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The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries

Jay Twomey

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Series Editors' Preface

The Blackwell Bible Commentaries series, the first to be devoted primarily to the reception history of the Bible, is based on the premise that how people have interpreted, and been influenced by, a sacred text like the Bible is often as interesting and historically important as what it originally meant. The series emphasizes the influence of the Bible on literature, art, music, and film, its role in the evolution of religious beliefs and practices, and its impact on social and political developments. Drawing on work in a variety of disciplines, it is designed to provide a convenient and scholarly means of access to material until now hard to find, and a much-needed resource for all those interested in the influence of the Bible on western culture.

Until quite recently this whole dimension was for the most part neglected by biblical scholars. The goal of a commentary was primarily if not exclusively

to get behind the centuries of accumulated Christian and Jewish tradition to one single meaning, normally identified with the author's original intention.

The most important and distinctive feature of the Blackwell Commentaries is that they will present readers with many different interpretations of each text, in such a way as to heighten their awareness of what a text, especially a sacred text, can mean and what it can do, what it has meant and what it has done, in the many contexts in which it operates.

The Blackwell Bible Commentaries will consider patristic, rabbinic (where relevant), and medieval exegesis as well as insights from various types of modern criticism, acquainting readers with a wide variety of interpretative techniques. As part of the history of interpretation, questions of source, date, authorship, and other historical-critical and archaeological issues will be discussed, but since these are covered extensively in existing commentaries, such references will be brief, serving to point readers in the direction of readily accessible literature where they can be followed up.

Original to this series is the consideration of the reception history of specific biblical books arranged in commentary format. The chapter-by-chapter arrangement ensures that the biblical text is always central to the discussion. Given the wide influence of the Bible and the richly varied appropriation of each biblical book, it is a difficult question which interpretations to include. While each volume will have its own distinctive point of view, the guiding principle for the series as a whole is that readers should be given a representative sampling of material from different ages, with emphasis on interpretations that have been especially influential or historically significant. Though commentators will have their preferences among the different interpretations, the material will be presented in such a way that readers can make up their own minds on the value, morality, and validity of particular interpretations.

The series encourages readers to consider how the biblical text has been interpreted down the ages and seeks to open their eyes to different uses of the Bible in contemporary culture. The aim is to write a series of scholarly commentaries that draw on all the insights of modern research to illustrate the rich interpretative potential of each biblical book.

John Sawyer
Christopher Rowland
Judith Kovacs
David M. Gunn

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Introduction

Historical Overview

The three New Testament letters to Timothy and Titus, collectively known as the Pastoral Epistles, are curiously paradoxical texts when considered in terms of their reception. Unlike a major Pauline letter such as Romans, for example, the Pastoral Epistles do not feature sustained arcs of theological reflection, nor do they produce (at least not in any substantial way) the sense of a unique voice, a distinct and distinctive personality. Yet they have been essential to the development of Christian theology and have contributed significantly to the traditional portrait of Paul. Unlike 1 Corinthians or Galatians, or even Philemon, they do not give one the impression of a living community, a

charged and complex social world just behind the surface of the text. Yet the Pastoral Epistles reveal much about the social contexts of early Christianity, and they have played a tremendous role in shaping the structure, and thus the community, of the Christian church as a whole. And while they were written to and for church leaders, even a quick survey of their reception indicates the vast extent to which these letters have been appropriated and adapted for purposes quite other than pastoral care.

So, what are these letters, then, exactly? The Pastoral Epistles are a flexible, rich, if rather nebulous body of images, concepts, personal and historical references, in the form of letters addressed by Paul to his coworkers Timothy (in Ephesus) and Titus (in Crete). These two trusted friends and associates of the apostle are said to have been stationed in their respective mission cities to supervise the nascent churches there in a variety of ways. For example, they are told to choose local church leaders (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1), to perform damage control in the wake of divisive conflicts (1 Tim. 1; Titus 1; 2 Tim. 2:14), and to “present themselves” as models of pious behavior to their respective communities (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:11–16; Titus 2:7–8). These instructions are contextualized in terms of typical Pauline concerns about Jewish law (1 Tim. 1:8–11) and eschatological expectations (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; Titus 2:13), about suffering for the gospel (2 Tim. 1; 3:12) and the salvation offered to the Christian community (1 Tim. 2:3–7; Titus 3:6). Moreover, the exhortations offered to Timothy and Titus are couched in personal, indeed, touching language. Timothy and Titus are cast as Paul’s own “loyal” and “beloved” children. Timothy in particular is singled out as Paul’s heir (2 Tim. 2:1), is offered moral support in the form of encouraging recollections of the younger man’s mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15), and is advised about his health (1 Tim. 5:23) and his young age (1 Tim. 4:12). Second Timothy, written as a last testament, also has much to say about Paul’s career and his character, as he contemplates his likely execution.

The Pastoral Epistles are also, in the view of a scholarly consensus which this commentary accepts, pseudepigraphal. That is, they are post-Pauline documents, written within a generation of Paul’s death, letters which seem to reflect a sense of church structure and tradition and politics quite different from what one finds in Paul’s own communities (e.g., Thessalonica, Corinth, the churches in Galatia). The introductory sections within the commentary will discuss more specifically what these differences are, at least as they are construed by modern commentators. The modern refusal to grant authenticity to the Pastorals is worth considering here, though, primarily as a way of framing the reception history of these texts, for it links our moment with one of the earliest responses to the Pastorals. In the mid-second century, the “radicalized Paulinism” (Chadwick 2001: 89) of a Gnostic, or pseudo-Gnostic,

theologian named Marcion led to the creation of one of the first canons of Christian scripture. Marcion, working in part from Paul's apparent rejection of the law and of Jewish ceremonial practices, believed that the God of the Hebrew Bible was a lesser, and merciless, deity, and that a higher, benevolent God who had taken pity on humanity was now offering salvation in Jesus Christ. Accordingly he compiled his "Bible" of but a handful of texts: the Gospel of Luke and several of Paul's letters, all of which he purged of any obviously Jewish material. The Pauline corpus in Marcion's canon also excluded the Pastoral Epistles; and because Marcionites eschewed the materiality of human existence (they were docetic in theology and ascetic in practice), an early father such as Tertullian could assume that Marcion left the Pastorals out intentionally because they encourage marriage and childrearing (*Praescr.* 33, ANF 3.259). Major figures in the interpretive tradition have taken Marcion, and his rigorous scriptural excisions, as a point of departure in the construction of orthodoxy over against the heresies of Gnostics. Marcion himself, it has been argued, was not a thoroughgoing Gnostic. But patristic readers could nevertheless cite him, and the threat he posed the church, in their responses to Gnostics (and Manicheans, and ascetics of all stripes). The Pastoral Epistles, apparently excluded by Marcion, become key texts in these debates. Against the "false *gnosis* [knowledge]" of the heretics (see 1 Tim. 6:20), Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, and others could oppose passages from the Pastorals in which Paul insists upon the goodness of material reality, or seems to repudiate the idea of a secret Gnostic-Christian teaching.

At the other end of their reception history the letters are rejected yet again, and for reasons not entirely unlike those imputed to Marcion. It is true that some nineteenth century scholars, assuming a relatively late date of composition for the Pastorals, actually suggested that the Pastor wrote these documents in response to the Marcionite heresy. Most scholars now consider the Pastoral Epistles to be earlier than Marcion, and simply reject the authenticity of these letters on the basis of their stylistic, ecclesiological, social, and theological divergence from Paul's own writings. A number of twentieth century scholars argue that the author of the Pastoral Epistles presents an institutionalized, non-charismatic, largely non-eschatological church quite different from the situation in the earliest "authentic" Christian communities. And according to this view, espoused by Rudolf Bultmann among others, "the Christianity of the Pastorals is a somewhat faded Paulinism" (Bultmann 1955: 1.185). Contemporary feminist readings of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus can even more sharply lament the failure of these letters to maintain what some see as Paul's comparatively radical social agenda (see, for instance, the remarks of Jouette Bassler, cited throughout this commentary). While I tend to agree with the critical

rejection of the Pastorals as authentic Pauline texts, nevertheless I have also to acknowledge a curious historical similarity: both the Marcionite and the modern scholarly rejection of the Pastorals mark the two ends of a single interpretive spectrum. For entirely different reasons, to be sure, readers at each pole have favored what they see as the striking newness of Paul, with his ambitious and utterly radical project – announcing a previously unheard-of salvation, in Marcion; establishing a new egalitarianism on the basis of a shared palette of spiritual gifts, in modern scholarship. They have compared the innovation of Paul to the traditionalism of the Pastor, and they have found the Pastor wanting.

The Interpretations

However, if at the beginning and the end (until now, at any rate) of their reception history the Pastorals have suffered at the hands of critics, throughout most of the rest of their history they have been cherished, troubled, exploited, read, misread as writings of the apostle Paul. It would, perhaps, be possible to write a commentary that would differentiate among the interpretive preferences most in play at different epochs of these texts' reception. One could say, in general, and with regard to the theological tradition, that: Patristic writers often use the Pastorals in the service of early Christological and Trinitarian debates; Medieval responses explore the letters' more speculative theological, mystical, dimensions; Reformation writers key in on soteriological concepts; Enlightenment thinkers focus on the political aspects of the Pastor's writings; and eighteenth and nineteenth century interpreters tend to bring elements of the Pastor's piety to the fore.

At the same time, clear interpretive traditions for these letters are difficult to establish with any precision. Major interpretive emphases return again and again across the reception history of these three letters and at some point clear historical boundaries simply break down. One can trace an Augustinian–Calvinist trajectory, on grace and predestination, from the fourth century to the present, of course; but so can one follow, from Origen to the Universalists and beyond, an insistence upon the universality of God's salvation. Additionally, writers of all periods have been invested in working out the contemporary relevance of the Pastor's ecclesiology. Just what are the duties of a bishop, for example, and how are they to be differentiated from those of deacons or elders? And which of these offices is responsible for ordaining fit Ministers of the Word? Moreover, if women are permitted to play certain roles, as deacons perhaps, or as "official" widows, then what are the limits of their

authority? The Pastorals don't really provide precise guidance in these matters. These epistles also take a strict line on theological opponents, speculative troublemakers whose challenges to doctrinal authority seem to put the faith itself at risk. Readers through the centuries have consistently adapted the Pastor's critical invective for their own purposes. Ancient readers, as noted above, tended to pit the Pastor against Gnostic heretics, like Marcion or Valentinus. In later centuries, the names may change but the status of the opponents remains the same, so that Reformation writers, for instance, can cast "Papists" as the purveyors of false knowledge and harmful teachings, and a nineteenth century Anglican such as Matthew Arnold can refer to middle-class Protestant "Dissenters" as precisely those people the Pastor castigates in his epistles. And Paul's relationship to Timothy has been developed in consistent ways across diverse periods. The fatherly care he shows for his "son in the faith" becomes for a great many readers a touching reminder of the ideal of pastoral care.

I have tried to pursue such major arcs of interpretive interest wherever, and whenever, they might lead. The goal of my approach is not the construction of a univocal tradition, however. Readers will see that this commentary foregrounds a great diversity of responses, and draws attention to especially creative counter-readings, often by non-traditional figures, that trouble common and traditional understandings of these letters. If I continue to refer to "the tradition," I do so because it seems an easy shorthand for the multiplicity and complexity of what are nevertheless interconnected readings. Moreover, despite my interest in pushing the idea of reception study to its extreme limits, I do return again and again to certain key figures who, and a couple of major themes which, can provide this commentary with an overall sense of coherence. A word or two about some of these readers and themes may be helpful at this point.

Significant interpreters

John Chrysostom, whose name means "golden-mouth," probably wrote and delivered his homily series on the Pastoral Epistles in late fourth century Antioch, where he served as a priest before becoming the bishop of Constantinople in 398. The Antiochene school of interpretation favored literal over allegorical readings, and Chrysostom's homiletic treatment of the Pastor's letters evinces this emphasis on the historical, biographical, and factual. Because of this, and because his sermons were preached for the instruction of a socially complex congregation in an important urban center, Chrysostom's reading of the Pastoral Epistles often have a very concrete dimension to them which allows

us to glimpse, ever so fleetingly, something of the everyday lives of his original audience. The Pastor's exhortations to slaves, for example, give Chrysostom the opportunity to address both slaves and slave owners in his audience (Mayer and Allen 2000: 35). Although in no way does Chrysostom challenge slavery as an institution, he nevertheless seems to subordinate, rhetorically at least, masters to slaves, while acknowledging the unnaturalness of slavery itself (see at 1 Tim. 6:1–2) – a curious balancing act, in which one is tempted to read a responsive awareness of tensions in the church not unlike those Paul seems to have faced in his day (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:21). Chrysostom also responds relatively personally to the Paul of the Pastorals, especially to the language of Paul's suffering and commitment from 2 Timothy. Incidentally, Chrysostom is but one of many figures cited in *The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries* who wrote complete treatments of these letters. Others whose work I draw upon frequently include Theodoret of Cyrus, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, John Calvin, and John Wesley, not to mention modern academic commentators such as Dibelius and Conzelmann (abbreviated D-C herein), Jouette Bassler, and Philip Towner.

Augustine (354–430) was also a major figure in the early reception history of the Pastorals. Augustine began his career as a student of literature and philosophy, albeit one who quested religiously for truth. Baptized by Ambrose of Milan (338–97), Augustine was ordained a priest in Hippo Regius, in North Africa, in 391, and was elevated to the episcopacy within a few years. As Bishop of Hippo, Augustine, a prolific writer and acute thinker, was central to most of the theological debates of the late fourth and early fifth centuries; and he drew upon the Pastorals in all of his most significant theological works. For instance, in his struggles with the Pelagians about the essential role of God's grace in stimulating the faith that leads to salvation, Augustine can productively cite 1 Timothy 1:13 ("I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief.") to show that nothing human beings do independently of God can produce the faith requisite for salvation. Pelagius held just the opposite view, that human beings are granted reason by God's grace, and that they freely choose the paths their lives will take, thus earning their salvation or damnation by their own lights. For Augustine, however, the fact that God would choose Paul, a confessed "blasphemer," and indeed the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:13, 15), and utterly transform him apropos of nothing he himself had done, is proof positive that without the gift of grace, salvation is simply not possible. Augustine's reading of this and similar biblical texts had a profound effect upon the theology of the Christian west, although it wasn't until the Reformation (see the many relevant citations from Luther and Calvin in the commentary) that the Augustinian notion of grace came fully into its own.

Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) is cited frequently in this commentary as well, in part because he also produced a full-length commentary on the Pastorals, but also because his Aristotelian version of Augustinian thought is so characteristic of medieval scholasticism. Thomas' major work, the *Summa Theologica*, is a vast and systematic exposition of all the major points of Christian theology. Scripture serves not only as a source of proofs in the *Summa*, but as the very inspiration for reflection (cosmological, theological, philosophical, ethical) itself. One of the most significant uses Thomas makes of the Pastorals, although it seems quite uncharacteristic of the more sensitive and speculative dimensions of his thought, is in justifying the execution of heretics on the basis of Titus 3:10–11 ("After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned."). If civil law calls for the death of forgers and other relatively petty criminals, he asks, then how much more should the church insist upon the eradication of those who corrupt the faith?

Luther's (1483–1546) readings of the Pastorals are lively and forceful, and appear with some frequency in this volume, as do Erasmus' (1466–1536) reform-minded Catholic *Paraphrases*. But the central voice of the Protestant era cited here is that of John Calvin (1509–64). I chose Calvin quite simply because his wonderfully insightful exegesis of the Pastorals, frequently produced in support of his theory of predestination, eventually had the more significant impact on theology and literature in the American tradition, which I have tried to emphasize to some extent (for example, by citing the works of Jonathan Edwards). Calvin's commentaries on these letters were written in the early-to-mid 1550s, in Geneva, which he had helped transform into a functioning Protestant society, governed in part by a council of ministers and lay people whose function was to police the moral and religious life of the city. Despite the rigor of Calvin's theology, his commentaries on the Pastorals reveal a good deal of exegetical complexity vis-à-vis central Calvinist questions about the efficacy of grace over works, for example. Noting that 1 Timothy 4:7 advocates a "training in godliness" along the lines of the "physical training" of the athlete, Calvin acknowledges that for some believers what he would consider essentially useless works were, if performed in the right state of mind, useful aids to the religious life.

Other figures are discussed in the commentary with some regularity as well. Among them, perhaps the most interesting are: John Wesley (1703–91), representing an important strand of eighteenth century piety; and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55), whose religious musings are rooted equally in Lutheran piety and an early philosophical existentialism.

Areas of Interpretive Interest

Another way of producing a sense of continuity across the complex, frequently bewildering array of interpretive responses collected in a commentary such as this is to foreground types of readings that recur throughout the tradition. I use several basic categories to link similar kinds of material across the three letters, the most important of which are entitled: “Women,” “The Church,” “Theological Speculation,” and “The Opponents,” each of which is outlined below. Other, less frequent categories will include material on epistolary conventions (e.g., “The Thanksgiving”) and the Pastor’s depictions of Paul (“Paul”) and his correspondents (“Timothy”).

Women

Given my own background in contemporary literary and critical theory, and my investment in feminist, queer, and cultural studies approaches to the Bible, I tend to want to foreground readings which “trouble” the texts. Indeed, I was initially attracted to the Pastorals after having discovered how the seventeenth century Mexican nun, poet, and proto-feminist Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz dispatched what many would consider the Pastor’s misogyny (see examples of her critical readings at 1 Tim. 2:12 and Titus 1:12). That she had to do so is indicative of the ways in which these letters construct gender, and thus patriarchal power, for later readers; and the way she responds to the texts, rendering them more rather than less empowering for women, is indicative of a widespread tendency among interpreters to read particular verses, in various ways, against the grain.

The Pastoral Epistles rank among the New Testament’s most problematic texts for women. Although the Pastor’s patriarchal attitude is certainly unacceptable for many today, and for many twentieth and twenty-first century Christian women in particular, readers in all periods have frequently relied upon his strictures to enforce rigid limits on women’s full participation in the religious life of their communities. Perhaps this lamentable fact is only to be expected. Still, a reception history of the Pastoral Epistles can be quite intriguing not only because it allows one to trace the role of these texts in the history of Christian attitudes toward women, but also because it shows the ways in which the Christian tradition itself has registered its occasional discomfort with such attitudes. Women like Teresa of Avila, Sor Juana, Margaret Fell, Anne Hutchinson, and Charlotte Brontë, for example, join forces with literary characters such as Chaucer’s Wife of Bath and historical figures whose own

voices are all but lost to us, like Jerome's Marcella, collectively (if diversely) to respond to a key plank in western Christianity's traditionally patriarchal platform.

Even when the commentary treats the reception of passages unrelated to the Pastor's view of women, it does, whenever possible, feature the readings of women. Thus, for example, in considering the responses to the statement in Titus 1:11 that opponents "must be silenced," we encounter the words of two seventeenth century Quakers, Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, who had been imprisoned by the Inquisition, and whose understanding of the Pastor's view of his opponents inspired their own resistance to coercion. Later in the same letter, an excerpt from Jeanette Winterson's semi-autobiographical novel *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* reads the Pastor's ambiguous concern for purity through the lens of a youthful, religious, lesbianism. Readings by men which similarly recontextualize verses from the Pastorals in more or less overtly feminist ways are also given special attention (see for example the excerpt from Donald Barthelme's novel, *The Dead Father*, at 2 Tim. 3:6–7).

Interestingly, even some of the tradition's most conservative readers have occasionally deployed unexpectedly pro-feminist tactics. For example, although Jerome may be among the last of the fathers one would turn to for thoughts on gender equality, he nevertheless notes, approvingly, that his student Marcella would, when teaching men, give "her own opinion not as her own but as from . . . [a man]. . . . For she knew that the apostle had said: 'I suffer not a woman to teach,' and she would not seem to inflict a wrong upon the male sex" (*Ep.* 2.6, NPNF2 6.256). From this it is but a short step to the exegetical ingenuity of Sor Juana who, claiming Jerome as an influence, argues that 1 Timothy 2:11 "is more in favor than against women, since it requires them to study, and while they study it is clear that they need to be silent" ("Reply to Sor Filotea," 2005: 282). Clearly, if to differing degrees, both feel they must respect the scriptural injunction; yet both also find ways of keeping to the Pastoral letter, while subverting its spirit. Other men and women develop different strategies, sometimes historicizing a passage in order to limit its contemporary valence, sometimes (as in the case of Teresa of Avila at Titus 2:5) claiming to have a divine dispensation which frees them from the Pastor's restrictions.

In a way that could, conceivably, dovetail with these efforts, even as they concern other issues altogether, major and minor figures in the reception history of the Pastorals will sometimes read gender-specific verses in gender-neutral ways. I suggest that these readings "democratize" the verses in question because they broaden their scope to include both men and women. Thus, when Augustine takes "widow" in 1 Timothy 5:6 ("the widow who lives for pleasure

is dead even while she lives”) to mean any and all believers regardless of gender, and even the church itself, he democratizes, generalizes the verse. Such democratizing tactics, of course, are limited neither to readings of these letters nor to issues relevant to women’s religious agency (see some of the readings of “slave” at 1 Tim. 6:1, for instance). I draw attention to them partly to show the range of tools available within traditional readers’ exegetical toolboxes, but also subtly to hint that efforts to read the Pastor, or any biblical text, against the grain for emancipatory purposes are authorized and legitimated by a rich history of precedents.

There are certain passages concerning women in the Pastorals, however, which merit consideration in terms of the early development of church offices. These will be addressed in the commentary under the next heading.

The church

The second major area of interest pursued in this commentary concerns church order, construed in the broadest possible sense to include everything from ethical and social prerequisites for church office to the kinds of behaviors expected of members of the communities which Timothy and Titus are striving to consolidate. The commentary treats the construction of social status and socio-political categories from a variety of perspectives in order to trouble the normative claims readers of the Pastorals have made through the centuries. For instance, the Pastoral Epistles are perhaps best known in church circles for what they have to say about the development of leadership positions in early Christianity; consequently affirmations of these offices are given pride of place when church offices are at issue. First Timothy 3 and Titus 2 include information about bishops, elders (presbyters), and deacons which readers through the centuries have both adopted and puzzled over. With regard to the most significant office, that of bishop, the latest edition of the Catholic Church’s Code of Canon Law, for instance, seems very clearly to build upon the Pastor’s requirements that bishops be capable of teaching, be of a certain age and standing, and be able to foster the harmonious spiritual development of the community. Indeed, the extent to which this recent restatement of the Pastor’s basic qualifications has held steady through time is truly remarkable; language similar to the Pastor’s (and the Vatican’s) can be found in the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions* as well as in an eleventh century communal letter by the Christian community of Noyon and

Tournai (in present-day Belgium) discussing their selection of a candidate for the episcopacy. But if the Pastor's thoughts on church office have created a relatively stable tradition of ecclesiastical thought, they have also informed radical reformers (like Milton), who find in their contemporary political contexts sufficient grounds for rejecting episcopal authority, and thus for rereading the Pastor as source of anti-episcopal rhetoric. In Milton's view, since the Pastor never makes a clear distinction between bishop and presbyter, the later historical development of the episcopacy is a deviation from the biblical rule.

Another area of productive tension concerns the question of clerical celibacy. That bishops, in the Pastor's view, ought to be married men (the most basic reading of "the husband of one wife," 1 Tim. 3:2), complicated the valorization of celibacy in early theological tradition. As a result, Augustine and others have recourse to allegorical renderings of this verse, in order not to allow that bishops could marry. Later readers, notably the reformers, find such allegorical interpretations less than compelling, and consequently turn the Pastor's comments on marriage and church office (deacons and elders, too, are required to be married) into polemical proof-texts in their battles with their ecclesiastical and theological opponents.

Despite the Pastor's interest in limiting the active religious roles women might play in his community, he is thought by a diverse range of readers through the centuries to have instituted an office of deaconesses (on the basis of 1 Tim. 3:11). Chrysostom, for instance, explained that the Pastor "was referring to those [women] having the dignity of the diaconate" and not to wives or "women in general"; and Theodore of Mopsuestia believed that the women of this verse were "to exercise the same office as the [male] deacons" (in Wijngaards 2002: 169, 178). Even Thomas Aquinas, although ultimately opposed to women holding office, has to acknowledge that it was quite possible to read the text in support of a diaconate of women (Thomas Aquinas 2007: 43).

But church office is simply one among many issues pertaining to the organization of religious life in the Pastor's communities. Another has to do with the appropriate behavior of individual believers, including slaves. The New Testament does not reject slavery as an institution, and so it should come as no surprise that the Pastorals do not either. This rather benign historical contextualization, however, cannot begin to account for the various ways in which nineteenth century American anti-abolitionists, for instance, used passages like 1 Timothy 6:1–2 and Titus 2:9–10 in support of slavery. James Shannon, for example, a president of the University of Missouri in the 1850s, sought biblical warrant for his pro-slavery agenda, and found it in 1 Timothy 6:1–5, which

text led him to assume “that they had some abolition *ignoramus* even in Paul’s day; and that inspired Apostle pronounced them ‘*men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth*,’ and commanded Christians to withdraw from their society” (Shannon 1855: 14). Abolitionists during this period similarly tried to bolster their cause with biblical citations, but the Pastoral Epistles made it all but impossible to do so convincingly. The Pastor’s exhortations to slaves have also been generalized as advice to servants (Luther) and, recently, to workers generally (Nelson 2005: 143). Others, however, like the poet Wanda Coleman, cite the Pastor’s “yoke” imagery only to reject it in favor of a vision of revolutionary change.

This commentary also includes, under “The Church”: material concerning ritual and liturgy; what we would consider today as church–state relations; the problem of apostolic succession; and other issues.

The opponents

For the historically minded scholar of the Pastorals, the identity and program of the Pastor’s opponents are a maddening conundrum since we are given almost no information about them at all. We do learn something about the Pastor himself, though, namely that he prefers not to engage his opponents directly, but rather by means of invective. And it is fascinating to note how, again and again, readers of these letters simply adapt the Pastor’s criticisms of his opponents to reflect their own perspectives. Theodoret, for instance, takes up the Pastor’s reference to an opponent named Alexander the coppersmith (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14) to mark, it would seem, a clearer distinction between the artisanal class and the educated elite: he is “a man of no sort of distinction at all, – no nobility of birth, no eloquence of speech, who never led a political party nor an army in the field; who never played the man in fight, but plied from day to day his ignominious craft, and won fame for nothing but his mad violence against Saint Paul” (NPNF2 3.160). Thomas Aquinas, reading Titus 3:10, was fully aware that the Pastor does not encourage the church to condemn an opponent without first trying, by admonishments, to change him. But “after that, if he is yet stubborn, 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” (ST SS Q[11] A[3]). Luther and Calvin consistently collapse the boundaries between their reforming moment and the Pastor’s conflicts by casting the “Papists” as the opponents described in these epistles. Cotton Mather cites 2 Tim. 3:1 both to insist upon the

apocalyptic signs of his times and to justify the persecution of witches in New England (Mather 1693: 23). Not all readers could so easily endorse the Pastor's approach to opposition, however. In the early twentieth century, Karl Barth acknowledged that part of the "fight of faith" was stopping the mouths of theological opponents. However, contrary to most other readings of Titus 1:11, Barth argued that "[t]he ministry of the Word can in no wise be understood as a fight of one party against a counter party" (1936: 87–8).

Theological speculation

Although they tend not to engage very extensively in theological reflection, these letters nevertheless do include some of the New Testament's most intriguing language regarding what the Pastor calls the "mystery" of God. It is quite possible that the Pastor's theological considerations include material he has borrowed from liturgical formulae, early hymns, and the like, but readers have found his imagery inspiring no matter what its original source may have been. Negative theologians, such as Pseudo-Dionysius, eagerly took up the image of a God who "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16), and spoke of "the divine darkness . . . where God is said to live. And if it is invisible because of a superabundant clarity, if it cannot be approached because of the outpouring of its transcendent gift of light, yet it is here that is found everyone worthy to know God and to look upon him" (*Epistle* 5, 1987: 265). Other readers adapt other passages – those involving concepts of God's eternal consistency (2 Tim. 2:13), for instance, or Christ's preexistence (2 Tim. 1:9) and divinity (Titus 2:13) – as the basis for their own speculative projects. The Pastorals have also been an important source of soteriological reflection in the tradition. According to 1 Timothy 2:4, God "desires everyone to be saved." This verse, with its hopeful universalism, poses particular problems for theologies of predestination. Augustine and Calvin had thus to argue that the "all" of "all men" was simply a reference to categories, hence to all *kinds* of men. Further narrowing the idea of God's universal call to salvation, Augustine even altered the verse so that it would better support his position. God teaches all those who are saved, he claimed, "*all such* to come to Christ, for He wills all such to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (*De praed. sanct.* 14, NPNF1 5.505). Everyone else is, of course, lost. The contrary view, that "all" indeed means "all men," receives a variety of endorsements throughout the centuries as well. The Wesleys, for instance, insist in an eighteenth century hymn that "not one of all that fell / but may Thy favour find" (Hymn 15, *Poetical Works* 1868: 3.90).

The Commentary

Beyond the thematic foci helping to organize this commentary is the canonical structure of the Pastorals themselves. As with the other commentaries in this series, *The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries* explores the reception of these texts in generally sequential (that is, verse by verse) and chronological order. However, there are many passages in this three-letter corpus, and especially in 1 Timothy and Titus, which significantly overlap. In order to avoid repetition, therefore, I have decided to cross-reference similar material whenever possible. Generally texts are cross-referenced at the first instance of a concept's appearance. For example, readings of Titus 3:1, concerning attitudes toward the ruling authorities, are discussed at 1 Timothy 2:1–2, where we encounter the same ideas. 1 Timothy is a longer letter, certainly, containing six chapters to 2 Timothy's four and Titus' three, and this in itself justifies the greater attention afforded it. But the cross-referencing, and the consequent need to deal early on with problems in the scholarship on these letters, undoubtedly adds to the burden 1 Timothy is asked to bear in this commentary. On occasion the cross-referencing is delayed if the readings at a later occurrence of an idea or motif are generally more interesting or robust; so, for example, the "good fight" language of 1 Timothy 6:12 (and 1:18) is discussed at 2 Timothy 4:6–7.

I begin the major sections within each chapter of the commentary with a survey of contemporary scholarly perspectives. I am not thereby privileging as wholly accurate or even as more fully adequate what are, in essence, simply additional readings in the reception of these texts. Still, since many of my readers may be largely unfamiliar with the Pastorals, I thought it important to introduce the letters in the way readers would be most likely to discover them on their own: by looking into modern commentaries, or perhaps by picking up a collection of recent scholarly essays. The reader is, of course, invited to begin with these introductory sections, or not, as he or she sees fit.

The chronological order of readings is, with perhaps one or two brief exceptions, maintained throughout. Since thematic concerns naturally take precedence over strict chronological presentation, the commentary is not always especially rigorous with regard to the priority of citations within a particular period. Readers will also see that in a commentary such as this chronological ordering is a micro-, rather than a macro-, organizational tool. That is to say, discrete sets of readings, in response to specific verses, are grouped together in what are essentially miniature units, within which citations are arranged, generally, in the order of their composition. Over the course of a given chapter,

however, there will be several such units, and thus each chapter as a whole bears constant witness to the ebb and flow of time – of interpretive time, that is.

To help the reader navigate through these units, the commentary makes use of two types of section headings. A major thematic unit is headed by a title (using one or the other of the categories discussed above) in bold font. The cross-referencing is given alongside this title, to indicate either that material from other letters will be discussed in this section, or simply that one can find similar ideas elsewhere in the Pastorals, or both. There follow a number of smaller sub-sections detailing the reception history of specific passages, and each of these is headed by an italicized full verse or partial excerpt from the passage. On occasion the content of these subsections is subdivided into kinds of readings (e.g., theological, political, literary), but usually no very clear distinctions are made between one mode of reception and another.

This commentary draws largely upon the New Revised Standard Version of the Pastoral Epistles, but will frequently, especially in discussing readings which cite from the letters themselves, defer to the King James or other translations. At the end of the volume readers will find a biographical glossary, which provides very basic information on most of the figures named in the commentary. This section is followed by a bibliography and index. Please note that the bibliography begins with a list of the abbreviations used throughout the book and concludes with information about the various websites referenced in the commentary.