

Pastoral Epistles and Ecclesiastical Polity in the New Testament

Dr. Matthew Colvin

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What is the ministry of the Church's officers, its bishops, elders, and deacons? What relation does they bear to the apostles of Jesus? What functions and authority do they exercise? This course offers a close reading of all the texts of the NT relevant to the question of church office, especially the relevant passages of Acts and the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). It also surveys the most important subsequent texts on the origins of office, from the historical claims of Ignatius and Jerome in the patristic era to the councils and church order literature, to the Reformers, to scholars like Kloppenborg and Alistair Stewart in modern times. We will evaluate the claims for presbyterial, episcopal, and congregational polity, the origin of the laying on of hands, the place of the apostolate in the NT church, and the role of Paul's assistants. We will also assess the theories of jure divino prelacy, synagogal origins, house churches, and Greco-Roman associations. One week will also be devoted to the question of women's ordination.

NT texts will be interpreted in light of their Jewish background, including comparisons with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic literature. Attention will also be given to the Greco-Roman background of associations and religious collegia. All sources will be read in translation, but appeal will often be made to the original languages of texts.

Meetings

The class meets via Zoom at the link posted in the Google classroom. Recordings are posted after each class. The class is run in a "flipped classroom" format, with 30-60 minute pre-recorded audio lectures by the instructor each week, and assigned discussion questions to get the in-class discussion started. Some weeks will also devote 30 minutes of class time to a presentation by one of the for-credit students on a selected work of secondary literature. The procedure and criteria for grading these presentations will be discussed in class and via the Discord channel.

Grading

50% - a final paper chosen in consultation with the instructor.

50% - an oral examination in which students will be asked to (1) comment on a passage of the pastoral epistles and (2) respond to a contemporary published view on some controversy regarding ecclesiastical office in a way that demonstrates scholarly understanding of the concepts and sources covered in the course.

Required texts:

A. Louth and M. Staniforth, ed. *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1987), ISBN 9780140444759

Other sources (excerpts provided or subjects of presentations by students):

- Roger Beckwith, *Elders in Every City* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003)
Matthew Colvin, *Like the Man Himself: Office and Ordination* (work in progress)
Alistair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority in Earliest Christianity* (T&T Clark, 2004)
David Daube, “The Laying on of Hands” and “Rabbinic Authority” and “A Reform in Acts and Its Models” in *Collected Works of David Daube*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: The Robbins Collection, 2000)
Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009)
Geoffrey Kirk, *Without Precedent* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016)
Kenneth Kirk, ed. *The Apostolic Ministry* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957)
John H. Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019)
J.B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1901)
Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Apollos, 1998)
K. Rengstorf, “ἀπόστολος” in TDNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996)
Alistair Stewart, *The Original Bishops* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017)
Francis Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002)
William Witt, *Icons of Christ* (Waco, TX: Baylor University PRes, 2021)

Week of...	Topic	Readings (60-100 pages weekly)	Student Presentations (subject to change)
7/4	The Theology of the Pastoral Epistles	1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, entire.	none
7/11	“Apostolic Succession” and the Apostolic Fathers	The Letters of Ignatius; 1 Clement; the Didache.	Francis Sullivan, <i>From Apostles to Bishops</i>
7/18	The Institution of the Shaliach in 2nd Temple and Rabbinic Judaism	Daube, <i>The Laying on of Hands and A Reform in Acts and Its Models</i> ; Colvin, chapters from <i>Like the Man Himself</i> (prepub.)	none
7/25	Timothy and Titus as secondary apostles	Chapter from Colvin, <i>Like the Man Himself</i>	Roger Beckwith, <i>Elders in Every City</i> or J.B. Lightfoot, <i>The Christian Ministry</i>
8/1	The Episcopacy	Chapters from Alastair Stewart, <i>The Original Bishops</i>	
8/8	The House Church	Chapter from Patrick Stefan, <i>The Power of Resurrection</i> on the Dura-Europos house church; excerpts from Roger Gehring, <i>House Church and Mission</i> and from Eckhard Schnabel, <i>Early Christian Mission</i> .	John H. Kloppenborg, <i>Christ's Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City</i>
8/15	Presbyterianism	Excerpts from St. Jerome's commentaries on Pastoral Epistles; excerpts from T.F. Torrance and from Skene's summary of Vitranga's <i>Archisynagogus</i> ; selections from the Mishnah (at sefaria.org).	Martin Bucer, <i>De Regno Christi</i>
8/22	Women's Ordination?	Excerpts from Epiphanius and Tertullian; chapters from Colvin, <i>Like the Man Himself</i>	Geoffrey Kirk, <i>Without Precedent</i> or Andrew Perriman, <i>Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul</i> or William G. Witt, <i>Icons of Christ</i>