



Preacher, Pastor & Evangelist

**ESSAYS ON THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
IN HONOUR OF SIMON MANCHESTER**

Edited by Gerard O'Brien



The essays in this collection cluster around three central aspects of gospel ministry: proclaiming the word (preacher), godly perseverance in pastoral relationships (pastor), and the imperative to reach out with the gospel to a dying world (evangelist).

These three themes not only describe the essence of godly Christian ministry, but are an apt description of the man in whose honour these essays have been written: Simon Manchester, senior minister at St Thomas' North Sydney from 1989 to 2019.

Featuring essays from Dick Lucas, Phillip Jensen, William Philip, Claire Smith and others, *Preacher, Pastor and Evangelist* offers sharp insights and deep encouragement for anyone involved in gospel ministry.



SIMON MANCHESTER

**SENIOR MINISTER AT ST THOMAS'
NORTH SYDNEY, 1989-2019**

**matthiasmedia**
your partner in making disciples

ISBN 978-1-925424-61-4



9 781925 424614



Preacher, Pastor & Evangelist

**ESSAYS ON THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
IN HONOUR OF SIMON MANCHESTER**

Edited by Gerard O'Brien

 **matthiasmedia**
SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

Preacher, Pastor and Evangelist

© Matthias Media 2019

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Matthias Media

(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)

Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

Matthias Media (USA)

Email: sales@matthiasmedia.com

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com

Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978 1 925424 61 4

Cover design by Georgia Condie.

Typesetting by Lankshear Design.

Cover sketch of St Thomas' by Kathy Manchester.



CONTENTS

Introduction and tribute to Simon Manchester	5
1. The final letter: A window into 2 Timothy <i>Dick Lucas</i>	15
2. In defence of the big idea: Key questions for clear and faithful preaching <i>Chase R Kuhn</i>	35
3. The preacher who does not lose heart <i>William JU Philip</i>	49
4. The tribulations and triumphs of ministry <i>Gavin Perkins</i>	73
5. Deeds in keeping with repentance <i>Matthew Sleeman</i>	85
6. John Owen on the glory of Christ <i>David Short</i>	109
7. Seeking the welfare of the city <i>Claire Smith</i>	123
8. Evangelism and covenantal apologetics: A dialogue <i>Gerard O'Brien</i>	141
9. Evangelistic preaching <i>Phillip D Jensen</i>	161
10. Preacher, pastor, evangelist and leader <i>David Robertson</i>	181
About the contributors	193



INTRODUCTION AND TRIBUTE TO SIMON MANCHESTER

By the grace of God, Simon Manchester has served 30 years of fruitful gospel ministry at St Thomas' Anglican Church, North Sydney. This festschrift was compiled to the glory of God and to honour what he has done through Simon these three decades as he retires as rector on 13 December 2019. The people who contributed to this volume have either served beside Simon or enjoyed close fellowship with him during that time. We are all very thankful for the example of a man of God committed to the proclamation of his word and the care of his flock.

The title *Preacher, Pastor and Evangelist* summarizes both Simon's ministry and the content of this volume. I gave the contributors free rein to choose their topics and they all gravitated to these themes quite naturally in honour of the man they are thankful for. My prayer is that it not only serves as a fitting tribute to Simon, but that it would also serve to build up Christ's church (just as Simon would want).

My sincere thanks go to everyone who made this festschrift possible.

To the contributors: thank you for such excellent articles and timely and friendly responses to my emails. I can see why Simon appreciates you so much!

To Matthias Media, especially Tony Payne, Ian Carmichael and Emma Thornett: thank you for making this happen. I would have been completely at sea trying to do this without you. Thank you also to Samantha Dunn for editing the text.

To Kathy Manchester: thank you for being a sounding-board for this project, for encouraging me to go ahead with it, for suggesting contributors, for encouraging me as I struggled with it, for your help with the tribute, for being the lovely and kind person you are, and for caring for Simon so well over many years (as well as keeping all this a secret).

And to my wife, Briar: thank you for your patience with me as I brought this together. So much of what I do depends on the wonderful woman beside me—I thank God for you.

Gerard O'Brien

August 2019

Simon Manchester arrived at St Thomas' in 1989 after five years as rector at Lalor Park. Before that he had served for three years under Dick Lucas at St Helen's, Bishopsgate. Those three years proved pivotal in shaping Simon's ministry. 'The treasure is in the text' was Simon's summary of Dick Lucas' preaching, a motto Simon practised from the pulpit and repeated through the decades to his assistants and students (at Cornhill Sydney and Moore Theological College). Simon would tell of countless pastoral issues that were handled simply by unpacking the word of God, and share testimonies of people who told him he saved their marriage or changed their life through his preaching. Rightly, Simon would not take the credit, but attributed it to the Spirit's power through the word. The word rightly divided from the pulpit on Sunday (and on the radio) would save countless pastoral emergencies through the week. The people of God have been fed and equipped to navigate life faithfully.

This is not to say Simon is a distant pulpiter, appearing for an hour on Sunday only to disappear to his study the rest of the week. He was always a personal presence in the life of his flock: meeting with members over breakfast and lunch, visiting the sick, counselling the troubled, supporting the bereaved. I asked Kathy for an example of this (it is done quietly by Simon and so I am never fully across his busy schedule). She mentioned one day that week in which he:

- visited a dying congregation member in the hospital (for the sixth or seventh time)
- talked to her husband, and arranged to meet him for lunch to tell him more about Jesus
- called two church members to enquire of their progress through sickness, and to make sure they were being cared for

- bought and dropped off a game for a family because the kids liked playing it when they had lunch with the Manchesters the previous Sunday.

All this done in the midst of sermon preparation and the countless administrative tasks that characterize a big and busy parish. Simon loves the flock and acutely feels the “anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28). Despite its size, Simon has cared for the people of St Thomas’ like it is a small church. He knows the people and their struggles, and cares for them in a practical way. Of course, Kathy has consistently stood beside him, supported him and helped him care for people in this way.

Simon’s capacity is beyond most of us. There were times I met with him and he would share his schedule and I did not understand how he did it all. He would reminisce of all the things he did when he was an assistant (much more than I was doing at the time!). I could not help but think of the Monty Python Yorkshire men and the ‘luxury’ I was enjoying! That said, his capacity has never been the result of self-sufficiency. Simon is a pastor in prayer. Individually, he faithfully prayed through the church directory. As a team leader, he would make sure the office staff met for prayer daily at 2.30 pm. He was committed to the pre-church prayer meetings and he measured the health of St Thomas’ by the attendance at whole-of-church prayer meetings. He modelled what it means to rely on the Lord, who is sovereign over the work. The Lord upheld him faithfully and ruled over the ministry.

There have been many highlights in Simon’s time at St Thomas’. One has been the ‘sending’. The people of St Thomas’ have prayed for workers for the harvest and the Lord has provided abundantly. Simon oversaw the ‘re-potting’ of three separate churches: Naremburn Cammeray Anglican (1998), Church by the Bridge,

Kirribilli (2004), and St Mark's, Northbridge (2010). The generosity and kingdom heart involved in these was incredible. On all three occasions, a gifted and godly assistant minister from St Thomas' led 50+ keen members to another church. There was a corresponding decrease in St Thomas' numbers and giving, but that is the sacrifice involved in kingdom generosity. Simon did not seek to grasp for his own personal empire; he gladly sent people for the advance of the gospel. Many individuals have been sent too. Simply read the names further below of past assistants and trainees who have now spread around the globe from St Thomas'. And those names do not include the scores of lay members who have gone with the gospel. Missionary sending has been a big priority under Simon's leadership. He has set the pattern of regular prayer for our missionaries each Sunday, and 20 per cent of St Thomas' offertories go to our 20+ mission partners.

Simon is a natural evangelist. If you've ever been to a café with him, you will know the ease with which he strikes up conversation with staff. And he will very naturally lead the conversation to the gospel or an invitation to church. He is constantly meeting with people—people new to church and people who have been around for ages. He enjoys a chat, but he's always keen to get to spiritual matters. He is particularly concerned to make sure people are clear on the gospel and assured of salvation. Recently he met with a regular at church and asked his classic question, "If you were to die tonight and Jesus asked you why he should let you into heaven, what would you say?" The man said something like, "Because I believe in you and I believe you are Lord". Unsatisfied, Simon pressed with the next question, "The devil believes Jesus exists and he knows he's Lord—do you think he will go to heaven?" These are penetrating (some might say intimidating) questions, but they come from a heart of love. Simon wants to see the lost

saved and the saved matured in their faith.

A hallmark of Simon's time at St Thomas' has been the consistent *Christianity Explained/Explored/Condensed* courses. Everyone in the church knows there is another one coming up and that they can invite their friends. Simon is in his element around a table of 15-20 people, leading them through different parts of the Gospel of Mark and showing the majesty and mercy of Jesus. Many, many people have been saved sitting around such tables. And you can hear Simon's joy when he recounts stories of seeing the scales fall from people's eyes as they see Jesus for who he truly is.

The broadcasting of Simon's sermons via the Hope 103.2 weekly program *Christian Growth* opened up a significantly wider ministry opportunity.¹ With a regular audience in excess of 50,000 listeners, Simon's gifted opening and handling of God's word has had an impact impossible to measure. He regularly receives messages from people who were converted or grown through that ministry.

The reach of this ministry even extended to people behind bars. One such listener is Bronson Blessington, sentenced to life in prison at the age of 14 in 1988. Extraordinarily and powerfully converted through the ministry of Christians visiting his jail, he contacted Simon to thank him for the blessing he received from the 103.2 broadcast—and a friendship was born. This has carried on over years with regular phone contact, occasional visits and letters—Bronson often encouraging Simon more than Simon felt the reverse.²

1 Hope 103.2 is Sydney's Christian FM radio station.

2 For a fuller account see Clare Chate, 'My friendship with a murderer', interview with Simon Manchester, Hope 103.2, Sydney, 9 February 2016: www.hope1032.com.au/stories/life/news/2016/my-friendship-with-a-murderer-simon-manchester/

As one of the most gifted preachers God has given Australia, it is not surprising that Simon has been sought out to speak in many different places. He has treasured opportunities to preach around Australia (Katoomba conventions, CMS conventions, and many different church weekends away, including in remote areas), New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, England (Keswick, EMA and church weekends away), Canada, Chile and the United States (Simeon Trust, Capitol Hill Baptist). In return, St Thomas' has been blessed by the many gifted preachers from around the world who have experienced Simon and Kathy's gracious hospitality and preached from the St Thomas' pulpit: Eric Alexander, Christopher Ash, Jerry Bridges, Tim Chester, Dale Ralph Davis, Mark Dever, Bill Dumbrell, David Jackman, John Lennox, William Philip, Vaughan Roberts, David Robertson, Matthew Sleeman, William Taylor, Rico Tice and George Verwer (to name a few!). There have also been numerous notable visitors to St Thomas' to hear Simon preach—prime ministers and deputy prime ministers, state governors, and even the US vice-president.

Having seen the blessing of the Cornhill Training Course for training preachers in the United Kingdom, Simon led an initiative with his friend David Peterson to establish Cornhill in Sydney. They recruited Gavin Perkins to take the lead and Cornhill Sydney was launched in 2012. Simon generously gave time and energy to teaching the students, as well as providing the location—the newly built Parkview ministry centre on the St Thomas' site. Since then this critical preacher training has produced dozens of graduates (and it continues to grow under the leadership of Peter Ryan).

Even with this international ministry, Simon continued to serve the local community. Reflecting his love of rugby league,

Simon was the chaplain to the North Sydney Bears between 1990-1997. With his quick sense of humour, the players warmed to him and he enjoyed being a gospel presence in the club, preparing some of the players for marriage and taking their weddings. Also part of the local community is the North Sydney CBD (a short walk down the road), where tens of thousands of people come each day for work. To reach these people, Simon started the Bible Means Business ministry in the 90s. Based on a similar ministry at St Helen's, 50-70 people would come each Wednesday for a \$5 lunch and a message from the Bible. Simon preached his way through books like John, Acts and Romans. People were converted and grown. There are still members of St Thomas' who came to Christ through that ministry.

The site of St Thomas' has experienced significant development during Simon's time: the 34 McLaren Street restoration and rezoning (2004); the preschool restoration (2008); the Memorial Hall restoration (2010); the Parkview ministry centre and apartments development (2013); and the church building roof and sandstone restoration (three stages: 1995, 1999, 2019). As Simon departs, the final stages of the church restoration will be completed. It is a legacy to generations to come that Simon leaves the grounds in such excellent condition for the continuation of gospel ministry in North Sydney.

Another big property decision was made in 2005. Simon led the on-site preschool into a much more deliberate alignment with St Thomas'. Although the relationship with the operators was friendly, Simon wanted it to be a gospel-centered and gospel-saturated preschool. It was a relationally difficult decision. He closed the preschool down and restarted it under closer parish oversight and a wonderful new director, Alex Orange. It took great resolve on Simon's part to see it through. But the result has

been remarkable. My wife and I have a friend (not yet a believer) who was considering preschools in the area. She went to information nights for each preschool and found that they all focused on accelerated learning and educational outcomes as the top priorities. Except one: St Thomas' preschool was upfront in saying that Christianity is primary, and that means relationships are important. They want good educational outcomes, yes. But more than that, they want children to learn to relate to God and to one another. It was an 'aha' moment for her. She said to us, "Of course! I don't just want my child to learn; I want him to value relationships". She decided to send her child to St Thomas'. The preschool has been instrumental in leading whole families to Jesus over the years.

When I talk with people about Simon, a recurring theme is thoughtfulness. He is a prolific card-writer. After assistant ministers deliver sermons, he gives warm notes of encouragement (and helpful pieces of constructive criticism). Speaking with Emma Thornett (the managing editor at Matthias Media), she tells of how thoughtful Simon has been to their team over the years. Simon regularly sends them notes of encouragement. Emma recalls one particularly lousy day when many things had gone wrong and, out of the blue, she received an email from Simon, reminding her of the good work she is doing. He did not know what a well-timed message it was. There are many others who have received such thoughtful and encouraging notes. His thoughtfulness extends to his hospitality. When we have staff lunches at the Manchester house, Simon will have prepared fun activities for the kids (and adults) and gifts for them to take home from his favourite toy shop. And if you receive a gift from Simon, you can be assured that much thought has gone into it—from a carefully chosen book, to some Protestant 'relic', to

something fun he picked up from Vinnies.

Through all this, the St Thomas' community has been greatly blessed by the Manchester family. Rach, Beth and Sam have loved the people, shown great patience as the minister's kids as they grew up, and each led the youth and music of St Thomas' at various times. Kathy has been a constant helper and supporter of Simon. She has cared for him (as well as so many of the people at church), shown incredible hospitality in her home, and graciously juggled the demands of family, church and work. The community of St Thomas' is very thankful for Simon and the Manchester family and we will miss having him as our senior minister.



THE FINAL LETTER: A WINDOW INTO 2 TIMOTHY

Dick Lucas

When Mr Sherlock Holmes made use of Dr Watson's broad shoulders to reach a window of the Fighting Cock Inn, in this way gaining a momentary glimpse into the inn's interior, it was enough to solve the grave problems associated with the Priory School, the death of the German master, and the strange disappearance of the Duke of Holderness's son and heir. By contrast, in this window into 2 Timothy, I cannot promise success in solving all the issues connected with the Pastoral Epistles; nonetheless, this survey of a favourite letter may throw light on certain matters of importance that relate to church leadership and Christian ministry at the present time. It is also my desire that what I write may act as a warm tribute to an old friend at a special moment in his life and continuing ministry.

For the Christian pastor, in a day of vigorous church planting, the Pastorals prove themselves to be of priceless value. Yet, at his desk, working through 2 Timothy, the preacher may well sense a perplexity. Can the prized companion of Paul's missionary

journeys, the trusted assistant, be the same person as the Timothy apparently revealed in this letter? Can the named collaborator with the apostle on half a dozen New Testament letters, the one who, from long experience, knew all about the mind and ways of his great mentor (3:10), the man of whom Paul could write that he had “no-one like him” (Phil 2:20)—can this be the seemingly fragile vessel to whom this letter is ostensibly addressed?

For a reading of 2 Timothy can easily lead to the impression of a rather raw hand, unsure of his own capabilities, not overly robust, the ‘timid Timothy’ of tradition. And this despite the evidence that, as a comparatively young man, Timothy is acting as apostolic delegate in influential Ephesus, having previously carried through a number of high-profile assignments on Paul’s behalf; for example, a visit to the tiresome and immature Corinthians. Exaggerated or not, the seeming mismatch between the Timothy of Acts and the Timothy of the Pastorals has been sufficient to persuade a distinguished scholar, CK Barrett, that the portrayal of Timothy given in the Pastorals is “fictitious, founded in fact, no doubt, but not accurately representing it”.¹ A similar verdict comes from Brox, a German commentator, of whom AT Hanson writes: “Brox suggests that the reason why Timothy is treated both as a tiro in need of elementary instruction and as one who has had a lot of shared experience with Paul is that the author is in fact writing a manual of instruction for church leaders, and wishes to provide for leaders at all stages”.²

This latter suggestion might be a more constructive assessment, though it is scarcely without its own difficulties, as we

1 CK Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Clarendon Bible, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963, p. 10.

2 AT Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Century Bible Commentary, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London, 1982, p. 148.

search for this anonymous mastermind who so confidently assumes the mantle of Timothy's spiritual father and guide.

It is thus that scepticism is added to scepticism, since, as "every schoolboy knows",³ the majority view among New Testament scholars is that the Pastorals emerged in the sub-apostolic age, even as late as mid-second century. For myself, as a young student of the Pastoral Epistles, I cut my teeth on that little black job, the Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, an excellent and generally conservative edition that sets the reader on the road to a lifetime's appreciation of these compelling letters.⁴ Many years later, my guess would be that a brief survey of the commentaries and studies of the Pastorals in any comprehensive theological library would show that the issues of authorship and authenticity are still unresolved. The deniers of Paul's authorship have wholly failed to convince the defenders, just as the defenders have failed to persuade the deniers. It is like those marathon tennis duels at Wimbledon, when the score in the final set stands at 18 games apiece, with no likelihood of a killer punch. After a suffocatingly warm day, and as the shadows lengthen on the court, the spectators, as exhausted as the players, can hope only for eventual release and bed.

As for our 'schoolboy', it is all but inevitable that he will come to recognize that scholars, as scholars, are no wiser than other thinking people; indeed, experience shows that they can be "ultra-conformist within the circles formed by those whose approval they seek and value", a sentence from Paul Johnson, in

3 TB Macaulay, 'Lord Clive', in *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review*, 5th edn, 3 vols, vol. 3, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848, p. 109.

4 JH Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1899.

his book *Intellectuals*.⁵

It will, therefore, be the best policy to come to these letters in accordance with the claim that they make for themselves. In doing so, we soon realize that we are reading not only about those past believers, but also about ourselves in the present: the same follies; the same crises; the same ministry pressures; the same divisions and stumbling blocks; the same obligations and hopes; yet, in it all, the same Lord, with the same ‘promise of life’ (2 Tim 1:1).

Triumphalism and apostolic authority: the essential background

Two major issues form an essential background to 2 Timothy, ensuring its enduring worth. First, the widespread disparagement of Paul’s apostolic authority troubling the churches of Asia Minor. Second, the rapid advance, like a forest fire, of a triumphalist version of the faith propagated by men once known as respected teachers (2:16-18). Both these realities alert the reader to the sharp divisions among living churches in those early years, something that continues to be the case in our own era.

The desertion of Paul by those who owed him so much is an unhappy theme of 2 Timothy. Shocked we may be when we read of it, yet hardly surprised, since it came about because of his “chains” (1:16, 2:9). Just as suffering was once thought by such as Peter to be unthinkable for God’s Messiah, so it was thought to be unthinkable for God’s apostle. Repeated incarcerations were felt to be quite out of order, impossible to square with the ‘signs of an apostle’. As for the intoxicating new message that the “resurrection has already happened” (2:18), this “gnostic denial

5 P Johnson, *Intellectuals*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1989, p. 342.

of eschatology”⁶ gave wondrous hope, doomed nevertheless to disappointment, that a complete and full salvation was already the proper experience of the believer; all this ours through the dying and rising of conversion and baptism. For the man or woman of true commitment, the claim was confidently made that the powers of sin, sickness and suffering had once for all been rendered impotent, so that a full victory over these could be theirs now, to be received by faith and celebrated with joy.

In the light of such euphoria, Paul’s gospel could only appear inadequate and defeatist, lacking in a genuine fulfilment. Why wait in hope for that which can be ours today? It will be seen at once that this conflict of understanding controls any final evaluation of 2 Timothy and its significance for today’s church militant, since this letter is part of the Spirit’s witness, which, in the end, must influence our concept of Christian ministry. There are times when it becomes necessary to describe these matters in ultimate terms as we attempt to apply them to the messy and compromised situations in which we find ourselves living and working. Of whom, then, are we heirs? Of the princely lord in his palace, free from the hardships and the stresses of life? Or of the prisoner in his cell, object of disgrace and humiliation? This issue lies at the core of 2 Timothy.

The readership of the letter

It greatly assists us in getting a clear grasp on 2 Timothy if we recognize those to whom it is addressed and for whom, therefore, Paul’s instructions are intended. First, we must come to Timothy himself, with the caveat that this letter is not marked ‘private

6 Barrett, p. 106.

and personal'. Second, 2 Timothy is an open letter to be read by the churches in Ephesus, its hinterland and further afield; the final greeting is in the plural, leading some modern translators to add the word 'all' (not in the Greek) to "Grace be with you", so as to make this vital point. Third, in the purpose and wisdom of God, 2 Timothy speaks to the "man of God" in every generation as it continues to do today (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:17).

Since the contentious issues in 2 Timothy have to do with the wider church scene in Asia Minor, we begin there. For, in the light of this, it will be easier to understand why and how Timothy is told to exercise his delegated authority. So what was this propaganda, strongly advocated and widely accepted among these young churches? Today, it would be described as an over-realized eschatology, a laying claim to possess now what is promised only in the resurrection. Perhaps a less technical description is that to be found on our boxes of breakfast cereal, tempting us with new and improved versions. Checking on this in my own kitchen I find products that are "genuinely inspiring", "bursting with exciting flavours" and, better still, "recommended by doctors as health-giving". In reality, the stuff on offer from teachers like Hymenaeus was thoroughly unwholesome, the very opposite of the sound and healthy apostolic doctrine. In practice, this modish Christianity undermined faith (2:18). These fantastic promises could not be fulfilled, resulting in lasting discouragement and, at worst, apostasy. Alternatively, what remained was a determined make-believe, stoically held in the face of reality.

The thrust of the letter

How then does Paul speak to these churches through this letter to Timothy? That must be our first consideration before we listen

to Paul addressing Timothy himself. What is the overall thrust of this 'open' letter, a letter that remains with the elders at Ephesus as they await Timothy's return? The straightforward answer is that, in 2 Timothy, Paul so identifies Timothy with himself, son with father, that those church authorities that remain loyal to the apostle will be bound to submit to his acknowledged representative; in which case they must, in conscience, oppose the very strong pressures to receive the popular new teaching as an acceptable version of the truth. This Pauline strategy can be observed both in broadbrush terms and in detail. Broadly, Paul insists that Timothy is one with him on the essentials. First, Timothy shares with him the obligation to *suffer for the gospel* of the grace of God (chapter 1); second, Timothy has the further obligation to *teach the apostolic truth* ("the sound words that you have heard from me") to loyal and competent men who, in their turn, will pass this sacred deposit on to others (chapters 1, 2); third, Timothy also has the obligation to *follow the model of ministry exemplified by the apostle* (chapters 3, 4). In these three ways, Paul demonstrates that Timothy, though not an apostle in succession, is his true and rightful heir, responsible for the continuation of his legacy. This simple but impressive endorsement of Timothy directs the church leaders to receive the apostle's son in the faith as the man who, despite youth and inevitable human frailties, is the one to be trusted and obeyed. A similar pattern, characteristic of 2 Timothy, is seen in miniature in the thanksgiving (1:3-5). Since we know that one element of the prevailing errors had to do with the misuse of the law, it is not surprising that Paul insists here that his proclamation of Christ is a bona fide development from the old covenant, as also is Timothy's faith. This is a genuine progression from law to gospel that should, on no account, be reversed. Gospel must never revert to law. And, to all such questions, Paul has given his

definitive answer—“Remember Jesus Christ!” (2:8), a text that demands to be set and understood in its context. Who then are we to have perpetually in mind as model and pattern? It is the crucified Jesus, who chose the way of the cross and, in doing so, was vindicated by the resurrection, proving himself to be the authentic Messiah of prophecy. All of which, typically and in practical terms, is underscored by 2:10-13.

This, then, is at the heart of what is almost certainly Paul’s final word to the universal church, just as we find it in another very late letter, that to the Philippians. There, the relentless enemy is once more at the gate, much to the perplexity of the faithful as they open their hearts about their troubles to their special apostle; while, simultaneously, external threats come at a time of internal divisions, the parting of friends and teachers. A letter, then, that is full of pain. Yet, and this is the triumph of faith, the living church is commanded, despite everything, to rejoice in the Lord, now and always the sole basis for continued calm, courage and the resolution of her differences. In both letters, in Philippians as in 2 Timothy, the power of Christ’s resurrection is known by the believers as they share in his sufferings! In 2 Timothy, these hardships are described in practical terms, the scars of battle, the self-denial demanded of the athlete and the round-the-clock labour of the farmer (2:3-7). Hardship, not heavenly ease, is the hallmark of all Christian ministry; freedom from the enemy’s onslaughts is only for those who have opted out of the fight. Not so for Paul (4:6-8). Not so for Timothy (1:8). And not so for all the churches in Asia Minor who are loyal to their divine mandate. This is the word of the Lord, then as now.

A word to Timothy and a word about Paul

It is now time to consider 2 Timothy as a personal (though not private) word from the apostle to Timothy himself. Care is needed if we are correctly to assess 2 Timothy in this way, so it may be worthwhile to explain why.

First, 2 Timothy is unlikely to have been Paul's final word to Timothy. There will have been a conversation in Rome, assuming that Timothy was able to get there in time to hand over that precious cloak and those much-wanted notebooks. In the shadow of the apostle's martyrdom, what a meeting of minds and hearts that will have been! What memories from past times, what strategies for the future must have been talked through!

Second, and in the light of this, 2 Timothy is not so much about Timothy's ministry as Paul's, which is the pattern for all in leadership, now as then. For us today, it is this autobiographical material in his letter that is still both so impressive and so important. For it is here that we can say our farewells to the great missionary to the Gentiles. How much the apostle means to the living church today! Equally, how much, long ago, to the faithful church leaders in Ephesus and in the Roman province of Asia! What a reminder for them of the rock from which they were hewn and the quarry from which they were blasted!

Third, 2 Timothy is not, as already noted, addressed to Timothy as a beginner in ministry, yet it does mark what was, in effect, about to be a new beginning in his ministry as a church leader with the widest of responsibilities. Now the son will be without the father's guidance. Now he is to be on his own, facing much heavier responsibilities at a time of turmoil. Passionate feelings must be challenged, leaders brought back to their senses and evangelism restored to its place as priority number one in all the Christian communities. It will be some task.

Two directives

If this is an accurate account of the situation, we take now two typical examples of Paul's personal counsel, the call to fan into flames God's gifts to Timothy through the laying on of hands and the call to watchfulness over sensual lusts and temptations. With regard to the first, the best sense in context has to do with the larger responsibilities now facing the still youthful Timothy. Most certainly, he will need fresh courage, love and sound judgement as he exercises his authority (1:6-7). This is no time for weakness and indecision. The call is to be strong in the grace of Christ (2:1), to warn people before God (2:14), to rebuke, correct, encourage (3:16, 4:2). And above all, jealously to guard the gospel treasure entrusted to him (1:14). I have no interest in denying Timothy's frailties, since all Christian leaders have faults and shortcomings. Timothy is normal; that is, not a perfect pastor. This remains so for all God's servants, according to the measure of faith granted them. All are called to maintain spiritual fervour, all to be unflinching in zeal as they serve the Lord with sincerity and gladness (Rom 12:11), all to "fan into flame the gift of God" (1:6):

*Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up the gift in me.⁷*

Just so, 2:22, in referring to lustful temptations, speaks to all in pastoral oversight and not to the young only. It is of some interest that a number of scholars, such as JND Kelly,⁸ see here a reference to the danger among youthful leaders of self-assertiveness and

7 'O Thou Who Camest From Above', Charles Wesley (1707-1788).

8 JND Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Black's New Testament Commentaries, A & C Black, London, 1963.

other high-handed attitudes; for such things are not uncommon, can be painful, and even insufferable. That Timothy is to ‘command’ others much older than himself is very clear in 1 Timothy. So it seems there is a genuine apostolic concern here, for, as an old writer has put it, the caution “Let no-one despise you for your youth” (1 Tim 4:12) does not mean that the young leader should be furiously angry and assert himself, but rather that he should become the kind of person whom others cannot despise. The remarkable section 2:22-26 is a model of not only acceptable, but also sensitive, leadership. An excellent exhortation in this respect comes in 1 Timothy 5:1: “Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father”. One has only to imagine the difficulty, even embarrassment if such a rebuke became necessary. How careful, how conscious of his position, how considerate that youthful pastor would be!

Such is the wisdom of Scripture and the realism of this pastoral advice and guidance. Insights like this I owe to an old book on the pastoral teaching of St Paul by HL Goudge.⁹ Anyone finding a copy of this great rarity will strike gold.

The four imperatives

Perhaps the best injunctions from Paul to Timothy, from father to son, are to be found in the four imperatives of chapter 4 and verse 5. It is a fine summary of leadership responsibilities in the church, then as now: keep your head; face the inevitable hardships; make evangelism your priority; do not fail to complete the good work that God has prepared for you to do. We consider these under three heads.

9 HL Goudge, *The Pastoral Teaching of St. Paul*, Edward Arnold, London, 1913.

1. They expose the error of the false teachers

The language used here is not flattering and may sound abusive, so it is important to recognize in this the sober-minded disposition that the apostle is calling for. The fact is that Hymenaeus and party have been intoxicated with the heady wine of their dramatic message.¹⁰ This may well happen when the disciplines of the mind are little valued, even disparaged, and scriptural exposition is rare. In that case, a proper enthusiasm will move noisily to fanaticism. The warnings are everywhere in 2 Timothy, to such an extent that we are left wondering how sincere believers in well-founded churches could so quickly embrace what turned out to be nothing but fables and fancies. Yet so it was, and is so still. Many reading this, and he who writes it, can recall those brilliant but false lights that promised what can never be delivered until Christ returns, and yet, for a time, captured the affections of so many. In addition, the fraudulent prospectus has a further benefit: it attracts no opposition and demands neither sacrifice nor loss, while the urgent duty of preaching the Word in all its truth to a hostile world ceases to be the main thing in the church's program. Finally, some words from Colossians 2:6-7 come to mind, very characteristic of the apostle:

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

In the circumstances of the new version of the Christian faith rapidly circulating in Asia Minor, this pattern of loyalty to gospel beginnings had, all too quickly, been abandoned. Pastors had moved on, far from their beginnings, under the guise of seeking growth in understanding.

¹⁰ Kelly, p. 207.

2. They explain the menace of the new teaching

The Pastorals, as part of the canonical Scriptures, demand our confidence. Yet the warnings contained in a brief letter are liable to shock the reader on account of their severity. It surprises us that what has sometimes been characterized as ‘Christianity plus’ can be far more dangerous for the living churches than ‘Christianity minus’. Did not CS Lewis say more than once that a watered-down faith had little appeal to the outsider? So it is that the true believer, nourished on the Bread of Life, recoils from the dry husks of a ‘liberal’ and revisionist version of the biblical faith.

In other words, no faithful Christian is in the least surprised that the consequence of unbelief in the church’s leadership turns out to be the undermining of long-standing churches and revered denominations. But what 2 Timothy insists on goes much further than this. What we meet here is the certainty that triumphalist interpretations of the apostolic faith, whatever their stripe, have a destructive, divisive power that can undermine the most robust faith and the most long-standing fellowships. Readers must make up their own minds as they listen to the ringing of the alarm bells in a passage such as 2:14-26. It seems that a kind of madness has invaded the house of God.

As for the eventual results of such departures from the apostolic standards, we hear in chapter 3 of terrible times ahead, when moral and spiritual breakdown so takes control of numerous visible churches and societies that readers might well tremble, were it not for Kelly’s welcome assurance that “Paul’s pessimistic diatribe ends on a more confident note” (3:9).¹¹ This senselessness, Paul writes, will, in the end, be clear to everybody. The wait may weary us, but history and experience show that, in

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 197.

the long purposes of a sovereign Lord, errors and evils come to be seen for exactly what they are. How easy it is to detect the follies of the past! How salutary to recognize that a future generation will scarcely credit the follies of the present!

3. They endorse the overall New Testament portrait of Paul

What the apostle asked of Timothy in 4:5, he himself exemplified in his own life and ministry. Who would wish to deny this? We marvel at the *teacher*, in his majestic writings, cutting a straight road for believers to travel, able to do this because he had the mind of Christ. We marvel at the *sufferer*, repeatedly flogged, beaten, stoned and shipwrecked, all for Jesus' sake and ours. We marvel at the *evangelist*, under obligation to Greek and non-Greek alike, to the wise and to the foolish, ever eager to preach the gospel where it has not been heard. We marvel at the *ambassador* (in chains!), who fought in the contest to the very end, completed the race, and was loyal to his trust.¹²

These four imperatives, standing on their own, and explored under the three headings above, have appropriateness for preaching ministry at all times. But, as always, the immediate context gives them a peculiar force. It was a day, it seems, when people were no longer prepared to hear the truth but looked for mentors who would satisfy an itch for the consoling prejudices and passions of their society. Today's readers now find themselves in some awe at how such popular demands were so quickly met by a whole chorus of voices in harmony with the delusions of the day. And in some awe, too, as to how a first-century author was able to describe our 21st-century world so

¹² *ibid.*, p. 209.

acutely and perceptively; favoured churches that are not biblical, favoured moralities that are not moral, favoured 'liberalism' that has not the slightest intention of being liberal.

2 Timothy and the man of God

Experience and observation show that the Pastorals continue to speak today, notably to the “man of God” (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 3:17), a title that “admirably fits one who is a pastor”.¹³ I begin with two demolition jobs, at the hand of AT Hanson, from his New Century Bible Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. It is true that this genre of over-confident critical scholarship is unlikely to commend itself to the evangelical community, nor be of much constructive use to the preacher in his study. Yet it is also true that “volleys of scepticism are valuable at rooting out sentimental and traditional understandings that won't face serious scrutiny”, words I find written on the flyleaf of my own copy. In any case, there must be something to be said for an author who, noting the various attempts to translate an obscure Greek phrase, usually rendered “rightly handling the word of truth” (2:15), as “ploughing a straight furrow” or as “driving a straight road”, points out that no-one has yet come up with “keeping a straight bat”!¹⁴

Hanson effectively demolishes two citadels: the doctrine or idea of apostolic succession, and the curious claim that the Pastorals illustrate the emergence of early Catholicism. On the first matter, he sees the main function of Timothy and Titus “not as links in an apostolic succession, but as guarantors that the apostolic teaching and authority remains intact in the church of

¹³ *ibid.* p. 139.

¹⁴ Hanson, p. 134.

the author's day".¹⁵ So it is this that remains the huge responsibility resting on the local pastor, one that can neither be surrendered to a hierarchy of episcopal overseers, nor carried on one man's shoulders without the promised help of God. Hence the admonition "By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you" (1:14). As I recall, it is Barrett who comments that without such assurances, the responsibility for maintaining God's truth in the church would be intolerable.

On the second issue, Hanson is blunt and to the point. In the Pastorals, there is no downgrading of the married state, since it is assumed that the pastor will usually be a family man. Hanson also notes that, apart from one reference to baptism (Titus 3:5), there is no special emphasis on the sacraments in the Pastorals. I quote "...the ministry is not defined in cultic or sacral terms. It is related to the gospel and the presentation of the deposit of faith, not to the eucharist or the conduct of worship..." and "Above all, the gospel is still the test or norm of the church's life and belief, and the ministry and all other institutions exist in order to serve it".¹⁶

This, it seems to me, is unchallengeable, so that, with radical commentaries of the Hanson type, I seek to be thankful for the good and principled rather than irritated by that which is unjustified in the light of more traditional scholarship (Calvin, Fee, Guthrie, Hendriksen, Knight, Plummer, Stott, Towner, for starters).

Hanson, therefore, is right in asserting that the picture of the pastoral ministry in the Pastorals is far from "the cultic, separated, professionalised superior caste which it became later in the history of the church".¹⁷ As he says, the qualities needed

15 *ibid.*, p. 24.

16 *ibid.*, p. 49.

17 *ibid.*, p. 35.

for congregational leadership, according to the Pastorals, are not markedly different to those of senior laymen (cf. Titus 2:2), the main desideratum for pastoral leadership being a genuine and attested ability to preach and teach the faith effectually. In a secular society marked by a sheeplike submission to the reigning orthodoxies, a willingness to think independently (off one's own bat!) is the need of the hour, an authentic and indispensable nonconformity.

As we near the end of this survey, I underline two persistent directives for the "man of God" that run through the Pastorals and are conspicuous in 2 Timothy. They are the call, already noted, to flee from "youthful passions" (1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22) and the call to engage fully with the word of God, the Scriptures, in order that churches might enjoy leaders who know what they are talking about, are equipped for their work and capable of equipping others also. Both these 'callings' assume the weakness of the flesh that resists the necessary disciplines. Both these 'callings' assume a parting of the ways from alien ideas and unworthy standards, witness the significant "You then" and "But as for you", that repeatedly occur. Both these 'callings' assume hard and difficult times, for had not Christ's apostle himself known periods of isolation and the pervasive moral corruption of the world, commonplace among those who "abandon God for absorption in self and material satisfactions"?¹⁸ Ferocious opposition seems inevitable if the gospel message is to be fully proclaimed, and all the world to hear it (4:14-17).

The voice of the apostle in affection, testimony, exhortation, warning and promise, sounds out perhaps best of all in assurance and expectation. To read 4:8 with 4:16-18 gives believers, in

18 Kelly, p. 194.

whatever situation they find themselves, all the encouragement they will ever need. As for the hypothesis that only a few genuine Pauline fragments are to be found in the Pastorals, it demands of the reader a remarkable level of tone deafness, but, in any case, has long since been effectively buried by Dr Kelly, who regarded the theory as a “tissue of improbabilities”.¹⁹

Conclusion

So what is the conclusion of the matter? It is that 2 Timothy, self-evidently, is part of the lively oracles of God, something the earliest Christians took for granted.²⁰ Just as his sheep recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, so the shepherds of God’s flock will still recognize in the Pastorals the necessary standards laid down by the Chief Shepherd, so that they may become adequate watchmen, servants and examples to those entrusted to their care.

Where, above all, did the most significant failure of the false teachers lie?

1. They failed, on account of his ‘sufferings’, to recognize Paul’s apostolic message for what it was, the authoritative word of God.
2. They failed, on account of its attractiveness, to recognize the message of Hymenaeus and Philetus for what it was, the snare of the devil (2:26).
3. They failed to recognize that all authentic Christian ministry is bound, eventually, to provoke opposition and entail hardship, witness Paul’s “chains” (1:16) and Timothy’s later incarceration (Heb 13:23).

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁰ See H Alford, ‘Prolegomena’, in *The Greek Testament*, vol. III, 4th edn, Deighton, Bell and Co., Cambridge, 1865, p. 70, note 1!

4. They failed to emulate Paul and fix their hopes on the future; that is, on the “crown of righteousness” (4:8) and the “promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus” (1:1). Instead, they looked in large measure to “this life” (1 Cor 15:19) for the fulfilment of the saving promises of God, while enjoying a struggle-free coexistence with the “rulers” and “authorities” (Eph 6:12) of this present age.

This fourfold failure is all too common and, apart from the “firm foundation” of 2:19, disastrous for the cause of Christ. It is ever capable of being repeated, and it may well be that here lies the peculiar urgency of 2 Timothy for today’s worldwide evangelical community.