

Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.*



*For our sons and daughters,
may they forever stand. . . .*

* From "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" (1900), words by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and music by John Rosamond Johnson.

TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND

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Verse 16 returns to a familiar Pauline refrain with respect to the desire for the peace of the Lord to be a constant goal for every Christian action. All must understand that in the Semitic idiom, peace is not merely the absence of hostility and open conflicts but the result of doing what is right and just. Peace, in this sense, seeks to enhance the welfare of the entire community.

Scholars have long been at a loss in trying to authenticate the Pauline claim in v. 17 that he places a distinctive mark in every one of his epistles. Perhaps this is an overzealous extension of Gal 6:11, "See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!" or of 1 Cor 16:21, "I, Paul write this greeting with my own hand." There is no such indication at the end of 2 Corinthians and, more particularly, at the end of 1 Thessalonians! For this reason the final claim that a distinctive mark is present in 2 Thessalonians is yet one more pointer to the deuteropauline status of authorship, thereby indicating that the document was written by a disciple of Paul rather than by Paul himself.

Notes

1. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 107.
2. Juan Williams and Quinton Dixie, *This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience* (New York: Morrow, 2003), 102–3.

For Further Reading

- Giblin, Charles H. *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Re-Examination of 1 Thessalonians 2*. AnBib 31. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1967.
- Holland, Glenn S. *The Tradition That You Received from Us: 2 Thessalonians in the Pauline Tradition*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.
- Hughes, Frank Witt. *Early Christian Rhetoric and 2 Thessalonians*. JSNTSup 30. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989.
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See also Further Reading for 1 Thessalonians on pp. 399–400.

1–2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS (THE PASTORAL EPISTLES)

Clarice J. Martin

INTRODUCTION: THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The Pastoral Epistles—1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus—hold an enduring and distinctive place within the corpus of Christian Testament writings. Purportedly written by Paul to two of his most trusted and cherished younger coworkers, Timothy and Titus, whom he left in charge of the churches in Ephesus and Crete, respectively, the letters provide incomparable glimpses into the historical situation of first-century Christian communities ("assemblies")—communities that held fast to a cherished narrative of Christian hope and the appearance of Christ in the future (Titus 2:13).

Likely written within a similar chronological frame, probably during the reign of the

emperor Domitian, in Asia Minor (90–110 C.E.), the letters appear as third-generation correspondence. The first generation was represented by Timothy's grandmother Lois and the second by Timothy's mother, Eunice. Timothy, standing as a sterling representative of the third generation, appears as one determined to pass on the precious faith legacy of his ancestors (2 Tim 1:5). The Pastoral Epistles attest decisively to the resolute transmittal of the seed and tradition of faith held by Christians from generation to generation, certifying the power, vibrancy, and adaptability of the Christian gospel over time. Offering a candid glimpse of the continuing evolution of the Jesus movement within the late first century, the Pastoral Epistles provide a fascinating

glimpse of the transformations and changes experienced by Christian believers who were firmly situated within the dynamic, pluralistic, and bustling Mediterranean world. It was a world that mirrored the characteristic social networks, organizations, social mores, political tensions, internecine strife and wars, and traditional and polytheistic religions of the day. It was also a world in which luxury and indulgence were largely the possession of a small governing aristocracy, or those irrepressible social climbers with lower status who eyed the prize of privilege and struggled to attain it.

The authorship of the Pastoral Epistles remains a thorny and unsettled subject. Although these documents have been designated as "Pastoral Letters" since the eighteenth century and were accepted as genuinely Pauline by generations of early Christian writers, their authorship has been debated for more than two hundred years. A clear majority of scholars today consider the Pastorals as a whole to be pseudonymous, which is to say, written by one or more Paulinists who adapted some of Paul's ideas and wrote in his name (it was a common practice in the ancient world to honor—but adapt—the idea of an earlier writer). Even those who advocate Paul's authorship concede that another hand may have produced the letters, particularly in light of significant linguistic and thematic departures from the Pauline corpus. The Greek vocabulary, style, and syntax diverge quite noticeably from that of the traditionally recognized Pauline corpus (1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philemon, Philippians, Galatians, Romans). The notable body of scholars who hold that the Pastorals are pseudonymous nevertheless discern in the Pastorals seasoned echoes of the apostle's theology.¹ While this writer shares with a significant number of Christian Testament interpreters the view that the Pastorals are pseudonymous, I shall at various points in the essay refer to

the writer as "Paul" (using quotation marks). I do so without prejudice, in conjunction with the Pastoral author's desire to ascribe Pauline authorship to the correspondence.

As many African American believers would attest relative to the Pastoral Epistles—and to the larger canons of both the Hebrew Bible and Christian Testament literature—the interpretation of biblical texts is richly enlarged when interpreters explore the broad range of possible historical meanings of biblical texts within their own ancient cultural milieu. Similarly, subsequent readings of those texts within diverse global cultures and communities must be undertaken with an openness to appreciating the broad interpretive legacy of our biblical heritage. Dynamic and transformative faith commitment and practice more often arise from an openness to multiple, dissident, emancipatory, and revisionist readings and interpretive practices, including careful and thoughtful reassessments of the continuing impact of our biblical inheritance on ecclesial tradition and practice, and on political and social policy. One hallmark feature of African American biblical hermeneutics (practices of interpretation) through the centuries is its culturally-nuanced agreement with the rallying cry of sixteen and seventeenth-century reformers: the church is a dynamic institution, created to be the ever-reforming embodiment of the pilgrim people of God in a changing world (*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*—"the church reformed and ever to be reformed"). The project and enterprise of African American biblical hermeneutics has in every age fired the engines of profound change in both church and society.²

African American Christians have always been convinced that fidelity to God requires not only imaginative reappropriations, reinterpretations, and reconstructions of biblical traditions, but even confrontations with biblical traditions and their centuries-old interpretive legacies. Historically, one of the most imagi-

native African American reappropriations of biblical traditions occurred during antebellum slavery, when African Americans claimed that the Exodus tradition in the Hebrew Bible was emblematic of their experience of enslavement in America. Enslaved African Americans found glad and notable affinities with the God who delivered Israel from slavery's tyrannous and oppressive bond in Egypt, reappropriating the liberation story to reflect their own worldview and aspirations. Convinced that the God who liberated Israel from Egypt brooked no tolerance for the enslavement of some human beings by other human beings, these black enslaved pioneers blatantly rejected the duplicitous and self-serving rhetoric of pro-slavery rhetoricians who used scripture to endorse slave-holding Christianity. Ideologically and theologically informed by a black sacred cosmos which celebrated a God who was Loving, Compassionate and Just, black biblical interpreters easily denounced both the slaveholding God and the hermeneutical practices that gave rise to this God's genesis.³

The early twentieth century witnessed the creation of one of the most delightful, imaginative, and impassioned reinterpretations and reconstructions of biblical tradition. Famed anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston penned the compelling allegory, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (published in 1939), a long-lived classic which blends the story of Moses, the Great Emancipator in the Hebrew Bible, with the Moses of black folklore. The political allegory brilliantly analogizes Hebrew oppression in Egypt with black oppression within the United States, with Moses functioning as a decisive liberation agent for those living under the heels of Jim Crow practices and policies. Hurston's creative revision of the sacred myths of biblical tradition with African American personalities, terms, symbols and idioms represents a monumental testament to the limitless imaginative potential and improvisational

savvy of African Americans' engagement of the Bible over the centuries.⁴

In addition to critically reappropriating, reinterpreting, and reconstructing biblical texts and traditions, African American have also confronted and critiqued an array of biblical texts and practices, challenging, for example, the interpretive legacy of biblical traditions (and their practitioners) used to reinforce such oppressive and lethal practices as colonialism and racial domination. This well-documented fact can be seen, for example, in long-standing black critiques of those ancient canonical traditions that legitimated and endorsed the submission of enslaved men and women to slave masters and slave mistresses (e.g. the pagan, Stoic *haustafeln* or domestic codes in Colossians 3:18–4:1; Ephesians 5:21–6:9; and 1 Peter 2:18–3:7). It can also be seen in the critique of a Eurocentric interpretive legacy that ignored the profoundly glaring exploitative power of the propertied Sarah over the enslaved black woman, Hagar, in Genesis 16:1–16. African American hermeneutical strategies invoking celebration, affirmation, critique, resistance, transgression, and reform have long roots within the black interpretive repertoire. As we shall see, African American engagements of the Pastoral Epistles have mandated an integration of these and other strategic approaches to these ancient letters.⁵

First Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, while addressed to individuals, are clearly public epistles in scope, interweaving personal injunction and ecclesial advice with a communal orientation. Some interpreters have described the Pastoral correspondence as a type of ancient, encyclopedic "manual of church order," but one must be cautious here. No single definitive organizational structure is presupposed in the three letters, nor are the letters a "handbook for church leaders" (2 Timothy lacks reference to church order; little

reference is found in Titus to church order, and what is there departs from the account in 1 Timothy). Hence, the presence of common and similar traditional material should not lead interpreters to “collapse” the letters together as a fully unitary sub-corpus. Each letter must be studied individually, even if there are common themes. One suggested model for the Pastoral correspondence is the *mandata principis* letters found in Hellenistic royal correspondence. Those letters contain directives generated by rulers to their appointed delegates who are governing regional territories. Addressed specifically to these delegates in local cities or to other representatives, the letters outline a series of instructions to be implemented. While technically “private correspondence,” the instructions delivered to specific individuals were always intended for larger audiences. The “paraenesis” or moral instructions interwoven in all three Pastorals illustrate the dual function of targeting at once both individuals and the larger Christian assemblies that we see in the *mandata principis* genre.⁶

At least three broad factors should be considered in identifying a continuum of possibilities that gave rise to the historical situation of the Pastoral Epistles. First, perceived as dissident communities⁷ faced with the potentially threatening intrusions of the ideologies and retributive power of Rome, the recipients of the Pastorals were keenly aware of their tenuous relationship to imperial authorities. The Pastoral writer(s) exhorts the recipients to embrace the ideals of good citizenship, conformity to prevailing social norms, and accommodation with government and worldly authorities for the sake of peace for the church (1 Tim 2:1-2; Titus 3:1).

Second, as communities facing teachings and resistance from individuals and groups who were responsible for suffering and internal divisiveness within the faith communities,

the recipients were encouraged to remember and to imitate the example and disposition of Paul—their faith model par excellence—in their quest for steadfastness and perseverance in faith and ministry. A fiery resolve to exhibit unfaltering moral virtue, holiness, and wisdom would also counter vituperative opponents (1 Tim 1:3-7; 6:3-6; 2 Tim 2:1-26).

Finally, there is some evidence that Christian traditionalists within the faith communities feared an erosion of prevailing social mores that required free Christian women and enslaved believers (males and females) to continue to conform unqualifiedly to their roles as “low-status subordinates” in the assemblies that met within the Greco-Roman households (*oikoi*). Such prevailing social mores were, after all, a foundation block of Roman ideology and society. In agreement with such Christian traditionalists, the author of the Pastorals issued stern warnings against what might be termed “egalitarian excess.” For these Christian traditionalists, who insisted that rigid conformity to paternal power (*patria potestas*) be upheld in government and home (where the rule of the *paterfamilias*—the father/husband/slavemaster—was the ultimate authority), any deviance potentially challenging or subverting those traditional protocols from a “dissident subculture” was likely viewed as “egalitarian excess.” A libertine or liberationist eschatological ethic wherein free Christian women and enslaved persons (males and females) viewed themselves as fully freed from these customary social constraints and mores likely had its roots in the more egalitarian vision of the pre-Pauline formula in Gal 3:28: “there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

African Americans have found resonance with at least four broad themes or motifs in the Pastoral letters: (1) the generational transmittal of the Christian faith (as signaled in the textual

reference to Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother, Eunice); (2) the suggestions of qualities for church leaders; (3) the more contentious instruction for navigating the terrain of gender politics relative to women’s leadership, agency, and service with the church; and (4) the Pauline model of fidelity and perseverance in faith portrayed in 2 Timothy.

1 TIMOTHY

1:1-2, SALUTATION

The opening salutation foregrounds immediately the much-cherished and valued intimacy between Paul and his “loyal child” Timothy. The father-son terminology was customarily used to express the master-disciple relationship that was then widespread in the mystery religions.⁸ As Timothy’s spiritual father, “Paul” here revalidates the enduring bonds of their long-established union as grounded in the vitality of the faith they held in common. Timothy was no mere “special acquaintance” by accident or “happenstance”; he was “Paul’s” loyal child “in the faith” (*en pistei*). The apostle himself used the parent-child imagery to describe his relationship to his converts in other communications (1 Cor 4:14-15; Phlm 10), and referred to Timothy as a coworker (1 Thess 3:2; Phil 2:19-20). The prayer-wish for Timothy in the salutation here, invoking “grace, mercy, and peace” (*shalom*) for Timothy’s unique person and distinctive being, robust faith, and loyalty, provides a sterling model for reinforcing long-standing bonds and life-giving intimacy among ministry coworkers and friends.

Marie-Noëlle Anderson, a South African expert on traditional medicine and biodiversity, has sagely remarked on the priceless and “privileged” character of life-giving intimacy: “Intimacy should be seen as a privileged

meeting of two beings: Man with woman, parent with child, pupil with teacher.”⁹ Such intimacy is in clear evidence in the author’s narrative transaction with Timothy. Clear, too, is the author’s hope that the seeds of faith that he had planted in his young charge would continue to be sown in others, producing and

“For Russell and Rowena Jelliffe” by Langston Hughes

And so the seed
Becomes a flower
And in its hour
Reproduces dreams
And flowers

And so the root
Becomes a trunk
And then a tree
And seeds of trees
And springtime sap
And summer shade
And autumn leaves
And shape of poems
And dreams—
And more than tree.

And so it is
With those who make
Of life a flower,
A tree, a dream
Reproducing (on into
Its own and mine
And your infinity)
Its beauty and its life
In you and me.

—“For Russell and Rowena Jelliffe” from *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc., and Harold Ober Associates Inc.

reproducing an unbounded spiritual harvest. The African American poet Langston Hughes offers a similar perspective on seeds in the poem, "For Russell and Rowena Jelliffe" (see sidebar on p. 413).

Hughes's sonnet recalls the astonishing mystery and power of sown seed to reproduce itself and thrive. Similarly, the parable of the sower traditions in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 4:1-9; Matt 13:1-9; Luke 8:4-8) bears witness to the mysterious sovereignty of the sown word of the gospel to explode into fruitfulness for the kingdom—a yield of thirty, sixty, one hundredfold. "Paul" here challenges Timothy to maintain his unapologetic, unfailing commitment to this divine, potentially explosive work of ministry, where nurtured seed develops deep roots and may become a flower, a trunk, or an expansive and sturdy tree, enduring firmly through the seasons and cycles of life, irrepressibly reproducing itself in every receptive soil.

Like all mentors, Paul the apostle was a "lantern" in Timothy's life. In the words of one of America's foremost civil rights leaders and child advocacy champions, Marian Wright Edelman, we do not come into or get through life alone. Our lives are often gifted with exceptional women and men, who, like Paul, function as lanterns in our lives, brilliantly illuminating our pathways with wisdom and inspiration for the journey, galvanizing and fueling our energies and resolve. Her prayer in the sidebar conveys her gratitude for these rare individuals.

The model of Paul as a loving, collegial, and focused mentor and coworker in ministry, introduced here but repeated in greater detail throughout the Pastorals, highlights the importance of such life-giving relationships in identity formation. "Without identity, we are an object of history, an instrument used by others, like a utensil. Identity is an assumed role; it is like being in a theater where every-

Mentors Light Our Way

"O God, I thank you for the lanterns in my life who illuminated dark and uncertain paths, calmed and stilled debilitating doubts and fears with encouraging words, wise lessons, gentle touches, firm nudges, and faithful actions along my journey of life and back to You."

—Marian Wright Edelman, *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), xiii.

one is given a role to play."¹⁰ Joseph Ki-Zerbo, a professor of history at Dakar University in Senegal, declaratively pinpoints a key issue in the crisis of identity formation among people of every generation and of all cultures and nations. It is the awareness that the roots of our identity anchor us within the drama of life and prevent us from becoming aimless and disoriented. Timothy's clarity about his "roots" and his Christian identity was a formidable tool in facing foes from without and fears from within.

As Christians living in the post-apostolic era, seeking guidance about how to follow the apostolic teachings of Paul, the martyr apostle of an earlier generation, the recipients of 1 Timothy appeared to be preoccupied with issues related to their own identity formation as Christ-believers. Like those in Alex Haley's famed 1976 miniseries *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (which sparked a renaissance of genealogical study and research on family origins and history among Americans of all ethnicities and cultures), the members of the late first-century Christian assemblies required a sharper, more refined photographic picture of "Paul," who had long inspired revolutionary and costly faith within an imperial context.

Christ-believers in the assemblies where Timothy had ministered had themselves been

energized by the traditions regarding the apostle who had so staunchly and fearlessly proclaimed during his life and ministry: "I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you" (Phil 1:23-24). They had nodded together in affirmative, almost lock-step agreement upon hearing once again of Paul's boundless love for Christ: "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:7-8). Their spirits hushed within them when they imagined their spiritual hero in the waning, sunset years of his life proclaim in correspondence to the Roman believers in the West (whom he had never met): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'" (Rom 1:16-17). For the Ephesian faithful, a "hermeneutics of memory and mimesis (imitation)" made perfect sense as a sure-fire strategy for nurturing their own identity formation in their time. The reconstructed memories and model of the apostle clarified who they were—and "whose" they were—as bearers of the deposit handed on to them.

The author of 1 Timothy was certainly a master reconstructionist and image maker, portraying Paul as *primus inter pares* (first among equals) to qualifiedly give directions for all phases of the church's life. Such image making is familiar in the lived experiences of black peoples, both within the United States and in the African diaspora. One of the monumental achievements of Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize-winning book, *Beloved*,¹¹ is its bellwether cry for black peoples to *remember*

the historical past—even the disheartening, traumatized past of American slavery. In her view, a "disremembered," romanticized past obfuscates the realities and terrors of enslavement. It veils and trivializes the long tradition of resistance and revolt that dogged every step of slavery's swagger. It diminishes the pertinacity of enslaved individuals, families, and communities who exhibited boundless creative potential in their pursuit of the dream of freedom and a more robust quality of life. These subaltern giants, who so often stood tall

Love the God-Given Self

"'Here,' she said, 'in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved.'"

—Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 88.

when bowed, passed on the light-torch that still illuminates the way of black peoples in the present. "Re-memorying" the past foregrounds the myriad of ways African Americans reconstructed certain kinds of stability, created life-giving strategies for survival, and much, much more.

When Sethe's mother-in-law, the inspired preacher Baby Suggs, stood tall in the hush-arbor of the outdoor church called the Clearing and recalled the evils turned loose on African Americans during slavery—affecting eyes, hands, mouth, and the totality of their physical being—her last words to her enlivened congregation were not words of lament. She helped them to create a countercanonical script and "counterstory" to the master American narrative of racial inferiority and inhumanity—a narrative which ceaselessly trivialized the integrity, beauty and worth of black bodies, and which mocked the limitless treasure of black humanity and potential. Her reverberant, grandiloquent, and captivating rhetoric commanded an unqualifiably passionate, embodied, and performative dance of self-love—a self-love with visible markers of loving fiercely every feature of the God-given self of black women, men, and children. African American homiletical, rhetorical artistry, had once again broken through the veil of slavery's stultifying mist, disrupting—for a season, at least—slavery's intrusive assault and reign of terror in African American life. (See the sidebar on p. 415.)

If Baby Suggs used a parade of graphic imperatives and spellbinding images and metaphors to frame and reconstruct slavery's horrors, she also employed a hermeneutics of memory and mimesis to remind members of her congregation that how they were imaged, constructed, and treated by others was never an indication of who they actually were and are. The "subjected" self was never the "actual self." Proactively, she challenged them to disrupt the "constructed self" of their

slaveholders by celebrating the nonnegotiable grounds and integrity of their full humanity. Imperatively framed phrases exhorting the men, women, and children to "love" despised hands, mouths, and flesh dramatically externalized and embodied their resistance to slavery's tyrannous reign.

The author of the Pastorals similarly utilized a hermeneutic of memory and mimesis in service of the identity formation of Christian believers. The Pastoral writer portrays Paul as a model for teaching and suffering and a mentor for moral behavior. He achieves this reconstruction with a series of bold paraenetic injunctions, maxims, and imperatives. The fiery imperatives in 1 Timothy and Titus, in particular, are meant to place Paul himself behind the regulations, authorizing the action stated with apostolic authority. The sidebar (see p. 417) enumerates the frequency and forces of the hortatory imperatives and "must" verbs running through the letters. Cast in the first person, second person, and third person, they create an air of intimacy, personalizing further the apostolic prescriptions for appropriate behavior.¹²

1:3-7, AN INTERNAL CRISIS

Verses 3-7 have in view an internal crisis arising from battles with an elite esoteric group who taught "a different doctrine" (*heterodaskalein*) in the "household of God" (*oikos tou theou*) within the Ephesian communities (1 Tim 1:3; 3:15; 6:3). This different doctrine stood in sharp contrast to what Paul himself had taught (6:3), and it contravened Paul's own instruction (e.g., Gal 1:6-7). Interpreters have extensively explored the precise nature of the false doctrine or heretical teaching, highlighting its speculative character arising from preoccupation with legends, tales, myths, and fables. Likely people from *within* the assemblies, and not outsiders from *without*—as was

Hortatory Imperatives (Orders to Do Something or to Be Something) in 1 Timothy and Titus

First-Person Singular Verbs

1 Tim 1:3, "I urged"
1 Tim 2:1, "I urge"
1 Tim 2:8, "I desire"
1 Tim 2:12, "I permit"
1 Tim 5:14, "So I would have"
1 Tim 5:21, "I charge"
Titus 1:5, "I directed you"

Second-Person Singular Verbs

1 Tim 5:1, "Do not rebuke . . . but exhort"
1 Tim 5:3, "Honor widows"
1 Tim 5:7, "Command this"
1 Tim 5:11, "But refuse"
1 Tim 5:19, "Never admit"
1 Tim 5:20, "Rebuke them"
1 Tim 5:22, "Do not be hasty . . . nor participate; keep"
Titus 2:1, "Teach"
Titus 2:6, "'Urge"
Titus 3:1, "Remind"

Third-Person Singular and Plural

1 Tim 2:11, "Let a woman learn"
1 Tim 3:10, "Let them be tested first . . . let them see"
1 Tim 3:12, "Let deacons be"
1 Tim 5:4, "Let them first learn"
1 Tim 5:9, "Let a widow be enrolled"
1 Tim 5:16, "Let her assist them"
1 Tim 5:17, "Let the elders . . . be considered worthy"
1 Tim 6:1, "Let all . . . regard."
1 Tim 6:2, "Let them not be disrespectful . . . let them serve" (my translation)

Impersonal "Must" or "Ought" Verbs

1 Tim 3:2, "Now a bishop must be"
1 Tim 3:7, "He must be"
1 Tim 3:15, "How one ought to behave"
Titus 1:7, "Must be blameless"

the case in Galatia (Gal 2:4) and Corinth (2 Cor 11:4; 12-15)—the troublemakers were not "external wolves" but "homegrown," disguised wolves in the midst of the communities who had lost their spiritual bearings and wandered from the faith. Presuming to be "teachers of God's law" (1:7; 5:17), they were preoccupied with seductive novelties that would yield a fallow harvest, instead of bearing the fruitful bounty of the saving and empowering work of renewal and transformation.

Scholars have spilled a great deal of ink discussing and debating the precise nature of the teaching promoted by the false teachers. There is no mention here of the aggressive missionary tactics we see in 2 Timothy, where the false teachers rove about, "going from house to house" (2 Tim 3:6), and where the activist bent of the false teachers is captured with such terms as "they stand against" (2 Tim 3:8), and "they advance" (2 Tim 2:16; 3:13). Their verbal disputations are nonetheless unprofitable, and must be opposed (1 Tim 2:14; 2:16-17).

1:8-11, USES OF THE LAW

The author here details contrasting views and uses of the law. The false teachers used the Old Testament law, likely the Torah or the Mosaic law, to buttress their claims for personal spiritual authority and spirituality, an illegitimate use of its purpose and function. For the apostle Paul, "the law is good, if one uses it legitimately" (v. 8; cf. Rom 7:7-25, 16). Providing a minitutorial for the faithful, "Paul" now reminds the audience of the primary function of the law: to expose sin in the light of God's ethical standards. Revealing sin and pointing sinners in the direction of the gospel, the law emphasizes God's demands and human needs. Hence, the law was not intended for "just" or righteous persons, or for the smug, self-congratulatory teachers who assumed they

had achieved “spiritual nirvana” through special “knowledge” (6:20). Rather, it functioned to illuminate and to restrain one from the kind of violence enumerated in vv. 9-10, to lead one to repentance, and to provide a directive to the life-giving gospel.

The vice list catalogued in 1 Tim 1:9-10 bears an unmistakable resemblance to the egregious sins listed in the Ten Commandments. The author censures “those who kill” fathers or mothers instead of honoring them (v. 9c; Exod 20:12); excoriates murderers (v. 9d; Exod 20:13, “You shall not murder”); and indicts both liars and perjurers (v. 10; Exod 20:16, “You shall not give false witness against your neighbor”), and adulterers (v. 10; Exod 20:14, “You shall not commit adultery”).

Quite startling in the vice list, and often surprisingly overlooked or minimized in scholarly interpretation of this particular vice list, is the censure of “slave traders” in v. 10. The Greek term used here for slave traders is “*andrapodistas*,” a word occurring only here in the Christian Testament and found in neither

the Septuagint (LXX) nor in other pre-Christian literature. Technically, the term means “slave dealer,” or “kidnapper,” and perhaps “procurer,” or “thief.” Hence, and in notably bold strokes, slave trading—so widespread on the Mediterranean landscape of the first century—is linked with the sins and violence of murder, “and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me” (vv. 10b-11). Within this context, slave traders are cast with those who violate the Decalogue’s commandment against stealing—in this instance the theft is human lives (Exod 20:15, “You shall not steal”). As George Knight correctly observes, there is a striking inconsistency here. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament contain traditions that appear to forbid particular practices relative to slavery, yet appear to tolerate the institution. It is certainly the case that traditions in both Testaments seek to regulate the existing state of slaves and masters (Deut 24:7; Eph 6:5-7; Col 3:22—4:1; 1 Tim 6:1; 2 Tim 2:9, 10).¹³

The Roman Slave Trade—An Economic Goldmine

“The exportation of slaves induced the Cilician pirates most of all to engage in their evil business, since it proved most profitable. For not only were the slaves easily captured, but the market, which was large and loaded with cash, was not very far away. I mean Delos, which could take in and ship out tens of thousands of slaves (*myriadas*) in a single day. From this arose the proverb, ‘Merchant, sail in and unload your ship, your cargo is already sold.’ The slave trade arose after the Romans became rich from the destruction of Carthage and Corinth and began to make use of numerous household slaves. Seeing easy profit in this, large numbers of pirates emerged to accommodate the demand and handled both the kidnapping of prisoners and the sale of them at Delos. The kings of both Cyprus and Egypt cooperated with them in this, because they were enemies to the Seleucids. Since the Rhodians were equally unfriendly, they too looked the other way. As a result, the pirates, posing as slave dealers, went about their evil business unchecked.”

—Strabo 14.5.2 (669)

Even if, as some interpreters classically note of vice lists in general, this particular list is but one of many examples of such lists in antiquity, posted widely in tabular form, and is only descriptive (painting a broad picture of transgressive behavior) and not prescriptive (reacting to, or seeking to change behavior within a particular locale), the technical term *slave traders* nevertheless warrants further comment. Interpreters Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, for example, caution, “One must not see the list as referring to actual contemporary events or as closely related to the historical or fictitious situation of the Epistle.”¹⁴ But what the term still strikingly represents, in any case, is biting anti-slavery polemic that requires further comment.

The profitability of the sale of enslaved men, women, and children is well attested in the annals of ancient history. The geographer Strabo describes the remarkably extensive commercial activity occasioned by the exportation of slaves in Delos after 133 B.C.E. While the trans-Mediterranean slave trade had been a fact of Greco-Roman existence for centuries, its profitability has rarely been described with such remarkable candor. Strabo observes that the profitability factor made the “theft” of the enslaved in war, and within a host of other contexts, an irresistible temptation for many. Like the American slave trade of later centuries, the “economic profitability factor” only deepened the tightly intertwined roots of slavery’s hold on society.¹⁵

In comprehensive studies of slavery from antiquity to the present, the perception of slavery as the “theft” of the integrity of human personhood and spirit is well attested. Allusions to being a “stolen” people abound in black slave narratives, music (including the Negro spirituals) and literature. Black spirituals, such as is found in the following sidebar, are quintessential markers of the lived experi-

ence of the fracture and dissolution of family networks in slavery, an experience often described as “social death.”¹⁶

Slavery as Social Death

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
A long ways from home;
A long ways from home.

Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone,
Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone,
Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone,
A long ways from home;
A long ways from home.

Whether the allusion to the slave traders in 1 Tim 1:10 is descriptive or prescriptive, the inference of anti-slavery critique and polemic is unmistakable. One wonders how enslaved women and men within early Christian assemblies might have heard it (see the allusion to enslaved believers in 1 Tim 6:1-2 and Titus 2:9-10). I have argued that interpreters need to limn out some of the clamorous debates blanketed within texts like 1 Tim 3:10 and Rev 18:13—texts that allude to the cry of subaltern (oppressed and marginalized) lions whose voices are muted by the thunderous victory chants of the hunters—the imperialist and colonialist “historical winners whose stories we know all too well.”¹⁷

1:12-17, VALIDATION

The author of the Pastorals picks up the artist’s brush and continues to paint his unique reconstruction of Paul. Not only did the Paul of tradition ignite and extend the revolution of faith initially inaugurated by Jesus

throughout the Mediterranean, but he also validated the pragmatic rituals of Christian life—baptism, the Lord's Supper, collections for the saints, and ministry to the weak, the powerless, widows and orphans. Crisscrossing the well-worn paths of the Roman Empire, he challenged the pretentious and imperial practices of earthly kings and patrons who enabled injustice and suffering to flourish, dealing a minor blow, at least, to the idolatry of power embodied by imperial ideologues.¹⁸ But if Paul's portrait landed him firmly in the "Hall of Faith," with his portrait hanging on the same wall as other likely and unlikely pioneers in that mighty cloud of witnesses—Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, and Gideon (Heb 11:1-40)—the reconstruction produced no unblemished saint.

Verses 12-17 signal a profound truth: Paul, a champion of the gospel, had also been a needy recipient of God's superabundant grace. The foremost sinner and violent persecutor of the nascent and struggling assemblies became a foremost example of God's redemptive mercy. Using the well-known preaching formula "once—but now," the author of the Pastorals contrasts Paul's career as a violent persecutor with the life of one who had received a salvific grace surpassing human expectation, computation, and reason. The portrayal of Paul in post-apostolic times highlighted his conversion as an example or exhibit of the inexhaustible long-suffering of God—a loving God who welcomed even the most arrogant and unflinching opponents of the good news of the gospel.

1:18-20, A Contrast of Faith and Faithlessness Timothy's faithfulness and good conscience are contrasted with the faithless and conscienceless duo Hymenaeus and Alexander. Hymenaeus, mentioned also in 2 Tim 2:17, 18, upset the faith of others by engaging in heedless disruptions with words, senseless

controversies, and an ungodly chatter that produced a harvest of impiety or ungodliness. The infectious discourse, compared to foul-smelling, destructive gangrene (cf. 2 Tim 2:17, *gangraina*), was a malignant sore eating away at the healthy tissue of a flourishing community. Moreover, the antagonists advanced a view of realized eschatology that implied the resurrection of the body had already taken place, a pre-Gnostic or semi-Gnostic teaching denounced in 1 Corinthians 15. The apostle Paul had emphasized the futurity of the resurrection in Rom 6:5; now "Paul" recalls that teaching as a decisive blow to the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who argued that the resurrection was already past (cf. 2 Tim 2:18).

Drawing on the image of military service widely used in philosophical diatribe to emphasize the need for disciplined focus on the battle at hand, the writer commands Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (v. 18), suggesting that Timothy draw upon an arsenal of tools, weaponry, and strategic resources for battle in the campaign of life.¹⁹

2:1-7, Church and Society

The writer of 1 Timothy has in view a particular motive for accommodating worldly authorities: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity" (v. 2). Here the writer launches into a treatise on the church's relationship to society, portraying Roman political powers rather positively. He enjoins implicit prayer that the work of the Christian mission not be inhibited by the imperial powers. Many commentators suggest the admonition reflects a conservative "bourgeois" or "middle-class" ethic, one that avoids challenging the established sociopolitical order in favor of adaptation and conformity to many of its prevailing ideological and cultural assumptions and norms. Perhaps this "ideal Christian citizenship" represented a strategic survival strategy for some third-generation

assemblies settling down in the world within the context and reality of a delayed parousia. In fact, for some assemblies of the saints in the latter decades of the first century, the Roman Empire was no longer the "main enemy," but the welcoming earthly environment in which Christianity would have to peacefully exist until the coming of Christ. Moreover, "the image of Christ was slowly transformed from that of an alternative king to that of a model emperor presiding over a shadow government in heaven and showing by example how things should be done on earth."²⁰

The ideals of peaceful Christian citizenship in the Pastorals stand in sharp contrast to the Pauline understanding of existence, which emphasized tension in the world (2 Cor 11:23-33) and opposition to the dominant order (1 Thess 4:14-18; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Rom 8:18-25). Paul, who had founded his ethic on an eschatological perspective that indicated the end of the dominant order soon, with the parousia (coming) of his Lord to follow, was willing to transgress—albeit with some limitation and inconsistency—the patriarchal social norms relative to low-status social subordinates, including married and single women and enslaved men and women (1 Cor 7:25-35). A social history of the urbanized groups of Pauline Christianity reveals a Paul who established a revolutionary countercultural ethos within the Christian assemblies, one that often contrasted sharply with prevailing cultural assumptions and hierarchical structures. Helmut Koester's insight on this point is indispensable for understanding and interpreting the Pastorals within their social and historical context. In sharp contrast to the Pauline letters, the Pastoral Epistles mark the end of Christian eschatological ethics:

Christianity no longer looked upon itself as the community of the new ages that promised to break down social barriers, as those

between man and women, free and slaves, at least as far as its own interior organization and order was concerned. Rather, the church had become obligated to the world and society at large and had to fulfill the general norms and moral demands in an exemplary fashion. If Christians are still admonished to distinguish themselves in their moral actions from the rest of society such distinction would now be achieved through a more dignified and faithful observance of the generally accepted rules for good behavior.²¹

Quite in contrast to the Paul of the authentic Pauline letters, who emphasized the countercultural legitimacy of rational moral decisions after careful weighing and assessment of alternatives (1 Cor 7:2-7; 7:36-38; Phil 4:8-9), the author of the Pastorals championed models and protocols of behavior in the Greco-Roman households that generally maintained the power and prerogatives of both *patria potestas* (paternal power) and *paterfamilias* (the rule of the father/husband/slavemaster).

2:8-15, A PATRIARCHAL FAMILY ETHIC

The author's insistence on the value of social conformity to promote the community's image in the world at large meant that *patria potestas* and the authority of the *paterfamilias* be upheld, in conformity with the conventions of Hellenistic moralists. Concerned that the assemblies would not become recognizably stable organizations within society, the writer articulates a family ethic wherein the piety of the *paterfamilias* frames the piety of the entire household. The conservative mind-set in evidence here emphasizes stringent instruction for social subordinates—wives, not husbands (1 Tim 2:9-15; Titus 2:4-5, 1 Tim 5:14), and

for slaves, not masters (1 Tim 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10). The presence of these regulations suggests that some free women and some enslaved men and women were likely subverting patriarchal household norms, seeking to act and live as those who had been liberated from prevailing social and cultural values and regulations in Christ.

The strict injunction to women's silence in vv. 11-12 contrasts sharply with references to women's verbal presence and agency in the Pauline letters (cf. Rom 16:3-23). In Phil 4:3 and Rom 16:3, Paul named three women with whom he labors as *synergoi*, "fellow workers": Euodia, Syntyche, and Prisca. Paul assumed as a given that women would speak in and lead early Christian worship services (1 Cor 11:5). The writer of the Pastorals, on the other hand, presses traditions about Eve as seductress and primary progenitor of sin into his argument (cf. Sir 25:24) to reinforce male prerogative in society and the *ekklesia*.²² This position contrasts sharply with that of Paul himself, who argued that Adam preceded Eve (1 Cor 11:18), and Eve was the one deceived by the serpent (2 Cor 11:3). It was Adam's sin that brought death into the world (2 Cor 15:21-22). For the writer of 1 Timothy, who doubtless knew of the more egalitarian tradition of "no longer

slave or free . . . no longer male and female" (Gal 3: 28), there would be no "egalitarian excess" overturning patriarchal household norms—as witnessed in the charismatic assemblies of Paul of earlier generations—in *his* assemblies! The Pauline model that generally welcomed free women and enslaved men and women, and often advanced their liberation from patriarchal conventions, would have absolutely no place in his community of saints.

The patriarchal ideal for relationships between husband and wife is soundly documented in Greek and Roman literature. The Greek philosopher and biographer Plutarch, who lived in Rome ca. 90 C.E., describes the ideal relationship between husbands and wives in one of his moral essays, "Expectations of Marriage" (see sidebar below).²³

Verses 11-12, prohibiting public teaching by women, reflect an integration of traditional patriarchal norms about the public behavior and decorum for women in Greco-Roman society. The prevailing sentiment prohibiting women's public teaching and their exercise of authority, requiring them to "ask their husbands at home" if they wanted to know something, had earlier been interpolated into a genuine letter of Paul (1 Cor 14:33b-36). As the text box narrating a public speech by

Expectations of Marriage

"When two voices sing in unison, the melody of the deeper voice prevails. So, too, in a temperate household every activity is carried out with both parties in agreement, but every activity also makes clear the sovereignty and choice of the husband. . . . That wife is worthless and unfit who has a sad countenance when her husband is eager to make jokes and be cheerful, or who makes jokes and laughs when he is serious. The first behavior reveals an unpleasant character, the second an inconsiderate one. . . . A wife should have no emotion of her own, but should share in the seriousness and playfulness and melancholy and laughter of her husband."

—Plutarch, *Moral Advice*, 139 D, F; 140 A

Marcus Porcius Cato concerning the "unruly" behavior of Roman women who had dared to express a public opinion about a political matter attests, women could be educated, but they were not expected to express opinions on their own.²⁴ Cato (234–149 B.C.E.), a wealthy, prominent politician in Rome who was an established spokesperson for ultraconservatives, argued that men should retain the full power of the patriarchal household authority and restrict women's autonomy. Cato's quotation in the sidebar (on the following page) serves to remind us that traditions or practices that subvert the liberating potential of the gospel for women must be overturned.

The quotations by Plutarch and Cato remind us of the debilitating legacy of patriarchy. Patriarchy, which presupposes that males alone best and most fully represent the interest, gifts, and potential of both women and men in church and society, is a jagged blade: it not only "cuts" by distorting the human construction of reality, in which men and women together are both equally and fully created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-31), it "cuts" and devastates by sanctifying the dominion of some human members of the human family over others—a tradition and social practice African Americans rejected outright in the evil institution of American slavery (which legitimated the dominion of whites Americans over black Americans). As the African American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins has so wisely observed, dominant groups legitimate their "right to rule" over others—and demand or encourage the submission of others—by appeals to "commonsense." Her comments are relevant to the politics of patriarchy in both church and society: "In the United States, hegemonic ideologies concerning race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation are often so pervasive that it is difficult to conceptualize alternatives to them, let alone ways of resisting the social practices they justify."²⁵ As African Americans know all too

well, when biblical texts and religion are used to legitimate inequities in the social construction of reality ("the way life is supposed to be or function")—as did the pro-slavery defenders who used power to endorse the subordination of some peoples to others—the results can be devastating and demonic.

A "hermeneutic of the experiences of black peoples," that foregrounds the distinct legacy and rationales of orientation, and the enduring and dynamic regimes of choice and practice within black people's lives, requires a much-needed reassessment of continued patterns and practices of patriarchy in black church theology and ecclesiology. Biblical interpretation and practice that mandate the subordination and marginalization of women, that legitimates their exclusion from ordination, and that diminishes the equalitarian use of power between women and men within twenty-first century churches, wreaks violence on homiletical and social justice rhetoric and practice that claims to liberate the whole of creation. Further, it impoverishes cherished ideals of the constructive transformation, dynamic agency, and boundless potentiality of black peoples. The imaginative and decisive creation of hermeneutical strategies that dethrone the idolatry and legacy of patriarchal conditioning are absolutely requisite for enlarging the church's authenticity, spirituality, and mission within the world. On this point, African American hermeneutical strategies must confront, critique, and overturn the legacy of the jagged edge of patriarchy in black life. Interpretive reconstruction and practice may lead to the kind of liberationist practices that can constructively radicalizing our own present and future possibilities as a people and aid us immeasurably in formulating our life projects.²⁶

The extensive literature on the history of black women's leadership, agency authority, and ordination within African American

churches through the centuries reveals a complex mosaic of images. Denominational histories, autobiographies, slave narratives, spiritual narratives, historical records, and other varieties of fiction and nonfiction alike all document the distinctive challenges black women face relative to their empowerment—or disempowerment—in the church, particularly as it relates to church leadership and governance. Some denominations tend to adopt a hermeneutic that affirms the more liberationist models of women's co-leadership found in Paul's authentic letters. Other denominations and interpreters favor the more conservative, patriarchal model of "ideal Christian citizenship" for women we find in

the Pastoral letters. These, and a range of other models, exist across a broad continuum within African American churches, religious communities and organizations.²⁷

Sociologist Cheryl Townsend Gilkes has provided a brilliant analysis of the distinctive ways in which African American women have shaped the culture and consciousness of the black religious experience in her book *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community*.²⁸ Theologian Kelly Brown Douglas has helpfully highlighted the implications of a Christology that takes seriously the meaning of Christ for multiple communities and audiences within the black church in her

The Social Control of Women

"If each of us men, fellow citizens, had undertaken to keep the right and the authority of the husband out of the hands of the women of the family, we would have less trouble with groups of women. But as it is now, at home our freedom is trampled on by feminine rages, and here in the Forum it is crushed and trod underfoot. Because we were unable to control each woman as an individual, we are now frightened by women in groups. . . .

"Indeed, it was with some embarrassment that I came a few minutes ago to the Forum right through a crowd of women. If I had not held in respect the dignity and basic decency of each woman as an individual (it would mortify them to be seen receiving a scolding from a consul), I would have said: 'What kind of behavior is this, running around in public blocking streets and talking to other women's husbands? Could you not have asked our own husbands the same thing at home? Are you more persuasive in public than in private, with others' husbands than with your own? And yet it is not right, even in your own homes (if a sense of shame and decency were to keep you within your proper limits), for you to concern yourselves about which laws are passed or repealed here.' That's what I would have said.

"Our ancestors were not willing to let women conduct any business, not even private business, without a guardian. They wanted them to remain under the control of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. We, for heaven's sake, now allow them to take part in politics and to mingle with us in the Forum and to attend assemblies. . . . To be quite honest, they desire freedom, nay rather license in all matters. And if they win in this matter, what will they not attempt?"

—Marcus Porcius Cato, quoted by Livy, *A History of Rome* 34.2.1, 2, 8–11, 14.

3:1–16, LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

The author here delineates leadership qualities within the community, describing ideal conduct for *episkopoi* (overseers) and *diakonoi* (deacons). He emphasizes "moral qualities" that believers should exhibit, not "qualifications." Contemporary understandings of "bishop" and "deacon" should not be read into the passage. Officers described as *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* were earlier described within the Pauline correspondence (Phil 1:1; 3:11; cf. Rom 6:1), albeit briefly. The allusions present a view of leadership positions in an early stage of development. *Episkopoi* appear to have significant administrative and teaching responsibilities (3:2), while *diakonoi* and *presbyteroi* also assume management responsibilities, and teach or preach (3:12; 4:14; 5:17). Women are included as *diakonoi* (3:11–12; cf. Rom 16:1, where Phoebe is called a *diakonos* of the church at Cenchrae). If Paul appeared to restrict women's prophesying activities in

important book, *The Black Christ*.²⁹ Biblical scholar Musa W. Dube provides an illuminating anthology with contributions of African women about religion and gender in her anthology titled, *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*.³⁰ Caribbean scholar and political scientist Judith Soares has contributed helpfully to our understanding of the legacy of Eve traditions in Barbados, in her essay "Eden after Eve: Christian Fundamentalism and Women in Barbados."³¹ And I have challenged African American interpreters to address the unsettling paradox of *rejecting* the literalist patriarchal injunction for slaves to be submissive to masters in the domestic house tables (Col 3:18–4:1; 2:18–3:7), while still *accepting and embracing* the literalist patriarchal injunction that women should be subordinate to husbands.³² As Gilkes's observation in the sidebar below confirms, there is much at stake in African American women and men functioning "together," and "in harness" for the benefit for the entire community.³³

The Jagged Blade of Patriarchy

"The patriarchy of the black church has never been peaceful. The content of that patriarchy—a patriarchy that can be labeled ambivalent in its various expressions—has been severely modified by the persistent tradition of conflict that black women have maintained within black religious structures. Although women remain subordinate persons in structures where males hold nearly all the highest positions, the ideologies advanced by these men in defense of their domination reflect the embattled nature of their position. Simply stated, there are certain arguments that black preachers dare not advance in public regardless of how much they believe them; for instance, those arguments assailing women's competence were lost in the debates of the nineteenth century. In interpreting any conflicts within African American religious traditions, however, it is critically important to remember that they take place in organizational settings where the operating metaphor and ideology for human relations is *family*. They take place among 'brothers' and 'sisters,' between 'fathers' and 'mothers' and 'daughters.' . . . As early as the 1830s, black women orators refuted biblical arguments demanding their silence as public speakers."

—Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis), 108 (emphasis mine).

1 Corinthians 11, the author of 1 Timothy appeared to restrict their functioning as teachers and authorities (2:8: "I desire, then, that in every place the men (*andras*) should pray"; 2:12). As Linda Maloney astutely observes, even wealthy women—those with the money for leisure and adornments, implicit in 1 Tim 2:9—are enjoined to silence. According to Pliny, enslaved women were exercising leadership roles as deacons in Christian churches in Asia Minor as late as 112 C.E.³⁴

What the writer of 1 Timothy has in view in 3:1-16 is church leaders whose behavior is irreproachable, soundness in life and work, and a good reputation before others in the "household of God . . . the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (3:15). If the author(s) of the Pastorals has no unitary, unified model of church government detailing how deacons function alongside widows, how bishops relate to elders, and how deacons relate to bishops (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9), what he is concerned to do is to preserve, hand on, and nurture an apostolic tradition that provides an effective arsenal of resources for combating heresy, and one that reinforces ideals of Christian citizenship generally consistent with prevailing cultural norms.³⁵

4:1-10, FALSE TEACHINGS

The author of 1 Timothy has done his homework! With a detective's investigative skill, he compiled a detailed list of the errors the false teachers were advancing within the Christian assembly. He has already decried their preoccupation with verbal wrangling (1 Tim 1:3-4); here he critiques their ascetic practices, including the renunciation of marriage and abstinence from certain foods. In earlier decades, Paul had advised some members of the Corinthian assemblies not to marry in light of the coming end (1 Cor 7:8, 25-26), but he did not forbid marriage. The writer of 1 Timothy

also held marriage in high esteem (1 Tim 5:14), a theme similarly echoed in Titus 2:4.

Rejecting the ascetic denial of food, the writer implicitly celebrates instead the bounty and varieties of food God provides for humankind, which "God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (v. 3b). A Jewish and Christian view of reality celebrates the goodness of God's creation (Gen 1:1-31; Rom 14:14, 20; Mark 7:18, 19). Theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher reminds us of the marvelous integrity of God's created order: "As African American preachers and church mothers often say, 'God don't make no junk!' Everything has intrinsic worth and value. Every cell of an organism, each creature in an ecosystem, the very dust of stars and earth hold secrets of life and sustenance."³⁶ Instead of falling in line lockstep with those false teachers who abstained from foods, Christian believers were to maintain a sense of wonder and thanksgiving, with prayer, for the gift of food.

4:11-16, YOUNG LEADERS

In a church where elders were highly regarded (1 Tim 5:1-2), younger leaders within the assemblies might have experienced some intimidation. But Timothy's gift was given through a prophecy "with the laying on of hands *by* the council of elders." The writer argues that Timothy should not fear them; instead, he should boldly exercise his gift with confidence, modeling the noblest ethical ideals of appropriate speech and conduct, love, faith, and purity (v. 12).

5:1-25, RESPECT, RECIPROCITY, RESPONSIBILITY

These three terms capture dominant motifs in chap. 5. At the outset, the writer portrays the congregation as an extended family with

obligations of respect, reciprocity, and honor due to one another (vv. 1-2). The familial language of fathers, brothers, mothers, and sisters centrally highlights their responsibility for one another.

Verses 3-16 and vv. 17-20 outline regulations for the conduct of two primary groups: widows (vv. 3-16) and elders (vv. 17-20). The charge to honor and care for widows echoes a long-standing moral commitment to care for women left without a husband. This motif is deeply rooted in Jewish and Christian tradition (Exod 22:22-23; Deut 10:18; 14:29; 24:17-21; 26:12, 13; Ps 68:5; Isa 1:17, 23; Mal 3:5; Acts 6:1-6; Jas 1:27).

Suggestions that the passage refers to an "order" of widows are based on vv. 9-10, but there is little consensus on this point. The behavior of younger widows appears to be of paramount concern (vv. 11-15). Widowhood is, after all, a high honor (5:3) within the community. Whether younger or older, widows were to exhibit godliness, hospitality, fidelity to God, charitable works, and a life lived above reproach.

Elders deserve "double honor" (vv. 17-18) when they rule and teach well. The backdrop of this section and the preceding section on widows is the presence of forces (false teachers) that seek to undermine the vitality of the Christian message (widows, vv. 11-15; elders, v. 20). As those who live in the presence of the triumvirate of "God, Christ Jesus, and the elect angels," the faithful should attune their moral compass to insure fair and impartial treatment of elders who labor well.

6:1-2, A MESSAGE FOR THOSE "UNDER THE YOKE"

The writer has a special message for "all" (v. 1) of the enslaved within the faith community: they must regard masters with "all" honor. The slavemasters may not be personally "worthy" of

such honor, but they are to be regarded as worthy of such honor by virtue of their position (Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17). The writer emphasizes the need for enslaved men and women to conform to the traditionally prescribed, submissive behavior appropriate for low-status subordinates within the Christian assemblies, as earlier prescribed of women in 1 Tim 2:1-15. This model of "ideal Christian citizenship" will insure that "the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed" (v. 1).

The specific lack of directives about how masters should behave reinforces the thesis that the author reflects the interests and perspectives of those in the more economically privileged, higher status, propertied class. According to the author of 2 Timothy, service to fellow Christians who are masters should be even more rigorous, for such masters are "believers and beloved" (v. 2). As in the rhetoric of the domestic household codes in Col 3:18—4:1; Eph 5:21—6:9; and 1 Pet 2:18—3:7, we hear a "male-master rhetoric" that reinforces the prevailing social assumption that conformity to high status and low status roles must be rigorously maintained for the well-being of the *ekklesia* and the larger society.³⁷

Verses 1-2 echo the sentiment of the widely used and disseminated *exemplum* literature in Roman imperial society. Composed by males to encourage the loyalty and obedience of wives and enslaved women and men, these "loyalty tales"—popular short stories that formed a part of the symbolic universe and repertoire of the Roman elite—sought to "shore up" and reinforce the existing social construction of reality favoring male privilege and power.

Functioning as a kind of ancient "propaganda tool" for elite males, the *exemplum* literature typically portrayed free women and enslaved women and men as docile and passive, and utterly passionate about proving their unbridled loyalty to husbands and slave

masters—even to the point of death. The sidebar (below), with Cassius's example of favored stories from *exemplum* literature, valorizes the devotion of the self-sacrificing slave.³⁸ The *exemplum* literature recalls nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century pro-slavery tracts, pamphlets, and fictional literature that circulated on the American landscape with images of presumed "happy" and loyal slaves (cf. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe). Functioning similarly as the ancient propaganda literature, the pro-slavery literature sought to reinforce the notion that the loyal enslaved male or female would always place the well-being of his or her slave master above their own—even to the point of death.

Exempla: Pro-Slavery Propaganda

In one of the two most frequently recorded stories, the slave of Antius Restio, even though he had been branded for misconduct, secretly followed his master, hid him, brought him food, and, when soldiers approached, killed an old man in his place, claiming to the soldiers that he had taken revenge on his master for branding him (Valerius Maximus 6.8.7; Appian, *Civil War* 4:43; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 47.10.4–5; Macrobius 1.11.19–20). Contrasting this tale with two others of self-sacrificing slaves, the historian Cassius Dio (cf. Macrobius 1.11.18) makes the moral clear:

"In these incidents, perhaps the slaves, because of some previous act of kindness, were repaying those who had treated them kindly. But a certain slave who had been branded not only did not betray the man who had branded him, but enthusiastically saved him." (Cassius Dio 47.10.4)

The slave injunctions in 1 Tim 6:1–2 were part of the lexicon of biblical texts used by pro-slavery apologists in America to legitimate slavery. The Bible was, after all, the Southern church person's chief authority cited in support of slavery. Not surprisingly, pro-slavery biblical interpretation never jeopardized the privileged status and authority of the slave-master—a situation that parallels exactly the ethic in the Pastorals relative to slavery. But African Americans never accepted a literalist biblical interpretation that legitimized their status as subhuman chattel. They always countered the dialectics of negation with multiple forms of resistance.³⁹

6:3–21, ON GODLINESS AND WEALTH

The chief concern of vv. 3–21 is twofold. First, godliness (*eusebeia*), or "religion," holds value for both the present life and the life to come (vv. 3, 5b, 6, 11). In v. 3 false teachers imagine godliness to be a course of great personal gain (*porismos*). *Porismos* is literally translated as "good business," a source of profit. But the "godliness," with contentment, derives from neither monetary nor material gain, but from the active pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness (v. 11).

The second major concern of the chapter is wealth. The "love" of money is a snare (v. 10), a root of manifold evil. According to the philosopher Epictetus, "Bion the Sophist used to say that love of money is the mother city of all evil."⁴⁰ The false teachers are thoroughly preoccupied with greed (vv. 5–9). For the writer of 1 Timothy, divestiture of wealth is not an issue; rather, a life of good works and sharing with others (*koinōnikos*, v. 18) represents the model life for the wealthy within the assembly.⁴¹

2 TIMOTHY

INTRODUCTION

The rallying cry of 2 Timothy is "Remember!" The author of 2 Timothy presents himself as Paul, imprisoned in the very last years of his life. Framing his spiritual "last will and testament" in the form of a personal paraenetic letter, he provides distinctive contributions to the theological heritage of the church. While 2 Timothy contains themes and motifs found in 1 Timothy, the tone of 2 Timothy is much more urgent, and it is more intensely personal. Timothy is beckoned to come to "Paul" (4:9, 11, 21), but more than this, he is charged to deepen the roots of a faith legacy passed on to him by a faithful and faith-filled mother and grandmother (1 Tim 1:5). "Paul" charges his beloved child to "fan into flame" the gift of God within him (1 Tim 1:6), and to conduct his ministry with the God-given spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (1 Tim 1:7). "Paul's" incentives for action are personal; his tone is persistent.

(See also the Introduction to 1 Timothy.)

1:1–18, NOT ASHAMED, EVEN IN SUFFERING

With unceasing prayers and gratitude, "Paul" recalls the Spirit-empowered life and ministry of his young charge Timothy (vv. 6–7, 13–14). The author's appeal in the chapter is twofold. First, he charges Timothy to *never* be ashamed of either his testimony about "our Lord" or "Paul" himself. In fact, the Spirit God gives to believers fills them with power, not cowardice (v. 7). Second, Timothy is to take his part in the suffering occasioned by the proclamation of the gospel, as did Paul (vv. 8, 12). Neither "Paul's" abandonment by others in Asia (v. 15) nor his imprisonment (v. 16) dampened his confidence; rather, God's eternal plan, pur-

poses, and grace in the work of Christ ignited the fires of his ministry and recharged the batteries of his resolve (vv. 9–10). For "Paul," the key to perseverance in ministry is *knowing* "our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." "Paul" championed "personal knowledge" of Christ Jesus and not "heresy" as the key to the dynamism that marked his ministry: "for I *know* the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him" (v. 12, emphasis added). Like his mother and grandmother before him, Timothy is called to pass on a faith legacy built on the sure foundation of a personal knowledge of his God.

In his acclaimed book *Mama Made the Difference: Life Lessons My Mother Taught Me*, Bishop T. J. Jakes invites respected colleagues and friends to bear witness to the motivating power of a mother's love for her children. The clear consensus is that next to God's love, a mother's love for her child can be one of the most transformative forces on earth. In the very first chapter, "Mamas Teach Us to Believe in God," he comments: "So much in our lives begins with believing—love, peace, growth, change, destiny—I am so thankful that my mother always taught me to *believe*. She taught me to believe in God . . . and she taught me to believe in myself. . . . The strong Tide of my mama's many lessons flow out of the currents of these two streams."⁴² Surely Timothy would assent to the luminous wisdom of Jake's words relative to both his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother Lois.

2:1–13, MORAL VALUES

If the image of Paul as "model for suffering" and "mentor for moral behavior" was sketched in clear but faint lines in 1 Timothy (see the Introduction), the author of 2 Timothy used

a finely pointed artist's brush to fill in the details of Paul's image with graphic clarity in 2:1-13. Like a doting parent who in the last days of life teaches a series of unforgettable "life lessons" to a beloved child, "Paul" now urges Timothy to "be strong" in the grace of Christ Jesus. Moreover, Timothy must entrust what he has heard from "Paul" to faithful people who will, in turn, teach others (vv. 1-2). Utilizing a "hermeneutic of memory and mimesis" (see the Introduction), the "Paul" of 2 Timothy encourages Timothy to emulate his own soldier-like suffering (v. 4), his unswerving athletic drive in pursuing his goal (v. 5), and his patient labor in sowing seed in ministry, with the optimistic expectation of a certain crop (v. 6). Above all, Timothy must, like "Paul," endure "everything" ("all things," *panta*) for the sake of fellow believers (v. 10).

2:14-26, CORRECTING WITH GENTLENESS

There is a significant shift here in the thematic focus of chap. 2. Timothy's mandate to (1) "remember Jesus Christ" (v. 8) and (2) imitate Paul's example as soldier, athlete, farmer, and one who perseveres in suffering recedes into the background, as the author "puts on his boxing gloves" and provides concrete strategies for engaging in combat with false teachers. The content of the false teaching is reminiscent of that which is outlined in 1 Tim 1:3-7 (see the comments there). Hymenaeus, described as one who suffered "shipwreck in the faith" in 1 Tim 1:20, is described here as "swerving from the truth," because he believes incorrectly that the resurrection has already taken place (vv. 17-18). The "job description" for the Lord's servant who corrects the opponents is clear: the diverse company of those professing to be Christians will—like various kinds of utensils

in a large, rich person's house—purify himself and herself from that which is ignoble (not noble). Further, like vessels of silver and gold, she or he will become a vessel for noble use, ready for every good work.

Verses 16 reminds us that the "mechanics of imprisonment" Christian believers would have endured included chains. This sobering allusion recalls the unimaginable brutality of "chains" or shackles endured by many African peoples during the transatlantic slave trade of the seventeenth century. Almost one hundred pairs of shackles were found at the site of the wreckage of the *Henrietta Marie*, the oldest slave ship ever found, and the only one to have been discovered and excavated in the Americas. Located thirty miles off the coast of Key West, Florida, the ship is the only merchant ship ever recovered that sank during the course of trade. Among the almost one hundred pairs of shackles found in the wreckage nearly three centuries later, were shackles so small they seem to have been deliberately forged for the wrists and ankles of a child.⁴³

3:1—4:22, EXHORTATIONS AND GREETINGS

The imprisoned "Paul" of 2 Timothy is undaunted in spirit. He devotes a portion of his last will and testament to a description of the apostasy to be experienced in both the present and future (3:1-9). Using the model of the Hellenistic vice catalogue, the writer lists eighteen vices or sins, with a nineteenth vice added in v. 5, "holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power." Such vice lists are found elsewhere in the Christian Testament (Rom 1:29-31; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 1:9-10).

The hermeneutic of memory and mimesis is pressed into service as "Paul" recalls the

experiences of his life in ministry (3:10-17). His teaching, bold faith, and endurance of suffering and desertion qualified him—whose race of life was nearly run—to exhort Timothy to imitate his practices of steadfastness in faith and endurance in suffering. Inspired by God's radical and empowering trilogy of grace, mercy, and peace, which he has experienced for so many years firsthand, and had wished for others (2 Tim 1:2), "Paul" recounts for Timothy his own experiences of distressing times and persecutions. He minces no words about the severity of his trials in 2 Tim 3:11b, pointedly recalling: "What persecutions I endured!" The sufferings and persecutions he had experienced in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra had doubtless become the stuff of legend, not only permanently imprinted in his mind and body, but recounted in Christian assemblies far and wide. But these sufferings and persecutions were only the "tip of the iceberg." After all, Alexander the coppersmith had also done him great harm at one point, ferociously opposing the message (2 Tim 4:14-15). "Paul" had also experienced the utter loneliness and bitter dejection of desertion, when absolutely "no one" came to his support (2 Tim 4:16). His suggestion of having been "rescued from the lion's mouth" in 2 Tim 4:17b may be a reference to deliverance from the sword, as opposed to a literal deliverance from a lion in the amphitheater. In any case, we have in 2 Timothy the portrayal of the last will and testament of one who drew near to the gateway of the kingdom with audacious hope and astonishing confidence. Paul, the exemplar and model who had endured the sometimes hazardous and contentious work of ministry, who had personally felt the bite of wolves in sheep's clothing, and who had known the vulnerability, isolation, and loneliness of abandonment by friends and colleagues, is now represented as a prisoner in the

waning moments of his life. But this "Paul" could still dare to point to his sacrifices and his life as an exemplar of the faithful believer who gallantly perseveres in the great race of life to the very end. Second Timothy 3:10 documents the expansive arenas of his life that could serve as resources for Timothy to emulate in his own faith and life journey. With his first-person "my" statements, "Paul" invites close scrutiny of the ways in which Christ Jesus has pervaded his life commitments and projects, his motives and goals, and the intensity of his commitment. In 2 Tim 3:10 he invites Timothy to recall, review, and emulate:

my teaching
my conduct
my aim in life
my steadfastness

In 2 Tim 4:6 "Paul" notes that the time for his "departure" has now come. The imagery is that of a ship being loosed from its moorings. Moreover, although the prospect of death looms large, his fearless and noble sentiment in 2 Tim 4:7 cannot mask his boundless joy regarding the Lord's impending return (2 Tim 4:8): "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim 4:6-8). The allusion to "fighting the good fight" is found in both 1 Tim 6:12 and 2 Tim 4:7a, and recalls ancient athletic contests where competition for the prize was keen, marked by an intensity of focus, discipline, and energy that could lead one to prevail in the end. Within this context, the language of a boxing context and race may be in view in 2 Tim 4:7a. Typically, a crown of laurel, pine, or olive was awarded to ancient

competitors in the athletic games (2 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 9:25-25). "Paul" views his martyrdom as a glad and sacrificial homage to the God whom he longs for (2 Tim 4:18). His prize will be the fulfillment of the eschatological hope of being present with the God in whose presence he has lived and labored, the God who has never ceased to rescue him, stand by him, and strengthen him (2 Tim 3:11; 4:17-18).

When in 4:6 "Paul" declares that he has "fought the good fight," finished the race, and kept the faith, he recalls an image to which many peoples of African descent can relate. Nelson Mandela endured three decades of solitude, but he "fought the good fight" of survival, with his faith as a notable source of strength and inspiration. Enduring hard labor, he simply refused to die, and apartheid could not eradicate or efface his life and dignity.⁴⁴ On a similar note, June Jordan, professor of African American studies at the University of California, Berkeley, shares a personal story of "fighting the good fight." In her autobiographical essay, "A Good Fight," she recalls her shock upon learning she had been diagnosed with breast cancer in 1993—with a 40 percent chance of survival. Not only did she learn to "redefine courage," she learned—as she states it—to "make this cancer thing into a fight." She comments of her physicians, colleagues, students, and neighbors: "They dared me to practice trying to lift my arm three or four inches away from my side. They dared me to go ahead and scream and cry but not to die. And so I did not die. But I have faced death. . . . I am happy beyond belief because this is a good fight. . . . And I am happy beyond belief to be here and to join with you to make things better."⁴⁵ The opportunity to "fight the good fight," whether "of faith" or "for life," is one of the greatest gifts God bequeaths to us.

TITUS

INTRODUCTION

Titus, one of Paul's coworkers, was well-known to the apostle, and he was mentioned in several of Paul's authentic letters. A Gentile (Gal 2:3), he was present with Paul at the meeting with the Jerusalem apostles. He assisted with the collection in Corinth (2 Cor 8:6, 16-17, 23). Titus intervened in a dispute between Paul and the Corinthian church (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6-7, 13-16). Generally considered a pseudonymous letter (see the Introduction), Titus centrally foregrounds Paul as responsible for Titus's ministry in Crete—the largest of the Aegean islands. As Paul's "loyal child in the faith" (1:4), Titus was charged with overseeing the affairs of the Christian assemblies "in every town" on the island (v. 5).

Theologically, the letter to Titus echoes many of the themes and motifs found in 1 and 2 Timothy: the gospel is called "the faith" (1 Tim 1:19; 2 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:13); knowing "the truth" is essential for faith (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1); in terms of Christian ethics, the ideal of Christian citizenship, reinforcing patriarchal norms and subjection to rulers, is reinforced (Titus 3:1-2; see the comments on 1 Tim 2:1-7); salvation is understood as both present and future (1 Tim 1:16; 4:8; 2 Tim 1:9-10; Titus 2:12-14). One distinct difference between Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy is the more detailed salutation in Titus that elaborates the character of Paul's apostleship (1:1-6), and offers comment on eternal life (1:23). Only the salutation in Rom 1:1b-4, 5, 6 exceeds that of Titus.

(See also the Introduction to 1 Timothy.)

1:1-16, LEADERS AND DISCIPLINE

As in 1 and 2 Timothy, the leadership qualities for elders (v. 5) and bishops (v. 7) are clearly

outlined. Not "job descriptions," but evidence that leadership was shared by many people, the terms reflect a still-fluid church structure in the latter decades of the first century.

Verses 10-16 differ from 1 Timothy in the identification of false teachers. The threat is from within, not without, for the "rebellious people" actually "profess to know God" (vv. 10, 16). The "circumcision party" is the source of the error, and they must be rebuked sharply to become sound in faith (v. 13).

Verse 12 proves that stereotypes are a fact of life for all cultures, ancient and modern. Clement of Alexandria attributes the epithet that "Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons" to Epimemes, a poet in the sixth century B.C.E.⁴⁶

We need not rehearse the long litany of "stereotypes" Americans have laid at the feet of black peoples in America—the list is long, the path well worn. As an act of self-love, African Americans counter stereotypes best the way the writer of the Pastorals did—by reconstructing the images and discourses we want to "re-memory" and model for ourselves and our children (see the discussion of Toni Morrison's book *Beloved* in the comments on 1 Tim 1:1-2). Michael S. Harper's poetic reflection "Black Cryptogram" presents an image to cherish:

When God
Created
the black child
He was
showing off.⁴⁷

If the memories of Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother Lois sparked Timothy's resolve to pass on the golden heritage of Christian faith (see the comments on 2 Tim 1:5), Sterling Plummpp's poem "Daybreak" encircles the possibilities black men have to soar as eagles within a limitless sky of pos-

sibilities and promise—a monumental epic of triumph and fortitude:

every day
i find a new life.
my love for freedom
our right
to wear robes
as we please,
never sets.
black voices
dance in my soul
like anxious sparkles.
every black man
is an epic
sung
in the soft keys
of survival.
o i want,
i want,
to hear
be near
all my brothers
when I die⁴⁸

2:1-15, MORALS AND MANNERS

The developing Christian ethos in the community emphasizes living in the community in accord with sound doctrine (v. 1) and a concern to prevent the word of God from being discredited (v. 5). Older women are charged to assist younger women in conformity to their traditionally prescribed roles as "household managers" (vv. 3-5), while younger men are to be self-controlled (v. 6). Enslaved women and men—and not slave-masters—are accountable for their behavior (see the comments on 1 Tim 6:1-2).

Verses 11-14 reconfirm the glad news that "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," appeared in history as a human being. If the transforming power of God's grace can make salvation available to all (v. 11), it can also

fire the engine of a transformed moral life in which impiety gives way to self control and uprightness, and where a preoccupation with worldly passions brakes for godliness to have the "right of way."

3:1-15, CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

The theme of submission to governing authorities echoes the sentiment of "ideal Christian citizenship" in 1 Tim 2:1-4, where accommodation to the prevailing social order is linked with paraenesis encouraging fellow believers to live harmoniously (vv. 3-8).

The letter closes with a charge for believers to devote themselves to good works so that everyone might benefit (vv. 8-11). The parting comment about false teachers appears to be an afterthought, but the fact that the subject is broached attests both to its importance and also to the need to address it.

Notes

1. For one of the best summations of the history of the debate, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 423-28.
2. For a discussion of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, see John C. Purdy, ed., *Always Being Reformed: The Future of Church Education* (Louisville: Geneva, 1985).
3. Dwight Hopkins provides a succinct discussion of the God of the enslaved in Antebellum America in *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 13-48.
4. Zora Neale Hurston, *Moses: Man of the Mountain* (New York: Harper, 1991).
5. Delores Williams has provided a brilliant exploration of the Hagar and Sarah tradition from a Womanist perspective in *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Walk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1998).

6. Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 439.
7. The history of the Jesus movement within the historical context of the Roman Empire has received much-needed attention in the literature in the last two decades. See, for example, Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).
8. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1972), 13.
9. Marie-Noëlle Anderson, "April 19," in *Origins: African Wisdom for Every Day*, ed. Danielle and Oliver Föllmi (New York: Abrams, 2005).
10. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, "June 5," in Föllmi, *Origins*.
11. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Knopf, 1987).
12. See Robert J. Karris's summation of the data in *The Pastoral Epistles* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1979), 49-50.
13. George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 86.
14. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 23.
15. Nicholas K. Rauh, *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce: Religion, Economy, and Trade Society at Hellenistic Roman Delos, 166-87 B.C.* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1993), 422-23. See Strabo 14.5.2.
16. The experience of being "stolen" and sold like commodified property or goods is well-documented in the literature, including the autobiographical narratives of ex-slaves like Ouladah Equiano, born in 1745. See, for example, Arna Bontemps, "Ouladah Equiano: An Interesting Account," in *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 24-27. See also "Spirituals and Blues," in *Black Southern Voices: An Anthology of Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction, and Critical Essays*, ed. John Oliver Killens and Jerry W. Ward Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1992), 227-28.
17. Clarice J. Martin, "Polishing the Unclouded Mirror: A Womanist Reading of Revelation 18:13," in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*,

- ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 82-109.
18. Horsley and Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom*, 156, 224-32.
19. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 32-34.
20. Horsley and Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom*, 225.
21. Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 305.
22. Linda M. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 370.
23. Jo Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 44.
24. Ibid., 298.
25. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 284.
26. Lucius Outlaw's concept of a "hermeneutics of the experiences of black peoples" is a useful ideological construct for practices of biblical interpretation within African American culture. See Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 30.
27. On the politics of gender in the religious experience of African American peoples, see, for example, Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, eds., *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), and Elizabeth Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).
28. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004).
29. Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ*, The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion 9 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994).

30. Musa Dube, ed., *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).
31. Judith Soares, "Eden after Eve: Christian Fundamentalism and Women in Barbados," in *Nation Dance: Religion, Identity, and Cultural Difference in the Caribbean*, ed. Patrick Taylor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 104-17.
32. Clarice J. Martin, "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women,'" in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), 206-31.
33. Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women*, 108-9.
34. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 369, 379n12.
35. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*.
36. Karen Baker-Fletcher, "Something or Nothing: An Eco-Womanist Essay on God, Creation, and Indispensability," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 428-37.
37. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Early Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 251-84.
38. Holt Parker, "Loyal Slaves and Loyal Wives: The Crisis of the Outsider within Roman *Exemplum* Literature," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. Sandra Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (New York: Routledge, 2001), 157.
39. Clarice J. Martin, "'Somebody Done Hoo'dood the Hoodoo Man': Language, Power, Resistance and the Effective History of Pauline Texts in American Slavery," in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*, ed. Allen Callahan, Richard Horsley, and Abraham Smith, *Semeia* 83/84 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998). See also Donald H. Matthews, *Honoring the Ancestors: An African Cultural Interpretation of Black Religion and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 24-25.

40. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 85; cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.50.
41. For a discussion of wealth in late-first-century assemblies, see Reggie M. Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: A "Bourgeois" Form of Christianity?* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).
42. T. D. Jakes, *Mama Made the Difference: Life Lessons My Mother Taught Me* (New York: Putnam, 2006).
43. Madeline Burnside, Rosemarie Robothan, and Cornel West, eds., *Spirits of the Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 18, 121–22.
44. June Jordan, *Affirmative Acts: Political Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1998), 2–3.
45. *Ibid.*, 66–71.
46. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 135–36.
47. Michael S. Harper, "Black Cryptogram: For Sterling A. Brown," in *The Oxford Anthology of African American Poetry*, ed. Arnold Rampersand (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 237. "Black Cryptogram" originally from *Nightmare Begins Responsibility: Poems*. Copyright 1975 by Michael S. Harper. Used with permission of the poet and the University of Illinois Press.
48. Sterling Plump, "Daybreak," in Rampersand, *The Oxford Anthology of African American Poetry*, 362. "Daybreak" originally from *Half Black, Half Blacker* by Sterling D. Plump, © 1970 Sterling D. Plump. Reprinted by permission of the author.
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