Exegetical Theology is an ambitious project. Asumang is not content to write an ordinary commentary, although the first section of the book could stand alone as a commentary. As a church man, he is determined that exegesis must inform theology and be applied to the life of the church. He gives expression to this conviction by undertaking three separate but interconnected tasks.

Part 1 presents a comprehensive *contextual exegesis* of the Pastoral Epistles (PE). This is akin to a commentary on the PE. He sheds light on the canonical form and reception history of the PE, ably defends Pauline authorship against the tide of sceptical scholarship that rejects it, and provides a short but sufficient survey of the historical-cultural context of the PE, addressing the recipients, locations, and false teachings that the letters imply or assume. Then he works through each letter section by section, unearthing layers of meaning that speak to the heart of Christian ministry, leadership, and discipleship. He is content to leave some difficult questions open after giving an insightful survey of the scholarly landscape, while never compromising the gospel on aspects of Christian belief and practice that he deems fundamental.

Part 2 offers a series of *theological analyses* of selected doctrines in the PE. He offers full-length treatments of the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church, followed by a chapter dedicated to the soteriology, ethics, and eschatology of the PE. In remaining faithful to the Bible's straightforward claim that the PE are Paul's letters, a belief treated with disdain and derision by large swaths of the scholarly guild, Asumang shows how the PE harmonise beautifully and contribute significantly to Pauline theology. I particularly appreciate his treatment of 'Ecclesiology in the Pastoral Epistles'. Although other NT writings are clearly church documents, he rightly demonstrates that the PE offer the most sustained, prominent, and practical treatment of the doctrine of the church in the NT. Asumang's theological analyses are both academically robust and spiritually edifying, faithful to the Word and relevant to the world.

Part 3 turns to *applied theology*, reflecting the conviction of a church-based theologian that the task of theology is only complete when the implications for what we believe and how we live are unpacked. For this endeavour, Asumang chose two themes or focus areas—biblical orthodoxy and pastoral theology—devoting one chapter to each. It is worth getting this book just for the chapter about orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The church in Africa today is in a battle for its orthodox soul. The western church has largely succumbed to the tide of liberalism. While Christianity has grown remarkably on African soil, it faces dangerous threats from both popularist and scholarly distortions of the gospel. How we long to see Asumang’s passion for biblical orthodoxy to take root in Africa. It would be better to call it Paul the apostle’s passion for orthodoxy, or even better the Holy Spirit’s passion, since Asumang’s is a derived burden.

I love the way that Asumang models that theologising is not merely an academic exercise. Theology serves to glorify God and serve the church. When we divorce theological study from a burden for the well-being of the church, we do it untold violence. *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in Exegetical Theology* carries God’s heart for his people. It is a guide for evangelical theologians, pastors, and lay leaders who pray for wisdom to navigate the complexities of modern church life. His reflections on maintaining biblical orthodoxy and developing a pastoral theology are particularly pertinent in an era where these foundational principles are often challenged.

In conclusion, *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in Exegetical Theology* is a testament to Dr Asumang’s commitment to evangelical scholarship and his dedication to the church’s mission. Few theologians would dare to write a book that is so pervasively exegetical, theological, and practical. Although many would pay lip-service to the ideal that good theology should integrate all three, this is a rare and welcome attempt to live it out. Asumang is not only a brilliant intellectual; he is also a brave scholar whose pioneering attempt at integrated theology should serve as a model for many to follow. I rejoice that such a model emanates from an African theologian.

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Preface

In 2008, I was tasked by our institution, the South African Theological Seminary, to write a study guide for its undergraduate course on Paul's letters. I was subsequently doubly blessed when soon afterwards, the encouragement came to upgrade the material into a textbook which was published as *Paul and his letters: A Textbook for Conservative and Charismatic Christians*.¹ A couple of factors drove that decision. To start with, students consistently appreciated the course material and, in their feedback, suggested a much wider publication to be made available for other students, and for that matter, Christian workers outside the academy who may nevertheless benefit from its helpful insights.

The most pressing motivation however was the lack of appropriately contextualized textbooks serving the particular constituency of our students. These are typically Christian workers in the majority world, inevitably conservative in their theological approach to Scripture, and charismatic to various degrees in their worship and witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, they seek to be dedicated in their obedience to God's word and to be impassioned by the Spirit imbued zeal that trust in the power and veracity of God's word unleashes in kingdom service. They are accordingly committed in their education to acquire all the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes that would make them approved workers of the Lord Jesus. Their key handicap was the lack of contextualized, affordable, and accessible textbooks to facilitate their studies. That was the key motivation for writing my first textbook. The fact that it was soon followed by a second on the General Letters² testifies not just to their favourable reception among students but the urgency of the need.

Several positive developments have occurred during the intervening years to prompt the present work. In the first place, many of these students are making excellent contributions in ministry, and a significant proportion have committed themselves to graduate studies. This situation is not unique to the majority world. Globally, tertiary theological education has experienced steady growth of graduate taught courses such as MDiv, MA Theology, MATS, MLitt, MMin, and DMin, and research-based programmes, such as MTh, MPhil and PhD, all aimed at equipping students to meet the increasing complexities of contemporary Christian service. The mounting popularity of multi-vocationalism in Christian ministry has also become a driving incentive for such educa-

¹ Asumang, A. (2013). *Paul and his letters: A textbook for Conservative and Charismatic Christians*. Johannesburg: SATS Press.

² Asumang, A. (2015). *The New Testament General Letters and Revelation: A textbook for conservative and Charismatic Christians*. Johannesburg: SATS Press.

tion as it is attracting noteworthy proportion of students whose academic capacities and needs are often above the average undergraduate level. This is all well and good.

With these positive developments however has come the new challenge which the present book aims to help address, even if in a small way. While many of these students have already had good grounding at the undergraduate level, they nevertheless are increasingly faced with lack of resources that are tailored for their graduate work. Moreover, the in-depth specialization of knowledge that defines graduate studies means that they are often inadequately guided by the currently available resources from disciplines that are outside their specialty. And so, for example, graduate students specializing in contemporary theology of worship, may well find that the level of guidance they might require from the discipline of Biblical Studies to support their investigations may be non-existent, or certainly inadequate. This problem is repeated in several other scenarios.

As expected, the gap in the situation for the constituency of students I have in mind is much wider, certainly deeper, and definitely much more acutely felt. Not only have the student numbers increased exponentially matching the stupendous growth of Christianity in the majority world. Much more, heightened interest in education, a notionally very good thing in and of itself, and the multiplication of educational institutions to cater for them, also a very positive development, have sadly not been matched by the necessary resources, both human and otherwise, to sustain such rapid growth. Unsurprisingly, the problem of paucity of resources at the undergraduate level fifteen years ago is now being compounded at the graduate level. The challenge is so desperately felt that some are understandably arguing for slowing down such educational advances to avoid diluting standards.

I take a different less pessimistic view of this albeit seemingly crippling challenge. For while the field may be ready for harvest, and teaching labourers may be few, there is no reason why the few shouldn't rise to the challenge of writing the needed resources while they pray for the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers into the field. The present book represents my sense of some of the things we need to do to plug this gap, evidently, in the very narrow area of the Pastoral Epistles. Ultimately, I am hopeful that with God's help and the Spirit's enablement, I may be able, in the not too distant future, to cover the other groups of Paul's letters and beyond.

The Pastoral Epistles were in fact chosen as starting point for fulfilling this long-term ambition seemingly at random. During a brief visit to Ghana in November 2022, I received an invitation to give a series of lectures to the MA in Sacred Ministry students at the Daniel Institute in Ghana, covering their module on Studies of the Pastoral Epistles. Given that the students are exactly the kind of constituency I have in mind for this project; my preparations exposed the practicalities of the above-described gap, but also afforded me the insight into what could be done about it. It became more evident during these preparations and the lectures that followed that the Pastoral

Epistles are, indeed, excellent point of departure for my project. For, it seems to me patently evident that Christian workers in these environments desperately need to be guided to fruitfully engage these texts and deeply reflect on precisely how their messages might relate to addressing the challenges of serving the Lord's mission in their contexts.

Note must also be made of the current literary context of the dominance of intensely resistive hermeneutics of suspicion by critical scholarship towards these three letters. For over two centuries now, the Pastoral Epistles have been dealt an unfair and slanted hand by the majority of scholarly experts on whom we have come to rely for insights into backgrounds of our biblical texts. For various reasons which will unfold in the book, the voices of these unique group of letters have effectively been encased within an inimical cloud of self-generating controversies, begrudging expositions, and in some cases, half-hearted interpretations. The reality is that it is only recently that some brave souls have ventured into directly engaging the messages of the Pastoral Epistles on a more positive level and thereby highlighting their unique contributions to the New Testament. This context has resulted in a global dearth of helpful resources, certainly for our students.

Yes, these letters raise their own unique problems and questions. All books in the Bible do. And yet when these problems are approached in a manner that is antithetical to their nature and intentions, as has been the vogue in critical scholarship, the inevitable result is not more understanding of their contents but rather their alienation and muzzling. After all, like human beings, no texts would readily declare their secrets to those who approach them from hostile stances. This is even more so for sacred biblical texts. It is unsurprising therefore that within the academy, the Pastoral Epistles have been the most marginalized and therefore effectively gagged of Paul's letters. Students who wish to seriously engage them have sadly therefore had little to go by in terms of fair but rigorous teaching resources and helpful scholarly guidance.

This situation is doubly unfortunate, to put it mildly. For, in socio-cultural, historical, literary, and theological terms, the Pastoral Epistles make unique contributions to the biblical canon that no other books do. Moreover, as we shall have the chance to evaluate, when taken seriously, these letters also make distinctive contributions to contemporary pastoral reflections on the nature, goals, and functions of Christian ministry, especially in very challenging environments. Indeed, there are striking similarities between the contextual scenarios these letters envisage and those of the contemporary situations of Christian witness in many parts of our world. Furthermore, the Pastoral Epistles have more to say about the actual formation, and continued development and nurture of Christian ministers than any other biblical texts. The claim that every page of the Bible has something fresh to say to every generation is definitely true of the Pastoral Epistles. In a world in which Christian ministry is facing tremendous, and in some cases, existential challenges, the Church cannot afford the continued marginalization of the one group of texts that specifically

assumes that context and deals with that crisis. This is therefore the time to return to the Pastoral Epistles. No wonder then that I didn't need any convincing to take on this task. If my choice of the Pastoral Epistles was initially at random, it has turned out to be the right starting point. I pray that I have managed to do enough to commend it for use by students, teachers, and other Christian workers.

Three closing comments are in order, two being caveats, and one, a vote of thanks. To avoid this already large book assuming an unbearably voluminous stature, I have refrained from overburdening it with explanatory footnotes and too many scholarly references. I accept that supplying these could have been useful for the graduate student seeking additional resources or even enable them to cross-check the accuracies of the information and validity of my conclusions. All the same, including so many would have raised further difficulties as to which ones should be left out and why. The compromise is to select only a few but helpful recent secondary resources which might themselves contain some of the helpful bibliographic materials. I have also been mindful in selecting these pointers to focus on those which will be more accessible to the constituency of students I have in mind. I accept however, that such compromises may not please everybody. I can only beg for understanding and forgiveness.

The reader will also find that the book has a fair number of repetitions. So, for example, passages which are examined in one part are taken up again and examined from a different perspective in another part of the book. And in those scenarios, some of the necessary exegetical information are repeated. This repetition is therefore largely inevitable given the large-scale nature of the project focused on the text. It is in any case made necessary also by the structure of the book as it mirrors the specialities of the Seminary curriculum. The repetitions for sure have the disadvantage of seemingly rehashing information, especially exegetical ones, which have already been established in one part. But I think they have their advantages too, at least in shedding further light on the text from different perspectives. This certainly is my intention and I hope the reader will patiently bear with me.

I am grateful to the Lord Jesus who has been gracious to me beyond measure in granting me this privilege to serve Him and His kingdom. It is such an amazing thing that He chooses sinners to use for His holy service. To Him therefore be the glory and honour. The leadership of the South African Theological Seminary, and especially, Dr Kevin Smith, our principal, is due enormous gratitude for their magnanimity, collegial support, and encouragement in this and other projects. I am also heavily indebted to the leadership at the Daniel Institute in Ghana, namely Dr Fred Brako, its Provost, Dr Charles Owiredu, his vice, Dr Clement Adjei-Brown, the institute's Director of Education and whom I had the privilege of supervising his PhD research, and Rev Edwin Nii Ayerh Adjei as my co-tutor for the lectures. I am grateful for their kindness and guidance in preparing these notes. Finally, I thank the founder of the Institute, Dr Mensa Otabil. My

meeting with him at his office last year not only initiated my involvement with the institute, but also deepened my appreciation of the clarity of his vision regarding theological education of excellence in Ghana and beyond. I totally share his energetic commitment to this rigour, along with the training of theologically grounded future leaders of the majority world. Very much like Daniel of the Bible, as he put it. And it is exactly in this spirit and motivation that this textbook has been put together. I pray that it serves that purpose in its small way.

Annang
Advent 2023
Grimsby



Prolegomenon

This brief prolegomenon is devoted to setting out and explaining the design of the book and how it may be employed for several different purposes. I begin however, firstly by clarifying the subtitle, especially as it indicates the methodology and presuppositions that drive the studies. Secondly, I provide an explanation of the format of the chapters which follow. And thirdly, I set out the general learning outcomes to guide students and teachers for using this textbook for their studies.

Exegetical Theology

The term *Exegetical Theology* in the subtitle needs clarification as some may not be familiar with it or may well know a different way of conceptualizing it. Basically, I use the term to mean a purposeful combination of the well-established historical-grammatical exegetical methods on one hand, and thematic, philosophical, conceptual, and theological analyses of the text on the other hand. The text is itself viewed primarily as theological material, that is, as the word of God with timeless messages for His world. This therefore demands a hermeneutics of trust and as such also an eclectic approach to the methodology where required. And so, where appropriate, other approaches such as social scientific and rhetorical methods, are examined, at least for providing perspectives on the impact of how particular hermeneutical stances have shaped the directions of receptions of the Pastoral Epistles. In this way a critical approach is adopted, not just towards the hermeneutical stance the book itself adopts but equally so towards alternative stances that prevail in the academy. Moreover, this eclectic approach results in the studies being basically driven by well-honed questions of relevance, rather than rigid attachment to lines of methodology.

Specifically, therefore, this method involves philological, contextual, hermeneutical, and syntactical exegeses with an overarching commitment to theological interpretation that coheres with the inspired nature and normative intentions of the biblical text. Not all theological themes receive

attention and to the same degree, however. The investigations are focused on those which are more consistently addressed by these letters. Thus, themes such as doctrine of God, ecclesiology, in its conceptual and practical expressions, pastoral theology, Christology, soteriology, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and ethics receive far more detailed attention than others. This is accompanied by exegetical investigation of how these themes are elaborated by the author to fulfil his epistolary agenda in specific passages scattered throughout the letters. Given also that these letters are viewed as written by the Apostle Paul, where necessary these are compared with how Paul elaborates on the same themes in some of his other letters. This enables more granular understanding of the manner in which he has nuanced his message to meet the unique demands and contextual circumstances of writing the Pastoral Epistles. Evaluations of how these themes are informed by the Old and New Testament are also done so as to acquire a holistic understanding of the theological nature and foundations of the theme. Throughout these analyses, important scholarly proposals and views regarding interpretative questions are evaluated for their positive contributions to enhance the answers generated to particular questions. The resulting insights are then strained through sustained reflections of the significance and implications of what is learnt to contemporary contexts. Inevitably some subjects are treated more extensively and exhaustively than others depending largely on how much space the Pastoral Epistles give to them.

This method in effect echoes Walter Kaiser's³ approach even though mine is much more eclectic, synthetic and analytical, and certainly less comprehensive than his. I am nevertheless of the settled view that this approach ensures that the exegetical insights of the studies will equally serve all three branches of the theological disciplines, namely, Biblical Studies, Systematic and Biblical Theology, and Practical or Applied Theology. To me this is its key attraction for graduate students.

Outline of Book

This methodological approach also informs the structure of the book. It is divided into three unequal parts, each part designed to showcase the relationships between these letters and the various disciplines in the theological education curriculum. The first part is devoted to Contextual Exegesis of the letters. It begins with an introductory chapter which examines their canonical forms and function, history of receptions, Pauline authorship and socio-historical backgrounds of the letters. This is followed by three chapters, each of which is respectively devoted to examining the genre(s) and literary designs of each letter and expositional surveys. Some challenging passages, such as 1 Tim 2:11-15, 1 Tim 3:16, Tit 2:13 and others receive more in-depth exegetical examination than the less challenging ones. Other passages no doubt receive more thorough en-

³ Kaiser Jr, W. C. (1998). *Toward an exegetical theology: Biblical exegesis for preaching and teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

gagement in the later parts of book. In this regard, this part of the book may be regarded as highlighting the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to the discipline of Biblical Studies.

Part two of the book is Theological Analyses aimed at synthesizing and evaluating the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to some of the key theological themes of the New Testament. They in particular address the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to the biblical doctrine of God, Christology, Pneumatology, the Trinity, Ecclesiology, Soteriology, Ethics, and Eschatology. This part takes Pauline authorship as a given from classical biblical theological perspective and therefore that the letters canonically and organically relate to the other ten letters attributed to Paul. However, also in classical exegetical theological perspective, the chapters work with the assumption that the theology functioned within the specific socio-historical and cultural contexts of the specific recipients. The analyses therefore seek to establish how these doctrinal ideas related to the contingent situations of what we now know of first century Ephesus and Crete. Ultimately therefore attention is in each case paid to not only how these letters frame these doctrines to address their particular contextual circumstances, but also how they relate to the Pauline corpus and thus demonstrate their canonical contributions.

Some of the subjects receive more extensive analyses than others accounting for variations in the lengths of each chapter for different reasons. The chapter on Christology for example takes a detour into providing a synopsis of Pauline Christology, especially the pivotal passages of 1 Cor 8:6, Phil 2:6-11 and Col 1:15-20 because, as it argues, these passages are widely regarded by scholars as representing summary statements of Pauline Christology. Their insights therefore provide the frame of reference for evaluating Christology in the Pastoral Epistles. A similar detour into scholarly debates into Trinitarianism in Paul's letters is deemed necessary in another chapter to provide the context for investigating proto-Trinity in the Pastoral Epistles. The chapter on Ecclesiology in the Pastoral Epistles is rather long yet after due reflections, I have decided to leave it as it is. It is long for three main reasons. Firstly, and as argued in the introductory section, Practical Ecclesiology is one of the three pillars of major contributions of the Pastoral Epistles which thus deserves that extensive attention. Secondly, and as the procedure above dictates, it contains a detour into summarizing ecclesiology in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians as that certainly serves as a direct contextual backdrop to understanding the ecclesiology in the Timothean letters, especially 1 Timothy. Indeed, as the chapter argues, there are strong indications that ecclesiology in 1 Timothy assumes some understanding of that in Ephesians. The two letters were after all to the same city separated by an uncertain period. Thirdly, a section of the chapter is further devoted to how the Pastoral Epistles inform important aspects of ecclesiological praxes, notably of leadership structure, liturgical practices, and denominational polity. To be fair this last section of the chapter ideally belongs to part three of the book where I address the relevance of the Pastoral Epistles to Applied or Practical Theology. However, I have opted to retain the section in this chapter because, as it argues, ecclesiology must always be a balance of both theolog-

ical analyses with practical reflections. Dissociating ecclesiological praxes from the theological analysis would have undermined this essential commitment. All said this part of the book may be judged to be highlighting the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to Systematic and Biblical Theology.

Part three of the book, is devoted to examining two subjects in which the Pastoral Epistles relate to Applied and Practical Theology. I have kept this part brief, dealing only with the two subjects of restoring and maintaining biblical orthodoxy, and the other on Pastoral Theology. They are brief because they in effect summarize and highlight the implications and relevance of several of the exegetical and theological analyses in the previous chapters for these two of the three major pre-occupations of the Pastoral Epistles. The omitted one is practical ecclesiology that is addressed in part two. Invariably also they do repeat some of the exegetical insights from previous chapters. The chapter on restoring and maintaining biblical orthodoxy and orthopraxy evaluates some of the key theoretical constructs on the definition and nature of the concept of orthodoxy and synthesizes the various strategies which are set out in the Pastoral Epistles for doing so. A key part of this program is clearly the doctrine of Scripture as enunciated by these letters, and the processes of its interpretation and deployment for dealing with heterodoxy and maintaining orthodoxy. Other practical measures in church life and polity of relevance to overthrowing error and maintaining orthodoxy are also analysed. The final chapter on Pastoral Theology also begins by distilling current theories on the nature, identity, duties and attributes of the ideal pastor and the pastoral ministry. This is quite an expansive area of scholarly discourse, particularly as much more scientific disciplines of the academy such as psychology, counselling, clinical psychiatry, medicine, and nursing have all acquired legitimately vested interests in the subject of Pastoral Care. These interests overlap certainly with Christian Pastoral theology so much so that their insights cannot be ignored. On the other hand, our narrower pre-occupation is on how the Pastoral Epistles may contribute to shaping biblically grounded and theologically sound pastoral identity and habitus fit for the evangelical mission to which Christian workers are called. Though brief, the idea is for the chapter to highlight how these letters retain their foremost position in the biblical canon as indeed “pastoral”.

This arrangement of the parts, chapters and sections inevitably means that there are some overlaps and repetitions as the book progresses. I have endeavoured to reduce these to the barest minimum so that students may find that issues they might be interested in that are not addressed in one part are dealt with in others. Each of the chapters also begins with statements of the learning outcomes, presented in forms of essay questions (about 2,000 words each). These questions could serve several different functions, such as students’ own self-assessment, topics for group tutorial discussions, examination questions, and certainly also guidance for framing further research. An introductory section provides an overview of the relevance, conceptual framework, and content of the chapter together with its outline.

Learning Outcomes

Altogether, at the end of studying this textbook the student should be able to perform the following tasks:

1. Explain why authorship of the Pastoral Epistles by the Apostle Paul is historically, hermeneutically, and literary-theologically the soundest approach for their interpretation.
2. Evaluate how similarities and differences between the contexts of the Pastoral Epistles and your contemporary context affect your assessment of their unique contributions and pastoral application.
3. Explain the strategies set forth by the Pastoral Epistles for guarding the Christian faith from theological error.
4. Use the Pastoral Epistles to analyze and propose improvements to the standard liturgical plan (order of service) of your congregation's public worship.
5. Employ the Pastoral Epistles to write a strategic paper on the pastoral theology to guide your church's leadership team.
6. Assess the contribution of the Pastoral Epistle to a New Testament theology of Church government and discipline.
7. It is sometimes argued that the Pastoral Epistles as a corpus were intended to serve as "Manual of Ministerial Formation" for first century Christian workers of the Pauline Churches. To what extent is this argument correct?
8. Using appropriate examples demonstrate how the Pastoral Epistles show the inseparable interconnectedness between Orthodoxy in Christology and Soteriology on the one hand, and practical Christian conduct and ethics on the other.
9. Evaluate how the Pastoral Epistles link eschatology to Christian ministry.
10. Evaluate the merits and demerits of the different approaches to interpreting 1 Tim 2:11-15.
11. Evaluate the extent to which Titus 2:11-14 may be considered as a summation of key elements of Pauline theology.
12. Analyze the relevance of the pneumatology of the Pastoral Epistles for contemporary Christian ministry.
13. Use appropriate examples from the text to demonstrate the implications of how the Pastoral Epistles define and employ Scripture.
14. Explain how the Pastoral Epistles help in addressing the increasingly common danger of religious syncretism in contemporary Christianity?

Conclusion

This introductory prolegomenon has briefly explained the methodology of exegetical theology employed for the study and provided an outline of the book. Given the graduate level to which the studies are pitched, several foundational issues are assumed. This is not always the case however, and so in other places important presuppositions and assumptions are critically examined and their undergirding evidence presented. The learning outcomes provide useful ways of revising and evaluating understanding of the content.

Part I



Contextual Exegesis



Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles

Learning Outcomes

1. Use appropriate examples to demonstrate the unique contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to the biblical canon.
2. Analyse the factors that have contributed to the varying receptions of the Pastoral Epistles over the centuries.
3. Mount a coherent argument defending the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.
4. Assess how the socio-religious and political climate of Ephesus during the middle decades of the first century help interpretation of 1 & 2 Timothy.
5. Evaluate the features of what has come to be labelled as “the Ephesian Heresies”.

Overview of Chapter

The Pastoral Epistles retain a special place in the biblical canon. For starters, they deal with unique issues, both theological and practical, which no other body of literature in the Bible deals with, certainly not to the intensity with which they address them. In addition, though they appear to address a variety of problems with which we are familiar in other New Testament books, especially the other epistles, the approach adopted by their writer for addressing these problems are different, innovative, and for that matter more comprehensive. Then also is the flavour of the words, ideas, and theological concepts they express. At their core, these ultimately express familiar New Testament beliefs fitting the teachings of other parts of the Bible. And yet at the same time they are couched in interesting, practically oriented, and rhetorically vibrant ways to make them exceptionally impactful to the average reader. To crown all these, the Pastoral Epistles deal with a number of practical issues of church life not systematically addressed anywhere else in the biblical canon. It is unsurprising therefore that these letters have been deeply cherished by generations of Christians since the first century.

Such appreciation has however not been universally held, and certainly not in many scholarly circles today. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, several factors have conspired together to problematize these letters, and in some cases marginalize them from serious academic

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enquiry and reflection. It is indeed fair to say that among today's critical scholars, the overwhelming majority reject the Pauline authorship of these letters, question whether the circumstances they address were indeed historically real, certainly doubt that they did indeed reflect the situation of the Church in the middle of the first century, and so jettison the contemporary applicability of their theological ideas and practical instructions. The result of this inimical stance towards these books has been that their unique roles in the biblical canon have been unappreciated by the present generation. Students who devote themselves to investigate these epistles with the hope of in-depth understanding and application of their authoritative insights might very quickly find that they don't have sufficiently helpful guidance from the academic resources to help with their investigation.

The main objective of this chapter is to address the issues that have contributed to this unsatisfactory state of affairs. The hope is to help clear some of the unnecessary cloud of doubts within which these texts have been shrouded enabling students to navigate their way more fruitfully through them. Much more than that this chapter will demonstrate why our present Bible will lack something substantial were the Pastoral Epistles to be removed from them, or indeed continue to be marginalized as they are in some circles today. In effect, our aim is to identify cogent reasons why these letters have their special place in the Bible by addressing the background questions germane to their interpretation. The chapter therefore has four sections, namely, (a) their canonical form and functions, (b) their varying receptions over the centuries, (c) their authorship, and (d) their respective socio-historical backgrounds.

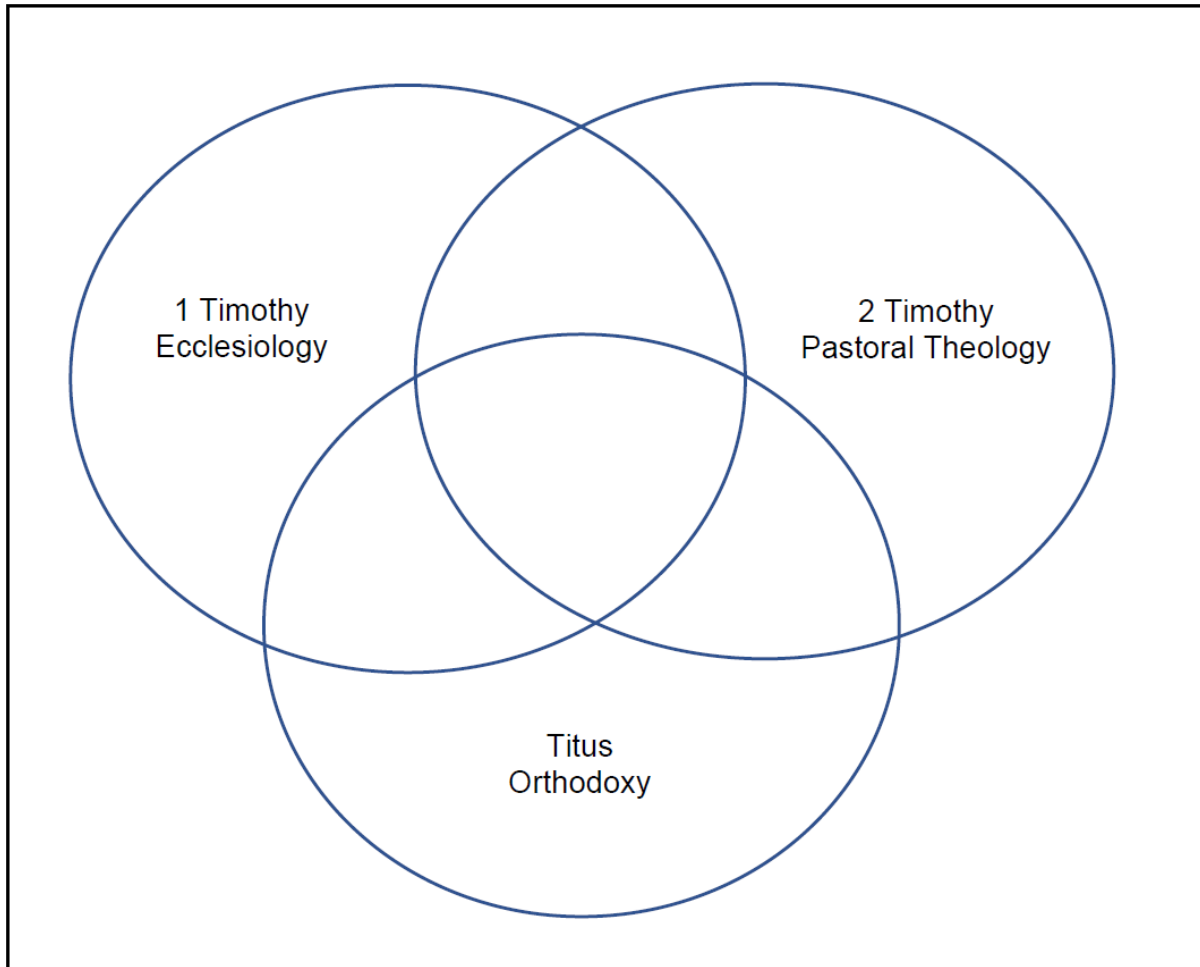
Canonical Form and Functions of the Pastoral Epistles

The two letters from Paul to Timothy and that to Titus, which have always been found together, never separated from each other in all the original manuscripts we have at hand, was first labelled together as "Pastoral Epistles" by Paul Anton of Halle as recently as 1726.⁴ This was when interpreters firmed up the centuries old and universally held recognition that they were indeed written by a "Pastor" to "Pastors". After all, these letters largely deal with three themes which are inseparably woven together through commonly known Pauline theological emphases. These themes are (a) determined correction and prevention of heterodoxy and heteropraxy, or to put it positively, maintaining biblical orthodoxy and orthopraxy, (b) diligent church order and discipline, with explicit focus on leadership structures and procedures to ensure God honouring, Christ celebrating and believers edifying conduct of public worship and church life, and (c) unremitting focus on the correct inner life and external conduct of Christian workers so as to fulfil the

⁴ Fee, G. D. (1985). Reflections on church order in the Pastoral Epistles, with further reflection on the hermeneutics of "Ad hoc" documents. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 28(2), 141-151. Page 141.

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gospel's missionary imperative. These themes are moreover tightly integrated together so that they merge into each other.



Put another way, their theological contributions are in three important areas, namely, Practical Ecclesiology, Biblical Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy, and Pastoral Theology and Formation. All three letters address these issues, but to different degrees and from slightly different perspectives. Together, they enable formulation of a robust account of these interlinked issues. This justifies the wisdom of not just keeping them together as a subgroup but even more so labelling them as Pastoral Epistles. They teach how to guard Christian orthodoxy, the organization and practice of the Church that is tasked with guarding that orthodoxy, and more importantly, on the formation of both inner and external character of the leaders of the church tasked with ensuring the organization and function of the Church to guard this orthodoxy. Much more, they are delivered through the medium of Paul's theology to address one overall purpose, namely, how the recipients, as apostolic representatives in Ephesus and Crete would ably fulfil their explicit mandates to shepherd the churches under their oversight. No wonder then that these contributions made them stand out and deserving the "pastoral" epithet.

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It is noteworthy also that, generations before the completion of the canonization process in the fourth century, the focus of the Pastoral Epistles on disciplined structure and procedures within the church's life were identified as their unique function. The Muratorian canon, for example, dated by some to the second half of the second century, explicitly suggests that these letters were included in that list because they deal with "Church Orders". Even Marcion of Sinope (85-160 AD), whom as we shall see, did not include the Pastoral Letters into his own limited canon, because they didn't fit his docetic and somewhat Gnostic inspired theological stance, nevertheless documented that these letters dealt with "ecclesiastical discipline". We shall assess the merits and demerits of these characterizations shortly. But even if there are limitations, these intimations make insightful contribution to our understanding of the distinctive functions of the Pastoral Epistles. One way of evaluating these contributions is to assess their roles in the Pauline corpus, and then for that matter, the New Testament, and in the biblical canon as a whole.

Pastoral Epistles within the Pauline Corpus

The current trend in scholarship of treating each one of the three letters separately has its advantages and are worthy of being taken seriously, certainly in terms of exegesis of the passages. Nevertheless, at the canonical level, their joint forms and functions reinforce the wisdom of centuries' long tradition of regarding the three as a subunit within the Pauline corpus. Why this tradition is likely to persist and its significance for understanding their contemporary contributions will now be the focus of our attention. In labelling them as "pastoral", the eighteenth-century theologians were officially also acknowledging their unique form and functions within the Biblical canon. To start with, their position within the biblical canon indicates awareness of this uniqueness even before they were labelled together as "pastoral". It is true that the fourth century canonizers considered an assorted number of factors in arranging the books of the New Testament. Not the least of these are their individual lengths, hence, 1 Timothy, with its 1,586 words, comes before 2 Timothy with 1,235 words, and followed by Titus with its 663 words. This order therefore does not dictate the chronology of their writing and publication as some might assume.

As we shall shortly indicate, there are interesting differences in the situations addressed by these letters so much so that some interpreters have put forward the reasonable theory that perhaps Titus may have been written prior to the two letters to Timothy. Indeed, that is the order in which they occur in the Muratorian Canon of the late second century AD. This theory however remains a matter of debate. Even so, the order of their canonical arrangement may well also lend some credence to the suggestion that, canonically, the letter to Titus serves to reiterate and therefore sum up the messages of the Pastoral Epistles. Placing them at the end of the Pastorals in that regard makes theological sense. This also provides a good rationale for studying the letters in the canonical order even though some scholars prefer placing 2 Timothy last as it is chronologically assumed to have been Paul's final extant letter. Whichever way we look at it, we should

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ideally study these letters individually in their own right, or when examining particular themes, ensure the distinctiveness of each of them and the contingent contexts, are maintained.

Within the Pauline corpus, the Pastoral Epistles share similar literary and thematic features with each other, as against the other Pauline letters, thus justifying their being regarded as a sub-group. Along with Philemon, they are semi-private letters addressed to individual Christian leaders as well as their churches. But the extent of their semi-privacy is limited because they are also designed to be read by and to whole congregations in a region (cf., 1 Tim 1:3; Tit 1:5). In this regard, the letter to Philemon is different as it is much more private than these two, even though it also addressed leaders and members of his household church, of which he was its patron (cf., Phlm 1-2). Accordingly, the Pastorals are unique in that the scattered congregations supervised by Timothy and Titus were being let in into the mandated instructions and information within Paul's missionary team through the mechanism of open communication. By contrast, the nine other Pauline letters sent to churches though similarly deal with specific issues and problems and thus are as occasional as the Pastoral Epistles, are nevertheless open and straightforwardly directed to the rank and file membership of these congregations. By not identifying single leadership structures in the recipient congregations (apart from Philippians where the overseers and deacons are greeted Phil 1:1) and certainly by not envisaging a complex scenario of layered readers, the other Pauline letters set out a less complicated way for their interpretation. If we were to arrange all the nineteen New Testament letters into a spectrum regarding the nature of their readership, the Pastoral Epistles and to a lesser extent, 3 John (Philemon may be included but it does not directly deal with a congregational matter) belong to one end of this spectrum. The other Pauline letters to churches would be in the middle of the spectrum as their readership is direct to identified congregations. And the General Letters which address roughly widespread groups of churches would be at the opposite end of the spectrum.

This complexly layered manner of the intended readership of the Pastoral Epistles establishes their unique place in the Pauline corpus. They also shed light on how the earliest Christian communities structurally addressed difficult issues of Church life. In that way, the Pastoral Epistles serve to summarize Pauline theology practically applied to deal with crisis situations in local churches. That is another way in which they play a hermeneutical role for the Pauline corpus. As we shall see for example, pivotal passages such as 1 Tim 2:3-7, 1 Tim 6:13-16, 2 Tim 1:8-12, 2 Tim 2:8, Titus 2:11-14 and Titus 3:4-7 patently condense Paul's Christology, Soteriology, Eschatology, Missiology, Ecclesiology and Ethics knitted together to address the specific issues of church life and witness. It is unsurprising therefore, that Paul does not elaborate and explain on the details of some of these theological affirmations or even justify them as he does in his other letters. He instead employs them in a matter-of-fact manner to explain their practical outworking in the fellowship of God's people. Paul's language in the Pastoral Epistles is thus less discursive

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but much more practical. While not surprising, since he was writing to fellow Christian workers, this formal feature also underlines their hermeneutical function.

The Pastoral Epistles also canonically serve as a ground level guide to grasping how Paul's theology is appropriated in the church's life and practice. This may be sharply distinguished from the letter to the Romans, which on the opposite end of the corpus, canonically provides an aerial view of Paul's theology. The other letters in between the two serve to various degree to provide the terrain of that theology.⁵ To be fair, all of Paul's letters were applied theology intended to address specific practical issues. None of them are therefore strictly the same. They differ due to Paul's own contingent situations, which secretaries helped him put them together, which church received it and the Apostle's prior history with them, the social settings and above all the specific purpose for writing. Some, such as Galatians (Gal 3:1), the Thessalonian letters (1 Thess 3:1-3) and the Corinthian correspondences (1 Cor 1:11), addressed acute problems in the sense that not only did these issues threaten to destroy Paul's pastoral relationship with the Churches. Much more, in these letters, the gospel itself was at risk of being overturned, diluted or at the least already undermined. A few letters appear not to address acute problems as these. Even then, the Apostle employed the correspondence nevertheless not simply to reaffirm the gospel (as he does with Ephesians) and prepare the congregation for his imminent participation in the fellowship as fellow worker and deal with internal divisions (as in 1 Cor 1:11-12). In others in less grave scenarios, Paul nevertheless employed the letters to address ultimately dangerous errors and/or gospel denying practices with potential to harm the cause of Christ (example being Colossians 2:8). Even in the case of Philippians in which Paul writes to assure and thank the believers for their support (1:5; 4:8-18), there were lingering problems both from internal (4:2-3) and external (3:2) sources which he uses to address. Each of Paul's letters therefore address problems of church life and witness. The Pastoral Epistles are in that sense no different. Some interpreters assert a small but perceptible shift in Paul's approaches in dealing with congregational issues. He for example appears to be "raw" and "impatient" with the Galatians, "business-like" and even systematic in the Corinthian correspondence (even though one can detect the "raw" Paul in 2 Corinthians), "scholarly" in Romans and "reflective" in Ephesians. These differences do come through indeed in studying the letters. But even then, in each case, Paul is addressing particular issues in the Churches.

The Pastoral Epistles in this regard were no different from Paul's other letters. He was after all a pastor at large, almost always on the move, and if not on the move, incarcerated. Judging by Luke's account in Acts of the Apostles, only rarely did Paul have opportunities for an extended stay in a place to minister, one being in Corinth from where he wrote Romans (Acts 18:11), and the other in Ephesus where he taught in a "hall of Tyrannus" for well over two years (Acts 19:9).

⁵ Goswell, G. (2022). The bookends of the Pauline corpus. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 65(1), 111–126.

Otherwise, itinerancy was his norm. That is what he also attempts to do in the Pastoral Epistles. However, here in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul, for reasons we will discuss later employs a different, ultimately much more comprehensive and enduringly strategic approach for addressing the problems in these Churches. This highlights the unique contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to the Pauline corpus. The unique contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to Paul's corpus, therefore include, (a) serving as hermeneutical window for interpreting Paul's applied theology, (b) providing practical guidance for conducting church life in the world (c) acting as a historical window into apostolic succession planning and (d) summing up the most comprehensive account of Paul's strategies for forestalling and addressing false teaching.

Pastoral Epistles in Old and New Testament

As a group, the Pastoral Epistles is not the only place in the New Testament where the Bible gives focused attention to addressing issues of church leadership structure, procedures and succession planning. We might again examine this by comparing and contrasting the approach adopted in other similar places in the biblical canon. Very early in the Church's life, the Apostles, according to Luke in Acts 6, saw it fit to set similar but necessary structures in place, with explicit instructions to address specific problems in the Jerusalem Church. Later, again according to Luke in Acts 15, when the Church was faced with divisions regarding the nature and extent of Gentile inclusion in their midst, it held an Apostolic conference from which they appointed delegates with letters to visit Gentile regions affirming and implementing the decision. Paul himself was a member of this team of delegates sent out with the letter to implement the instructions (Acts 15:22). And so, within the historical context of the New Testament times, Paul's particular approach in the Pastoral Epistles fits in very well, though his was more comprehensive. The differences on the other hand heighten our appreciation of their unique contributions to Paul's letters.

In terms of genre, the Pastoral Epistles may be compared with records of Jesus' teaching addressed to His disciples in the Gospels, such as the Sermon on the Mount. As it is with the Pastorals, the teachings are addressed to disciples, but ultimately, with a wider audience in mind. Matthew 5:1 certainly indicates the Sermon on the Mount was directed in the first place to the disciples, but meant also for the hearing of the crowds, who, as Matthew indicates after the sermon were "amazed" by it (Matt 7:28). This has similar features to the genre of the Pastoral Epistles. Even so, the Sermon on the Mount is no doubt also different from the Pastoral Epistles as they don't mandate specific organizational structures of the Church. But at least in terms of their genre and practical focus they mirror the Pastoral Epistles. In this way we appreciate their place in the biblical canon. Jesus' extended missionary instructions in Matt 10-11 as well as His farewell discourse recorded in John 13-17 also share some features with the Pastoral Epistles, even though like the Sermon on the Mount, they do not address organization of the Christian community.

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In the Old Testament, Moses' open mandating of Joshua in the presence of Israel recorded in passages such as Deut 31 is a good parallel even if it is less comprehensive than the Pastoral Epistles. Clearly, also the contextual and theological situations of the Churches in the cases of the Pastoral Epistles are different from the situation of Israel depicted in Deut 31, even though it is noteworthy that Moses, like Paul was also concerned with the need for orthodoxy and the dangers of heterodoxy. Clearly there are differences in genre. Yet in both, not only are the instructions meant primarily to the individual recipients. They are simultaneously made accessible to a secondary group of audience whose functions were to not only co-operate with Joshua but submit to his implementation of these instructions. A similar dynamic of layered communication focused on leadership training may well be taken from some parts of Proverbs in which the author addresses a person (often labelled as "my son") but instructions that are meant to be heard and shared by a wider audience (Prov 1:1-7). In most cases the use of this term may signify the scribal pedagogical and perhaps royal court rhetoric in which the Proverbs are delivered.⁶ However, on a few occasions they also express concern for how the immediate recipients of the instructions, presumably future leaders in the court bureaucracy would order the society. These leaders were by implication privy to the instructions in the first place. For instance, in Prov 3, the immediate addressee, identified as "my son" (Prov 3:1), is encouraged to hold firmly to God in trust and obedience (Prov 3:1-12), admonished to uphold integrity of conduct (Prov 3:13-26) and then further instructed on how to relate to others in an ordered and orderly world (Prov 3:27-35). As we shall see, similar instructions are directed at Timothy and Titus in the Pastoral Epistles. Similarly, there are close correspondences between the instructions to the son in Prov 2 with those directed to Timothy in 1 Tim 4. Just as Prov 2:1-4 urges upon the disciple to treasure the instructions they receive, so also Paul instructs Timothy to pay heed to his spiritual life in 1 Tim 4:11-12. Just as the educator in Prov 2:5-11 urges the tutee to find hope through taking the teachings to heart, so also does Paul in 1 Tim 4:13-14 urge Timothy on to devote to and exercise himself in the words of the faith which hold benefits for his ministry. And just as the student in Prov 2:12-22 is assured of the guarantee of salvation if he paid heed to the words of instructions, Timothy is assured in 1 Tim 4:15-16 that in diligently continuing in the teachings, he "will save both yourself and your hearers". The key difference between the two is that the socio-historical scenarios of the Proverbs are less specific, and certainly not as accessible to us as those of the Pastorals. Nevertheless, it is of immense value to appreciate some of the shared similarities between them.

All the examples of parallels identified above share some similarities in common. They all express concern about securing the heritage of sound faith and fidelity of God's word, and in some cases explicitly identify detractors from this path. They all underline the need for inner moral rectitude in the audience expressed in identifiable virtues. Some hint at concern for successive gen-

⁶ Fox, M. V. (1994). The pedagogy of Proverbs 2. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 113(2), 233-243.

erations even though none lay out explicit instructions in that direction. Though the Pastoral Epistles share all these properties, it is unique in the heightened and comprehensive way in which these similarities are dealt with. It is clear therefore that when viewed in the light of similarities and differences from sections of the Old and New Testament, the Pastoral Epistles are in excellent company in the biblical canon but play their unique unparalleled role in the canon. To put this explicitly, these letters look both back at the rest of the canon and forward in preparing the Church for its future. Certainly, no group of books in the Bible deal with the pivotal matter of leadership of the Christian community in such a comprehensive manner as the Pastoral Epistles. As it turns out this hermeneutical canonical function of the Pastoral Epistles enabled them to lay strong foundation for addressing some of the key developments in Christianity in the subsequent decades and centuries. It is how they were indeed received in that period that we now turn.

Reception history of the Pastoral Epistles

The canonical function of the Pastoral Epistles also reflects and somewhat explains some of the varying changes in their receptions over the centuries and shed light on the factors responsible for these variations. The reception history is indeed a narrative of resilience matching their indispensable role in the canon. The assessment that follows is brief, often generalized and sometimes imprecise. The aim is modest, to; in the first place, demonstrate the enduring contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to church doctrine and practice. Secondly, to highlight how the varying receptions of the Pastoral Epistles were often motivated by important socio-cultural and political situations during the time. And thirdly, it will underline the importance of fidelity to their exegesis and interpretation in our own settings. As with other biblical texts, inaccurate exegesis, and sometimes determined or even subtle resistance to their messages have crucial implications for Christian life and witness. The Pastoral Epistles are prime examples of this maxim. For convenience's sake we may divide the epochs of Christian history into five periods, namely (a) Patristic period, (b) Medieval or Middle Ages period, (c) Early Modern period which spans the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment period (d) Late Modern period and (e) Contemporary reception.⁷

Pastoral Epistles in Patristic Period

The evidence for the accessibility and use of at least parts of the Pastoral Epistles during the Patristic period is overwhelming. This was despite the fact that they were not yet fully included in any of the canons at the earlier stages, and the Fathers at the time tended not to make explicit attributions when they cited other texts. The *Biblia Patristica*, for example, identifies that the Pastoral Epistles are quoted or alluded to on as many as 450 times in writings of the second century AD. The Muratorian canon also includes the Pastorals in the Pauline collection. Even prior to that

⁷ Twomey, J. (2020). *The pastoral epistles through the centuries*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

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several passages in 1 Clement, a letter written by Clement of Rome to the Corinthians dated between the 70-90s AD appear to cite the Pastoral Epistles on several occasions (1 Clement 2:7 in 2 Tim. 2:21; Titus 1:3; 1 Clement 45:7 in 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Clement 1:3 in Titus 2:4 – 5; 1 Clement 7:3 in 1 Tim. 2:3; 1 Clement 62:1 in Titus 2:12, and 1 Clement 60:4 – 61:2 in 1 Tim. 2:1 – 3). Clement emphasizes, for example, that the “Scriptures” are to be regarded as true and divinely inspired (1 Clem 45:2) and grants the “full assurance of the Holy Spirit” on the Apostles to evangelize and appoint bishops and deacons (1 Clem 42:3-4).

It is debated whether these are direct citations of the Pastoral Epistles, as Clement, very much like his contemporaries, had a tendency of not explicitly making attributions when citing Scripture. We shall see in a later chapter that Paul himself does a similar thing in his use of the Old Testament. Even so, the remarkable density of parallels in Clement’s epistle is suggestive of his acquaintance with the Pastoral Epistles. Certain phrases in the Epistle of Barnabas (70-130 AD) similarly seem to echo the Pastorals (e.g., Barnabas 14:6 in Tit 2:14). So also, is Polycarp (AD 69 – 155) who seems to cite 1 Tim 6:7 and 6:10 in his *Letter to the Philippians* 4:11.

Irenaeus (130–202 AD) in his *Adversus haereses*, cites the Pastorals and attribute their authorship to Paul. Athenagoras (AD 180; in *Supplication* 37.1), and Theophilus (late 2nd cent in *To Autolytus* 3.14) appear to cite 1 Tim 2:1–2 and make other allusions to these epistles. Writing in the later stages of the second century, and seeking to refute the authenticity of the apocryphal Acts of Paul in his *De Baptismo* 17, Tertullian (AD 155-220) asserts “those who read the writings that falsely bear the name of Paul [Acts of Paul] adduce the example of Thecla to maintain the right of women to teach and to baptize, let them know that the presbyter in Asia who produced this document, as if he could of himself add anything to the prestige of Paul, was removed from his office after he had been convicted and had confessed that he did it out of love for Paul”. What is evident in the various references to the Pastoral Epistles by these Church Fathers was their consistent use for addressing false teachings of their time.

It is in this sense of their use to address false teaching that Marcion’s apparent exclusion of the Pastoral Epistles from his canon must be judged. The docetic but influential leader of the late first century constructed a canon of New Testament made up of only eleven books: a gospel, a truncated version of the Gospel of Luke, and ten Pauline epistles that excluded the Pastoral Epistles, though he recognized their existence. Scholars continue to debate Marcion’s motivation for excluding the Pastorals, especially as he included Philemon in his collection. Some have grounds to question aspects of Tertullian’s theory that Marcion left out the Pastoral Epistles from his canon because they went against Marcion’s theological instincts and not for historical reasons. This is even more so because they encouraged marriage and childrearing (*Prescription against heretics* 33). Even so, Tertullian’s general insight that Marcion was motivated purely on his own herodox presumptions seems to me to be historically more plausible. After all the Pastoral Epistles

do explicitly condemn ideas similar to Marcion's heretic programme. Moreover, a similar theological dynamic motivated his exclusion of all of the Old Testament, the rest of the Gospels, and even some aspects of Luke's Gospel from his canon. This negative factor in the reception of the Pastoral Epistles paradoxically therefore serves to underline the factors which shaped their earliest reception in the Christianity of the first three centuries. Their unrelenting, systematic, programmatic, and practical focus on addressing false teaching and preventing them from embedding within the Christian community made them prime texts for theologians and church leaders of those centuries. Others who were heterodox and averse to orthodox teachings were less sympathetic to these letters. It is fair to say that this trend has continued throughout the subsequent centuries.

It is also in this regard that Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–215) deployed the Pastoral Epistles in his *Stromateis* 2.11. Clement for example, notes that some Gnostic opponents rejected Pauline authorship of the Pastorals because passages such as 1 Tim 6:20-21 were directed against their teachings. We find the same focus in Ignatius of Antioch's (c. 110) use of the Pastoral Epistles. In chapter three of his Epistle to Polycarp, he states "Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach strange doctrines, fill you with apprehension" a statement which echoes 1 Tim 1:3 and 6:3.

Despite evident resistance to them in some heterodox circles, the enthusiastic reception of the Pastoral Epistles in other Christian communities continued into the third and fourth centuries. However, with the seeming calming of the heretical disputes in those decades, theologians began to appreciate their other contributions, such as their focus on Christian orderly conduct in church and society. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) for example employed 1 Tim 6:1-2 to address the rather intricate matter of slaves in the Church. As most readers of these Epistles might today do, Chrysostom challenged the institution of slavery alright and indeed asserted that despite the social arrangement, Christian masters should nevertheless be subordinate to Christian slaves who were leaders when it came to the church, God's household. Be that as it may, their use for countering false teaching never abated. Augustine (354-430 AD), being perhaps the most influential and prolific writer of the closing stages of the Patristic era did not sadly devote standalone treatises to the Pastoral Epistles *per se*. However, he allocated several parts of his writings to them, reflecting the abiding influence of these letters during his time. In his *On Nature and Grace* 32, for example, Augustine narrates what appears to be an imaginative debate between him and Pelegius regarding the interpretation of 1 Tim 1:20. He asserts that whereas the Pelegians would doubt whether Paul's handing over of Alexander to Satan to learn not to blaspheme would work, he argues that just as "heats of fevers are sometimes subdued by certain medicinal warmths" so also would such a procedure result in forestalling further blasphemy. This particular passage demonstrates two aspects of the influence and use of the Pastorals on Augustine. Firstly, it underlines the common assessment of their utility for addressing false teach-

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ing. Indeed, he deployed 1 Tim 1:3 and 15 for example in his refutations of the Pelegians regarding the form and centrality of God's grace in humanity's salvation. Secondly it indicates that despite the challenges of interpreting this verse, it was nevertheless upheld as authoritative. A similar tendency is evidenced by Augustine's *Confessions* 2.4, where he deploys Paul's condemnation of heretic genealogists in the Pastorals against his contemporary Manichean Faustus, insisting that such appeals to genealogy cancel out God's grace.

Before moving to the medieval period, it is worth registering a seldom highlighted comment of relevance by the fourth century bishop, Gregory of Nyssa (335-395). Though he was politically less influential than his peers, Gregory was nevertheless widely regarded as theologian and whose treatises proved very influential in the church's thought and life. It is not explicit whether Gregory's treatise on slave trading is motivated directly by the Pastoral Epistles. However, as we shall shortly see, 1 Tim 1:10 is the only passage in the New Testament which explicitly condemns the practice. And indeed, later on in the late modern period, Pope Gregory XVI issued a papal Bull (*In Supremo Apostolatus*) on 3rd December 1839 commanding the Roman empires of Spain and Portugal to stop slave trading. In it the Bull cites Gregory of Nyssa's argument above, which as stated may well have been inspired by 1 Tim 1:10. Gregory of Nyssa states:

He who knew the nature of mankind rightly said that the whole world was not worth giving in exchange for a human soul. Whenever a human being is for sale, therefore, nothing less than the owner of the earth is led into the sale-room. If [man] is in the likeness of God...who is his buyer, tell me? Who is his seller? To God alone belongs this power; or rather, not even to God himself...God would not therefore reduce the human race to slavery, since [God] himself, when we had been enslaved to sin, spontaneously recalled us to freedom. But if God does not enslave what is free, who is he that sets his own power above God's?⁸

Pastoral Epistles in the Medieval Period

Like most historical studies, not a lot of evidence one way or the other is extant regarding the reception of the Pastoral Epistles during the Medieval period (5th to 15th century). The few pieces of evidence however underline the influence of the Pastorals during the period through two of its three major contributions, namely, church government, and procedures for addressing heresy. We may cite for example Pope Gregory the Great's (540-604) *Liber regulae pastoralis* (Pastoral Care) in which he defined the nature and duties of the bishop. This piece is heavily indebted to the Pastoral Epistles. Similarly, an account in the 11th century of the qualifications and procedures for electing a bishop to replace a dead one borrows heavily from 1 Tim 3:

We elected him just as apostolic and canonical authority commands: [he is] catholic in faith, by nature wise, teachable, patient, temperate of mores, of chaste life, sober, humble, expressive, merciful, lettered, educated in God's law, circumspect in the meanings of the scriptures, trained in ecclesiastical doctrines, and orthodox according to the ways

⁸ Hall, S. G. (2012). *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Seventh International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (St Andrews, 5-10 September 1990)*. 74. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

and tradition of scriptures . . . , hospitable, modest, a good manager of his household, not a neophyte, a man of good character, one who has followed ecclesiastical tradition at every step, who has administered good works to all and right reason to the satisfaction of all who have asked for it.⁹

By far however, the detailed commentary by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) on the Pastoral Epistles, should be considered the bright speckle of light during the period and underlines their abiding influence. Perhaps, as expected, Aquinas gives pride of place to 1 Timothy 3 where he explains the nature, qualifications and an extensive analysis of the inner life and spirituality of the ideal bishop. But also interesting is his analysis of how the church ought to deal with heresy. He for example, argues for the execution of heretics on the basis of Paul's instructions on how Titus ought to handle a troublemaker in the church in Tit 3:10-11, a passage which he seemed to regard as Paul's pivotal statement on procedures for dealing with a heretic. This no doubt reflects the influence of the agonistic intensity of the social context of the time.¹⁰ So, for example, Aquinas argued that if as at the time, the civil law demanded the execution of less grave offences such as forgery, then how much more shouldn't the heretic ultimately face the death penalty. As he puts it in his *Summa Theologica* Q[11] A[3]), "if [the heretic] is yet stubborn [after initial warning], the Church no longer hoping for his conversion, looks to the salvation of others, by excommunicating him and separating him from the Church, and furthermore delivers him to the secular tribunal to be exterminated thereby from the world by death". We shall have occasion to examine whether this extreme view of the nature of excommunication was what Paul had in mind. But Aquinas' interpretation and argument reflect how social and political contexts do influence the reception of biblical texts such as the Pastoral Epistles.

Pastoral Epistles and the Early Modern Period

It is difficult to precisely mark out when the upheavals of the period during which the Protestant reformation occurred, morphed into a less fevered and settled period in Europe. Some identify it as emerging in the early fifteenth centuries at the close of the Middle Ages and culminating in the middle of the eighteenth century. Whichever cut off times are chosen however, these three centuries marked three remarkable phenomena that shaped Christianity, namely, the European Renaissance, the Evangelical Reformation, and the Enlightenment. The socio-cultural and political transformations associated with each of these phenomena played significant role in influencing how the Pastoral Epistles were received and used. With the Roman Catholic Church in full control over formulation of orthodoxy, it will appear that the role of the Pastoral Epistles during the renaissance was largely in the area of its use in legitimating ecclesial authority. As we shall see, this also made the Pastoral Epistle extra powerful for challenging the same authority that it was

⁹ Ott, J. S., & Jones, A. T. (2007). *The bishop reformed: studies of episcopal power and culture in the central Middle Ages*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

¹⁰ Sirilla, M. G. (2017). *The Ideal Bishop: Aquinas's commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles*. Washington: Catholic University Press.

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employed to legitimate. Thus, its emphases on Church order and discipline that was highlighted by Thomas Aquinas continued to shape doctrine and praxes during the period. But this was soon to change with the emergence of the reformation.

There is indeed little doubt that the major concerns of the reformers, chiefly Martin Luther, and later, John Calvin, shaped the extent and direction of their use of the Pastoral Epistles. Fortunately, also these theologians wrote extensively and thus have left a legacy of the extent to which the Pastoral Epistles were influential during their time. The focus on false teaching no doubt also played a role, with the “papists” frequently being couched in the images of the false teachers condemned in the Pastoral Epistles. Two unique concerns of the time however appear to dominate in addition, namely, soteriology and the doctrine of inspiration of Scripture. Whether coincident with the reformers’ emphases on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide* or emanating from them, key passages on the theme of grace in the Pastoral Epistles played a key role in the development and articulation of their soteriology (e.g., 1 Tim 1:5, 1:13-16, 3:9; 2 Tim 1:9, 3:15; Tit 2:11; Tit 3:5). Martin Luther for example devotes a series of lectures to 1 Timothy in which these concerns shine through again and again. Commenting on Paul’s testimony in 1 Tim 1:13 of his own experience of God’s grace as part of his conversion, Martin Luther asserts, “These are his ‘merits’ which preceded God’s grace.... To whomever grace comes, it comes as it did to Paul, without merit, because that is how we lived....To be sure, merits have appeared, but we were never worse than when we appeared the best”.¹¹

The socio-political and religious factors which laid the foundation for the necessity of the Reformation were somewhat also responsible for directing a solid construct of a theology of Scripture. The key issue was the development of the concept of *Sola Scriptura* as a way of differentiating the new Protestant movement from Roman Catholic teaching. It is thus unsurprising that the reformers turned to the Pastoral Epistles in formulating such theology. After all, as we shall indeed find, the Pastorals, take pains to outline the nature of the Scriptures, its authoritative function in the development of orthodoxy and fighting heterodoxy and heteropraxy, and its role in the formation of the Christian, especially the Christian leader. It is true, as stated earlier that the renaissance sowed the seeds that led to the challenge of the ecclesial authority. And in that respect, the prominent role that the Pastoral Epistles came to play in bolstering that authority, made the same text powerful in facilitating the reformers’ stance against the pope, through its doctrine of Scripture. Commenting on Paul’s instructions to Titus to “silence” rebellious false teachers in the community (Titus 1:11), Calvin draws on an imagery of Scripture as sword to fulfil this command, asserting that by “smiting” these rebels “by the sword of God’s word . . . the Church can com-

¹¹ Luther, M. (1973). *Luther's Works: Volume 28 Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. Page 241.

mand them to be silent... to refute their vain talk even if they do not stop making a noise".¹² The implied violence in the language is clearly metaphorical, even though Calvin's comments on Tit 3:10-11 borders on sanctioning the violent punishment of heretics, not unlike Aquinas's interpretation a few centuries earlier. All the same, it is clear that Calvin regarded the Scriptures as the key weapon for addressing heresy. It is a spiritual fight. With regards to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture itself, which is derived in large measure from 2 Tim 3:16, Calvin may be given the credit for setting out an extended clarification of the doctrine which later became the bedrock of the evangelical notion of verbal inspiration of Scripture. He comments,

[T]he prophets did not speak of themselves, but as organs of the Holy Spirit uttered only that which they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. All those who wish to profit from the Scriptures must first accept this as a settled principle, that the Law and the prophets are not teachings handed on at the pleasure of men or produced by men's minds as their source, but are dictated by the Holy Spirit. . . [I]t has its only source in Him and has nothing of human origin mixed in with it.¹³

Luther similarly understood the Pastoral Epistles as playing fundamental function in affirming the role of the Scriptures for doctrine and practice. In his lectures on 1 Timothy for example, Luther asserts that 1 Timothy is at the centre of the raging battle between God's word and Satan. And this is largely because of its concerns for church order and discipline. Luther was therefore driven by this letter to urge for private and public reading of Scripture, as his comments on 1 Tim 4:13 demonstrate. In another series on Titus, Luther makes the astute observation that the letter was essentially "a compendium of other wordier epistles"¹⁴ of Paul. This insight hints at what has been noted earlier that the Epistle to Titus plays the canonical function of summing up and concluding the *Corpus Paulinum*.

There were other issues in which the Pastoral Epistles played some roles, but exactly how decisive their contributions are, is difficult to evaluate. So, for example Luther's maxim of the priesthood of all believers, developed no doubt in the background of an overbearing ecclesiastical authority, came up against how one might interpret the instructions of 1 Tim 3 and Tit 1:5-7. It is crucial to bear in mind that by Luther's time, the over-concentration of power in the hands of the bishops led to the employment of the Pastoral Epistles to develop and legitimize a rigidly hierarchical structure of Christian ministry. Luther's rejection of this approach demanded a nuanced explanation of this text. This in turn came to represent a bedrock for the reorganization of church leadership following the evangelical reformation.

¹² Calvin, J. (1964). *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*. By John Calvin (translated by TA Smail). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Page 362.

¹³ Calvin, J. (1964). *The Second Epistle of Paul*. Page 178.

¹⁴ Luther, M. (1968). *Luther's Works: Volume 29 Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and the Hebrews*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

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The early modern period climaxed with the emergence after the reformation of remarkable intellectual and philosophical movements which came to dominate the socio-political scene, hence the label, Enlightenment. It was in any case preceded in the sixteenth century by several significant scientific breakthroughs which thus facilitated the intellectual developments that characterized that period. These scientific developments sowed the seed for the challenge of authority not just of ecclesial leaders but ultimately also of Scripture. Once again, the Pastoral Epistles played important role at the centre of these socio-political changes. From the perspective of the majority world however, this also was a period of global conquests and colonisations of Africa, Indo-Pacific, South and Central, and soon afterwards, North America. In the mix of these developments came also the evangelical missionary spread of Christianity. The climax of the early modern period is thus a rather complicated era in which economics and geopolitics shaped the nature and driving concerns of interpreters of Scripture. I will highlight two of these concerns in relation to the reception of the Pastoral Epistles, and thus demonstrate the enduring utility of these texts.

The first concern is in relation to politics, chiefly how these texts shape attitudes to political leaders and empires of the time. Questions of the relationship and co-existence of church and state, Christian involvement in empire expansionary wars and ultimately the difficulties raised by Protestantism and national churches all become pressing interpretive questions. How the interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles, especially of 1 Tim 2:1-2 and Tit 3:1, impact these questions were fundamental. For these passages encourage a co-operative attitude towards the worldly rulers, in exchange for peaceful conduct of the Church's missionary enterprise and mandate. Interpreters, depending on specific questions at stake found enormous inspiration from the Pastoral Epistles in making their arguments. In John Wesley's (1703-1791) case for example, his missionary evangelistic impulses dominate his exegesis of 1 Tim 2:1-2, where he comments,

[T]rue prayer is the vehemency of holy zeal, the ardour of divine love, arising from a calm, undisturbed soul, moved upon by the Spirit of God. Intercession is prayer for others. We may likewise give thanks for all men, in the full sense of the word, for that God "willeth all men to be saved," and Christ is the mediator of all. Seeing even the lowest country magistrates frequently do much good or much harm. God supports the power of magistracy for the sake of his own people, when, in the present state of men, it could not otherwise be kept up in any nation whatever.¹⁵

The clash between the hierarchical structure envisaged by the Church order described by the Pastoral Epistles in 1 Tim 3 and Tit 1 and that practiced by the main church traditions reared its head again in the case of John Wesley's struggles with the Church of England. Re-emphasizing the priesthood of believers, Wesley ultimately ordained lay preachers to perform duties which until then were the sole preserves of ordained clergy. We get an impression of his hermeneutics as to how that squared with his interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles in a letter he sent to his brother, Charles Wesley in which he states: "[S]ome obedience I always paid to the bishops in

¹⁵ Wesley, J. (1987). *Wesley's Notes on the Bible*. Wilmore: Francis Asbury Press.

obedience to the laws of the land. But I cannot see that I am under any obligation to obey them further than those laws require. . . [for] I firmly believe I am a scriptural *episkopos* [bishop], as much as any man in England or in Europe”.¹⁶ In other words, deeming the Church of England hierarchy as incompetent in matters of evangelical faith and zeal, Wesley believed himself to be a bishop who had the authority to legitimately ordain clergy in his mould. The text thus provided Wesley the impetus to circumvent the political order.

A second concern relates to the role of the Pastoral Epistles and the institution of slavery. Debate about the merits and demerits of the institution heightened at the tail end of this period, and the Scriptures were interpreted in both directions, sometimes in support and other times against it during the feverish debates. Most historians now assess the pivotal centrality of the African slave trade to the industrial revolution and therefore the world economy during the final century of the early modern period. Given how pivotal that trade became to the world economy, it is unsurprising that the language of the Bible, should play a role in that debate. The three passages in the Pastoral Epistles, namely, 1 Tim 1:10, 6:1-2 and Tit 2:9 played their part in providing the basis but sometimes conflicting ideas in shaping attitudes to the institution during the period.¹⁷ It was conflicting because 1 Tim 1:10 is the only text in the New Testament which explicitly condemned slave-dealing, even though 1 Cor 7:22 was also influential in encouraging the manumission of slaves. The other two passages on slavery in the Pastoral Epistles were on the other hand employed by those who supported the institution to argue their case. To be fair some during the era made a moral distinction between “slave trading” and the actual institution of slavery itself, thus enabling the bracketing out of the otherwise potentially significant impact of 1 Tim 1:10. Indeed, the papal Bull of 1839 referred to previously which commanded the empires of Spain and Portugal to stop slave-trading, nevertheless stopped short of abolishing the institution itself. Apparently appealing to 1 Tim 6:1-2 and Tit 2:9, it states:

Inspired by Divine Spirit, the Apostles indeed urged slaves themselves to obey their masters according to the flesh as though obeying Christ, and to do the Will of God from their heart. However, the Apostles ordered the masters to act well towards their slaves, to give them what was just and equitable, and to refrain from threats, knowing that the Lord in heaven...is indeed Lord of the slaves and of themselves. Indeed...by the law of the Gospel...Christians should regard as brothers their slaves, especially their Christian slaves.¹⁸

The hermeneutics of these interpretations of the slavery texts of the New Testament remain a matter of scholarly dispute. Their contemporary analyses have in many cases been scandalized and problematized by being studied through the prism of the more recent brutal transatlantic slave trade. Nuanced analysis of the nature of slavery in the first century Greco-Roman world would certainly paint a more complicated picture. Some household slaves were indeed better off

¹⁶ Wesley, J. (1829-31). *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley. 14 Vols.* . London: John Mason.

¹⁷ Harrill, J. A. (2006). *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, social, and moral dimensions.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

¹⁸ Panzer, J. S. (1996). *The Popes and Slavery.* New York: Alba House. Pages 97-98.

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than many freed people, even though there were indeed more brutal forms of slavery also. It is true the problems posed by the juxtaposition of these texts against the background of extreme abuses of slaves of the time, especially the indentured slaves who went through dehumanizing conditions in homes and caves and mines during the times cannot be dismissed. So also, must the fact be noted that for majority of household slaves, their realities were far removed from that of the African slaves in North America. All the same, the presence of these slavery texts in the Pastoral Epistles ensured that a balanced understanding of the complexities of the institution could feature in the hermeneutical debates of the early modern period.

Pastoral Epistles in Late Modern Period

The late modern period is, like its predecessor, difficult to demarcate. In philosophical and intellectual terms, its tail end may appropriately be situated in the beginnings of what has come to be labelled as the post-modern period, also ill-defined but dated from the late 1970s. Precisely when the late modern period begun however is debated, but for our purposes the dates are not that relevant. What is significant is that the period had an extraordinary impact on the reception of the Pastoral Epistles in Christian theology and praxis, what has come to be known as the marginalization of the Pastoral Epistles. Basically, after having served as an influential group of biblical texts for almost nineteen centuries, the late modern period launched a series of events and ideas which resulted in the displacement of the Pastoral Epistles from fulfilling their long held function and even more so their marginalization in formulation of Christian doctrine and praxes.

The socio-political and philosophical factors which facilitated this state of affairs may well be traced to a rupture in the relationship between the dominant biblical scholars of European universities especially Germany, and the church leaders of the time. Having been initially launched and facilitated by the hegemonic Church hierarchy, the Universities during the preceding renaissance period and especially as a result of the rifts caused within the Church over new scientific discoveries, begun to assert their independence. Not wanting to be left out, Biblical scholars in the Universities also begun to adopt stances which started to distance them from the Church. The relationship was initially not antagonistic, but there was definitely a degree of suspicion of ecclesiastical authorities in the universities. Given that the Pastoral Epistles was perceived to be key legitimating text for ecclesial authority, it is not surprising that a systematic hermeneutic of suspicion and resistance towards these texts emerged.

Other factors played their roles in catalysing this demotion of the Pastoral Epistles. For example, it is only in recent years that the manner and extent in which the then popular Nazi regime and its propaganda impacted the hermeneutics of influential University professors have been mapped out. The patently anti-Jewish zeitgeist of the German government and large swathes of its society became so pervasive that it irresistibly and often imperceptibly guided how researchers and historians framed questions, directed their methodologies, made critical choices and judgements,

and formulated their conclusions and ideas. Critical for our purposes was the fact that researchers insisted on a strict dichotomy between Jewish and Hellenistic influences on the historical genesis of Christianity. They moreover asserted that theological ideas and therefore texts, such as the Pastoral Epistles that seemed to be heavily framed by Hellenistic concepts came very late and therefore unlikely to have developed from Jewish minds, like Paul and for that matter Jesus. This powerful maxim was aided by a dominant Hegelian philosophy which asserted that all ideas develop over a prolonged period in evolutionary fashion from thesis to anti-thesis to synthesis. Specifically in relation to the New Testament, it was widely believed by scholars who almost always subscribed to this evolutionary philosophy that the notion of strictly defined Christian orthodoxy could not have emerged in Jesus' and Paul's day. The Pastoral Epistles could thus not have been written in the first century and ought to be interpreted with very different backgrounds and hermeneutical rules. It is these socio-political and philosophical traditions within the European context which served as the brewing pot for resistive stances towards the Pastoral Epistles.

The trajectory of this downward spiral started with Frederick Schleiermacher who in a letter-essay in 1807 made much of some of the peculiarities of the Pastoral Epistles. He opined that 1 Timothy was basically a poorly constructed compilation of Paul's letters. His rejection of Pauline authorship became more firmed up by later scholars who more explicitly drew on these objections to reject the theology and contributions of the Pastoral Epistles. By 1913, Martin Dibelius summed up six theses regarding the Pastoral Epistles which has continued to dominate not just scholarly guild but also reflected in most commentaries. Dibelius' argument against the authenticity of these texts were, (a) the absence of the Pastoral Epistles in some early manuscript collections, (b) the different approach adopted by the writer for dealing with false teaching as compared to Paul's other letters, (c) difficulties in harmonizing some of the events implied in the Pastoral Epistles with the events recorded in Acts of the Apostles, (d) the presence of significant number of words and phrases that are absent in the other Pauline letters, including disproportionate number of *hapaxes*, i.e., rare words found only in the Pastorals, (e) the impression that the ecclesial structure envisaged in the Pastoral Letters are advanced in comparison to Paul's other letters, and (f) the theology of these letters have some differences from what appears to prevail in the other Pauline letters.

These six objections to Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles put forward by Dibelius have essentially not changed and will shortly be addressed. For now, what is important to note is that based on these objections, and believing therefore that a pseudonymous author wrote later after Paul's death to address issues of his own time, it became the trend for commentators and writers to routinely reject or jettison some of the key theological contributions of these letters. Their deployment to address issues to deal with false teaching during the period for example became problematic. Their contribution to the doctrine of ecclesial structure was placed under a degree of doubt and certainly mollified in some sections of interpretation. And even their concern for Chris-

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tian moral conduct in the world were dismissed or pejoratively labelled as pushing “a ‘bourgeois’ form of Early Christianity.”¹⁹ Some scholars were more cautious in their evaluation and certainly resisted the extremes of this trend and indeed abhorred the tendencies of disparaging the Pastoral Epistles. They claimed that despite rejecting the Pauline authorship, they nevertheless held to their authoritative status. But by and large the settled opinion was rejection of the authenticities of these letters and thus their contributions became marginalized.

To be fair, the trend was associated with the rejection of a few others of Paul’s letters which had hitherto been accepted as genuine, namely, Ephesians, Colossians, and for some, Philippians and to some extent 2 Thessalonians. But the Pastoral Epistles remained at the most extreme end of this trend of partition of the Pauline corpus. In the place of the apostle, some scholars proposed innovative constructs of authorship so that it was argued that they bear Paul’s imprint but not authored by him or during his lifetime. Others laboured at demonstrating the flaws in the methodological assumptions, the exegetical moves and historical basis of the conclusions reached by Dibelius. Yet, despite these pushbacks, the general attitude in scholarship has been to marginalize the Pastoral Epistles from serious contribution to and appropriation of Christian theology.

The period ended with the massively influential work by Harrison²⁰ on the Pastoral Epistles which entrenched their marginalization for another century. Harrison employed a linguistic methodology which ostensibly compared the frequencies of particular lexicons and linguistic styles in the Pastoral Epistles with the other ten Pauline letters on one hand and on the other hand, a number of writings by post-Apostolic Church Fathers and Apologists. He found for example that as much as 37% of the words in the Pastoral Epistles were absent in the other Pauline letters. Moreover, he argued that the language of the Pastorals was nearer those of the postapostolic Fathers. Harrison’s arguments were heavily laced with statistics which, as one writer put it, constituted a “beautifully articulated military plan”.²¹ His statistical presentation played no small part in convincing many scholars, at a period of history when mathematical certainties had become the touchstone of science. It must be noted, however, that most of these scholars were not schooled in statistical methods. Recent more mathematically schooled reviewers^{22 23} have systematically dismantled the many flaws in Harrison’s project. For example, in grouping the shorter Pastoral Epistles together to compare against the much longer and larger numbers of what he regarded as authentic Pauline letters, Harrison committed a basic statistical error that undermines his result. Further-

¹⁹ Kidd, R. M. (1989). *Wealth and beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: An inquiry into a “bourgeois” form of early Christianity*. PhD Diss; Durham: Duke University.

²⁰ Harrison, P. N. (1921). *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*. London: Oxford University Press.

²¹ McIntyre, J. (1945). *The language of the Pauline epistles considered in its bearing on the possible Pauline authorship of the pastoral epistles*. MA Thesis; Durham: Durham University.

²² van Nes, J. (2013). *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: An Important Hypothesis Reconsidered*. In S. E. Porter, *Paul and Pseudepigraphy* (pp. 153-169). Leiden: Brill.

²³ Fickenscher, J. (2022). *A Rank-Based Analysis of Word Order and Codification in the Greek of the Pastoral Epistles*. PhD Diss.; St Louis: Concordia Seminary.

more, in including particles, prepositions, and pronouns in the cohort of words which were compared, he also committed a basic socio-linguistic error of not factoring how these verbal markers are largely influenced by the subject matter and not authorial habit or style. Indeed, a similar variation of use of vocabulary has been found in Shakespeare's works demonstrating how unreliable the whole concept is. Moreover, Harrison had not factored the possibility of the Church Fathers being dependent on the Pastoral letters, especially given that they addressed issues which were intimated by the Pastoral Letters. Other valid criticisms have been made of Harrison's contributions to make it unreliable for consideration for answering questions of authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

Be that as it may, the severely negative legacy of Harrison's work in the guild has yet to be overturned. From time to time, especially when Pauline ethics is the subject of consideration, a few scholars of the time resorted to the Pastoral Epistles for insights. Otherwise, the period constituted two centuries of systematic alienation of a group of texts which from all we can tell were rather crucial for the canonical interpreters of Paul. The effects of this marginalization cannot be understated. The otherwise magisterial projects of the Pauline theological movements of the post-world war years, the influential works of Schweitzer and Bultmann, for example, up through the New Perspective on Paul of Sanders and Wright, have all proceeded without any serious consideration for the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to these constructs. Yet they have routinely labelled their products as "theology of Paul". As we shall find in the rest of this book, a supposed "theology of Paul" that is devoid of the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles cannot be regarded as complete, given the uniqueness of the contributions of these letters.

Pastoral Epistles in Contemporary Scholarship

The last four decades of Pauline scholarship has been dominated by the paradigm shifting notion of the New Perspective on Paul. This idea was a welcome correction to decades of reading Paul through a wholly Hellenistic prism, sharply distinguishing him from his Jewish background. Reading Paul through a Jewish prism has indeed enabled a better and more textured interpretation of his letters. And it has paradoxically brought interpretations of most of his letters more closely with the other parts of the New Testament. Yet, as noted above, this seeming correction in Pauline scholarship has not spilled over to how the Pastoral Epistles have been received by scholars. If anything at all it seems to have marginalized the Pastoral Epistles even further. For a start those scholars who framed the tenets and ideas of the New Perspective on Paul simply took for granted that the Pastoral Epistles were not Pauline letters and therefore have nothing to contribute for correcting a misreading of Paul's theology. Indeed, the foundational study which launched the

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New Perspective on Paul, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* by Sanders²⁴, never mentions any of the Pastoral Epistles, not once. Subsequent leaders of the movement have not fared any better.

All has not been bleak though. The denial of Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles remains the dominant norm. Even so, the recent theological turn in New Testament Studies appears to be showing more interest in the Pastoral Epistles. The result is paradoxically exposing the inconsistencies in how critical scholars have approached the whole idea of pseudonymity in the New Testament. As a 2020 Gallup Poll²⁵ demonstrated, Ehrman's New York Times bestseller part titled *Forged*²⁶, has done much to popularize the view of critical orthodoxy regarding pseudonymity in the New Testament. In the process, Ehrman has done scholarship a service in exposing their implausible claim that their evaluation of a text to be pseudonymous was compatible with viewing them to be authoritative. They are not. This conclusion is in itself not surprising for as was noted earlier, the Pastoral Epistles provide an indispensable hermeneutical window for interpreting Paul. Accordingly, some scholars who hold to the view of pseudonymity nevertheless also argue that the Pastoral Epistles represent an astute interpretation of Pauline theology worth taking seriously.^{27 28}

Another positive trend is the increasing appreciation of the merits of studying each one of the Pastoral Epistles in their own rights. Several scholars now argue that, despite their thematic and literary similarities, each letter addresses a situation that is so independent of the others that the practice of lumping all three letters together as a corpus in the Pauline letters should be abandoned.^{29 30} So, according to Towner³¹, "the letters read as separate messages, and where language and themes overlap, each letter nevertheless employs them to achieve unique literary objectives." This is a fair critique of the traditional approach. For though scholars routinely categorize certain groups of Paul's letters together (e.g., the Prison letters), few scholars would lump them together for the purpose of interpretation and theological analyses as is routinely done for the Pastoral Epistles. It is further argued that the lumping of the three letters together results in loss of the unique voices of the shorter letters, especially Titus. Scholars continue to take their

²⁴ Sanders, E. P. (1977). *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

²⁵ Saad, L. (2020). *Record Few Americans Believe Bible Is Literal Word of God*. Retrieved January 8th, 2023, from Gallup: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/210704/record-few-americans-believe-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>.

²⁶ Ehrman, B. D. (2011). *Forged: Writing in the Name of God - Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*. New York: Harper Collins.

²⁷ Aageson, J. W. (2007). *Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church (Library of Pauline Studies)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

²⁸ Bray, G. L. (2019). *The Pastoral Epistles: International Theological Commentary Series*. London: T&T Clark.

²⁹ Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus (The New Testament in Context)*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.

³⁰ Towner, P. H. (2006). *The letters to Timothy and Titus: NICNT Commentary Series*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

³¹ Towner, P. H. (2006). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Page 28.

similarities in genre, theological emphases, and ecclesiological concerns seriously in interpretation. But the caution about potential errors in grouping them together is also being taken equally seriously. For some this has meant abandoning the term “Pastoral Epistles” altogether in favour of labelling each letter separately.

As we shall see later, this trend is proving very helpful for appreciating the theological contribution of Titus, a letter that has hitherto lived very much in the shadows of 1 Timothy, due to their remarkable similarities. On the other hand, there is an undesirable consequence also in completely dissociating these letters from each other to the extent of resulting in their losing their unique place and contributions to the Pauline corpus and the Bible as a whole. Their grouping together certainly heightens these contributions. All the same appreciating their nuanced differences is also yielding immense results for understanding each individual letter, especially in relation to their unique genre and situations they address. A paradoxical benefit of the new trend therefore is to heighten *both* the importance of each one of the letters, in terms of their uniqueness and their voices, and yet at the same time stressing their strength of contribution to the biblical canon only when kept together as a single unit. The letters are clearly stronger when treated together, demonstrating the ancient wisdom of being always found together in the textual tradition. This strength is on the other hand reinforced if interpretations of each one of them takes their respective literary and socio-historical contexts seriously. This is the approach adopted in the present study.

In addition to the above, as serving as a window for examining Pauline theology, two other aspects of the Pastoral Epistles are catching the attention of contemporary scholars. The first is the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11-15 and its relationship to current debates on gender in Church leadership. This interest has been especially pronounced in an era of social justice movement and will receive some attention in the studies that ensue. The second is with regards to the contributions of these letters to New Testament ethics. Many scholars are coming round to appreciate the nuanced manner in which these letters deal with Christian ethics in a predominantly Graeco-Roman culture with the competing ideologies and ethical paradigm. We shall have time to examine the extent to which the Pastoral Letters reinforce Christian ethics in such an environment. These two new interests have been tremendously enriched by the contributions of recent archaeological discoveries of first century Ephesus and insights into the pervasive influence of the religious atmosphere of the time. We shall devote extended sections in the chapters that follow to evaluate these subjects. It suffices to point out that the increasing interests in the Pastoral Epistles have not led to full reversal of their marginalization in the scholarly guild.

The above account of the history of reception is clearly limited, perhaps debatable and reductionistic in some of its conclusions as all brief historical narratives inhere. It for example leaves out the fact that the story has been different in the majority world where most scholars continue to

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rate these texts highly, even if they are not served well by the commentaries and academic expositions they rely on. Indeed, while the evidence has not been documented, there are reasons to surmise that the Pastoral Epistles have particular resonance to the majority world. As we shall see, the putative context they addressed shares some striking similarities with the situation in much of Africa, South and Central America and Asia, where the rapid expansion of Christianity with inadequately structured Church organization and polity has exposed the pressing danger of syncretism. The rapidity of development of innovations in Christian theology and praxes in the context of equally rapid growth of Churches is no doubt a fertile context for this development. Furthermore, the lack of well-defined ecclesiology shaping this rapid growth, paucity of biblically ground Church leadership despite their charismatic abilities to shape and guide the growth have all made engaging the message of these texts urgent in these contexts. Also important is the seeming revivals in indigenous religions and certainly in the case of Africa, Islamic religion in the majority world. While superficially the Church in the majority world may appear to be doing better than elsewhere, there are reasons to be concerned about how deep this health is. The purposes and messages of the Pastoral Epistles are particularly fitting for addressing these issues in these contexts.

Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles

All three Pastoral Epistles explicitly bear the name of Paul as their writer. As indeed was the Apostle's practice, they all open with his trademark self-introduction, each one as usual tailored for the specific purpose of the letter (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Tit 1:1). They also identify familiar names of colleagues, sympathizers, and opponents of Paul from the other letters and add new ones, which again is typical. And even though questions are raised regarding how the Apostle's implied itinerary might fit into that found in Acts of the Apostles, there is no question that the movements they project reflect the life and career of Paul who until his imprisonments was more often travelling rather than stationary. Indeed Tit 1:5 and 3:12 suggest that Paul was in transit somewhere in the East, at the time of writing that letter. So also, most likely, is the impression in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 1:3). And he had further plans for travel, back to Ephesus in the case of 1 Tim 1:3, and 3:14, and towards Nicopolis in the Adriatic region in the case of Titus. How significantly Paul's movements and further plans for travels affected his framing of these two letters (he was in prison when he wrote 2 Timothy) is difficult to assess. But it could have had some impact if one compares the phenomenon to other letters such as Romans and 1 Corinthians in which he was more stationary at the time of writing.

Be that as it may, all three letters definitely also bear Paul's trademark theological and pastoral concerns, even if some of the language differ. He is determined to fulfil his call of mission to the nations (1 Tim 2:1-7; 2 Tim 1:11, 4:17). He is deeply burdened for the success of the churches he had planted and remains throughout the letters, passionately committed to the Lord Jesus

who called him to such a task. He ventures to disclose the names of Timothy's mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5), and even tells his readers about Timothy's health (1 Tim 5:23). In fact, 2 Timothy weaves together a very realistic and so typically complicated narrative of the state of affairs around Paul, precisely what one would expect of real-life situations. Paul for example had recently been to Troas where he left some of his belongings with a specific person he names (2 Tim 4:13). He also mentions that Onesiphorus had recently arrived in Rome from Asia (2 Tim 1:15-18) and had made strenuous efforts to locate him. He identifies the location of some of his co-workers, and names other believers who are identified elsewhere in the New Testament to have been associated with his missionary efforts. So, for example, Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18; Rom 16:3, 19), Tychicus (2 Tim 4:12; Acts 20:4; 21:29), Erastus (2 Tim 4:20, Acts 19:22), and Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20; Acts 20:4; 21:29) are also known in Acts. Moreover, on two occasions, he requests Timothy himself to join him, and bring his belongings along while doing so (2 Tim 4:9-13).

It would thus appear that if the one who wrote these letters was not Paul, then he must have taken extraordinarily meticulous measures to successfully disguise himself as if he were Paul. Why he would do that and how it could be that until 200yrs ago no single writer suggested that this couldn't have been Paul, are remarkable pieces of the phenomenon. And yet, despite this amount of solid evidence, majority of contemporary critical scholars in the last 200yrs have come to believe that this is precisely the case, that the one who claims to be Paul is after all not that person and yet successfully managed to disguise himself for the preceding nineteen centuries. These critical scholars assert that someone, a pseudonymous writer who was not Paul, aware that the Apostle was long dead, decided to put together these letters deliberately portraying such realistic and complex real-life narratives, passing themselves off as if they were Paul, addressed them to Paul's co-workers who were then also dead, believing that even if his readers suspected such fictitious elements in the work, they would nevertheless ignore the fictitious scaffolding and yet value the text because it contained weighty theological ideas. Few scholars will put their stance in this stark manner, but it is difficult to render the implications of their argument any other way.

There have been mediating positions. Some scholars for example postulate that some of the materials employed for constructing the Pastoral Epistles were derived from fragments of Paul's writings which were posthumously put together by an individual or a Pauline school made up of his disciples for addressing issues after the demise of the Apostle. That way a suggestion is made that the letter could claim to be genuinely from Paul when in actual fact its whole framework and therefore theological programme and intention was post-Pauline. Others, rejecting the label of pseudonymity, have argued for a phenomenon of allonymity, that is, a lesser-known author transparently borrowing a well-known author's name as their own for their work without aiming to deceive. Basically, the argument is that pseudonymity suggests intention to deceive

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whereas allonymity does not have that intentionality. The original readers knew that these documents were not from the Apostle Paul and not to Timothy and Titus, but were willing to take them as authoritative nevertheless, so the claim goes.

Many scholars have rejected this distinction between pseudonymity and allonymity. But even if an allonymous author did not intend to deceive the readers, it is still not a benign exercise as it has profound consequences for the interpretation of the text. After all, their interpretation depends significantly on the historical data in which the text situates itself. In other words, if the writer is not the Apostle Paul but someone else, and the recipients are not Timothy and Titus, then modern readers are to assume another set of socio-cultural circumstances which will then impact their interpretation of the text. We shall see for example that it is impossible to interpret 1 Timothy fully and adequately without taking account of the socio-historical circumstances of mid-first century Ephesus. The manner in which the wealth of the city impacted socio-religious life, the configurations and influence of the social classes and their reflection in religious expressions, the peculiar gender issues of the city, and above all, the syncretistic tendencies of the many religions, all impacted Christian belief and practices. No meaningful interpretation of these texts may proceed without grappling with these questions. If we cannot have confidence in doing so, then the process will be fraught. Put another way, there are significant consequences to rejecting Pauline authorship of these letters. Interpreters who suggest otherwise may be making special pleading for their case. Accordingly, it is imperative to address the validity of the bases upon which scholars have reached such decisions that are critical for the interpretation of these letters.

Critical scholars advance four categories of objections to the traditional view of Pauline authorship. The first objection is **Linguistic**. It is noted that the Pastoral Epistles contain a significant number of vocabularies which are absent or less frequent in the other Pauline letters. Sometimes different words are used for the same ideas that are shared with the other Pauline letters. So, for example, words such as “godliness” (εὐσέβεια; *eusebeia*), and “self-controlled” (σώφρονα; *sōphrona*), are frequently employed, and ἐπιφάνειαν (*epiphaneian*) is used rather than παρουσίας (*parousias*) when speaking of the appearance of Jesus. The letters also have different linguistic styles, employing lists of nouns, peculiar adjectives and generally a different style of presentation of the arguments. As noted above there is a significant flaw in the methodology of, and also the assumptions behind, this line of objection. This is so much so that even though a few scholars continue to advance it, most have abandoned the linguistic objections altogether. It is true though that when all these factors are considered the Pastoral Epistles still contain a number of hapaxes in comparison to the New Testament. Yet, it surely cannot be that an ancient writer, let alone a clearly busy letter writer as Paul, would not have been versatile enough in introducing new vocabularies in his communication, especially when these are directed primarily to colleagues. The fact is that when taken on their own merit, every Pauline letter has its own peculiar linguistic style and unique words, dictated much more by the topics, the situation, and Paul’s

own state of mind. Perhaps also, his evident desire to ensure that his Apostolic legacy is maintained through these assistants all contributed to the peculiar linguistic style. Then also is the factor of the contribution of his amanuensis (secretary). After all Paul sometimes dictated his letters (e.g., Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Philem 19, Col 4:18) and that certainly must impact the ultimate style.

The second objection is **Ecclesiastical** – that the structure and polity of the churches depicted in the letters (1 Tim 3:1-7, 4:6, 5:17-21; Tit 1:5-9) appear to be too organized and is more akin to depictions of the church leadership organization in periods later after Paul's time. A common comparison is sometimes made with the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (35–107 AD – *To the Ephesians* 2.2; *To the Magnesians* 3.1; *To the Trallians* 2.2; 3.1) in which Ignatius seems to depict a three-tiered church hierarchy headed by a monarchy styled bishop. It is asserted that a similar picture is assumed in the Pastoral Epistles. But a plain reading of the Pastoral Epistles shows nothing of the sort. The distinction between elders and bishops are even difficult to identify on simple reading of the texts (Titus 1:5, 7; cf. Acts 20:17, 28), and hence the continuing debate in scholarship. And in any case, there is little evidence of a rigid hierarchical structure even in Ignatius' time, with others adopting a less hierarchical structure. Moreover, the Pastoral Epistles repeat the practice of style of leadership structure which Paul and Barnabas instituted earlier during their missionary journeys (Acts 14:23; cf. 11:30; 15:2; 20:28–31; 21:18), and which was evidently present in Philippi (Phil 1:1). Jewish synagogues long before Paul's time also had similar systems and so there is no reason why the pattern would have been different in his day. Paul in the Pastoral Epistles certainly dwells more on the qualifications of these leaders rather than their duties and distribution of powers. Those were assumed to be basic, only employing the metaphor of the steward or father of the household to indicate what was expected of them. Then also, Acts of the Apostles frequently pairs Apostles with "elders" (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; cf. 21:18). The argument regarding ecclesiastical structure comes unstuck given the explicit instructions for Titus to appoint elders in every town. Presumably each one of these would be directly accountable to Titus and not to a regional authority. All put together, it must be concluded that though the references to ecclesial leadership are prominent in the Pastoral Epistles, this only proves that Paul was particularly interested in addressing this subject as part of his aim to get the recipients to deal with the problems. They affirm rather than undermine the authenticity of these letters.

The social welfare arrangements for the widows are also sometimes cited as evidence of sophisticated church government and polity. It is particularly pointed out that the extensive arrangement described in 1 Tim 5 would seem to suggest that there may well have been an ecclesiastical order of widows who had pledged vows of celibacy as part of their dedication to serve Christ and thus had become dependent on the Church for funding. We will examine the passage a bit more thoroughly later. But there is no reason to read it as a sophisticated arrangement, and certainly not as part of a church hierarchy. The care of widows was very thoroughly organized from the

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early days of the church in Judea, and so there is no reason to suppose that a much more organized system would not have become the norm a decade or two later, even in the Gentile environment of Ephesus.

The third objection is **Historical-contextual**. Objectors argue that it is quite difficult to identify with some precision the nature of the problems in the context to which Paul addresses these letters. So, for example what was the precise false teaching that was plaguing the Ephesian context? It is fair to say that when objections to Pauline authorship began to be raised from the late eighteenth century onwards, a prevailing construct of the nature of heterodoxy and heteropraxy in early Christianity dominated scholarship and wrongly directed all enquiries into a *cul de sac* from which the academy is only recently recovering. It was assumed that Gnosticism with its dualistic philosophical framework was the key threat to Christian orthodoxy, and that any vocabulary or concept which had any tinge of dualism must have emerged from Gnosticism. Given as all the historical evidence is that Gnosticism proper developed in the second century, a standard but evidently flawed thinking developed in Biblical scholarship. This mistakenly attributed any hint of dualism to Gnosticism and then therefore categorized teachings that had that ring to it as emerging only late in the second century onwards.

This was a major flaw no doubt. For starters, it is now patently clear that dualistic thought and speech went back centuries before Paul's time. It was indeed prevalent in many Jewish circles, and some may even identify it with the Old Testament's doctrine of the "Two Ways". Moreover, the false teachings addressed in the Pastorals do not as much exhibit the so-called dualistic Gnostic tendencies but rather a syncretistic mindset which was rife throughout the region even before the first century. It is true that some of the Church Fathers such as Irenaeus found the Pastoral Epistles very useful for countering the Gnosticism which developed in their day. But that does not therefore mean that the Pastoral Letters were originally written to address Gnosticism. Furthermore, the historically verifiable situation of the Ephesian Churches at the close of the century were very different from the situation these letters paint. By contrast Acts of the Apostles together with recent archaeological discoveries document the presence of all the necessary elements that would have made the situation with the church in Ephesus around the late 50s and early 60s so much fitting to what Paul addresses. The dominance of the Artemesian religion, the interest in magic and in particular the heavy presence of syncretistic Jews, altogether formed a powerful cocktail for the development of heresy during the time of Paul. The fact that the pattern does not fit one single known and organized false teaching is simply because they were not organized. Syncretism is seldom organized.

The objectors do sometimes also raise the difficulty of matching the historical context of the Pastoral Epistles with that depicted in Acts of the Apostles to justify their stance. There is no mention in Acts for example of Paul being in Nicopolis or on a mission to Crete (Tit 1:5, 3:12). But these

objections are based on the unwarranted presumption that Luke records every movement of Paul. If that premise were to stand the objections ought to be raised also with the other Pauline letters such as 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans where Paul identifies places he had been that Acts does not document (2 Cor 11:23–24; Gal 1:2; 4:13–14; Rom 15:19).

The fourth objection is **Theological**. They point to the emphases of already formed solid theological doctrines, including what Paul repeatedly refers to as “trustworthy sayings” (e.g., 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:1; and Tit 3:8). These are regarded as too concrete theological dogma to have emanated in the first century. For example, God is repeatedly called “our Saviour” (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Tit 1:3; 3:4), an epithet which Paul uses only twice elsewhere and for Jesus (Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20). The letters put significant stress on “sound doctrine” something which appears new in the Pauline corpus. Whereas these observations are indeed correct, they do not impact on the authorship question, as in their general sense, they convey Pauline theological thought and themes. In other words, the objection based on theology essentially amounts to a linguistic objection. The Pastoral Epistles are different from the rest of the Pauline corpus not because they were not written by the one who claimed to have written them. They are different because they were in fact written by the same person to a different category of recipients, addressing a complicated scenario of mixtures of false teachings, and so they were aimed at setting out a systematic number of strategies for their solution. The uniqueness of the Pastoral Epistles therefore results from their genre and the contingent situations they address. Not on the authorship. In fact, on that score, their uniqueness affirm that we are reading from an author with a pastoral instinct who is not enslaved to words but driven by tailoring them to address peculiar situations.

We shall return repeatedly to this fundamental notion as we examine the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles. But for now, we must conclude that it is clear that cogent and viable answers are offered to each one of the objections to Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. The fundamental issue behind the claim of inauthenticity appears not to be simple objective data. For, the fact is, all scholars accept that there is something unique about these Epistles. The sticking point is the degree to which a scholar may evaluate these differences when compared with the other Pauline letters, and their judgement as to the relevance of their evaluation. Moreover, how these two evaluative judgements are arrived at is not totally explicit despite the arguments that a scholar may mount in support of their judgement. So also, are the consequences of these judgements. Or to put it bluntly, they boil down to and also impact the scholar’s hermeneutics. This is not a purely objective exercise.

Those who evaluate the differences as out of the scale of the variations of Paul’s writing abilities or what one could expect to have been the historical situation of the embryo Christian communities in the 50s to 60s AD attribute the authorship to later time after the demise of Paul. They accordingly rate the historical value of the Pastoral Epistles less highly, even if they might give

some weight to their theological contributions. On the other hand, those who accept Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles tend to evaluate their difference from the other letters as acceptable within the spectrum of a versatile author's capabilities. They judge these differences as making positive contributions for our understanding of the historical and social complexities of the contexts of New Testament Churches. And they freely employ the Pastoral Epistles for answering historical and theological questions related to the New Testament times. In other words, these judgement choices have roots and consequences. They are judgements that cannot be made lightly.

Sociohistorical backgrounds of the Pastoral Epistles

We shall reserve the matter of the specific purposes and occasions for the writing of each one of the Pastoral Letters to the next three chapters respectively. In this section we will rather provide a thick description of the socio-cultural and political situation of Ephesus and Crete in the middle of the first century, description that will help in the interpretation of these letters. We will address three key concerns here, (a) the Recipients, (b) the Locations, and (c) the Heresies.

Recipients of the Pastoral Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles were addressed primarily to two of Paul's co-workers, Timothy and Titus. There is copious amount of information on Timothy in the New Testament. According to Acts 16, he hailed from the Galatian province of Lystra where Paul met him during his first missionary journey. From what the Apostle says, his mother and grandmother were Jewish, and his father, who perhaps was not alive at the time was likely Greek (Acts 13:49-14:25; 2 Tim 3:11). Paul soon became more than a father figure to Timothy who later joined Paul's team after his circumcision. He was certainly dear to the Apostle who described him his as "beloved and faithful son in the Lord" (1 Cor 4:17), God's "fellow worker" (1 Thess 3:2) and "my true son" (1 Tim 1:2).

Some of Paul's language about and to Timothy could be taken at face value to indicate that the latter was young, fragile and lacked confidence (e.g., 1 Cor 16:10-11; 2 Tim 1:6-7). But this picture must be balanced by the elevated and often independent roles Timothy played as part of Paul's team. Timothy was perhaps the most valuable member of that large group, co-authoring six of Paul's letters, (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon) and mentioned in two others in which he is identified as Paul's co-worker (Romans and 1 Corinthians). That makes ten, including the two letters that bear his name. Only three letters of Paul fail to mention Timothy, namely, Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus. That was how important he was. He is indeed trusted enough to be sent as apostolic emissary on important missions to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1-10), Philippi (Phil 2:19-24) and Corinth (1 Cor 4:16-17). Paul's exhortations to Timothy from which these impressions are derived may well also reflect the Apostle's own concerns or perhaps be part of his own way of cultivating a pastoral habitus of strength in

weakness in Timothy, as he himself espoused (2 Cor 12:7-10). We shall devote extended sections to examine how Paul employs his language to cultivate and nurture God-relying and honouring pastoral identity and habitus in Timothy in the final chapter of this book. For now, it is crucial for interpreters to be reticent in imagining Timothy to have been a persistently immature person. The evidence points to a contrary conclusion. Be that as it may, as co-worker, Timothy became indispensable to Paul. As the Apostle put it to the Philippians – “I have no-one else like him...Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel” (Phil 2:20-22). This rich background indeed prepared Timothy to become the Apostolic representative to address a most difficult problem of the mission in Ephesus.

Not as much is known about Titus’s background as Timothy’s. The former is not mentioned at all in Acts but features in several of Paul’s letters. He is mentioned thirteen times (2 Cor 2:13, 7:6, 7:13–14, 8:6, 16–17, 23, 12:18, and Gal 2:1, 3). The little gleaned from these personal references definitely qualifies him to play the similar role in Crete that Paul assigned to him. He was a Gentile whose uncircumcision (in contrast to Timothy’s circumcision) was clearly inspired by Paul’s strategic Gentile missionary stance (Gal 2:3). He most probably had a robust disposition, with apparently a stronger temperament and commanding presence, enough to be labelled by some scholars as “Paul’s trouble-shooter”. And trouble shooter Titus indeed helped Paul to secure the agreement of the Jerusalem apostles for his Gentile mission (Gal 2:2-3), dealt with the difficult Corinthians in which he was the bearer of the notorious “sorrowful letter” from Paul (2 Cor 2:3-4, 13, 7:6-16) and sent to collect the outstanding contributions for the humanitarian relief funds (2 Cor 8:16-24). But like Timothy, Titus is also identified by Paul in the letter as his “true son in the faith” (1:4). Elsewhere in his letters, Paul labels Titus as “my brother Titus” (2 Cor 2:13), and “my partner and fellow worker” (2 Cor 8:23). So, he was definitely very close to Paul. It is to these two believers, serving as Apostolic representatives, that the Pastoral Epistles were primarily addressed.

As explained earlier, the situation with recipients of the Pastoral Epistles is rather complex, for these letters were semi-private. We should strictly therefore label the readership of the Pastoral Letters as layered. On one level, there are communicative elements from Paul to Timothy/Titus. On another level, the communication is from Paul to the churches they were to oversee. And at a third level, there are implied or anticipated communication from Timothy/Titus to these churches. One may well suggest a fourth encyclical or general level, if indeed Paul also intended to use these letters as template for the training, formation, and instruction of other leaders of Pauline churches. The direct evidence for this fourth level is limited, but these letters certainly came to be employed that way and would seem to have been a remote consideration of the Apostle. All these levels are rolled into one complicated genre. To put it another way, Paul employs the Pastoral Letters to concurrently repair, rebuild and solidify three different kinds of relationships in order to advance the mission of the Gospel in challenging settings, namely, (a) Paul and his co-

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workers, (b) Paul and the Churches in Ephesus and Crete, and (c) Timothy and Titus and the Churches in Ephesus and Crete. Accordingly, knowledge of the backgrounds of Timothy and Titus has limited utility on the extent to which it impacts our interpretations of these letters. On the other hand, given that one of Paul's secondary goals in writing these letters is the spiritual development of these leaders, the letters provide a considerable window to understand the successors of Paul and pastoral theological formation.

The Locations

Both 1 and 2 Timothy were written to Timothy in Ephesus, and Titus to Crete. The situation in Crete at the time of writing is much less clear and yet relevant for interpreting the letter. The large island in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea was so mountainous that most of its cities encircled it on the coasts. But this also made it open to the sea-faring world and therefore relatively rich but vulnerable to invasions. The island was associated with Caphtor in the Old Testament (Deut 2:23), the origins of the Philistines (Amos 9:7), and the myth of Minos, the mythological inaugural king of Crete. It was believed that every nine years Minos donated seven boys and seven girls into a mythological underworld labyrinth and subsequently after his death became the judge of the underworld. Cretans thus had a rather dark mythical underlay to their religions. A similar impression is gained in analysing the Cretan myths of origins of the gods where, very much unlike their surrounding neighbours where the origins of gods were thought to be otherworldly, their myths claimed earthly and human origins of the gods. Zeus in the first century Cretan mind was born as a human being and killed and buried in their island only to have emerged as a god. Care must be taken in drawing significant conclusions about the first century Cretan based on such myths, for precisely how religious notions impact people's daily lives is complicated. Even so, they may well provide hints for deciphering the philosophical attitudes and leanings of first century Cretans and so may have relevance for the issues Titus was to address. For, these myths demonstrate a strong flavour of anthropomorphism and at least anthropological origins of Cretan religion. It points to Cretan pragmatic *laissez faire*, "live and let's live" attitude to life. This was reasonably different from their Greek, Egyptian and to some degree, Roman neighbours who speculated on other worldly gods. By contrast Cretan myths tended to be suffused with ideas about animals and humans. First century Crete also had a strong Jewish presence that goes back many centuries, and apparently persisted with strong links with Alexandrian Jews.

Though not a lot is known about Christianity in Crete during the time of Paul and Titus, it is interesting that references to contacts with the Christian religion are found at the beginning and the end of Acts of the Apostles, and yet nothing said of it in between. At the beginning, we are told that there were Jews from Crete in Jerusalem during Pentecost, suggesting that some were converted and returned to the island with the Gospel (Acts 2:11). The only other mention of the island is in Acts 27 when Paul's ship briefly docked there while on his way under arrest to Rome. It is possible that in between the two incidents Paul had been on a brief mission to the island in the

late 50s AD, resulting in the founding of churches there. Walker in two articles³² argues for example that 1 Timothy and Titus were written in the period between September AD 55 and January AD 57 when Paul left Ephesus and went across into Macedonia and Illyricum before wintering in Corinth (Acts 20:1-3; Rom 15:19). In that scenario, Paul having doubts of the stability of the newly found churches, or certainly perhaps needing to leave earlier than he had hoped, left Titus behind in Crete (Tit 1:5) and shortly wrote him the letter mandating him on how to stabilize the churches.

Alternatively, Paul's mission to Crete may have occurred in the period after the release from imprisonment recorded in Acts 28. In that case, the genesis of Cretan Christianity would have been in the early 60s AD. Most interpreters opt for this later scenario given that Patristic tradition tended to date Paul's execution in the late 60s. Paul's writing of the Pastoral Epistles after a first Roman imprisonment may also help explain their linguistic features. That said however, the arguments for the plausibility of the earlier proposal are also worth entertaining. In any case given that little is known about the setting, most of the information about the context of Crete is to be gleaned from the letter itself.

By contrast, our knowledge of the situation with the location to which 1 and 2 Timothy were addressed is much more detailed and evidenced. First century Ephesus was one of the most important cities of Asia Minor. Its importance as a Roman provincial capital was surpassed in its time only by major cities such as Rome itself, Alexandria and Syrian Antioch. Being a port city and thus a gateway of sorts to the whole Roman province of Asia Minor, the comparison with what New York City is to the USA is not far-fetched. Indeed, one first century Roman writer called it *Lumen Asiae* (the Light of Asia). It is unsurprising therefore that reference to the presence of the Church in this city abound, from the early stages as recorded in Acts to the late stage as in the Book of Revelation. Recent massive archaeological excavations of ancient Ephesus³³ have also confirmed historical reliability of the information provided by Luke's account of Ephesus in Acts 19. For example, the speech in Acts 19:25-27, by Demetrius, the coppersmith who incited the crowd against Paul in Ephesus paints a very realistic picture of Ephesus that matches accurately what we now know about mid-first century Ephesus. Demetrius said,

You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.

³² Walker, P. (2012). Revisiting the Pastoral Epistles - Part I. *European Journal of Theology*, 21(1), 4-16. Walker, P. (2012). Revisiting the Pastoral Epistles - Part II. *European Journal of Theology*, 21(2), 120-132.

³³ Windle, B. (2018). Ephesus: A case study for the reliability of Scripture. *Bible and Spade*, 31(3), 62-68.

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Demetrius was absolutely right in his honest protestations and fears. First century Ephesus was rich, money obsessed, and dominated by self-interested trade guilds, all woven around the industrial religious complex of the worship of the goddess Artemis. The following should thus be regarded as additional information to the account in Acts 19. Hoag³⁴ has rightly observed that first century Ephesus was distinctive in three areas, namely, (a) it was the sacred home of the global religion of the worship of the goddess Artemis, (b) it was made the Roman imperial capital of Asia by Augustus, and (c) the flourishing trade made it rich with goods and culture and traditions. Ephesus at the time of Paul and Timothy was therefore demographically complex, commercially rich, socially metropolitan, politically sensitive, and religiously a melting pot. We shall take each of these features in turn and reflect on why they are important for interpreting the Timothean letters.

By the middle of the first century, Ephesus was a bustling city that had rapidly grown in size and population during the reign of Caesar Augustus who moved the capital of Asia from Pergamum to Ephesus, with massive building projects. Some have estimated a population of over a quarter of a million which makes it the most populous Asian city of the first century. Its geographical situation at the intersection of major international trade routes towards the East as far as India ensured that the population was a complex mixture of ethnicities. Its Greek background had in any case been heavily influenced and transformed by its Romanization. But the travel to and through the city for commerce and religion ensured the presence of peoples from all over the then world, including Jews whose significant and influential presence is well attested to by the New Testament. The situation was such that there were new people coming into Ephesus all the time. And this complex pluralistic, multicultural and ever-changing demography contributed to the development and growth of the false teachings. Development of syncretistic beliefs and practices is after all the natural result of such a demographic complexity.

The city reached heights of prosperity during the first century, the very time that Paul and Timothy and later, John became associated with it. The drivers of commerce, as it is in such situations were multiple. What one might call, religious tourism played a role. In addition to tourism, an ideology of the Artemisian religion made it not just the goddess of prosperity but also of financial security. People not only sought for the blessings of the idol for their money. They also brought their wealth for safe keeping at the temple. It is no wonder then that the Artemisium (the temple of Artemis) became the international financial centre and a modern equivalent of investment banking. This bank virtually controlled the finances for much of that part of the world.³⁵ Inhabitants of Ephesus could also pay to become priestesses and priests of the goddess. Thus, a system of corrupt practices developed that made people rich and powerful. Priesthood of Artemis

³⁴ Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus. Vol. 11.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

³⁵ Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus.*

religion was big business. But there were many other businesses as well, judging by recent discoveries of inscriptions regarding guilds and associations. Inscriptions for guilds, for merchants, coppersmiths, silversmiths, clothing sellers, wine tasters, wool dealers, bed builders, carpenters, physicians and many others have all been found³⁶. We will see how wealth played a major role not just in affecting the way men (1 Tim 6) and women (1 Tim 2) behaved in Church, but also how it at least had a potential to corrupt Church leaders (1 Tim 3). It contributed to the development and certainly the spread of the false teaching. And it explains why Paul warns Timothy saying, “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim 6:9-10). There was a very lively problem with money at work in the contingent context of the Timothean letters.

Given the wealth of the city as well as the rich mix of cultures, it was not surprising also that first century Ephesus was socially metropolitan. Just over a century before Timothy’s time, the Roman Emperor had established a bi-cameral city government with its own Secretary of the city, and a people’s assembly (*ekklesia* – the same term which is employed for the gathering of God’s people), very much along the line of the organization of the Roman senate (cf., Acts 19:23-41). A mutual admiration between the Ephesians and the Roman Emperors ensured a prolonged time of peace and prosperity, and with it also the flourishing of the Imperial cult in the city. A particular class of influential political class called *Asiarchs* were appointed as essentially political operators and go-betweens who ensured the relationship between Rome and Ephesus endured. These people to be fair were scattered all over Asia, but unsurprisingly had a more pronounced presence in Ephesus, as recent archaeological evidence has confirmed. Luke states that Paul made some friends among them (Acts 19:31), an information which indicates significant reach, or at least potential reach of the Gospel among the wealthy and influential classes of Ephesus. This no doubt has relevance for interpreting and understanding some of the exhortations in 1 Timothy regarding greed, wealth, social class and politics. There is evidence also of varieties of entertainment options in first century Ephesus, from athletics, leisure pursuits, Dionysiac dance performers, gladiatorial and other sports.³⁷ First century Ephesus was no doubt a vibrant and upwardly mobile city.

By far, and at least for our purposes, it is the religious elements of first century Ephesus which had the most important consequences. It was a religious melting pot no doubt even though the worship of the goddess, Artemis dominated every aspect of life, its landscape, festivals, and culture. And even though it was a religion that had adherents in many parts of the world, resulting in

³⁶ Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus*. Page 45.

³⁷ Trebilco, P. (2007). *The early christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

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three versions, namely, the Roman, Greek and Ephesian versions, it was so associated with Ephesus with its own special modifications that it became known as Artemis of the Ephesians. There are good reasons for its distinctive Ephesian association. For example, the Ephesian version regarded the goddess as a celibate virgin who specialized in midwifery, as “saviour” of women during childbirth. Plutarch³⁸, a first century Roman historian, reports a myth that circulated at the time that the temple of Artemis had been burned in the previous generation because the goddess “was absent, assisting at the birth of Alexander [the Great]”. No wonder that she was named in popular imagination as “Artemis Saviour” for what was believed to be her ability to save women through childbirth, one of the commonest causes of death among women at the time. Others acclaimed her as “Lady (*Kyria*), Saviour (*Sōteira*), a heavenly goddess (*ouranios theos Artemis Ephesia*), and the Queen of the Cosmos (*basilēis kosmou*). She was also described as greatest (*megistē*), great (*megalē*), holiest (*hagiōtatē*), and most manifest (*epiphane-statē*).³⁹ In sum, Artemis dominated this third most important city of the Roman Empire. It is of no surprise, as we shall find, that echoes of these terms are employed within the Timothean letters for assorted number of reasons. The Artemisian temple itself was a great spectacle, one of the Seven Wonders of the World at the time, and as has been pointed out became a key centre of international investment banking. Every aspect of Ephesian life was bound up with the worship of Artemis. As Oster put it, “There was no other Graeco-Roman metropolis in the Empire whose ‘body, soul, and spirit’ could so belong to a particular deity as did Ephesus to her patron goddess Artemis”⁴⁰. The two major festivals per year, each lasting a whole month, that were celebrated in honour of Artemis, ensured that pilgrims regularly flowed into and out of the city along with their wealth, influences, and culture. The gender connotations of the fertility cult, together with the influences of its powerfully rich priestesses became associated also with a degree of ancient equivalent of feminism, certainly the empowerment of women of the city.

Whether this element of the Artemisian cult played a part in shaping the nature of the false teachings in Ephesus has been a subject of dispute among New Testament scholars. Majority of contemporary scholars believe they did and must be considered as playing a key role for elucidating not just the context, but the Timothean letters themselves. Some within this group have invariably read elements of the gender related instructions in 1 Timothy, especially 1 Tim 2:11-15 with this as a background in mind and we shall have opportunity to examine this later.⁴¹ There may for certain, be sound grounds for the interpretation of parts of this passage as polemic against Arte-

³⁸ Plutarch. (2004). *The Life of Alexander the Great*, ed. Arthur Hugh Clough,. trans John Dryden; New York: Random House. Page 3.

³⁹ Trebilco, P. (2007). *The early christians in Ephesus*. Page 22.

⁴⁰ Oster, R. E. (2016). Ephesus as a religious center under the Principate, I. Paganism before Constantine. In W. H. (Ed.), *Heidentum: Die religiösen Verhältnisse in den Provinzen* (pp. 1661-1728). Band 18/3; Teilband Religion. Berlin: De Gruyter.

⁴¹ Kroeger, R. C., & Kroeger, C. C. (1998). *I suffer not a woman: Rethinking I Timothy 2: 11-15 in light of ancient evidence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. Glahn, S. (2015). The identity of Artemis in first-century Ephesus. *Bibliotheca sacra*, 172(687), 316-334. Glahn, S. (2015). The first-century Ephesian Artemis: ramifications of her identity. *Bibliotheca sacra*, 172(688), 450-469.

mis. And so, even if there is no direct polemical intension against the Artemisian religion in 1 Tim 2, former adherents who were now Christians would most likely have noted the resonance to their former beliefs. The warnings regarding extremities of asceticism later in 1 Timothy would certainly have been linked in their minds to some of the ideas and practices of abstentions from food and sex associated with the Artemisian religion.

But the worship of Artemis was not the only influential religion in Ephesus. Being polytheistic, it is unsurprising that the Ephesians subscribed to portfolios of beliefs, practices and gods. The Olympian gods, imperial cults, folk Asiatic religions and eastern mystery cults all flourished in Ephesus. The Asians were for example the most ardent followers of the imperial cult, their avid polytheism apparently facilitating ever increasing accumulation of gods and idols they worshipped. But Ephesus also had a recognizable presence of Judaism, as the Jewish population in first century Ephesus was not insignificant. In addition to Luke's account in Acts 19, of the presence of the Jewish synagogue, and the comical operation of the seven sons of the Jewish chief priests, one may also add evidence from Josephus (*Ant* 14:227) and Philo.

Luke's example of the behaviour of the seven sons of Sceva also demonstrates another facet of Ephesian religious life – the syncretistic inclusion of magical beliefs and practices in everyday Ephesian life. It is indeed unsurprising that Ephesus became famous all over the ancient world as the centre of magic.⁴² Recently discovered magical papyri demonstrate that the average Ephesian of the time could not escape the strong attractions of magic mixed with mystery religions and astrological speculations. The term *Ephesia grammata* found in many ancient amulets, protective charms and sometimes recited as magical commands, represents all the evidence that one needs in support of this claim. People as far away as Alexandria of Egypt owned these amulets which they used for their protection and presumably prosperity. That incantations were inscribed on some of the statutes of the goddess Artemis may have been a ploy to enhance the commercial aspect of the cult, for there is evidence that this magical formula operated also independent of the Artemis cult. Luke's account of this practice in Acts 19:18-20 testifies not just of the widespread prevalence of magic in the city, and the extraordinary amount of commerce that it involved. But also, on a general level, it underlines the link between money and first century Ephesus.

The story of the seven sons of Sceva also highlights the extent of this syncretistic absorption of magic into Judaism. Several amulets and copies of incantations incorporated into Jewish prayers have been discovered, some of them proudly naming idols as mediators of these prayers. For example, the Book of Razi'el (also called Book of Secrets), which to be fair cannot be accurately dated and certainly does not go back anywhere near the first century, and yet has been suggest-

⁴² Arnold, C. (2001). *Power and magic: the concept of power in Ephesians*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

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ed as containing traditions that go back to those times, contains mixtures of Jewish religious ideas, astrological speculations, mystery cult incantations and magical treatises. Another example is the magical manual of *Sword of Moses*, which has been mooted as preserving some traditions going back to the first century. The *Testament of Solomon* is another example of Jewish magical texts. No direct links have been demonstrated between these manuals and first century Ephesus. What they demonstrate however is the long line of history of Jewish syncretism that the seven sons of Sceva were part of. While it is not fully evident that the false teachings in Ephesus and Crete, to which we now devote ourselves to examine, had magical elements, they had strong Jewish elements that majored in speculations about genealogies. This section has shown that a fruitful interpretation of 1 Timothy requires textured knowledge of the demographic, socio-cultural, economical and religious situation of Ephesus of the middle of the first century.

The Heresies in Ephesus and Crete

It is important to examine the Pastoral letters on the background of the false teachings that prevailed at the time and against which Paul writes. As already pointed out, Paul's approach to heterodoxy and heteropraxy in these letters differs slightly from his approach in some of his other letters. In his other letters such as 1 Corinthians or even Colossians where we may find similar ideas apparently floating in the background, Paul at least devotes extended passages to directly refute these false teachings. He would often explain on the basis of Scripture, why they are wrong. By contrast, in the Pastorals, Paul denounces these teachings outright, and does not spend much time to explain why they were wrong, even though there are occasions where he provides his motivation (e.g., 1 Tim 1:5). It is clear that Paul expected his co-workers to know why these false teachings are false, and rather concentrates on providing instructions on how to deal with them or prevent them from escalating. The result of this phenomenon in the Pastoral Epistles is that it is not at all clear whether the false teachings were part of an organized body of doctrines or random disconnected ideas.

An added complication is that some interpreters have queried that since Paul did not spend time to systematically dismantle the false teachings, opting instead to denounce them straight on and focusing rather on getting structures and procedures in the church in place, whether perhaps his main concern was their disruptive and rebellious nature and not really about their contents. This argument does not stand up to scrutiny as the Apostle cites specific aspects of the errors. It is true that he was concerned also about their effects in causing disorder and rebellion in the Churches, and this features prominently in his instructions to Timothy and Titus. But the two issues are related – false teaching grows in a disorderly and rebellious setting and restoring orthodoxy requires restoring order. Indeed, as we shall later discover one of the key defining characteristic of heterodoxy is its breaking up of the sanctity and unity of the community. In other words, heterodoxy invariably results in schism.

It is for these reasons that two necessary caveats ought to be borne in mind before mapping out the heresies in the backgrounds of the Pastoral Epistles. Firstly, while the general approach of constructing the socio-historical background of Paul's letters through mirror reading the text is necessary and definitely unavoidable, the interpreter must exercise extra caution with regards to characterizing the heresies addressed in the Pastoral Epistles. Decoding which bits of Paul's words are reflective of the context, and which bits are general statements can be tricky. Are we to take every denunciation by Paul as aimed at a false teaching; or are some of them part of Paul's general exhortation to his co-workers? For example, interpretations of 1 Tim 2:9-15 depend to some extent on whether the passage related to a specific cultural scenario in the Ephesian context, or to a general one. Some interpreters have argued that the gender ideology of the Artemis cult was responsible for influencing a false teaching which was spread by influential women of the Ephesian society. Accordingly, they argue that the passage must be read with that gender situation as background. In other words, some argue that Paul's instructions in this passage were directed at a specific scenario that may not necessarily apply in other situations, at least not in that specific sense. Others do not see the passage as dealing specifically with the heresy. In that case, they take it that the passage has direct universal and enduring application. How one employs the mirror reading technique to characterize the picture of the heterodoxy in Ephesus therefore has hermeneutical consequences.

The second caveat is that it is a rather misleading and ultimately perhaps unrewarding exercise to attempt to organize and name the false teaching under a single heading or doctrine. Clearly if a particularly organized false teaching were identified that labelling might help in characterizing it and enable more textured interpretation of the text. The fact however that Paul does not devote much time to systematically dismantle such teachings defeats any attempts to identify a single organized heresy at the root of the problem. Some interpreters have on the other hand asserted that the lack of systemization suggests that the Pastoral Letters were not addressed to a particular situation. Rather the citation of elements of false teachings merely borrowed from stock language and ideas deployed for dismissing opponents. Yet this view cannot be taken that seriously as the texts do indeed claim to be addressing historical situations and incidents. They even name some of the leaders of the heresies. By and large, therefore, most interpreters believe that the Pastorals addressed real historical situations, even if it is difficult to place the teachings under a single heading (1 Tim 1:3, 20; 2 Tim 2:17–18). That difficulty has however not deterred interpreters from trying. This has led not only to multiple proposals, but even more so and as earlier pointed out, interpretive *cul de sacs* that have questioned the authenticity of the letters themselves.

An example of how this caveat is needed is the problem created by the long-standing debate as to whether the false teaching had gnostic elements. In 1 Tim 6:20, Paul exhorts Timothy to “turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas (ἀντιθέσεις; *antitheseis*) of what is falsely

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called knowledge (γνώσεως, *gnōseōs*). It is unsurprising that some interpreters latched on to this term as representing a technical reference to Gnosticism. And based on that they postulate that the false teaching of 1 Timothy was gnostic in nature. This is especially in the light of Marcion's Gnostic book titled *Antithesis*. That led to conclusions about the historical context and authenticity of the letters, since organized Gnosticism emerged later in the second century onwards. And even though it is not inconceivable that some form of gnostic ideas existed earlier, the so-called proto-Gnosticism, the whole practice of directing any mentions of heterodoxy associated with "knowledge" to Gnosticism in some form is fraught with errors. In any case, the elements of heresies that are described in the letter do not add up to what is known of Gnosticism. It is indeed instructive that scholars have speculated about possible links with Gnosticism in almost all the letters in which Paul has had to denounce heterodoxy and heteropraxy (e.g., 1 Corinthians and Colossians). That suggests that the category is proving not as useful as some may imagine.

Table 1: Elements of the heresies addressed by 1 Timothy.

Element	Explanation
Myths and endless genealogies (1:4)	Speculative interpretations of Scripture which drew on family lineages and origins (e.g., Gen 4-6)
Adopting Jewish ceremonial laws (1:7-11)	Similar to teaching of Judaizers taught, emphasizing fulfilling markers of Jewish identity as evidence of spirituality.
Interest in controversies (6:4) and <i>gnōseōs</i> (6:20-21)	Similar to the situation in Corinth and Colossae. Gnosis in 6:20 is not the same as Gnosticism.
Spiritism and magic (4:1-2)	Folk religion, occultism, magic and eastern mysticism. Some had over-realized eschatology, believing the resurrection has already occurred.
Extreme asceticism (4:3, 8)	Forbidding sex and marriage, and the eating of certain foods as part of piety. This has sometimes been incorrectly labelled as dualism.
Greed (6:3-10)	Inordinate crave for wealth and power.
Gender issues (5:15)	Women were special targets of false teaching which may well have had a strong attraction to women in the first place.

With these caveats in mind, we now turn to examine the texts themselves for ideas on characterizing the heresies. Even though there are similar elements, it is nevertheless important not to conflate them. As table 1 above shows, the false teaching in Ephesus was essentially syncretistic. Syncretism describes the phenomenon whereby elements of other religions, whether in ideas and or practices are assimilated into another religion.⁴³ The term is sometimes contested⁴⁴ as invariably most religions which co-exist in subtle competition with each other in the same social

⁴³ Droge, A. J. (2001). Retrofitting/Retiring "Syncretism". *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 375-387.

⁴⁴ Leopold, A. M., & Jensen, J. S. (2016). *Syncretism in religion: a reader*. London: Routledge.

and cultural space shape each other's ideas or at least the manner in which these ideas are articulated and applied. Furthermore, the demarcation between "contextualization" and "syncretism" is in most cases not as sharp as the two words may suggest. What may be viewed as an attempt to contextualize the Christian Gospel in a new cultural setting, can easily result in, or appear to others to be, syncretism. Often borrowed elements are refracted, redefined and even re-clothed in the language of, or stuffed with the ideas of the recipient religion. In those scenarios it may not always be clear the extent with which the borrowed language, idea or practice retains their old elements.

Nevertheless, it is patently clear also that even well-meaning contextualization may result in incorporation of ideas and practices which are in their essence corrupting and so incompatible with the foundations and nature of the recipient religion. The fact that during New Testament times, Plutarch (46-119 AD) the Greek philosopher employed the term συγκρητισμός (*synkritismós*) to technically characterize the phenomenon demonstrates that despite the debate, it indeed does exist. Given the difficulty with defining, delineating and evaluating the social phenomenon of syncretism, it is prudent to reserve the term to describe situations in which the borrowing of ideas is unsystematic and or where the borrowed elements are significant enough to contradict the foundational elements of the recipient religion. The picture portrayed in 1 Timothy would seem to mirror such rough intermingling of ideas and practices in Christian circles. It is again one feature pointing to what likely happened in the middle of the first century in the earliest decades of Christianity. Scholars have also raised questions regarding some of the plausible sources from which the false teachers may have borrowed the ideas and practices. Though they have proposed many, three of them have in particular dominated the debate, namely (a) Hellenistic Gnosticism, (b) Jewish proto-Gnosticism and (c) Ephesian Artemesian syncretism. The first has been addressed previously and will not be examined except to underline that some have recently combined it with Jewish flavour of proto-Gnosticism. The advantage of this latter proposal is that the heresies addressed in 1 & 2 Timothy clearly have discernible elements of Judaism, with the interest in the law, genealogies, and even the extreme asceticism. Whereas it does not account for all the elements, it does explain a fair number.

A similar assessment may be made of the Ephesian Artemesian syncretism proposal. While the idolatrous elements could be plainly rejected, the manner in which the Artemesian culture permeated the whole of civic society may well have made it difficult for some Christians to reject certain ideas and practices from that religion. Certainly those, and very likely almost all gentile Ephesian converts to Christianity in the city would have been previous devotees of Artemis. Totally abandoning their former ideas and practices may well have been a difficult task. It is sometimes also queried, given the prominent instructions given about women (1Tim 2:9-15, 5:11-15; 2 Tim 3:6-7) whether gender specifically played a part on the heresies. Or perhaps the women were regarded as easy preys and agents of the false teachings. Was there an attempt to transfer the

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prominent role of priestesses of Artemis religion into the Christian religion? Or on the other hand should we take the interest in addressing gender related issues as incidental to the problems? Judging by what Paul says in 1 Tim 5:15 some women became embroiled in the false teaching alright and were certainly targeted by the false teachers (2 Tim 3:6). Yet, it is not also impossible that many of the leaders were women, and that Artemisian practices proved influential in how the heresies unfolded.

Accordingly, it would seem that both scenarios were not mutually exclusive. Artemisian syncretism played a role in catalysing the gender element of the false teaching. It is for example suggested that the independence, power and prestige of the Artemis priestesses made it attractive for some Ephesian Christian women to model themselves along similar lines, hence the apparent attraction to celibacy and asceticism which constituted parts of the false teaching (1 Tim 4:3). Artemisian beliefs and practices therefore intermingled with Jewish esoteric interests within Christian circles to threaten the Christian mission. Thus, while it will be an exaggeration to describe the heresies addressed by 1 Timothy with a single specific title, it will not be far wrong to characterize it as a syncretistic mixture of Christianity, Judaism and Artemisian religion within a metropolitan Ephesian culture of wealth and privilege. Recently some scholars have opted to label this as “the Ephesian Heresy”. This is a somewhat helpful suggestion as it takes the specificity and contingency of what happened in that context seriously without seeking to railroad it into a particular category. What needs to be borne in mind however is that there is lack of clarity as to whether what this letter addresses was a single organized heretical movement restricted to that locality, or more likely several heresies being adopted in this pluralistic context. The general term, “Ephesian Heresies” may be more appropriate. Given their complexities, it is no wonder that Paul needed an apostolic representative presence in Ephesus and a sustained structure and procedure to address it.

The false teaching addressed by Titus is similar but even more ill-defined, even though there are certain elements which also parallel that in 1 Timothy. It certainly has Jewish elements, and in fact that seems to be the most definable feature: they follow the “circumcision party” (1:10), were mesmerized by “Jewish myths” (1:14), and “genealogies” (3:9) and followed “the commands” of some of the Jewish apostates (1:10). In addition, they seem to have very disruptive and rebellious streak that is devoted to controversies and arguments (2:8; 3:9-10). It is thus likely that while false teaching was definitely a danger in Crete, Paul likely determined that the key problem was lack of discipline and order in the churches. The two are evidently mutually reinforcing and Titus’s task then was not just to deal with false teaching by silencing them (1:11), but much more, to “put in order what was left unfinished” (1:5). We will have opportunity to examine how Titus was to go about fulfilling this mandate.

STUDIES IN EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

The preceding exercise of summarizing and analysing the elements of the false teachings addressed by the Pastoral Epistles has immense implications for our contemporary tasks of exegesis, theologizing and pastoral application. In terms of exegesis, it no doubt guides our examination of the text in its historical setting. While not every statement in the Pastorals must of necessity be interpreted as describing or addressing the false teaching directly, there are ways in which they would indirectly impact it, whether positively or negatively. This approach brings unity to the exegetical task and sheds considerable light on the Apostle's programme for maintaining orthodoxy and correcting heterodoxy. Theologically, it provides a basis for hermeneutical clarification of the nature of Christian orthodoxy as conceived by the Apostle Paul.

This has important pastoral consequences and implications for our contemporary application. In many parts of the world, a combination of aggressive secularization, rapid pluralism, and liberal multiculturalism has incentivized various kinds of theological innovations, contextualization and syncretism. The Christian faith is facing external and internal forces which are negatively impacting biblical interpretation as well as doctrinal formulating and practice. This is manifested in different ways in different parts of the world. In the minority world, the socio-political situation is exerting considerable pressure that is resulting in such innovations. Even then, it is for example instructive how explicitly pagan new age ideas and language have become at best tolerated in some ecclesial circles in these jurisdictions, and in some places celebrated. There is evidence that the forces of pluralism are resulting in syncretistic conceptualization of some Christian doctrines, certainly at the popular level. In the majority world on the other hand, the forces are largely internal but nonetheless dangerous. Rapid Church growth has been associated with inadequate discipleship and the phenomenon of internal experimentation with syncretistic tendencies. How Paul thus addressed the problem has profound implications for contemporary Christianity, a matter to which we shall devote a whole chapter to address later.

We finish this chapter however with brief comments on the genres and literary structures of the Pastoral Epistles, the details for each more fully addressed in the expositional surveys that follow in subsequent chapters. As stated earlier, all three were semi-private letters mandating the recipients to be apostolic representative in Ephesus and Crete. As semi-private they also communicated to the churches over which they had been granted oversight. Within this generic framework, interpreters have sought to more precisely define the genre of each of the Pastoral Epistles as that has implications and significance in guiding discovery of authorial intentions and the literary structure. Debates surround the precise genre(s) of 1 Timothy and Titus. Interpreters interested in more precisely defining their genre have compared them with semi-private letters of their time. Some compare them to letters of appointment of generals, or royal letters. But these proposals have not attracted wide support. Currently, the idea that their closest comparators are administrative letters between middle level managers seems to have caught on. The major simi-

larities between them underscore a predominant view that they both have the same genre. But this view has inherent flaws that it is preferable to examine each letter on their own merits.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address five key aspects of the Pastoral Epistles necessary for their interpretation. It first examined their canonical form and functions noting their roles within the Pauline corpus, the New Testament, and the whole Bible. They set out directions on the guarding of Christian orthodoxy. They provide guidance on the structural organization and procedural practice of the Church that is tasked with guarding that orthodoxy in the first place. And they concentrate on the spiritual formation of Christian workers tasked with ensuring the organization and function of the Church to guard this orthodoxy. These features make them stand out from other books of the Bible and highlight their canonical contributions. Theologically also they serve to summarize and apply Paul's theology to specific scenarios in local churches in Ephesus and Crete. Accordingly, these letters provide even more granular account of Paul's applied theology enabling a full completion of the Pauline corpus. In other words, they serve as hermeneutical window for interpreting Paul's applied theology, as well as historical window into apostolic succession planning.

The chapter summarized the varying receptions of the Pastoral Epistles highlighting some of the factors which contributed to these variations. Whereas they played significant roles in the period of the Church Fathers' battles against heterodoxy, their role during the medieval years focused more on politics. The early and late modern periods were characterized by progressive rejection of their authenticity that resulted in their marginalization from within the biblical canon. The rejection of Pauline authorship by enlightenment scholars was significantly based on linguistic, ecclesiastical, historical-contextual, and theological objections and these were addressed as part of the third section.

The detailed consideration of the socio-cultural, political, and economic backgrounds of first century Ephesus and Crete which was the subject of the fourth section has important significance for the interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles. The religious, social, cultural and economic impact of the religion of Artemis of Ephesus is for example extremely important for understanding the nature of the heresies that are addressed. These heresies were likely syncretistic combinations of fringe ideas from Judaism, Artemisian religious ideas, magic and folk religious concepts and extreme asceticism. This mixing was catalysed by a metropolitan climate of plurality and pursuit of wealth and social advancement, at least in Ephesus. This account demonstrates how relevant the messages of the Pastoral Epistles are to contemporary Christianity. And it is in this sense that their unique genre and literary structures have important implications for their interpretation.

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About the Book

This is an advanced textbook for students and Christian workers seeking for in-depth analyses of, and critical engagement with, the theology espoused by the Pastoral Epistles. Arguing that these letters make three unrivalled contributions to the Bible in the areas of restoring orthodoxy, sharpening ecclesiology fit for that purpose, and deepening pastoral theology to curate these purposes, the book employs an exegetical theological methodology to investigate the text and evaluate its relevance to Christian doctrine and praxes. Its first part may serve as a standalone commentary, as it employs contextual and grammatical insights to shed light on the meaning of the text and its historical, theological, and pastoral significance. The second part evaluates the contributions of the Pastoral Epistles to important New Testament concepts such as Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, doctrine of Scripture, Soteriology, Ethics and Eschatology. The third part approaches the task from an applied theological perspective. It investigates how these letters frame the concepts of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy and pastoral formation of the inner spiritual life and public ministry of the Christian worker. The several learning outcomes that are couched in forms of essay questions are designed for tutorials, revisions, and to trigger ideas for research.

Endorsement

“Dr Annang Asumang’s *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in Exegetical Theology* is a brilliant and timely addition to scholarship on the Pastoral Epistles. This work brings together the rare blend of an African scholar and churchman who loves both Word and the church. Asumang’s extraordinary ability to integrate an uncompromising commitment to the truth of Scripture with a gracious, magnanimous, and even-handed style of engaging scholarly debates is as rare as a Japanese engineer who speaks Zulu.”

Dr Kevin Smith; Principal of South African Theological Seminary, Johannesburg.

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