

The Pastoral Epistles - Introduction

This third lecture concerns the collection of deuterio-Pauline letters; the Pastorals and the letter to the Hebrews. The Pastoral Epistles comprise Titus, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and these were probably written in that order. Titus has a long introductory greeting for a very short letter; 1 Timothy has no proper concluding section and so easily leads into 2 Timothy which has the character of a last will and testament of the apostle St. Paul. St Timothy had been one of St Paul's constant companions and co-workers in his missionary journeys; and he is listed as a co-author of four of St Paul's genuine letters—2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. St Titus was a Gentile convert, an emissary of St Paul to the churches at Corinth, Jerusalem and Crete, the latter where he eventually became Bishop. The letters to St Timothy concerned pastoral and doctrinal issues in the church at Ephesus where he was Bishop.

Notwithstanding this background and the fact that St Ignatius, St Polycarp and St Clement of Alexandria all attest to St Paul's authorship of these letters, it is by no means clear that this is definitely the case. A pseudonymous author may be supposed for all three, because the Greek literary style is very different in these letters from the rest of the Pauline corpus. This in no way detracts from the canonicity and value of these letters within the Pauline school of writings, particularly since there is extensive cross-referencing to Romans and 1 Corinthians. Some of the arguments used by Protestant scholars, however, in doubting Pauline authorship are quite spurious, since they assume that St Paul would not have worked in a church situation that had an ordered and settled ministry. Such assumptions from inbuilt conclusions cannot be justified from the text. In previous lectures, we have observed how St Paul can write to different churches with different situations in very different ways. If St Paul did write these letters, they were probably written between 64 and 67 A.D.; if he did not, we may suppose a date nearer the end of

the first century when heretical tendencies in these churches had grown in extent and seriousness. The non-canonical Acts of St Paul and St Thekla, for example, dating from the second century, has a similar list of characters and geographical locations to those of the Pastoral Epistles, but its doctrines are those earlier resisted in the Pastorals themselves as being inauthentic to St Paul. A late first century date would, therefore, provide a more plausible forward link to a pseudonymous successor of St Paul who augmented his teaching against these false doctrines. Let us now consider the Pastorals in order of their composition.

Titus

The letter to St Titus begins with a greeting in which St Paul indicates that St Titus has authority as “my true child in a common faith.” The exercise of that authority is to be in large part “manifested in His word through the preaching with which” St Paul (and now St Titus) “have been entrusted by command of God our Saviour” (1:3-4). In preaching on this opening chapter of the Epistle to Titus, St John Chrysostom has given a powerful explanation of both the potential and the boundaries of preaching:

‘Through the preaching,’ that is, openly and with all boldness, for this is the meaning of ‘preaching.’ For as a herald proclaims in the theatre in the presence of all, so also we preach, adding nothing but declaring the things which we have heard. For the excellence of a herald consists in proclaiming to all what has really happened, not in adding or taking away anything.¹

Those guidelines to preaching remain a welcome beacon to both preachers and congregations throughout the ages. St John Chrysostom has recognised that both St Paul and St Titus are wise, defined by a contemporary Christian educator and preacher as “people who know human life and how to live it faithfully. They have an unusually rich understanding of God and of God’s world and of how to fit into

¹ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus 1*; cited by Peter J. Gorday (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [ACCS] NT IX—Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 283.

it.”² This was one of St Paul’s outstanding character traits—to have gained such “an unusually rich understanding of God and of God’s world” and to have learned “how to fit into it” in so many different cultures and situations with so many different helpers and listeners.

The letter to Titus then addresses the same issue to be found in 1 Timothy 3, namely, the qualities to be expected in an elder/presbyter/bishop, remembering as St Jerome has reminded us that St Paul appears to be stating here that “a bishop and a presbyter [or elder] are the same.”³ The qualities are readily defined, but not so easy to find and verify firmly in one person—to be “the husband of one wife,” with “children who are believers,” “not be arrogant or quick tempered or insubordinate or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain” (1:6-7). Furthermore, “he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it” (1:9). St Jerome sets out both a justification and a danger in the appointment of bishops, of which St Paul was well aware: “When subsequently one was chosen to preside over the rest, this was done to remedy schism and to prevent each individual from rending [that is, tearing apart] the church of Christ by drawing it to himself.”⁴ In many cultures over many years, individual bishops have at times made the serious mistake of trying to draw the Church to themselves and their jurisdictional authority, rather than focus on being servants of the Church.

The selection of clergy, especially bishops, is a matter requiring considerable care and discernment, linked to consultation with the appropriate hierarchical authorities, as well as leading members of the local church community. A litmus

² Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Reading for Preaching: the preacher in conversation with storytellers, biographers, poets, and journalists* (Cambridge, UK: 2013), p. 70.

³ St Jerome, *Letters 146.1*; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 285. However, it should be noted that in certain usages of the words “bishop” and “presbyter,” bishops “have the power of placing presbyters in the individual towns,” as St Jerome recognises in his *Commentary on Titus*; quoted by Gorday, *ACCS*, p. 285.

⁴ St Jerome, *Letters 146.1*; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 285.

test, that is, an action that serves as a definitive test of suitability for ordination among those who are married, is the treatment of one's children. St John Chrysostom advises:

We would observe what care he [who is being considered for ordination] bestows upon [his] children. For he who cannot be the instructor of his own children, how could he be the teacher of others? ... For if he was unable to restrain them, it is a great proof of his weakness. And if he was unconcerned, his want of affection is much to be blamed. He then who neglects his children, how shall he take care of others?⁵

A further difficulty in the appointment of clergy is that even when a family is in good order, "the disposition" of an ordained person may change. As St John Chrysostom recognises:

One who was a true son [of Christ] may become spurious, and a spurious son may become a true one. For it is not the force of nature but the power of choice on which it [personal integrity in the exercise of the priesthood] depends, whence it is subject to changes over time.⁶

In these two opening chapters of the letter to Titus, St Paul and the Church Fathers offer a model of how to select clergy, with particular emphasis upon personal lifestyle, theological competence and family functionality. This advice from nearly 2,000 years ago remains equally pertinent today

Thereafter, a familiar theme emerges as Titus is emboldened to confront divisive Judaisers who are much given to the spinning of fables for profit (1:10-16). St Paul urges St Titus to teach about the importance of Godly behaviour amongst believers, who will then prove impervious to such influences, and which will prepare the Church for the Second Coming of Christ in judgement (2:11-15). The letter concludes with a reiteration of the Gospel and its renewing grace which characterise the life of the Church. There is a fresh warning against contentious teachers who

⁵ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus 2*; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 287.

⁶ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Titus 1*; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 284.

divide the congregation and who are not amenable to correction (3:9-11), with specific advice that after someone has been admonished “once or twice, have nothing more to do with him” (3:10). St John Chrysostom is equally blunt in a financial context:

Those who are contentious for the sake of money you will never persuade. They are only to be persuaded so long as you keep paying out, and even so you will never satisfy their desires.... From such then, as being incorrigible, it is right to turn away.⁷

St Paul was certainly being proactive in seeking to warn St Titus and the believers in Crete of various problems that might be encountered in building up a strong Christian community.

1 Timothy

This letter is addressed to a person, St Timothy, whereas the letters of St Paul are usually addressed to churches. This gives the letter a much more personal feel: St Paul is addressing a friend and co-worker in the Gospel who now has episcopal responsibility for the church at Ephesus. Once again we hear of a church being plagued by speculative Judaizing teachers (1:4-5) against which St Timothy much preach the grace of Christ, the foundation of both St Paul's apostolate and his.

The opening chapter ends with a strong warning about what happens to those who “by rejecting conscience . . . have made shipwreck of their faith” (1:19). St John Chrysostom develops St Paul's warning with a powerful metaphor:

In all circumstances, beloved, we need faith—faith, the mother of virtues, the medicine of salvation—without it we cannot grasp any teaching on sublime matters. But those who are without faith are like people trying to cross the sea without a ship. They are able to swim for a while by using hands and feet, but when they have gone farther out they are soon swamped by the waves. So, also, those who have recourse to their own reasoning before accepting any

⁷ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy 17*; cited by Gorday on Titus 3:10, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 306.

knowledge are inviting shipwreck, even as Paul speaks of those ‘who have made shipwreck of their faith.’⁸

By contrast, St Ambrose uses the same metaphor of a shipwreck to highlight the strength of those who have faith:

The truth of the Lord encompasses him, so that he is not afraid of the terror of the night or of the thing that walks about in darkness [Psalm 90 (91):4-6.] ... Thus he may look upon the shipwrecks of others while himself still free from danger. He may behold others driven here and there on the sea of this world, those who are borne about by every wind of doctrine, while himself persevering on the ground of an immovable faith.⁹

Both worldly influences and excessive reliance on one’s own reasoning threaten perseverance in faith—each person in any culture or any age chooses whether to ground their lives in faith, reasoning or worldly ideas and comforts.

The community is exhorted to a life of prayer (2:1-2), modesty and Godliness (2:8-15), under the leadership of the priest, as explained by St John Chrysostom:

The priest serves as the common father, as it were, of all the world. It is proper therefore that he should care for all, even as God, whom he serves cares for all.... From this, two advantages result. First, hatred toward those who are outside the circle is transcended, for no one can feel hatred toward those for whom he prays. [Second,] those apart are made better by the prayers that are offered for them, by losing their ferocious disposition toward us. For nothing is so apt to draw men under teaching as to love and to be loved.¹⁰

This challenge “to love and to be loved” remains a key to both prayer and missionary endeavour by priests and lay people. While self-help books can be of some

⁸ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John* 33.1; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 149 on 1 Timothy 1:19.

⁹ St Ambrose, *The Patriarchs* 5.26-27; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 149 on 1 Timothy 1:19.

¹⁰ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy* 6; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 149 on 1 Timothy 2:1a.

assistance to us as Christians in learning how to love and to be loved,¹¹ the primary challenge, as both St Paul and St John Chrysostom recognise, is unquestionably to live a committed Christian life.

The qualifications for bishops and deacons are set forth; and these ministers must teach the faithful by the example of their own of Godly living (3:1-13). An early creed follows (3:16); and this highlights the importance for St Timothy of resisting the false teaching of excessive asceticism and worldly speculation with the faith of the Church. These heresies may have been of the Jewish or gnostic sort, or both (4:1-11). The letter goes on to deal with problems that might have arisen concerning the youthfulness of St Timothy in his office. He is not to be unduly concerned about such matters but should rather concentrate on the teaching ministry that has been his charism since ordination (4:12-16). The letter characteristically for the Pastoral Epistles then goes on to examine some problems of the Church's social and personal life. The community's responsibility to take care of widows seems to have been abused by younger women who have descended into idleness and gossip. Widows to be supported should only be mature women given to good works (5:3-16). Whereas the false teachers have accrued ill gotten gains, Orthodox teachers, elders of good repute, deserve a good income from the community (5:17-20; cf. 6: 3-10).

Along with some reiterations of the teachings necessary to combat the haughtiness that is often associated with wealth together with the gnosis that leaves many astray, the letter concludes with an exhortation to Timothy that he should fulfil his

¹¹ William Ury, *Getting to Yes with Yourself and Other Difficult People* (London: Harper Thorsons, 2015). This book is published in the USA with the same author and publisher, but with the title, *Getting to Yes with Yourself and Other Worthy Opponents*. See also the helpful study by Gretchen Rubin, *Better Than Before: Mastering the Habits of Our Everyday Lives* (London: Two Roads/Hodder & Stoughton, 2015). For an effective combination of self-help and Christian insight, see C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: HarperCollins, 1960). The four loves are affection, friendship, Eros [the state of being in love] and charity. Lewis begins by distinguishing between “need-love” and “gift-love”, pointing out that we all need God's love and need one another. Lewis writes: “Every Christian would agree that a man's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God. But man's love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely, and must often be entirely a Need-love” (p. 3).

ministry in anticipation of Christ's Second Coming in judgement (6:11-16).

Tertullian views the challenge of ministry in the context of an athletic competition:

O blessed, consider whatever is hard in your present situation as an exercise of your powers of mind and body. You are about to enter a noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer, a contest whose crown is eternity, whose prize is angelic nature, citizenship in heaven for ever and ever.¹²

Tertullian is urging an attitude to life and to Jesus Christ similar to that proposed in Hebrews 12:1: "... let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

2 Timothy

The second letter continues the theme of the first both in its personal solicitude for St Timothy and the exhortations to this apostle that he should fulfil his apostolate. There is more Pauline autobiographical material in the first chapter of this epistle than in the first letter, thereby highlighting the close and affectionate regard St Paul had for his friend and co-worker, especially towards the end of his (Paul's) life. The opening chapter of this epistle urges St Timothy, his fellow Christians (and us) in verse 8 not to "be ashamed" to testify of both the Lord and of St Paul, but rather to "share in suffering for the Gospel in the power of God" who "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of His own purposes and the grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago." St John Chrysostom offers an inspired interpretation of this exhortation from St Paul:

'Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,' that is, do not be ashamed that you preach one who was crucified, but rather glory in it ... For it was that death which saved the world when it was perishing. That death connected earth with heaven, that death destroyed the power of the devil and made men angels and sons of God; [and] that death raised our nature to the kingly throne. ... Reckon that you sustained these things, not by your own power, but

¹² Tertullian, *To the Martyrs* 3.3; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 218.

by the power of God. For it is your part to choose and to be zealous, but God's to alleviate sufferings and to bid them cease. ... Consider how you were saved, how you were called.¹³

Although St John Chrysostom emphasises the power of God, it is equally clear that St Timothy, his fellow Christians and all Christians throughout the centuries retain both the free will “to choose” to believe in Jesus Christ and also a personal decision of how zealous to be in accepting the calling that is given to each of us.

In the second chapter St Paul's own experience of suffering in his ministry is presented as an example for St Timothy. St Paul's urging to “share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2:3) is light-heartedly but powerfully interpreted by Tertullian:

I am aware of the excuses by which we colour our insatiable carnal appetites. Our pretexts are: the necessities of props to lean on; a house to be managed; a family to be governed; chests and key to be guarded; [a job to be found and completed]; food to be attended to; cares to be generally lessened. ... [Yet we remain] soldiers, indeed, subject to the stricter discipline, since we are subject to so great a General.¹⁴

St Paul stresses the challenge to teach correctly the Word of truth and resist the doctrines of those who just babble their own ideas (2:17f.).

The letter then portrays the decline in virtue that characterises the Last Days and against which there must be a teaching for Godliness from Scripture (ch. 3). Preaching the Word must be consistent, in season and out of season, but in the awareness that many will still be led astray by fanciful teachings which suit their own desires. St Timothy must nonetheless remain watchful and faithful both in his teaching ministry and in his evangelism (4:1-5). The letter closes from verse 6 of

¹³ St John Chrysostom, *Homily II on II Timothy I*; cited by Johanna Manley, *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox: Daily Scripture Readings and Commentary for Orthodox Christians* (Menlo Park, CA: Monastery Books, 1990), p. 569.

¹⁴ Tertullian, *On Exhortation to Chastity* 12; cited by Gorday, *ACCS NT IX*, p. 240.

chapter 4 with an extended valediction reflecting St Paul's awareness of his forthcoming trials and in various greetings that reflect the poignancy of his situation in prison. This section of the letter at least shows all the hallmarks of being written by St Paul himself and perhaps this is how we should regard the pastoral Epistles— as letters substantially authored by the great apostle, but much augmented by material from his later disciples whose final editions we now hold.

Hebrews

The historian Eusebius quotes Origen's opinion on the authorship of Hebrews as follows: "Only God knows the truth as to who actually wrote this epistle."¹⁵ (The title, *St Paul's letter to the Hebrews*, was added much later and was not part of the original text. There are many evidences in the letter which cast strong doubt on St Paul's authorship. Uncharacteristically, this is not a letter at all but a straightforward theological treatise; and more importantly it is written in a highly literate style of Greek which elsewhere we never hear from St Paul's lips. The theological treatment of the Law in Hebrews is quite different in its emphasis on the rituals of the priesthood and sacrifice, whereas elsewhere in the Pauline letters it is the moral aspect of the Law that concerns the apostle.

If St Paul did not write this letter, then it is by no means clear who did, for there are no clues in the text itself. One thing we can say is that the author did not belong to the apostolic group, for in 2:3 we read that the author and his community received teaching *from* them. The author was clearly well educated; and bearing in mind how he handled both the Jewish sacrificial system, seemingly in the context of Plato's distinction between ideal forms and mundane representations, it seems likely the letter was written within a Hellenistic Jewish environment into which Christianity had interposed itself.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.14.

The Jewish aspect of his teaching does predominate, but it is the sacrifices of the Tabernacle in the desert that are described, not the Temple as such. However, the sacrifices to which the author alludes still seem current which suggest a date before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. The location of the church to which Hebrews is addressed is made clear in 13:24—Rome. The contrast between a persecution already endured (10:32-34) and the possibility of a subsequent more deadly repression (12:4) indicates a date before the outbreak of Nero's persecution in A.D. 64. The first conflict could have been those disturbances that spurred the Emperor Claudius to expel the Jews for a time in A.D. 48. The audience for which the book is written does not seem to be the entire Church, but rather a subgroup within it (5:12-14, 10:25, 13:24). This subgroup seems to have been concerned with the status of the Old Testament sacrifices and their relationship to Christ, for this is a major concern in the epistle itself.

Putting all these clues together, we may suppose that the Christians for whom this letter is written were primarily if not exclusively from a Hellenistic Jewish background. Doubtless these people were tempted to revert to Judaism on account of the persecutions of Christians—an illegal religion at this time—knowing that the Jews, being legal were normally left alone by the Roman authorities. The author of the letter to the Hebrews is at pains to show how such a reversion would be spiritually disastrous in the light of Christ's replacement of the old Jewish sacrificial system by His death and resurrection. In this Christ is both Priest and Victim of a new and better Covenant, so there can be no turning back.

The first four chapters of Hebrews establish the Incarnation as the basis for what Christ the High Priest has done through His sacrificial death. His office in this regard is contrasted with that of the angels (1:5), Moses (3:3-6) and later in chapter 5 (1-11), Melchizedek. Chapter 6 begins with a warning that the believers must not return to the old rites and all their associated dead works. Having been baptised and having partaken of the Spirit, if they were to fall away, even repentance would

not restore them since they would crucify afresh the Son of God (6:1-6). Chapter 7 explores the Levitical priesthood and Melchizedek in relation to Christ in more detail; and it is the latter, Melchizedek, who is presented as the type of the one to come, Christ, whose priesthood is of a genuinely eternal character as the Son of God. As such, Christ is both Priest and Victim in that His perfection enables Him to offer the perfect sacrifice once only for the sins of the whole world rather than the imperfect sacrifices of the old covenant which had to be repeated continually. The contrast between these offerings is explored in chapters 8 and 9 in the context of the relationship between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary, concluding that Christ's perfect offering of Himself secures an eternal redemption in the way that the blood of bulls and goats could never secure (9:11-14 cf. 10:1-4). By this means, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant through His death (9:15-22). The remission of sins He has secured for all gives the believer boldness to "have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus" (10:18f.); and it is this regeneration that binds the Church together in anticipation of the end (10:23-25).

Apostasy violates the whole basis of this redemption with terrible consequences for those who have "trampled the Son of God underfoot" (10:29). Instead, the believers should persevere in and through sufferings for the sake of the great reward of their endurance (10:32-39). The great hymn to faith of 11:1 to 12:2 is, therefore, a natural consequence of the confidence of the Church in Christ and His sacrificial death. The fourth-century reflections of Theodoret, Bishop of Cyr, have retained their validity over the centuries:

The models of godliness are set before us on all sides, [St Paul] is saying, in such vast numbers as to resemble a cloud in density and testify to the power of faith. Accordingly, let us keep our eyes on them, be light on our feet and rid ourselves of the burden on unnecessary worries, in this way being able also

to avoid sin that is easy to contract. Before everything else we need perseverance to succeed in the course ahead of us.¹⁶

Suffering is but a chastening that can yield fruit in righteousness for those who are willing to be trained by discipline (12:11). The goal of the Christian life is therefore the heavenly Jerusalem, which in 12:18-24 is contrasted with the terrifying aspect of Mount Sinai and the old covenant. This new and heavenly Jerusalem is a great consolation for those who have endured.

Chapter 13 concludes the letter with mixed exhortations which variously commend hospitality, marriage, respect for church leaders, prayer, good works and the resistance of heresy. If the Jewish Christians at Rome had any doubt about the importance of keeping the faith, the Letter to the Hebrews would have disabused them of that; or at least, so we hope!

St Paul: “The Apostle of the Risen Christ”

It is a sound assessment that: “Paul’s influence on the development of Christian faith has been greater than that of any other man, for without his conviction that the gospel was intended for Gentiles *qua* Gentiles, Christianity would have remained a Jewish sect.”¹⁷ Yet as the Orthodox Christian historian and theologian, David Bentley Hart has reflected in his insightful *The Story of Christianity: A History of 2,000 Years of the Christian Faith*:

One of the more remarkable features of Paul’s ministry, considering his former zeal for defending the purity of Judaism, was his uncompromising insistence upon the absolute inclusiveness of the gospel. ... Not only did he believe that the Church embraced both Jews and Gentiles; he was also convinced that Christ had abolished the difference between them. ... In the letters he wrote to the various Christian communities he had founded or encountered, Paul

¹⁶ Theodoret of Cyr, *Interpretation of Hebrews 12*; cited by Erik M. Heen and Philip D. W. Krey (eds.), *Hebrews, ACCS, NT X*, p. 209.

¹⁷ Morna D. Hooker, “Paul” in Adrian Hastings (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 521-524.

unfolded a theology according to which all of God's promises to Israel had been fulfilled in Christ, but in a way that had miraculously allowed all the nations of the earth to be included within those promises.¹⁸

It is appropriate then that David Bentley Hart should call St Paul, "The Apostle of the Risen Christ"—a title that provides an excellent conclusion to these three lectures on the life and theology of St Paul.

¹⁸ David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity* (London: Quercus, 2009), pp. 29-32.

A Template for the Orthodox Interpretation of Biblical Texts

In accordance with the proposal of Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos that Orthodox biblical interpretation ought to have a three-level approach, the following template is offered for preachers, teachers, bible study leaders, catechists and students of the Scriptures generally:¹

Faithfulness in the Pastoral Epistles and Hebrews: 1 Timothy 1:12 (“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service”); **1 Timothy 6:12** (“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called”); **2 Timothy 4:7** (“I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course, I have kept the faith”); **Hebrews 12:1-2** (“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...”).

Level	Process	In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria)	Applicable Now (Praxis)
Exegetical	Historical / Contextual <i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i>	St Paul’s understanding of faithfulness arises out of his respect for the OT understanding of faith, linked to his determination to remain faithful to Christ and His Church, while urging others to do the same. The root of the Hebrew word for faithfulness is <i>‘āman</i> meaning “to confirm or support” or “to be established, faithful” or “to be certain, to believe in,” depending on the Hebrew stem. The Greek word for faithful is <i>pistos</i> which in its active sense means “trusting, believing” and in its passive sense” being trustworthy, reliable, faithful, loyal.” In his life and his teachings, St Paul unified the OT and NT understanding of being faithful.	As one Biblical commentator has suggested: “Paul is particularly aware that God has committed to him, as to every believer, the responsibility of using his gifts to serve others.” Hebrews 11.1-12:2 is firmly grounded in the idea that the OT and the NT together call us to live a life of faith in Christ now. 1 Timothy 1:12 indicates that Christ strengthens us to live this life of faith.
	Allegorical / Typological <i>(as derived from Tradition)</i>	In reflecting in 2 Timothy 4:7 that he has “fought the good fight, finished the course,” St Paul is looking back on some thirty years of service to the Lord (ca. 36-66 A.D.). St John Chrysostom compares St Paul’s relationship to St Timothy to that of a	St Ambrose cautions us: “For in a contest there is much labour needed. ... Is the palm ever given or the crown granted before the course is finished?” [ACCS, NT IX, p. 273]. Perseverance until death

		<p>father who will soon die, but consoles his son by saying: “Weep not, my son; [I] have lived a good life, [I] have arrived at old age, and now [I] leave you” [ACCS NT, IX, p.273].</p>	<p>is essential for Christians who truly seek to serve the Lord.</p>
Interpretative	Spiritual / Ethical	<p>Whether or not St Paul wrote Hebrews, the theology is certainly his. Theodoret of Cyr wrote of Hebrews 11 that St Paul “shows both those before the law and those under the law becoming God’s friends through faith. ... [St Paul] brings out the power of faith (faith accomplishing what the law did not achieve) [St Paul] teaches the very definition of faith: through it we see what is unseen, and it acts as an eye for discernment of what is hoped for” [ACCS, X, Heb, p173].</p>	<p>St Jerome stresses: “God has entered us as contestants in a racecourse where it is our lot to be always striving. This place, then, a valley of tears, is not a condition [or situation] of peace, not a state of security, but an arena of struggle and of endurance” {ACCS X, Heb, p. 210}.</p>
	Personal / Social	<p>It was very important to St Paul that the Lord considered him to be faithful (1 Tim 1:12). St John Chrysostom wrote: “It is as if [St Paul] were saying [to God]: ‘Let the life of your servant be openly exposed, so that the loving kindness of the Lord [<i>hesed</i> in Hebrew] might be all the more apparent. For although I have received the remission of sins, I do not reject the memory of those sins” [Homilies Concerning the Statues 12.1; cited in Gorday, ACCS NT IX, p. 141].</p>	<p>St John Chrysostom is explicit that St Paul is an example for others: “So if you have greatly sinned, you yourself upon being changed will hope all the more by seeing [St Paul]. Such an example comforts those who are in despair and causes them to stand tall” [ACCS NT IX, p.141].</p>
Transformative	The Call to Holiness	<p>St Clement of Alexandria warns us that “The majority do not turn their minds to the sort of things they encounter, and, if they are taught, they do not acquire knowledge; although they think they do.’ So says the admirable Heraclitus... [Isaiah] remarks, ‘If you do not believe, you emphatically will not understand either’ [Is 7:9 LXX]. ... Faith is in</p>	<p>St Clement also warns: “How could a soul come to study of these things, itself exceptional, if deep within, lack of faith over the teaching is fighting against it? [ACCS X Hebrews, p. 173]. One of the derivatives of the OT word for belief/faith, <i>‘āman</i>, is “truth.” To be transformed by the call</p>

		fact preconception by the will, an act of consenting to religion and as the divine apostle [St Paul] puts it, ‘the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ [Heb 11: 1-3; <i>ACCCS X Hebrews</i> , p. 173].	to holiness, we each must first experience that Christ is Truth.
	The Call to Witness	All four of the Biblical passages quoted in this template stress the responsibility to witness to the faith in Christ that we have each received. St John Chrysostom insists that “if we wish to run and to learn to run well, let us look to Christ, even to Jesus, ‘the author and finisher of our faith’ [Heb 12:2]. What is this? He has put the faith within us. For He said to His disciples, ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you’ [John 15: 16] ... [<i>ACCS X Hebrews</i> , 210]. God knows and loves us; and that is what gives us the competence and the confidence to witness to others.	David Bentley Hart has rightly said that “Not only did [St Paul] believe that the Church embraced both Jews and Gentiles; he was also convinced that Christ had abolished the difference between them” (see Lecture 48, p.13). That is a strong call to both Jews and Christians to witness to the fullness of faith in Christ and His Church.

¹ In “*The New Testament, An Orthodox Perspective, Volume 1: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics,*” (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997, Ch. 7), Fr. Theodore sets out three levels serving a sound Orthodox hermeneutical process. These are: **1. Exegetical** - using all critical, contextual, textual and literary methods to determine “the level of understanding of the biblical text in its historical context of literary form and conceptuality ...” (p. 190). **2. Interpretative** – evaluating means derived from the exegetical stage as applicable contextually to the reader’s contemporary issues and concerns (p. 197). **3. Transformative** – experiencing life changing practical applications of insights derived from the previous two stages.

In ALL of these three levels, the Orthodox context must be the Church as the locus of divine revelation and inspiration. Here the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth as manifested in the biblical text, the teachings of the Fathers and the liturgical context. In Ch. 4, p. 115 f., Fr. Theodore explains the historical and spiritual exegetical approaches which, following the Fathers, must be applied throughout. Classically these have concerned the Antiochian emphasis on the “literal” or historical approach and the Alexandrian emphasis on the allegorical and typological interpretations that reveal the inter-connectedness of all Scripture in Tradition at deeper levels of understanding.