

6.8  
B-1  
C-1  
D-1  
E-1  
F-1  
G-1  
H-1  
I-1  
J-1  
K-1  
L-1  
M-1  
N-1  
O-1  
P-1  
Q-1  
R-1  
S-1  
T-1  
U-1  
V-1  
W-1  
X-1  
Y-1  
Z-1

THE PASTORAL LETTERS

An Interrogative Commentary

by Willis E. Elliott

Prepared for the 1963 Summer Experimental Conferences  
sponsored by the United Church of Christ Council  
for Christian Social Action, The Council on Lay  
Life and Work, and the Board for Homeland Min-  
istries' Divisions of Christian Education and Evan-  
gelism

Reworked for the UCC Adult Curriculum as "The Pastoral  
Letters," W. E. Elliott & W. W. Wetzel (United  
Church Press, 1964, \$1)

---

The stated goals of the Conferences were "to deepen understanding of the Christ-  
ian faith, to know the issues of our world in concrete terms, to communicate the  
fact that mission is wherever a person is, to experience the church in its whole-  
ness, to challenge Christians to accept the risk of being his servants in the ser-  
vice of men."

TEXT: The Pastoral Letters. Why was this section of the Bible chosen? A few reasons may whet the appetite for this study:

1.... All who participate in the conference have some leadership as Christians, many at both the local and the larger levels. In the Bible this is the only section beamed specifically at Christian leaders and concerned exclusively with their qualifications, needs, and problems.

2.... In the past, the laity have seldom been challenged to wrestle with the Pastoral Letters. Clergy have given much attention to them, for it was assumed that the leadership spoken of in these letters is both ordained and professional. But the lay renaissance has broadened the concept of "ministry": it is now clear to us that every member of Christ's church, lay and clergy, whether or not financially dependent upon the church, whether or not formally ordained, has a "ministry" both in the church and in the world. (It was in this sense that our Lord spoke of his ministry and ours: Matthew 20:28, "minister" in the King James Version, "serve" in the Revised Standard Version, and "wait on" in the American Translation.) Most of this material applies to all of us, and all of it should concern all of us because of the principle of mutual ministry, that each is involved with and has a ministry to all.

3.... An agitated question in both denominational and ecumenical discussions these days is the question of the nature of leadership in the Christian community. Is it democratic, charismatic (by the direct leadership of the Spirit, who gives the charisms, the abilities and resources for the several ministries), autocratic? If Christ is the head, should the church not be Christocratic, directly

under his leadership and without a declared and relatively permanent human leadership?

4.... What should be the structure of the local congregation? In the near future we shall be hearing more about "the missionary structure of the congregation": for what other purposes is your church structured, or should your local church be structured? any?

5.... Granted that the local church needs both order and organization, spirit and institution, is this true also of groups of churches? These letters purport to be addressed to leaders of groups of congregations. The national staff of a denomination functions in this way, as an aid and stimulus to groups of churches (associations and conferences) and to individual churches. Not everything the Pastorals have to say on this subject is directly applicable to the United Church of Christ, but meditating on this text of scripture will provide perspective from the early church on our church.

6.... Because of our permissive culture, discipline--personal, group, church--is a thorny issue in the modern church. The early church lived in a culture which in many respects paralleled ours in permissiveness, but that church was under orders many leagues distant from permissiveness! Again we cannot simply apply their first-century situation to our twentieth-century church life. But neither can we neglect what God may have to tell us through their witness.

7.... In the Bible, this section reveals the most developed form of Christianity--in creed (faith), cult (worship and devotion), code (personal and social ethics), and order (institutional organization). It is on the border between pre-catholic Christianity and early catholicism. As such it can speak to

two aspects of our major Christian schism: Catholic/Protestant relations as persons and as churches.

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

The Oxford Annotated Bible, Revised Standard Version (Oxford University Press, 1962, \$7.95). The best of the study Bibles to date. Just the right amount of help, and with emphasis on meaning rather than dry facts. However, any of the RSV editions will do for the sessions.

The Pastoral Epistles, C. K. Barrett (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1963, \$2.50). In the New Clarendon Bible, this volume is the first commentary based on the New English Bible. It is a highly successful compromise between lay and technical needs and can further dialog between clergy and laity. As a first taste, choose a passage which appeals to you and then read the commentary. Before long you may want to wrestle with the introduction, which is far less important than the commentary itself. The book will not be used in the sessions: it is for your preparation, and for future reference.

#### BEFORE YOU COME:

If the leader can assume some familiarity with the text of First and Second Timothy and Titus, we can get farther than we could if you were to come to these three books "cold." In your own periods of meditation, you would do well to read through the Pastoral Letters (or "Epistles") many times. It will help if in doing this you use the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible side by side, either in text form or in the two recommended editions.... On the subject of NEB, I cannot refrain from mentioning John Knox's excellent "A Guide for the Reader of the New Testament, for use with the New English Bible" (Oxford University Press

and Cambridge University Press, 1963, 25¢)--a lucidly written plan for reading through the whole New Testament in nine sittings.

#### PROCEDURE:

The structure of the sessions will be as follows:

1.... The leader, with or without the help of others, will read the appointed section of text.

2.... With the aid of a few questions (writ large or on a distributed sheet) each person will direct his prayerful attention to the text in silence.

3.... Breaking into groups, participants will discuss in the light of text, questions, personal meditations, and issues the conveners may raise--such as, what is the text really driving at? how does the text most prick my conscience? what light is there here for our church's faith, order, life, and work of witness and service? what specifically can we do about it?

4.... Returning for plenary, participants may share their group findings; but this will not be done formally through reporters. The leader will then gather the insights, bringing the text once more into focus.

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT:

The character of the materials before us has a bearing on how we approach them. As far as we can make out, this is a collection of Paul's literary remains, reworked by a disciple of his long after Paul's death. We may speak then of two levels: material written by Paul and taken from his "notebooks" (2 Timothy 4:13), and an interlacing interpretive commentary intended to speak to church conditions contemporaneous with the

author--conditions far more developed than in the days of Paul. In this light, we need not look for a sequence in the writing of the Letters or even press their epistolary character. What we seem to have is a structure similar to that of the five speeches of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, speeches composed of sayings of Jesus and strung together on themes. In the so-called Pastorals, the themes of the three sections ("Letters" or "Epistles"), as labeled in the New English Bible, are "church order" (1 Timothy), "character of a Christian minister" (2 Timothy), and "training for the Christian life" (Titus). Since we are concerned with the message rather than the form--we might say, with the letter rather than with the envelope--we can pass by matters of epistolary formulae and also personal and geographical references. And we shall treat the material in its present sequence.

#### PARALLELS:

This section of the Bible will come closer to us if we realize that it is addressed to a time rather like our own--a time of transition, risk, and new hope. Many scholars locate this as the last-written section of the Bible. Be that as it may, it certainly represents transition from apostolic to post-apostolic times, from reliance on the immediate followers of Jesus to reliance on their followers. Will the apostolic gospel be absorbed into something else? Will the apostolic fervor cool? Will the apostolic life be lost as Christians lose the original doctrine and passion? Will the apostolic organization fall apart under internal and external pressures? At this time, Christianity is still expanding rapidly; but will its necessary contracting, its consolidating of its tradition and power, frustrate its vital openness? Will the church become smug and timid and avoid risk? All of these questions have parallels in the church of our day. We are in transition not from apo-

stolic to post-apostolic times, but from "Christian" to post-Christian times, in which Christians have relatively fewer numbers and less power. Both the parallels and the non-parallels between the time of the Pastorals and our time can be instructive. In that time and in this time and in all times God works by "the renewing power of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

#### THE TEXTUAL SEQUENCE:

We have mentioned one reason for treating the material in its biblical order: namely, that we are unable to set it in historical order: the scraps from Paul's "notebooks" are not dated, nor is it easy to separate what is Paul's from what is his disciple's. A further reason is that we Christians believe in the working of God's Spirit through the biblical text as it lies before us. The word of God comes to us through these words of our original spiritual forebears, and there is therefore a spiritual reason for exposing ourselves to scripture in its present form and sequence. It would be easy to break up the Pastorals and rearrange the pieces topically. It would be too easy, and we would find ourselves tempted to use these fragments merely to illustrate our own thoughts! We shall honor the text as it is and seek to open ourselves to it and to God's Spirit through it.

NOTE: In the sessions, the Revised Standard Version will be used as the common text. But to provide perspective from the New English Bible, the following interrogative commentary is based on this new translation. For your meditation, the questions seek (1) to unfold the text and (2) to point toward the concerns of the conference.

## SESSION #1 : 1 Timothy 1-3

1. 1-2 salutation. Why should "hope" be stressed (as it is here, for those who know Paul's writings)? God and Jesus are here linked by the terms "Savior" and "Lord," both of which are used in Paul normally of Jesus, though Paul also uses both for God: Does it make much difference how we associate or dissociate God and Jesus in our devotion and meditation? Is the Christian, and is the church, to put all hope in Jesus, or only most, or only some?

1. 3-20 the leader's charge. The writer sees gnosticism as currently the most serious threat to Christianity, and he commands a frontal attack wherever this false teaching is creeping into the churches. (Webster's Third New International Dictionary well defines this rival as "distinguished chiefly by pretension to mystic and esoteric religious insights, by emphasis on knowledge rather than faith and by the conviction that matter is evil.") What are some of the "erroneous doctrines" (vs. 3) which the gospel should flatly oppose today? What bearing do these have on social action, lay life and work, Christian education, evangelism? Can we today use as the touchstone of the authentic Christian message "God's plan for us, which works through faith" (vs. 4)? Note the pragmatic sanction: Resist whatever "cannot make known" God's will (margin "the faithful discharge of God's stewardship"). Can we now be this sure of what the gospel is, and this radical in using it as a criterion of authenticity and effectiveness? Does the church leader have the right to "command" even if it is done in "love which springs from a clean heart, from a good conscience, and from faith that is genuine" (vs. 5)? Can we achieve a church discipline which answers to these norms and guards against autocracy? What is to be done when someone in a small group or in the power structure of the local church tries to take over with "a wilder-

ness of words" (vs. 6)? How can we help people gain courage to confront those who are "so dogmatic" (vs. 7)?

This section of the Bible is in letter form probably mainly because this literary form was thought of as preferred by apostles in their writings, and is a collection of letters (a letter corpus) probably because of the influence of the Paul letter corpus. But it is really a church manual, in the general category of control-literature ("command" 1. 3): Can the word "command" be used at all in our modern church life? What effect does "command" in vs. 1 (God's command) have on "command" in vs. 3 (the church leader's command)? Are we under orders only under God or also in the church? "Discipline" is a function of leadership, here reinforced by the hero Paul (18-20)--a fourth function, after proclamation, teaching, and administration: Is leadership in the church incomplete without its fourth function? need all four functions center in one person? in clergy? This writer, who is a conservative (in contrast to the "John" who authored the Fourth gospel and 1-3 John) has a negative attitude toward the Jewish gnostic elements then penetrating the church: Can we speak of "erroneous doctrines" (3-4), or is it better to find the "some good in everything," or can we do both? In verses 3-4, note the close association of positive proclamation and negative preservation (as in the Statement of Faith, "to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil"): Isn't it enough to do positive thinking and acting without attacking anything or anybody?

Christians of all ages have tended to slip into moralism, cutting the devotional root of ethics and morals. While this does not occur in Paul, it is a tendency in the Pastorals in spite of the specific grounding of conduct in "love ... a clean heart... a good conscience...



faith" (1.5) right at the beginning of this section of the Bible. If nothing is for its own sake but everything for God's sake, how can we Christians live this out in a secular fragmented culture in which everything tends to be for its own sake (e. g., "art for art's sake") and everyone for his own sake? Can we achieve again a unity of "faith and a good conscience" (1.19) as our double armor?

Christians fulfil and transcend the common law as "good citizens," for God's glory through the gospel transforms their lives in the teaching church (8-11): Should the church today be as concerned with "wholesome teaching" as was this leader of the churches of the Pastorals? What obligation, if any, does the church have to point out and attack the opposite, viz., sick teaching? In the autobiographical section which follows (2-17) Paul states his "task" as "service": Is there any office in the church that does not consist in serving (diakonia)? If we are all to "be his servants in the service of men" (Statement of Faith), and the functional description of an apostle's office is "service" (vs. 12), do we have here a confirmation of Jesus' use of "minister" as the function of all Christians regardless of office (despite a technical use of "minister" in our commentary)? In your life of Christian witness, do you believe, really believe, that you have "words you may trust" (vs. 15; 4.9; 2 Tim. 2.11; Tit. 3.8; and margin of 1 Tim. 3.1)? Can there be confidence without arrogance?

The Pastorals' first doxology (vs. 17: "The King of all worlds, immortal... forever and ever!") reminds us of the final line in the Statement of Faith before its doxology: "He promises... eternal life in his kingdom which has no end": Should we think and hear more about God as King? For the early Christians, such thinking had serious political consequences: might it have for us? does it have for some Christians in the world today?

The tone of verses 18-20 is military. Does our situation indicate sufficient tension between the Kingdom of God and the world to justify such strong language as "fight gallantly" (vs. 19) and such severe discipline as excommunication (19a-20)? What are the evil powers against which we should now contend, "armed with faith and good conscience" (vs. 19)?

Beginning with 2.1... the rest of 1 Timothy is about the ordering of Christian life, and significantly it begins with regulations for worship. Is worship the natural ordering center for Christian faith, life, and work? How much importance do I give it in my life, and how important is it in the ordering of our local church life? Note "first of all" (vs. 1) or "most important": Do I really believe that "his presence in trial and rejoicing" (Statement of Faith) is most important, that the church should be a praying community under the direct guidance of God (a theocracy), that prayer should be at the heart of the church? (Like the Jews of their time, the Christians' common name for their gathering places was "the prayer place.") Even though this section of the New Testament is more concerned with organization and institution than any other, "first of all" comes what is of the essence of the spirit of the church rather than its body; and even though the Pastorals are primarily concerned about internal church matters, the fundamental orientation is toward and in the world ("first of all... for all men"): Can we today view the church primarily as an agency of divine invasion into the world "for all men"? But note that the prayer for those in public life ("sovereigns" vs. 2) is limited to the effect of politics on the Christians themselves, specifically their religious liberty and moral freedom; yet are these not at the heart of the good state and the highest achievement of political life?

If there were more "full observance of religion," would there be so much trouble over the lack of "high standards of morality"? In this conference we are concerned with the integrity of Christian faith and life: Could there be anything more difficult or as necessary? The central sanction for the early Christians was the divine sanction: the central answer to the questions, why be pious? why be good? was, because it is God's will, "approved by God" (vs. 3, here of prayer): What is the central sanction of the present American culture? What would happen if we were to put God's will first as motive and sanction, condemning as "erroneous doctrines" (1.3) all other motivations claiming centrality in the ordering of private and public life?

Verses 4 through 7 are a digression triggered by "Savior" in verse 3. Note the repetition of "all" (1 and 4), as "he seeks in holy love to save all" (Statement of Faith): Are loyalty to Christ and loyalty to humanity at odds, or necessary correlatives (compare "Savior of all" 4.10)? Through civil strife we developed a loyalty to the United States of America superior to our loyalty each to his own state: Are we developing a loyalty to Jesus Christ superior to our loyalty each to his own denomination? Should we strive to develop a loyalty to man superior to our loyalty each to his own nation (with an international police force powerful enough to crush the United States, as the United States is powerful enough to crush, say, Mississippi)?

Can we today say that we "know the truth" (vs. 4) with as much confidence as did these early Christians, or are we made timid by Pilate's question, now in the mouth of secular culture, "What is truth?" Note the simplicity, definiteness and authority of this witness to "the only God" (1.17), "one God, and also one mediator" (2.5). Does this emphasis on "one" not tend to make us narrow and

arrogant, and is it after all necessary to be so monotheistic and Christ-centered? How is this related to the political axiom that "he who leads must be 300 per cent certain"? How is it related to fanaticism and to mass movements as analyzed in Eric Hoffer's "The True Believer"? (Note the Statement of Faith: "In Jesus Christ... Lord, he has come to us... conquering... and reconciling the world to himself.")

"First of all"

prayer, "his presence in trial and rejoicing" (Statement of Faith), through the "one mediator" who is "himself man." The divine-human encounter does not stop short of incarnation, God's incarnation in Jesus and the church's incarnation in the world--all this against the gnostics who further believed in salvation through knowledge rather than through faith in him "who sacrificed himself to win freedom" (vs. 6).

The other paragraph of this chapter spells out the public side of this praying: "Everywhere (literally, "in every place") prayers"--in effect, "in every prayer-place," i.e., in every public worship.

Almost everybody knows what this paragraph has to say about the place of women. Nothing here can be construed to violate the consistent New Testament teaching of the equality of the sexes before God and in Christ (compare, e.g., Galatians 3.28). Feminism--the recent struggle to achieve for women equality with men--is a more ambiguous matter, mainly beneficent but with some sad side effects from the standpoints both of biblical-Christian ethics and modern social psychology. In our text, note that men and women are praying together in the same room and as equal members of Christ's church (in contrast to Judaism, whose women were not equal members with the men; and in more severe contrast to Christianity's strongest later

rival, Mithraism, a definitely male religion): the force of "again" (vs. 9) is "women also should pray...."--and, incidentally, "good deeds" should characterize their self-presentations in church and world, rather than the current self-display of Hellenistic high fashion. Early Christian practice was not uniform, but what we seem to have here is a picture of men and women at prayer in church, the women praying silently and remaining seated, the men standing with arms raised toward heaven and praying aloud--spontaneously, simultaneously, repetitively, and responsively. It would be crude to read misogyny into either the practical advice or the theological grounding here. The Pastorals deal with groups in church life, just as we do today--by sex, age, etc. Woman trouble in the earliest church was not from the suppression of women but rather the opposite: the churches tended to become female institutions as in them women became more free than they ever had been before in human history. This freedom for and of women became a scandal to the Christian witness as undoubtedly some women took advantage of their new freedom to "domineer over man" (vs. 12)--and the Pastorals are more conscious of the sanction of public opinion (what will people think? say?) than any other section of the Bible. Note that the limitations here imposed on women are grounded in the situation and in one person's conviction, though a person of authority in the churches: "I do not permit" (vs. 12). Would the relationship between the sexes be more creative and productive if women "who claim to be religious" (vs. 10) were to talk less in public ("listening quietly" vs. 11) and fulfil their separate role (reading "in her due place" instead of "with due submission" vs. 11)? Does having mainly women church school teachers tend to feminize the image of Jesus and shape the church into a female institution so that men tend to feel and some even say, I leave religion to my wife?

What follows is the unkindest cut of all! Adam was first in creation, and Eve was first in sin! This extended mode of interpretation, common at the time, is hard or impossible for us to accept. If male superiority can find no stronger biblical support than this, it is doomed to collapse. In fact, among us it has collapsed, and we have substituted for it the doctrine that men are supreme and women are superior--a paradoxical doctrine making for more mutual respect and more productive confrontation between the sexes. (Note that the Statement of Faith relates creation and ethics, but broadly: "He...creates man...and sets before him the ways of life and death.")

As asceticism crept into the church, the increase in the number of single women made the appearance of the dominant female inevitable---the current low education for women tended to be correlative with lower rationality, more flightiness and fanaticism---and women's superior natural intuitive powers made them more open to some of the current heresies. Yet women were in public worship with men (see, additionally, 5.5) and had great freedom in Christian service (5.10). No doubt about it though: the Pastorals maintain that women's place is in the home, over which they are to "preside" (5.14), though "respecting the authority of their own husbands" (Titus 2.5). (Note that in both these texts the social sanction is applied: The Christian woman is to behave so as to "give no opponent occasion for slander" and so that "the gospel will not be brought into disrepute.")

Women were to be honored and the gospel honored--the gospel first. If women had been permitted to act in ways scandalous to the general community, would this have honored either the gospel or women? If Christian women are free to live "in faith, love, and holiness, with a sober mind" (vs. 5), what more should



they want? freedom to earn, and to earn equal pay with men? (Entertaining men was about the only gainful employment open to women in the Hellenistic world, so the Pastorals are unconscious of our problem of "the working woman.") For this writer there are only two female classifications: homemaker and widow (for the latter of which see 5.3-16).

The Christian explosion in the Hellenistic world released women frighteningly, as today's rising expectations among the less free (e.g., the Negro in America) produce fright: Do you think the author of the Pastorals shows some of this fright from rapid change, the old male security (like white supremacy today) being shaken? Are we to act compassionately also toward those who are suffering from change? (The first clause of vs. 15 is obscure.)

3.1-13 leadership qualifications. The rest of 1 Timothy gives instructions for ordering Christian communal life beyond public worship. In this first section, the virtues required of leaders are in general the Hellenistic civic virtues, with a mixture of both Christian and Hellenistic motives. Is this a case of blessing what is, sanctifying the status quo in values? We are accused of having exported Western civilization along with the gospel: are the Pastorals an instance of early Christian importing of cultural values into the gospel and the church? In the Christ-and-culture tension, what can prevent the swamping of the gospel by the mere use of Christian sanctions for promoting the best in a common culture? The Pastorals do not set up a double standard of morality for the sexes or for the clergy as over against the laity: the profile of Christian character for the "leader or bishop" and for the "deacons" is the same as that for all Christians, but heightened because of the higher visibility of the church leaders to "the non-Christian public" (vs. 7). Has the church the right to expect higher

standards of faith and life from leaders, clergy and lay? Since the Christian must accept unpopularity and perhaps even persecution (2 Tim. 3.12), why keep such a sharp eye out for the outsider's opinion (1 Tim. 3.7; 5.15, 25; Tit. 2.5, 8)? To see how seriously this sanction of public opinion is taken, note that the first qualification of the "leader or bishop" is that he must be "above reproach" (vs. 2), and the following five virtues also have public-relations angles: Does the Christian leader today have a comparable value as representing the Christian manner of life? A seasoned Christian (vs. 6), he must be "a good teacher" (vs. 2) and an exemplary household head. What further qualifications does the Christian leader need in our time? (Note that "leader" is inserted so as to indicate that "bishop" describes the function of overseership: it is not yet a technical term, and its relation to "elder" is not clear; nor was early Christian practice consistent in the nomenclature of church order; nor are we told whether this "bishop" is professional or lay.)

"Deacons"--the other functionary--must have integrity of life and belief (vs. 9). Their qualifications are much like that of "bishops," but in addition some qualifications for their wives are listed (vs. 11). Implied in verse 13 is that the deacon does not have quite as much right to teach as does the bishop, but must earn the right through "a good record of service."

Verses 14-16 Christian education. The author writes "to let you know how..." "The truth" is of supreme importance, and the church exists as its servant. This truth is the gospel, at whose heart is the open "mystery of our religion," the incarnation-resurrection story.

## SESSION #2: 1 Timothy 4-6

4.1-5 the peril. The writer believes that the church is entering "a time of troubles" (2 Tim. 3.1), a time when "some will desert from the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines" (1Tim. 4.1): Do we have some of this feeling today? should we have more of it? less?

Verse 3 lets us know what these "subversive doctrines" are: mandatory celibacy and ritual diet -- the second probably from Judaism, and the first from gnosticism--the two combined in Jewish gnostic Christians, who limited their freedom in Christ with two sets of prejudices: Should we today attack prejudice among Christians as keenly and directly as our author, and give our attack as substantial theological grounding as he does (in the doctrine of creation, 3a-4)? (Note: In this connection, one of the effects of the Pastorals is to help rescue Paul from his open enemies, the Jews, and from his unwanted friends, the gnostics, and so to preserve Paul's actual letters for influence in the church of the future.)

When the doctrine of creation is abandoned--and it is today under severe attack from many quarters--a split occurs between spirit and flesh, mind and body, tending to produce both an excess and a defect of participation in nature. We call the defect asceticism (as here) and the excess libertinism (as in 2 Tim. 3.5). By extension we may say that the church is ascetic when it pulls away from the body of the world and libertine when it over-adjusts to its environment. What are the ascetic and libertine elements in American Protestantism today? in your church? What can be done about them? Have we tended to make laws where there should be freedom and to give freedom where there should be rules and discipline? Gnostic moralism was the peril among them: What is the peril among us?

4.6-16 confronting the peril. The leader's responsibility here is Christian education (vs. 6), including warning (vs. 7a), and self-discipline (7b-8). On being "in training," compare 2 Tim. 2.2-5; 3.16, Tit. 2.12. Strength comes from contemplating the permanent "benefits of religion" (vs. 8), through which "we have set our hope on the living God" and are therefore willing to "labour and struggle" (vs. 10). (Statement of Faith: "Courage in the struggle for justice and peace"--but why do the Pastorals have so little to say about justice and peace? did the Christians have freedom to shape their own communal life but not the civic life around them?)

The essence of the Pastorals is in verse 11: "Pass on these orders and these teachings." Barnett (p. 33) says that "the greatest importance of the Pastorals" is that "they represent... a first attempt to do what each generation of Christians must attempt--to restate the convictions of the first, apostolic generation, in a new era and a new environment." Who should be making this attempt in our day? the theologians? the clergy? all of us? Note that in Christian education great stress was laid on the daily public reading of the Bible (vs. 13). Verse 14 speaks of Timothy's "spiritual endowment," the charism given him for ministry, in line with Paul's conviction that the spirit gives each Christian community the gifts it needs for its organizing, serving, and witnessing. Should it be the fundamental organizing principle of a congregation that it discover and release the natural talents and the supernatural charisms of its members?

5-6.1-2 one-to-one responsibilities in mutual ministry. The first two verses of this section cover the general divisions of sex and age, "elder" here being not technical (a church officer) but sim-

ply an older man. The biological family here becomes the analogy for relationships within the church, the family of God. Can it be extended to the family of man?

Verses 3-16 constitute the most extended biblical discussion of the widow. The regulations are all practical and in the direction of the simple obligations of Christian service within the spiritual family--a charity list or list of pensioners, those who would have no other earthly support; and guidance to others as to their responsibilities toward the indigent, "for this God approves" (5.4). Elsewhere early Christian literature shows compassion for what we now call in the United Church of Christ "health and welfare" beyond the boundaries of the church. The household head has an absolute obligation to provide for his household (5.8).

Since some widows under sixty go to the devil more or less (vs. 15) and are apt to bring shame upon the church (vs. 14), widows in that age group are to remarry. This instruction serves also to reduce the financial strain on the church and to fend off insincere converts. If verse 10 had been taken literally, widows would have cost the church very little, as there are no women who have "taken every opportunity of doing good"! Widows with relatives should be supported by them, freeing the church to support absolute widows, who have no other means or hope of support (this under the general rule that failure to support one's own is a denial of the faith, vs. 8). How do these principles apply to Christian benevolence today both in and beyond the church? If as Christians we do not have unlimited mutual liability for each other, what are the theoretical and practical limits? What is the Christian obligation in relation to social-welfare programming which does nothing to increase self respect but on the contrary tempts to "self-indulgence" and leaves people "as good as dead" (vs. 6)? (Note: The roots of monasticism are in the New

Testament, but verse 5 is only an anticipation of an order of nuns or "sisters.") But what should the United Church of Christ do in the face of the vast increase in leisure time and in the number of people disengaged from family obligations. Are we so sold on the biological family that unmarrieds are treated as an abnormal problem, a peripheral need which we may get around to some day?

5.17-25 "elders..." literally, "the well-presiding older men." The earliest model for organizing the Christian church was of course the synagogue, which was patriarchal (under the rule of the oldest males). Does this in-built conservatism help to explain why the Jews could not adjust to the appearance of their Lord and ours? What is the average age of the members of your church's official body? These church functionaries, when they do their work well, are to get double pay (the "stipend" can but probably does not mean "honor," which would force the following two axioms--vs. 18--into a metaphorical meaning). Our neat distinctions between clergy and laity do not apply here, where both titles and offices are fluid and only functions are stable. If these elders were paid, as is probable, they were professional--but definitely of lower status than Paul and his immediate followers. If they were laboring at "preaching and teaching," were they not ordained--and therefore not laymen? But were not some laymen ordained? These "older men" or "elder" were not bishops or deacons--or did these terms flow into each other? ("Elder" is probably not a technical term here, but it is in Tit. 1.5-7, where it is equated with bishop.) Since there is so much variety in leadership arrangement in the early church (those who want it neat would say, "confusion"), should we become functionalists, transcending our leadership traditions? If ordination makes for confusion more than order, should we not stop ordaining, or start

ordaining all members, each to his own function in the church and occupation in the world? Is there any justification for setting up an ecclesiastical court (19-22)? (Note public exposure as social sanction, and compare with the principle that all things sooner or later become public: 24-25.) (Verse 23 may reflect a tendency to avoid scandal by adopting some ascetic practices: Should church leaders live their lives as normal Christians, or with special restrictions for public effect?)

6. 1-2, see Titus 2. 9-10.

6. 3-20 the leader against the lawless. Here again is a neat summary of the author's purpose: "This is what you are to teach and preach" (vs. 3). The motive of those who stand against these "wholesome precepts" and this "good religious teaching" is said to be commercial: "They think religion should yield dividends" and do not "rest content" with mere "food and covering" but "want to be rich" and so "fall into temptations and snares," "wondering from the faith and spiking themselves on many thorny griefs." Is the writer condemning the rich in general, or only those who make a good thing of religion? Does the New Testament in general condemn the rich? (See Matthew 6. 24; Luke 16. 13; James 4. 4; and 1 John 2. 15.) (For commercial religious leaders who are not seriously interested in the truth, compare the sophists in the days of Socrates.) When our opponents are as threatening as this author's are, is it difficult to give them a fair shake? is it not probable that some of these Jewish Christian gnostics were sincere, honest, humble, and as sacrificial as the author? What becomes of one's own perspective when one becomes convinced one has "the truth," or what at least is apt to happen? Should there always be compromise through speaking and listening, each seeking the truth and striving to be fair to the other? Has society made progress against invective?

Note that two sanctions are used to reduce the temptation of money-lust: real riches are inner (vs. 6), and external riches are only temporal and temporary (vs. 7, a natural grounding of Christian simplicity of life). But in our affluent society, consumer-mindedness is essential: all must dream of being rich and strive to become rich, or many will starve. Advertising is the life-blood of this consumer economy. Is a Christian being responsible when he lives and preaches the simple life, "content" with "food and covering" in 1963 America? But when all strive for external riches, will there not be a doughnutting effect, failing to develop "resources... within"? What relation does this have to the rise of the foundations and of monasticism today? When we are so outer-directed as consuming mouths, must we surrender the ideal of being inner-directed, love-consumed?

Verses 11-14 present a picture of the leader's necessary toughness and tenderness. What he is to "pursue" is first "justice" (RSV "righteousness"): Is the "struggle for justice" (Statement of Faith) an obligation inherent in inner "righteousness"? Maintaining one's devotional life is second on the list. Next is something else that requires a dedication of will, namely, "fidelity"--then "love, fortitude, and gentleness." The leader is to have the disciplines of the runner (vs. 12) and the soldier (vs. 14). Note that verses 11-16 are heavy with theology and lightened with praise.... Would you be inclined to modify this portrait of the Christian leader?

Verses 17-19 express the most generally held early Christian attitude toward wealth. If your view differs at any point, how does it differ and how do you ground the difference?

Verses 20-21 are probably shaped by the thought of what is truly of value. The



true riches are the gospel and eternal life, the latter as a goal and the former as a present possession, a treasure in earthen vessels, the deposit of faith (compare 2 Tim. 1. 12, 14) which is to be "kept safe" from corruption by "so-called 'knowledge'" (gnosis, from which "gnosticism").

### SESSION #3: 2 Timothy

The perspective of 1 Timothy is the church in the world, with emphasis on the ordering of the church for ministry through "the truth," i.e., the gospel as rightly understood, firmly proclaimed, and resolutely defended. In 2 Timothy the focus shifts from the church to the Christian leader. In Paul's understanding, each believer takes the lead in the exercise of the particular gift which the Spirit strives to give the church through him. It therefore puts no strain on the school of Paul to understand 2 Timothy from inside the Christian leader, who is every "minister," every Christian as servant of God, of Christ, of the church, and of the world.

1. 1-5 the old leader's gratitude for the young leader. The image of Paul comes clearer in 2 Timothy and Titus, as it is in these two "letters" that the so-called Paul fragments appear. All three "letters" underscore Paul's authority as an apostle -- "by command of God" (1 Tim. 1. 1), "by the will of God" (2 Tim. 1. 1), "marked as such by faith and knowledge and hope" (Titus 1. 1). This refurbishing of Paul's image for a later generation has, for its most important effect, the church's greater attention to his undoubtedly genuine letters, which stand in the center of importance in the second half of the New Testament. Paul thanks God for Timothy, he does not thank Timothy (vs. 3). But human warmth is not absent from the relationship (vs. 4). Should a Christian relationship be primarily through prayer and only secondarily with each other? God gives us to each other, and a further

ground for Paul's gratitude for Timothy is that God's work through others prepared Timothy for the relationship-- especially God's work in the nurture of a believing home (vs. 5). Why no mention of Timothy's grandfather and father, since men were the usual teachers in the home? Because the spiritual heritage ran through grandmother and mother, who were Jewish. Timothy's father was Greek. Titus, in contrast, was of double Greek parentage, and spiritually a "true-born son" of Paul (Titus 1. 4). In further contrast, Paul was a double Jew. This marks the transition in early Christianity from Judaism through Hellenistic Judaism through a Jewish-Greek mixture to Christianity as almost exclusively gentile (though without wanting to be so). What does all this say about racism and culture-conflict? the homogeneous congregation? "the Jewish question"? evangelism? Christian education?

1. 6-14 the Christian as evangelist. Both times "the gift" (charisma, as in 1 Timothy 4. 14) is mentioned in the Pastorals it is connected with the laying on of hands: it is a gift in and for the church. It can be "neglected" (the other passage) till its warmth and power dies down (this passage, "stir into flame"). It includes "strength, love, and self-discipline"--in that order--enablers for the life of witness (7-8), which is sure to involve a "share of suffering for the sake of the gospel." When we seek to speak a good word for Jesus Christ and to help others come to a consciousness of the working of God in their lives and in their world, do we do it "in the strength that comes from God"? Can it be done without attention to "the gift" of "strength, love, and self-discipline"? Does our spiritual life die down and grow cold and powerless when we make no effort to bear witness to our faith? When we excuse ourselves from verbal witness what are our justifications? our real motives?



Note that while "the gift" is given through the laying on of hands as an act of the Spirit through an act of the church, all are "called... to a dedicated life" (literally, holy calling" vs. 9) without any action on our part or the part of the church, and "not for any merit of ours." (In the Statement of Faith, note the two correlative callings: "He calls the world... us.") The church is constituted by the call of God, but it determines to what extent God's Spirit is released in it and through it. The Christian life should eventuate in good deeds as fruit, but good deeds are not at the root. Rather, the root of moral striving is replaced in Christianity by grace, God's free forgiveness in Christ through the Spirit. This cuts across human moral striving and anxiety and occasions some of the "suffering" of the witness, for it is a frontal attack on human arrogance and rebellion against God. Is it necessary for the so-called ordinary Christian to understand and be able to sort out these things? Is every Christian called to be, among other things, a theologian? Is there a distinction between being a good thinker about these things and being a smooth talker about religion? How will a person think and talk if he really believes that "our Savior Jesus Christ... has broken the power of death"?

The temptation to be "ashamed" is great enough so that Paul's example is used to sanction unashamedness (vs. 12). The basis of confidence is not the belief in a gnosis (salvation by knowledge) nor even "the sound teaching" which the church has as "treasure" (13-14) but rather faith and trust in a person, in God in Christ. While the Pastorals do not give as much attention to the Christ-and-believer relationship as Paul himself does, here is a clear statement of that relationship of trust.

Verses 15-18 are probably a Paul fragment.

2. 1-13 the good soldier's endurance. This begins the main body of 2 Timothy (2. 1-4. 5), which has the form of a charge to Timothy. Christian education is to produce not just scholars but also teachers, in a spread-value strategy (1-2): What would happen if we were to release our pastors for teaching the laity to become teachers in the fulfilling of their own ministries? Should the church design toughening up exercises for the "soldier of Christ Jesus" and the spiritual "athlete" (3-6)? Would it be profitable for us as individuals and for groups in our churches to "reflect on" (vs. 7) the three analogies here--soldier, athlete, farmer? What light might the three analogies throw on social action, lay life and work, Christian education, evangelism?

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead" is the whole point of the first half of the New Testament, and "this is the theme of my gospel" (8-9). Daily meditation on the gospels was expected of all Christians in the early centuries. Otherwise the little churches would have been absorbed into the great swirling currents of Hellenistic mysticism, being unable to "endure hardship" (vs. 10) May not our current Christian softness be due to lack of remembering Jesus, meditating on the essentials of our faith and communing with our Lord? In what sense are we "God's chosen ones," the church as elect and commissioned community? What follows is a fragment of a hymn on this virtue of endurance. Its first line reminds us of Paul's emphasis on identification with Christ's death and resurrection: "We died with him" (Statement of Faith: "To join him in his passion and victory"; see 1 Timothy 1. 1; 2. 5-6; 2 Timothy 1. 10). The second half of the fragment's first line--"we shall live with him"--applies to those who are said to "have set their hearts on his coming appearance," i. e., on

God's future in Christ in this world and the world to come (4. 8).

2. 14-21 the Word and mere words. The Christian remembers Jesus, and the Christian as leader "reminds people of this" (vs. 14): Christian education and counseling and discipline all have the character of repeating God's mighty acts in Jesus. Against shame before the world, verse 15 opposes shame before God as the opposite of his "approval," which we are to "try hard" to be "worthy of." All this is related to proclaiming "the truth" as over against "empty and worldly chatter," profitless speculations. (The instance in verse 18 seems to be based on gnosticism's view that matter is evil, with consequent rejection of the resurrection of the body and conclusion that "our resurrection has already taken place.") It is almost impossible for us, unless we happen to live on the California coast, to imagine how pervasive were these cultic speculations and allegorical architectonics which threatened to undermine Christian doctrine and Christian ethics. (The sanction of purity in verses 20 and 21 grows out of the second quotation in verse 19. The same quotation suggests ecclesiastical discipline in the word "must" in view of the "time of troubles" mentioned 8 verses later.)

2. 22-26 singlemindedness. This section reminds us of Soren Kierkegaard's book, "Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing." What implications for Christian education? Why in this section?

3. 1-17 facing "a time of troubles." This section sounds painfully familiar, for it reflects a culture much like that of America today, with its self-centered, money-minded putting of "pleasure in the place of God" while "preserving the outward form of religion." Is it right ever to conclude that those with whom we are discouraged "are incapable of reaching the knowledge of the truth," having "lost the power to reason"? What does Jesus have to say about calling one's opponents

"fools"? Can we really do anything about moral conditions if we "keep clear of men like these"?

Verses 10 and 11 use Paul as an example of spiritual toughness in transition from resistance to what we might call secularism (1-9) to the basis of this toughness--the realistic acceptance of opposition as inevitable to all those who want to live a godly life as Christians (vs. 12), the memory of one's spiritual teachers, and continuous exposure to "the sacred writings," which, in addition to personal benefits, are useful "for teaching the truth and refuting error" and "for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (15-17). Do we stress sufficiently these benefits of Bible study? If it is so important, how shall we overcome some of the resistances to Bible study?

4. 1-5 the Christian as evangelist. In our Christian witnessing, should we "press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient"? Does not some witnessing do more harm than good? How can we know how hard to press? What force does "Christ Jesus... judge" have in this matter of evangelism? Is evangelism after all so urgent? Note the close association of "proclaiming" and "teaching" in verse 2. The early Christian take-over was with argument, reproof, and appeal, "with all... patience" (vs. 2), just as the Communist take-over has been: How can the church today be better "equipped" and more "efficient" (3. 17) for an aggressive invasion of the world in the church and beyond the church on behalf of the Kingdom of God? Can we "spread the gospel" (vs. 5) when the ear-ticklers are gathering the crowd (vs. 3)?

4. 6-22 further notes from Paul, here used for the encouragement of his example in keeping faith and of his re-

ward. The distilled essence of Paul's life, for the purpose of the writer of the Pastorals, is "the Lord stood by me and lent me strength, so that I might be his instrument in making the full proclamation of the Gospel for the whole world to hear.... And the Lord will rescue me.... Glory to him for ever and ever!" (P.N. Harrison finds a half dozen Paul fragments in this chapter.)

#### SESSION #4: Titus

1. 1-14 instructions for ministry in Crete. Titus, a Greek (Galatians 2. 3), is the Crete representative of Paul, a Jew. Having a reputation for making peace between Paul and some of his churches, Titus is now assigned to organizing the Christians on this island, which Paul has left (vs. 5). While Titus is Paul's spiritual son, it is "in the faith which we share" (vs. 4): the relationship is more horizontal than vertical. It is "faith and knowledge and hope" which mark Paul as "servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ" (1. 1), nothing in Paul himself. Note that these three abstract nouns are given very concrete referents: Can we hope for spiritual strength from religion in general, faith in faith, spiritual ignorance where there can be knowledge, and vague hope? Notice the strong accent on "eternal life" in the first three verses: Does this necessarily make for otherworldly religion?

As a sub-apostle, Titus is to "set in order" what Paul has not, especially appointing "elders in each town" (vs. 5, doubtless the most technical use of this term in the Pastorals). It looks as if each town is to have a presiding elder, "a bishop.... capable to move his hearers with wholesome teaching and to confute objectors" (5-9). How might we relate this to the World Council of Churches' repeated plea for local ecumenicity, that "all in each place" who name the name of Christ should be in spiritual and functional unity?

If Christian organization is to be functional, is there anything necessarily wrong with the office of bishop or the word "bishop"? Is Titus serving as a sort of archbishop for Crete? Is there anything necessarily wrong with the idea of a pope, an archbishop of archbishops? Has this line of thinking anything to say to Catholic/Protestant relations? Need church leadership, yesterday and today, be as firm and tough as the internal and external pressures of community and world seem to demand?

Again we meet the charge that the Jewish gnostic Christians are at work in the churches "all for sordid gain" (vs. 11). Are there any unworthy motives in this attack? anti-Semitism? rivalry, jealousy? fear of losing control? What about the morality and fairness of quoting a Cretan prophet's low view of his people (12-13)? Is this realism or racism? Have those who do not agree with us necessarily "turned their backs on the truth" (vs. 14)?

1. 15-16 uses the sanction of purity against "disbelievers," probably specifically those who oppose the Paul school in Crete and elsewhere: such are "tainted alike in reason and conscience," corrupt in both logic and life, hypocritical in that "their actions" deny what they "profess," and disqualified by "detestable obstinacy." If a modern churchman were to use such a catalog of invectives, how would you feel about him? Was this justified in that time but would not be now? Can you really hate the sin and love the sinner when the sinner seems to be undermining what you believe to be the one escape from sin? Is there such a thing as non-violence of spirit, as well as physical non-violence?

2. 1-10 instructing the natural groupings in the church. While there is only one standard for Christian faith and life, the sexes and age-levels do receive some separate specific instruction. Older men

(1-2) and older women (3-5) are not put on the shelf but given a definite and conspicuous place in Christian service and witness, and are expected so to live that "the gospel will not be brought into disrepute": Can the church accept our culture's current tendency to put oldsters on the shelf? Titus is to teach "the younger men" (6-8) both by example and by mouth in such fashion that "any opponent" will find "not a word to say to our discredit"--again, the sanction of public opinion.

The one unnatural grouping--and it strikes us as very unnatural--is "slaves" (9-10). Christianity was revolutionary from center to circumference, from devotion to social action. But the social-action aspect of the revolution has been developing gradually through the centuries, whereas the central revolution shocked and shook the world into which Jesus came --the message of a particular God who turned out to be the universal God in the particular form of a man, the man Christ Jesus. Sexes, ages, and classes are so to live as to "add lustre to the doctrine of God our Saviour." Since there is this social conservatism in the Bible even though biblical doctrine undermines it, should we be in a hurry to effect social change? Compare 1 Timothy 6.1-2, the other reference to slaves in the Pastorals. Here two things are said: that they are to be sensitive to the sanction of public opinion, and that in the case of Christian masters the Christian slaves "must be all the better servants" because their masters are "their Christian brothers." Does this remind us of some of our uses of religion to bolster undesirable aspects of the status quo? Is a major function of religion that of "sanctioning injustice" (James Baldwin)?

2. 11-14 the argument from grace. The mention of "our Saviour" in the previous verse leads on to the statement that God's grace "has dawned upon the world with saving (in NEB, "healing") for all mankind."

first word in this section--"For"--indicates that the section reveals the grounding of the Christian ethic displayed in 2. 1 - 3. 16 (as 3-8a is the grounding for 3. 1, 8b-14). Notice that it is this grace, this free and saving love of God, that is the motivation for and power of Christian discipline, both negative and positive (vs. 12), and its present action is in tension with its future prospect (vs. 13). (Verse 13 seems to speak in confusion of the first two persons of the Trinity, but most of the early Christians would have considered this criticism a theological nicety: Do we not believe in one God?) Verse 14 has a modern ring in explaining Christ's sacrifice as "to set us free" negatively and positively. On these matters the Christian is to "speak with authority" (vs. 15): Can we? do we? should we?

3. 1-2 the Christian and politics. As we noted what looks like social conservatism in relation to the institution of slavery, we see here what looks like political conservatism, counseling submissiveness "to the government and the authorities." But these "submissive" folk were considered a major threat to the Roman empire, as indeed they were. Structurally, we Americans are less submissive to government; but actually, is our engagement in the Christian revolution as threatening to our culture and government as theirs was to theirs? "Be ready for any honorable form of work" may refer either to labor or to good deeds. In the former case, in our culture what would it mean to be ready as Christians for leisure?

3. 3-8a Christian doctrine again. Notice throughout the Pastorals, but especially in Titus, an alternation of doctrinal and actional passages. In the preceding verse the counsel of Christian gentleness leads into the humbling mem-



ory of what we Christians once were as "slaves to passions and pleasures" with malice and envy." But by the grace of God, kindness has come to us, not, however, for any good deeds of our own, not even the work of baptism, for it is a deed flowing from grace. The tight intertwining of ethics and theology in this beautiful and powerful passage is a reminder that Christianity cannot be reduced to a code without cult and creed. Salvation is corporate, in "the water of rebirth" (Statement of Faith: "To share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table"--though the Pastorals do not mention the Lord's Supper) and "the renewing power of the Holy Spirit" (Statement of Faith: "He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church"). Pentecost brings justification and the active Christian hope.

3. 8b-15 conclusion. "Such are the points I should wish you to insist on," we can almost hear the aged Paul saying through the lips of his disciple to the disciples addressed in the Pastorals, disciples who are now ambassadors for Christ, as Jesus' disciples became the apostles.

Verses 8a and 14 insist on Christians entering into useful occupations, that they may "not be unproductive." A final warning against "unprofitable and pointless" religious controversy leads into the rule of two warnings for "a heretic" (10-11). By the time of the Pastorals Christianity had come into self-consciousness as a movement under external pressure toward extinction and internal threat toward dissolution. Christianity today has much of this same feel. Obviously, there was much dialog in those churches: If there were more in ours, would we be more like them in their confidence and discipline and witness?

#### A REMINDER:

What happens in the sessions depends much on your preparatory Bible study.

As you use this guide, mark what you are concerned to have pursued at the conference.

The Pastorals glow with insights and bristle with problems. If you spend some time daily in prayerful meditation on this section of the Bible, you will glow and bristle too.