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New International Biblical Commentary

1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

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Introduction

These three letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), called the Pastoral Epistles (PE) since the eighteenth century, purport to be letters from the Apostle Paul to two of his younger co-workers, whom he has left in charge of the churches in Ephesus and Crete, respectively. Since the early nineteenth century, however, when doubt was first expressed by F. Schleiermacher, a large array of arguments has been forthcoming that have called their authenticity into question, so that at present the large majority of NT (New Testament) scholars worldwide consider them not authored by Paul but by a pseudepigrapher (although a disciple of Paul), around the turn of the first century A.D. The present commentary has been written from the perspective of Pauline authorship, fully aware of the many difficulties that entails but convinced that theories of pseudepigraphy have even greater historical difficulties.¹ Therefore, although much of what is said in this Introduction indirectly takes the form of conversation with scholarship about authorship, the basic concern is to introduce the reader to the historical data necessary for an intelligent reading of the commentary.

The Recipients

Timothy was a much younger colleague of Paul's who had become his frequent traveling companion and close friend. According to Acts 16:1–3, Timothy was from Lystra, a Lycaonian town in the Roman province of Galatia in south-central Asia Minor. Paul probably met him for the first time (ca. A.D. 46–48) during his first missionary endeavor in this area (cf. Acts 13:49–14:25 and 2 Tim. 3:11). It is altogether likely that he and his mother and grandmother became converts at this time. During Paul's second visit in this area (ca. A.D. 49–50), on the recommendation of the local believers (Acts 16:2), he decided to take Timothy along on his travels. But because Timothy was of mixed lineage (Jewish mother and pagan father), and so as not to undermine his mission among Diaspora Jews, he had Timothy circumcised.² Thus began a lifelong relationship of mutual affection (cf. Phil. 2:19–24).
Paul variously calls Timothy his "beloved and faithful son in the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:17 NAB; cf. Phil. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2) and his "fellow worker" in the gospel (Rom. 16:21; cf. 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:22). As his son, he became Paul's most intimate and enduring companion, who followed him closely (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2), shared his point of view (Phil. 2:20) and could articulate his ways to the churches (1 Thess. 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:17). As Paul's fellow worker, Timothy had been entrusted with three previous assignments to churches: to Thessalonica, ca. A.D. 50 (1 Thess. 3:1-10); to Corinth, ca. A.D. 53-54 (1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:10-11); and to Philippi, ca. A.D. 60-62 (Phil. 2:19-24). He also collaborated in six of Paul's extant letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians; cf. Rom. 16:21). In the present letters he is on yet another assignment, this time a most difficult one. He has been left in Ephesus to stop some false teachers who were in the process of undoing the church as a viable Christian alternative for that city.

Timothy is often pictured as a very young man, somewhat sickly, full of timidity, and lacking in personal forcefulness. Hence in these two letters Paul is frequently viewed as trying to bolster his courage in the face of difficulties. Although there may be some truth to this picture (see 1 Cor. 16:10-11; 2 Tim. 1:6-7), it is probably also a bit overdrawn. He was young by ancient standards (but at least over thirty by the time of 1 Timothy), and apparently had recurring stomach trouble (cf. 1 Tim. 5:23). But a person of his youthfulness who could carry out (apparently alone) the earlier missions to Thessalonica and Corinth was probably not totally lacking in courage. In any case, the exhortations to loyalty and steadfastness in 1 and 2 Timothy are probably the result of two factors: his youthfulness and the strength of the opposition.

Of Titus, much less is known. Curiously, he is not mentioned in Acts. From Paul we learn that he was a Gentile, whose lack of circumcision was a key factor in Paul's securing the right of the Gentiles to a Law-free gospel (Gal. 2:1, 3). He, too, was an early co-worker of Paul's (the event in Gal. 2:1 probably dates ca. A.D. 48-49) who became a trusted compatriot throughout Paul's life. To him Paul had entrusted the ticklish situation in Corinth, which included both the delivery of a very difficult letter (see 2 Cor. 2:3-4, 13; 7:6-16) and the gathering of the Corinthian gift for the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:16-24).
According to the letter that bears his name, Titus had been left on Crete, after Paul and he had evangelized the island, to set the churches in order. But he was soon to be replaced by Artemas (see disc. on Titus 3:12) and was to join Paul in Nicopolis. Apparently he had done so, because according to 2 Timothy 4:10 he had gone on to Dalmatia, presumably for ministry.

Although one cannot be certain, Titus was probably older than Timothy (see disc. on Titus 2:15). He also seems to have been of stronger temperament. Paul calls him his “true [legitimate] son,” which at least means that his ministry is a legitimate expression of Paul’s; most likely it also indicates that he is Paul’s convert (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14–15; Philem. 10).

It should be noted that the pictures that emerge in the PE are consonant with what we learn elsewhere. A pseudopigrapher, of course, could have so read Paul’s earlier letters and painted his own pictures accordingly. But that would have come very close to his having done research, which is highly unlikely. Moreover, the various movements of Titus (Titus 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:10) are not the stuff of pseudopigraphy, which would be expected to have drawn a consistent, easy-to-follow picture of events. These matters about Timothy and Titus, at least, favor the authenticity of the letters.5

The Historical Situation of Paul

One of the difficulties of the PE has been to locate them historically in what is otherwise known of the life of Paul. The problem is a combination of several factors.

First, the picture of Paul that emerges from 1 Timothy and Titus portrays him traveling freely in the East. He and Titus have evangelized Crete (Titus 1:5); he has apparently traveled to Ephesus with Timothy and hopes to return (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:14); at some point in all of this he intends to winter in Nicopolis, on the southern Adriatic (Titus 3:12). But in 2 Timothy he is again in prison, this time in close confinement in Rome, where he expects to die (cf. 2 Tim. 1:16–17; 2:9; 4:6–8, 16–18).

The problem arises because this cannot easily be placed in Paul’s life as it can be reconstructed from Acts and the earlier letters.6 To the traditional answer that Paul was released from the imprisonment of Acts 28, returned to the East, and was impris-
oned in Rome a second time, it is argued that Paul had intended to travel west from Rome, not east (Rom. 15:23–29), that Luke could hardly have been silent about such an event, and that in any case it would have been highly unlikely for Paul to be either released from a Roman detention or, if released, re-arrested. Since the only evidence we have for such a second imprisonment is from the PE, which are suspect on other grounds as well, such a picture is often viewed as the fabrication of a pseudepigrapher.

But the proponents of the above difficulties simply do not take the historical data seriously enough. If, as most scholars believe,⁷ Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians were written from Rome during the imprisonment of Acts 28, then it is clear that Paul had changed his mind about traveling west and now hoped to return to Asia Minor (Philem. 22) and that he himself expected to be released from the first imprisonment (Phil. 1:18–19, 24–26; 2:24).⁸ No sound historical grounds exist to think that such did not actually happen. Furthermore, it seems highly unlikely that a pseudepigrapher, writing thirty to forty years later, would have tried to palm off such traditions as Paul’s evangelizing Crete,⁹ the near capitulation to heresy of the Ephesian church, or a release and second imprisonment of Paul if in fact they had never happened. Again the historical data favor the authenticity of the letters.

But what is still not clear from the evidence of the PE themselves is the actual order of events and the sequence of 1 Timothy and Titus. The most probable solution holds that Paul went to Crete with Titus and (probably) Timothy soon after his release from Roman custody. There they evangelized most of the towns, but they also encountered some opposition from Hellenistic Jews who seemed to be taking a different tack from the struggle over circumcision that had characterized the earlier opposition from Palestinian Judaism (see Galatians 1–2; Acts 15). Paul, therefore, left Titus on the island to regulate things by putting the churches in order.

Meanwhile, Paul and Timothy were on their way to Macedonia by way of Ephesus when the stopover at Ephesus turned out to be a small disaster. Some false teachings similar to those encountered earlier in Colossae, and more recently in Crete, were in the process of totally undermining the church in Ephesus. So
Paul excommunicated the two ringleaders of this movement, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19–20); but because he had to press on to Macedonia, he left Timothy in charge of things in Ephesus to stem the tide (1 Tim. 1:3). On his arrival in Macedonia, he wrote letters to both Timothy and Titus. Timothy was to remain in Ephesus, but Titus would be replaced by either Tychicus or Artemas (apparently it turned out to be the latter) and was to join Paul in Nicopolis for the winter (see Titus 3:12). From there (Nicopolis) Paul seems to have been on his way back to Ephesus when he was arrested, probably at Troas at the instigation of Alexander the metalworker (see disc. on 2 Tim. 4:13–15). At what point he touched base at Corinth and Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20) is not so clear.

Eventually he was brought back to Rome, where he had a preliminary hearing before a Roman tribunal (2 Tim. 4:16–18) and was bound over for a full trial. During this time in custody he felt great ambivalence toward him on the part of his friends. Onesiphorus of Ephesus came to Rome, sought him out, and both ministered to his needs and informed him of the situation in Ephesus, which apparently had continued to deteriorate (see 2 Tim. 1:15–18). But others had left him, at least one as a turncoat, but some for legitimate reasons (2 Tim. 4:10–12). In this distress he decided to send Tychicus to replace Timothy at Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). With him, Paul sent a letter to Timothy (2 Timothy), urging loyalty to himself and his gospel and requesting, finally, that Timothy should drop everything and make his way to Rome, before winter closed down Mediterranean shipping, he hoped (see disc. on 2 Tim. 4:21).

Occasion and Purpose

In the preceding overview we touched lightly on the occasion of these letters; however, more needs to be said, for this is the crucial matter for understanding. Indeed, this is the crucial matter for the interpretation of all the NT letters, and it is precisely at this point that theories of pseudopigraphography face their greatest difficulties.

Any exegetical analysis of an Epistle presupposes that it is an ad hoc document, that is, that it is a piece of correspondence occasioned by a set of specific historical circumstances, either from
the recipient’s or the author’s side—or both. Theories of pseudepigraphy, therefore, must reconstruct a historical situation in the time of the pseudepigrapher, in this case about A.D. 90–110, that accounts for the data of these letters as addressing the “author’s” situation while still making them plausible as belonging to the alleged historical situation of the letters themselves. Right here is where the difficulties arise.

The most common reconstruction sees a combination of three factors to have caused an author to write these letters: the waning of Paul’s influence in the church; the threat of a “Gnostic” form of false teaching; and the need for organizational structures during the church’s transition from an intensely eschatological community with “charismatic” leadership to a people prepared to settle down to a longer life in the world with more “regular” clergy. In most cases scholarship accepts this final item as the ultimate urgency for writing. Thus “the writer, alarmed by the encroachment of alien theories and speculations, seeks to bring the Church back to the genuine Christian teaching, as it had come down from the Apostle Paul. In order that the Pauline tradition may be preserved, he desires that the Church should be rightly organized.”

The problems with such a reconstruction, however, are several: It almost totally fails to locate the Epistles into a specific identifiable historical context, for example, Ephesus or Crete at the end of the first century. It therefore tends to see the Epistles as not having genuine logic to their arguments, thus demanding theories of “compositional technique,” in which the author is viewed as purposeful in the overall scheme but negligent or without clear reason in the placement of some materials. Furthermore, it must candidly admit that much in these letters does not fit the proposed occasion at all. Most importantly, it never adequately answers the question, Why three letters? For example, why write Titus or 1 Timothy, given one or the other, and why from such a considerably different perspective and historical context? And why 2 Timothy at all, since it fails so badly to fit the proposed reconstruction?

It is proposed here that in contrast to the theories of pseudepigraphy, one can reconstruct the historical setting of these letters so that not only do they fit with other recoverable data from
this period but they can also be shown to respond in whole, as well as in all the details, to that historical situation. In the final analysis this is the strongest argument for their authenticity.

1 Timothy  As indicated above, 1 Timothy was occasioned by Paul’s having left Timothy in Ephesus as his personal representative in order to stop the influence of some false teachers. This is the one reason that is specifically stated in the letter itself (1:3). Chapters 2 and 3, however, deal with concerns of public worship and the character of the church’s leaders and conclude with another statement of purpose: “so that you will know what kind of conduct befits a member of God’s household, the church of the living God” (3:15, NAB). Because of this, most scholars, including those who accept Pauline authorship, see the false teachers as the occasion of 1 Timothy but argue that “church order as the proper antidote to the false teachers” is the overriding purpose. Thus they take the view that 1 Timothy is basically a church manual, and the concern is to set the church in order.\(^{15}\)

In contrast to that approach, this commentary assumes that everything in the letter has to do with 1:3 (“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain [people] not to teach false doctrines any longer”), and that this expresses both the occasion and the purpose of 1 Timothy. As will be seen in the commentary, this not only makes sense of every detail in the letter, but also helps to explain the nature and content of Titus and 2 Timothy as well. Three questions, therefore, need closer examination: Who were the false teachers? What was the nature of their teaching? Why was 1 Timothy written?

In contrast to Galatia and Corinth, for example, whose problems were basically caused by outsiders (“false brothers” who “had infiltrated our ranks,” Gal. 2:4; cf. 2 Cor. 11:4), in Ephesus as seen in 1 Timothy, there is not a hint that the false teachers came from the outside. To the contrary, not only do they appear to be insiders, but the whole letter makes sense if the prophecy spoken to the elders-overseers of this church recorded in Acts 20:30 had actually been realized: “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”\(^{16}\) If one takes this seriously, then the difficulty—and
urgency—of the situation in Ephesus comes into clear focus. The problem is that the church is being led astray by some of its own elders. 17

Several internal clues support this hypothesis: First, the errorists were clearly teachers (1:3, 7; 6:3), and teaching was the task of the elders (3:2; 5:17). Furthermore a significant part of the Epistle is allotted to the character, qualifications, and discipline of church leaders (3:1–13; 5:17–25); much of this stands in obvious contrast to what is specifically said of the false teachers. In this regard it is probably also noteworthy that two of the ring-leaders of this group are named and excommunicated (1:19–20).

Second, it is clear from 2 Timothy 3:6–9, and further supported by 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and 5:3–16 (esp. vv. 11–15), that these teachers had found a most fruitful field among some women, apparently younger widows, who had opened their homes to them and even helped to spread their teachings (see disc. on 5:13).

Third, the church in Ephesus in all probability was composed of many house-churches (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19; see disc. on 1 Tim. 2:8). If so, then one can envision each of the various house-churches having one or more elders and the problem being not so much a single large gathered assembly being split down the middle as various house-churches capitulating in toto to leadership that had gone astray (cf. Titus 1:11). It is this capitulation of some leaders and their followers that forms the ultimate urgency behind everything in the letter.

As with Colossians and Ephesians, 18 the nature of the false teaching is difficult to define with precision. Some things are certain. First, it possesses a behavioral as well as a cognitive dimension. The descriptions in 1:3-7 and 6:3-10, plus 3:1-13, show the false teachers to be involved not only in speculations and disputes over words but also in arguments and quarrels of various kinds. They are likewise proud, arrogant, and divisive. The bottom line, however, is greed; they have come to believe that godliness, or religion, is a means to turn a drachma.

Second, on the content side, there are several diverse elements: The false teaching is in some way related to a use of the Old Testament (1:6–10; cf. Titus 1:14–16; 3:9), which in turn partly accounts for its asceticism (4:3; cf. 5:23; Titus 1:14–16) as well as its “myths and wearisome genealogies” (see disc. on 1:4; cf. 4:7
and Titus 3:9). But there are elements of Hellenism, especially an admixture of Greek dualism (with its dim view of the material world), which also can account for the asceticism, as well as for the assertion that the resurrection (apparently as a spiritual, non-physical reality) had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:18). What precisely is meant by “so-called knowledge [gnōsis]” in 6:20-21 is more difficult to ascertain; in any case, it can be demonstrated to have affinities with the earlier problems in Corinth and Colossae.

Indeed, what is striking about these elements is not so much their affinities with second-century Gnosticism (with which they have far greater differences than similarities) as with the errors that had earlier invaded Corinth (ca. A.D. 53-54) and more recently Asia Minor, especially the Lycus Valley (Colossae and Laodicea). In Corinth the people in the “know” (“gnostics”), who also considered themselves to be the “spiritual” ones, had so imbibed Hellenistic dualism, along with an over-realized eschatology, that they were denying sexual relations within marriage (7:1-7; cf. 1 Tim. 4:3)\(^9\) and a future bodily resurrection (15:12, cf. 2 Tim. 2:18). And in Colossae a form of Hellenistic Judaism had recently begun to syncretize the Christian faith with Jewish and Hellenistic elements that had led to ascetic practices (2:16-23) and enchantment with wisdom/knowledge (2:3-8) and OT ritual (2:16, 21).\(^{20}\)

What appears to have happened in the decade of ca. A.D. 54-63 is that Paul had to wrestle on two fronts. On the one hand, a Judaizing faction from the church in Jerusalem, undoubtedly spurred on by conservative elements in the Diaspora, was insisting on the circumcision of Gentiles who had become believers in Jesus. They wanted such people to become full members of Israel as it had been formerly constituted (see Galatians; Phil. 3:2-16). On the other hand, religious syncretism was in the air in the Hellenistic world, and many Hellenistic Jews appear to have been involved in such speculations. When Gentiles were converted, they, too, brought to the faith a lot of foreign baggage, both philosophical and religious, that to them seemed easy enough to absorb within their new faith in Christ. But Paul realized clearly that such foreign elements would ultimately destroy the gospel every bit as much as Judaizing would. He first had to attack some of this in Corinth; a slightly different, and perhaps more subtle brand—
due to its distinctively Jewish coloring—had emerged in Asia Minor. Paul had recently addressed these deviations in his letter to Colossae while imprisoned in Rome. On his arrival in Ephesus, he discovered that they had erupted there as well, but now as the “official” line being promulgated by some of the elders. They had to be stopped, and Timothy was left in Ephesus to do it.  

The purpose of 1 Timothy, then, arises out of these complexities. The letter betrays evidences everywhere that it was intended for the church itself, not just Timothy. But because of defections in the leadership, Paul does not, as before, write directly to the church, but to the church through Timothy. The reason for this would have been twofold: to encourage Timothy himself to carry out this most difficult task of stopping the erring elders, who had become thoroughly disputatious, and to authorize Timothy before the church to carry out his task. At the same time, of course, the church would be having the false teachers/teachings exposed before them, plus Paul’s instructions to Timothy about what he was to do. Thus the letter, though addressed to Timothy, turns out to be all business. As such, it lacks the standard thanksgiving (see disc. on 1:3) and the personal greetings at the end (see disc. on 6:20–21); and such personal words to Timothy as do appear (e.g., 1:18–19; 4:6–16; 6:11–14) are totally subservient to his task of restoring order to the church.

Such an occasion and purpose also helps to explain another phenomenon of the letter, namely, that Paul is forever calling on Timothy to teach “sound” or “healthy” doctrine, but without spelling out the nature or content of such teaching. The reason now becomes obvious. The letter was written to a lifelong companion, who wouldn’t have needed such instruction. But the church needed to hear that the deviations were a disease among them and that what Timothy would have to teach would be the words of health (see disc. on 1:10). Just as in 1 Corinthians 4:17, Timothy was there to remind the church of Paul’s ways. The letter that would so authorize him would not at the same time need a detailing of those “ways.”

Titus Probably the feature about Titus most noticed by one who has first worked closely with 1 Timothy is how much it resembles that letter. Apart from the situation (1:1–4) and final greet-
ings (3:12–15), only the two semicreedal passages in 2:11–14 and 3:3–7 present material that has no points of correspondence with 1 Timothy. For this reason, Titus has often been viewed as a miniature 1 Timothy and, except for 2:11–14 and 3:3–7, has been treated with benign neglect.

However, closer examination reveals a large number of striking differences from 1 Timothy (and the more striking if this is the work of a pseudepigrapher). The most obvious difference lies with the occasion and Titus’ own circumstances. Like Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3), Titus has been left on Crete; but unlike Timothy, who was left to reform an established church, Titus has been left behind to set in order what had not yet been accomplished, namely, the appointing of elders in the various churches over the whole island (1:5). It seems certain from these data that the churches of Crete were more recent, and that whatever opposition existed had emerged within the church (along with the church itself), especially from Hellenistic Jewish converts (1:9–11).

What one finds in Titus, therefore, is considerably less urgency than in 1 Timothy. False teachers are indeed in evidence (1:10–16; 3:9–11), but the letter as a whole is not dominated by their presence. Titus himself is to rebuke such opponents (1:13), but the appointed elders are ultimately to be responsible to stand against them (1:9). Otherwise there is little of the urgency of 1 Timothy. Titus is not repeatedly urged to “fight the noble fight” (1 Tim. 1:18; cf. 6:12) or to “guard the deposit” (6:20; cf. 6:14) or to give heed to his ministry (4:11–16). Few second person singular imperatives occur—none of the personal, encouraging kind to Titus himself (except perhaps 2:15). There are no mentions of endurance (hypomone) for Titus, no vocatives of direct address or appeal, few appeals to keep the faith or the truth, and only one tauta imperative (“teach these things,” 2:15; cf. 1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 15; 5:7, 21; 6:2, 11). It is not that no urgency lies behind Titus; rather, the urgency is of a different kind, with different emphases.

Since the churches on Crete are newer, the concern in Titus focuses less upon false teachers per se and more upon the church as God’s people in the world. The letter, therefore, may be termed both prophylactic (serving to warn against false teachings) and evangelistic (serving to encourage behavior that will be attractive to the world) in its thrust. Thus, the matter of appoint-
ing elders in 1:5–9 has a clear prophylactic concern vis-à-vis the threat of error (1:10–16; cf. 3:9–11). But it also carries with it a concern for the reputation of the gospel in the world (see disc. on 1:6 and 3:8). The dominant theme in Titus, therefore, is good works (1:8, 16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), that is, exemplary Christian behavior and that for the sake of outsiders (2:5, 7, 8, 10, 11; 3:1, 8). Christ died precisely to create such a people, who would be zealous for good works (2:14; cf. 3:3–7). Even relationships and attitudes among believers (2:1–10) are to be such that outsiders will not only not reject the gospel (2:5) but might even be attracted to it (2:10).

Why, then, did Paul write such a letter, and when? Since it displays a more prophylactic, less urgent, appearance than 1 Timothy, the Epistle to Titus was probably written after the latter. Paul had left Titus in Crete to finish setting the churches in order. After he and Timothy had gone to Ephesus and found that church in such disarray, Paul left Timothy there to restore order. In Macedonia he wrote back to Ephesus to give Timothy authority for his task there. At the same time he reflected on some similar opposition encountered in Crete while he had been there, so he also wrote to Titus, again to give him authority against these false teachers. But because the situation there lacked the urgency of Ephesus, he encourages Titus to help the people toward exemplary Christian behavior for the sake of the world.

2 Timothy Even a cursory reading of 2 Timothy after 1 Timothy and Titus reveals both its close relationship to those two letters and its even more significant contrasts. All of the concerns from 1 Timothy have reappeared, but now in a much more urgently personal way.

The key to understanding this letter lies in recognizing Paul’s altered circumstances. He is no longer free to pursue his itinerant ministry. Arrested once again (probably in Troas; see disc. on 4:13), he is now in confined imprisonment in Rome (1:16–17; 2:9). He has already undergone a preliminary hearing (4:16–18) and is awaiting his final trial, from which he has little hope of anything except death (4:6–8). His confinement is an obvious hardship for him. Some have ministered to his needs (1:16–18); others have gone out on ministries (4:10, 12); and at least one has aban-
doned him (4:10). Meanwhile the situation in Ephesus has wors-
ened. Some, from whom Paul had expected better things, have
deserted him and his gospel (1:15), and, despite his previous ex-
communication, Hymenaeus is still at work overthrowing the faith
of many (2:17-18).

In the midst of these circumstances Paul sends this second
letter to Timothy. It is a letter of many parts. In a sense it is a
kind of last will and testament, a "passing on of the mantle." In
contrast to 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy is intensely personal, recalling
their earliest days together (3:10-11; cf. 1:3-5) and, above all,
appealing to Timothy's abiding loyalty—to the gospel, to Paul him-
self, to his own calling (1:6-14; 2:1-13; 3:10-4:5). In the back-
ground stand the false teachers (2:14-3:9); Timothy must resist
them and strive to win God's people back. But he is no longer
to stay on in Ephesus; rather, he is to entrust that ministry to oth-
ers who have remained faithful (2:2). Timothy himself is to come
to Paul (4:9, 11, 21). In the foreground stands Paul's lifelong
concern—the gospel and its ministry: "Fan into flame your gift,"
Timothy is urged (1:6-7); "guard the deposit" (1:14), "hold fast
to the truth" (1:13); and above all, "proclaim the message" (4:2).
And Paul's own circumstances, as well as Timothy's, cause him
to urge steadfastness even in the face of suffering: "Do not be
ashamed" (1:8, 16); rather, "take your part in suffering" (1:8; 2:3;
3:12; 4:5).

The purpose of the letter seems to be related to these ur-
gencies. It is certainly no "church manual"; nor is it dominated
by the false teachers, as is 1 Timothy. The primary reason for writ-
ing is simple—to call Timothy to his side. But the larger reason
is this appeal to Timothy's loyalty, especially in light of so many
defections and Paul's own imprisonment.

Finally, Paul's pervading note of confidence throughout the
letter must not be overlooked. Despite his own hardships, the
opposition, and the defection of many, Paul recognizes that God's
message, the gospel, is not, nor can it be, chained (2:9). Nor will
the church go under, for it bears God's seal of ownership: "The
Lord knows those who are his" (2:19). Endurance and suffering
are called for (1:8; 2:3-7; 3:14; 4:5), but eschatological triumph
is assured for those who persevere (2:11-13; 4:8) because God in
Christ has already triumphed over death (1:9-10). Therefore, the
basic thrust of the letter is an appeal for Timothy to carry on the
ministry of the gospel after Paul's death, but even facing death,
he is confident that God will see it through (1:5, 8, 14).

The Theology of the Epistles

For those who have difficulty accepting the Pauline author-
ship of the PE, the problems related to their theology rank with
that of language and style (see next section) as decisive against
their authenticity. The problem lies not so much with their being
non-Pauline in theology—indeed Pauline elements are recognized
everywhere—as it does with so much in them that seems un-
Pauline, that is, unlike his characteristic way of thinking and
speaking as reflected in the earlier letters. Partly this is a matter
of language, and partly, shifts of emphasis. Most often these
elements are considered to be the more developed concerns of
a later time. 24

However, it seems fair to observe that PE scholarship is
sometimes overimpressed with its own judgments about what
Paul could, or (especially) could not, have said or done. 25 When
one has as little evidence as is available from Paul—and what evi-
dence we do have is occasional, not systematic, in nature—a much
larger measure of caution than one usually finds in the literature
would seem appropriate. In the final analysis the decision rests
upon what impresses one more, the clearly Pauline nature of so
much, or the seemingly divergent nature of much. In the follow-
ing sections we will examine four crucial areas, point out their
similarities to Paul, and offer some possible explanations for some
of the differences.

The Gospel

One cannot read much of Paul without recognizing that at
the heart of everything for him is the gospel, the good news of
God's gracious acceptance and forgiveness of sinners, to which
the proper response is faith (trusting God that he really does ac-
cept sinners) and love toward others. This saving work is totally by God's own initiative, his prior action of grace toward the disobedient, meaning the righteous (whose righteousness is self-righteous, and therefore unrighteousness) as well as the unrighteous. That grace was effected by Christ's death on the cross; it is made effectual in the life of the one who believes by the power of the indwelling Spirit. The believer, therefore, is one who is both forgiven of his or her past sins and indwelt by the Spirit, and thus empowered for loving obedience to God.

Paul employs an extensive language, with a full range of metaphors, to speak of this saving event—justification, redemption, reconciliation, ransom, cleansing, propitiation—but the essence, as just outlined, remains constant. Except in Galatians, followed closely by Romans, where the forensic metaphor of justification has been brought about by the activity of his opponents, no single metaphor predominates. (Note that the dikai- ["just, justify"] word group does not appear in the earliest letters [1 and 2 Thessalonians] and appears only as one metaphor among others in 1 and 2 Corinthians [see esp. 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11]; it disappears again in Colossians, but reappears in Philippians precisely when the Judaizing contingent reasserts itself [3:2–16].)

It will be clear from any careful reading that this concern for the gospel is the driving force behind the PE. Preserving and reaffirming "the glorious gospel (lit., "the gospel of the glory") of the blessed God" (1:11) against errors absolutely dominates 1 Timothy, is still a vital concern in Titus, and returns in 2 Timothy as the crux of everything. On that much, most would agree. The problem arises from the manner in which this concern is often expressed.

For example, a different language begins to dominate. The gospel is variously equated with "the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 12; Titus 1:13; 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:7; this is rare in Paul, but see Gal. 1:23; Phil. 1:25, 27), knowing "the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:3; Titus 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; but cf. Gal. 5:7; 2 Thess. 2:12), the "deposit" to be guarded (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14), "sound" or "healthy teaching" (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 8; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3), and "our religion" (eusebeia; 1 Tim. 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6; Titus 1:1). The problem, first of all, is that the latter two terms seem to be borrowed from Hellenistic religion and philosophy;
and, second, this seems to reduce the gospel from a dynamic proclamation of good news for sinners to a static body of beliefs to be embraced. As an earlier scholar put it, "Paul was inspired, but the Pastor is often only orthodox." Instead of repeating, or re-arguing, the gospel itself, as in Galatians, Romans, Colossians, or Philippians, this author merely appeals to fixed formulas.

Although there is much to be said for this objection (and this Paul does indeed sound different), there are also some other things that must be said: the use of "sound teaching" and eusebeia, which do not occur elsewhere in Paul, can nonetheless be shown to fit a Pauline pattern of "appropriation." This is almost certainly a case, as with "wisdom" in 1 Corinthians 1-3 or "justification" in Galatians, in which Paul uses the language of the opposition but recharges it with his own content, thus turning it against them.

The basic reason for this kind of "objective" reference to the gospel, however, lies in the nature of these letters in contrast with the others. The other letters (excepting Philemon, of course) were written to churches, to be read aloud and apparently to function as authority as though Paul himself were there. Therefore, it was necessary for him to reiterate the truth that was to correct or stand over against their waywardness. In this case, however, the letters are written to those who themselves both know fully the content of Paul's gospel and are personally to take the place of authority in these churches that his letters had earlier done. This latter phenomenon is totally overlooked in scholarship. It is almost as if the real objection were that Paul should write such letters at all.

Furthermore, the errors at which these letters are directed are not primarily related to the nature of salvation per se, that is, how one receives right-standing before God. Here, as in Colossians, the errors are both more speculative in content and more behavioral in orientation. In such cases one should not be surprised if the gospel is often referred to as a fixed set of beliefs. After all, there has always been a cognitive side to the gospel for Paul.

But beyond that it should be noted that these letters are not totally lacking expressions of the content of the gospel. At several key points, where it serves as contrast to the false teachers, Paul reflects on the gospel itself (1 Tim. 1:12-16; 2:3-6; 3:16; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7; 2 Tim. 1:9-10), and in each case the theology, as well as much of the language, is thoroughly Pauline.
Thus in these letters the human condition is that of sinfulness, defined as disobedience or rebellion against God (see 1 Tim. 1:9–10, 13, 15; Titus 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:2–5); the condition is universal in scope and one from which there is no evident escape or human remedy (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13–16; Titus 3:3, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9). For this reason God must intervene with mercy (1 Tim. 1:13–16; Titus 3:3–7; 2 Tim. 1:9–10), and this he has done through the death of Christ, who through his own self-sacrifice secured our redemption (1 Tim. 2:5–6; Titus 2:14) and our justification (Titus 3:7). The scope of this salvation is also universal (1 Tim. 2:3–7; 4:10), including Gentiles as well as Jews (1 Tim. 2:7), but is effectual only for those who believe (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:10; cf. 1:13), and even this faith is God’s gift (1 Tim. 1:14). This saving work is effected in the believer’s life by the Holy Spirit, who both regenerates and renews (Titus 3:5–6) and enables for life and ministry (2 Tim. 1:6–7, 14). Such grace is to produce obedience in the form of love and other good works (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:5; 2:15b; Titus 2:12, 14; 3:8, 14). Finally, such a life is also lived in hope of promised eternal life (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:8, 10; 6:12; Titus 1:2; 3:7; 2 Tim. 1:10, 12; 2:10, 12a; 4:8, 18), which will be accomplished at Christ’s second coming (1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

If all of this is not as systematically set forth as some would like, and if some of it appears in slightly different language, there can be no question that the substance is what Paul elsewhere calls “my gospel.” And it is precisely this gospel that Timothy has been left in Ephesus to contend for, against the exclusivistic, ascetic, speculative teaching of the wayward elders and the disrepute that their behavior and greed is bringing to the gospel.

Ethics

Closely related to the preceding difficulty is the presentation of Christian ethics in the PE. Instead of the great Christian virtues of love, forgiveness, joy, and so forth, it is alleged, the ethics of these letters are more conventional, even “bourgeois.” This is especially true of the qualifications for church leaders (1 Tim. 3:2–12; Titus 1:6–8); and in Titus 2:12 the Christian life is described in terms of three of the four cardinal virtues of Stoicism. Furthermore, in 1 Timothy 6:6–8 godliness seems to be defined in terms of Stoic-Cynic self-sufficiency. Such a view of
Christian life, it is maintained, is far removed from the Pauline ideal one finds, for example, in Romans 12–14, Galatians 5–6, or Colossians 3.

Again, there is some obvious validity to this difficulty. At these points the Pastor does indeed sound less like the Paul one is used to quoting. But again, the overall picture is not nearly as cut and dried as this objection tends to view it. Some of the difficulty arises from a partial view of the earlier Paul, some from a distortion of what is actually said in the PE, and some from a different point of view about the occasion and purpose of the letters.

As before, much of the language is very likely that of the opposition, or at least of the environment to which Paul is speaking. There is nothing unusual about Paul's adapting such language to his own purposes. Nothing, for example, is more Stoic-sounding in Paul than Philippians 4:8 or 12. But anyone reading those sentences in the context of Paul recognizes that he means very non-Stoic ideas by them. The same is true here, as is pointed out in the discussion at 1 Timothy 6:6–8 or Titus 2:12.

The lists of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:2–3 and Titus 1:6–8 are somewhat puzzling and may indeed reflect a well-known schema (see disc. on 1 Tim. 3:1–7). But as is pointed out in the discussion, there are probably two reasons for this: (1) Paul is simply assuming that such people will possess the distinctively Christian virtues; (2) the concern in much of this centers upon the church's reputation before outsiders; therefore, the urgency is not so much with attitudes and relationships within the body of Christ as with blameless, observable behavior.

Furthermore, it is unquestionable throughout the PE that Paul's more distinctively Christian ethic is always expected of believers. The example of Christian lifestyle that Timothy is to set before the church (1 Tim. 4:12) is a thoroughly Pauline list; and other virtue lists are also Pauline (1 Tim. 2:15b; 6:11; Titus 2:2b; 2 Tim. 3:10–11). The motif of Christian life as endurance, even in suffering (2 Tim. 1:8, 11; 2:1, 3, 10–13; 3:12), is also characteristically Pauline.

What needs to be noted, finally, is that, as before, much of what is said about Christian behavior in these letters is a direct reflection of the behavior of the false teachers; and it is likewise their presence that dictates the nature of what is said.
Eschatology

The absolutely essential framework of the self-understanding of primitive Christianity, including Paul, is an eschatological one. Christians had come to believe that, in the event of Christ, the New (Coming) Age had dawned, and that, especially through Christ’s death and resurrection and the subsequent gift of the Spirit, God had set the future in motion, to be consummated by yet another coming (Parousia) of Christ. Theirs was therefore an essentially eschatological existence. They lived “between the times” of the beginning and the consummation of the End. Already God had secured their eschatological salvation; already they were the people of the future, living the life of the future in the present age—and enjoying its benefits. But they still awaited the glorious consummation of this salvation. Thus they lived in an essential tension between the “already” and the “not-yet.”

This view of Christian existence is thoroughgoing in Paul. Therefore salvation is spoken of as a past event, a present reality, and a future hope. The future is always a certainty. Sometimes, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 or 1 Corinthians 7:29–31, the hope of the consummation burns more brightly than in other passages. But always the Parousia is the eager expectation that Christians await.

It is sometimes argued that the eschatological perspective of the PE is different from this, that Paul now expects to die before the Parousia (2 Tim. 4:8) and that the letters are written for a church that “must make adjustments for a prolonged stay in the world.”[27] The fact that the Coming is now expressed as the epiphaneia (“manifestation”) of Christ, language similar to that found in Hellenistic religion, also is seen to support this view.

It would seem, however, that much of this objection is the result of a prior commitment to a point of view. For, in reality, the eschatology of these letters is thoroughly Pauline. As in other settings (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3, 7), the present apostasy is seen in terms of the eschatological woes of the End (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1). As elsewhere, endurance of suffering and the awaiting of the Coming stand side by side (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:12–14; 2 Tim. 1:12). Salvation, as always, is eschatologically understood as both present and future (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:8; 6:12, 14; Titus 2:12–14; 2 Tim. 1:9–10, 12;
2:3–11). If Paul expects to die in 2 Timothy 4:6–8, he can still speak eagerly of “loving Christ’s appearing” (v. 8), a perspective very similar to the ambivalence of Philippians 1:18–26 and 3:12–14, 20–21.

Indeed, it is in 2 Timothy, the letter in which Paul expresses the awareness of his impending death (4:6–7), that he also expresses himself in a most thoroughly eschatological way. In 1 Timothy and Titus salvation is regularly seen as an eschatological phenomenon (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:8–10; 6:12–14; Titus 1:1–2; 2:13; 3:7), very similar to the way it is seen in Romans (5:2–5, 21; 8:17, 18–27; 13:11–12). As in Romans, the future is certain and looked for, but plans are nonetheless made (Titus 3:12; Rom. 15:22–29), and Christian life in the world includes attitudes toward the state and others (Titus 3:1–2; Rom. 13:1–8).

But 2 Timothy seems more self-consciously eschatological, like Philippians. The certainty of the future is guaranteed through Christ, who “has destroyed death” (1:10). It is the prospect of “that Day” (the Day of Christ’s coming) that bolsters Paul (1:12) and is to encourage Timothy and the church toward steadfastness (2:3–13; 4:1, 8). The coming of the Lord will bring with it the eschatological prize (1:12; 2:5–6; 4:8). The present apostasy is evidence of Christ’s “coming to rule as king” (4:1, GNB), Timothy is urged to remain loyal to his ministry. This scarcely resembles the language of settling in to live for an extended time on planet earth; it is therefore perhaps of more than passing interest that in this letter also, apart from the provision in 2:2, there is no “church order” talk of any kind.

Church Order

In many ways church order is the crucial matter. For many people this is the chief reason for turning to these letters, especially 1 Timothy and Titus; and for others both the concern itself and its content reflect a much later time than Paul’s. A standard view suggests that the PE reflect a time like that of Ignatius (ca. A.D. 110–115), when a single bishop (modeled on Timothy and Titus) has primary authority in the church, with elders and deacons under him. An order of women deacons and widows is also argued for, on the basis of 1 Timothy 3:11 and 5:9, respectively.
But as already argued, the idea that the *purpose* of the PE is to offer "a handbook for church leaders" seems to miss their occasion rather widely and simply cannot account for a large amount of the material. The weakness of this view is perhaps also demonstrated by the fact that the entire spectrum of church government, from the hierarchical episcopacy of Roman Catholicism, through the mediating expression of Presbyterianism, to the extreme congregationalism of the Plymouth Brethren, all find support for their polity in these letters. If the Pastor intended with these letters to set the church in order, he seems not altogether to have succeeded.

The reason for such diversity, it is argued in this commentary, is precisely that these letters have quite another purpose; and therefore, as with other such *ad hoc* documents, they reflect church structures in the fourth decade of the church as Paul is correcting some theological and behavioral abuses. But church structures as such are not his concern. What, then, can be said with some certainty?

It is a mistaken notion to view Timothy or Titus as model pastors for a local church. The letters simply have no such intent. Although it is true that Timothy and Titus carry full apostolic authority, in both cases they are itinerants on special assignment, there as Paul's apostolic delegates, not as permanent resident pastors. It is a far cry from Timothy's role in Ephesus and Titus' in the churches of Crete to that of Ignatius in Antioch or Polycarp in Smyrna fifty years later.

Timothy, it is true, is called upon to set an example for Christian behavior (4:12), but this is exactly the role Paul had in his churches. They were to learn the "ways" of Christ by following the apostolic model (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Both Timothy and Titus are expected to teach, exhort, and rebuke, of course, which would also be the function of the elders after Paul and his itinerant co-workers had left. But these were first of all apostolic functions.

Responsibility for leadership in the local churches (per town or, as is likely in larger cities like Ephesus, per house-church) was from the beginning in the hands of several people, who apparently had been appointed by the apostle and his co-workers (cf. Acts 14:23). In the earliest letters these people are styled *hōi prois-
tamenoi (1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8), language still being used at the
time of the PE (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17). Interestingly, however, de-
spite all the difficulties in some of these churches, none of the
letters is ever addressed to these people; nor are they ever given
charge to set the church in order or to withstand error. In Phil-
ippians 1:1 Paul for the first time addresses both the church and
its (plural) leaders (episkopoi, “overseers,” and diakonoi, “deacons”),
the identical words used in 1 Timothy 3:2 and 8 (cf. Titus 1:7).
Apart from this reference, we would not have otherwise known
of their earlier existence; but because of such a reference, we may
properly assume that other churches also had such plural lead-
ership. It should be finally noted that in none of the earlier let-
ters does the term elder (presbyteros) appear.

The evidence that emerges in the PE corresponds very
closely to this state of affairs. Although some have argued that
Timothy and Titus were to appoint a single episkopos,29 under
whom there would be a group of deacons, exegesis of the key
passages (1 Tim. 3:1–2, 8; 5:17; Titus 1:5–7) and a comparison with
Acts 20:17 and 28 indicates otherwise.

In all cases leadership was plural. These leaders are called
elders in 1 Timothy 5:17 and Titus 1:5. They were to be appointed
in Crete by Titus but had apparently been appointed long ago
in Ephesus, probably by Paul himself. The term elders is probably
a covering term for both overseers and deacons. In any case, the
grammar of Titus 1:5 and 7 demands that elder and overseer are
interchangeable terms (as in Acts 20:17 and 28); they are not
thereby necessarily co-extensive.

What were the duties of such elders? At this point our in-
formation is limited, precisely because this was not Paul’s con-
cern. Two things seem certain: that the elders called overseers
were responsible for teaching (1 Tim. 3:3, 5:17; Titus 1:9), and that
the elders together were responsible for “managing” or “caring
for” the local church (see disc. on 1 Tim. 3:4–5; 5:17), whatever
that might have involved at that time in its history. Beyond that,
everything is speculative.

It is not at all clear that there were “orders” of women’s min-
istries, including widows. The stance taken in this commentary
is that there were women who served the church in some ca-
capacity, perhaps including leadership (1 Tim. 3:11), but that there
was no order of widows who were enrolled and had prescribed duties (see disc. on 1 Tim. 5:3–16).

What seems certain in all of this is that the church order of the PE fits easily with what one finds in the other Pauline letters and Acts; contrariwise, it is unlike the Ignatian epistles both in spirit and in details.

All told, the theology of the PE, despite some differences from the earlier Paul, is more thoroughly Pauline than otherwise; it, too, can be shown to favor authenticity. Moreover, what does emerge further reflects the totally ad hoc nature of the Epistles and thus supports the occasion and purpose as outlined.

Authorship

We are led, finally, to some concluding words about authorship, for the critical matters relating specifically to this question have yet to be examined.

External Evidence

The external evidence for the Pauline authorship of the PE is as good as for any other of his letters except Romans and 1 Corinthians. They are first quoted as Pauline by Irenaeus, ca. A.D. 180 (Against Heresies 2.14.7; 3.3.3). But they are clearly known much earlier. They are used as early as Polycarp (d. ca. A.D. 135), who "cites" their content (Philippians 4:1) in the same eclectic but authoritative way he does the other Pauline letters. They are missing from Marcion's canon (ca. A.D. 150), but Tertullian says Marcion rejected them, which is no wonder, since the content of 1 Timothy 4:1–5 is completely antithetical to Marcionism. By the end of the second century they are firmly fixed in every Christian canon in every part of the empire and are never doubted by anyone until the nineteenth century.

Yet despite this evidence and the fact that they purport to be by Paul and are full of thoroughly Pauline ideas and concerns, it can no longer be merely assumed that Paul wrote them. The
chief difficulty, and the one that is ultimately responsible for all the others we have noted, has to do with language and style, but its complexity also makes it the most difficult to present in a brief Introduction like this.

**Language and Style**

This problem basically has three parts: First, a significant part of the vocabulary is new, in comparison with Paul's earlier letters; and some of this new vocabulary, much of it crucial to the thought of these letters, seems to reflect a great deal more Hellenism than one finds in the earlier letters. Thus, for example, *eusebeia* ("godliness") is the crucial term to describe the Christian faith (see disc. on 1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8); *epiphaneia*, rather than *parousia*, is the only term used of Christ's second coming (see disc. on 1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13); the gospel is described by the medical metaphor "sound teaching" (*hygiainousè didaskalia*); God is called *our Savior*; and *sòphrôn* ("sound-minded") and its cognates predominate as virtues. All of these are the language of Hellenism or Hellenistic Judaism.

Second, much of Paul's rich vocabulary, expressing many of his most significant theological ideas, is either missing altogether or is used in some different ways. Thus, for example, *dikaiosynè* ("righteousness") appears only in the sense of "uprightness" and is a virtue to be pursued (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), not a gift of right-standing with God.

Third, a significant number of stylistic features common to these letters (e.g., the use of particles [conjunctions], prepositions, and pronouns, or the use/non-use of the definite article) are considerably different from the earlier letters. By and large, these letters have a more monotonous style, lacking the vigor, the tumbling forth of ideas, that characterize Paul.  

Although some of these items can be—and have been—overstated, there can be little question of the correctness of Kelly's observation: "The homogeneity of the Pastorals with one another and their dishomogeneity with the other Paulines must be regarded as an established fact." But he also adds, vigorously: "It cannot be too strongly urged that the inference that the Apostle cannot therefore be their author does not necessarily follow." How, then, shall one evaluate these data?
One answer, of course, is that taken by the majority of scholars, namely, that Paul is not their author. But this answer has its own—for me, insurmountable—difficulties: First, the letters are clearly far more Pauline than otherwise in all of their features: language, style, theology. It is difficult to account for this with the hypothesis of pseudepigraphy. An author writing in another’s name must be a near genius to be able to imitate so thoroughly. Furthermore, the failure to do so at easily discernible points (e.g., the greeting) and the creating of historical sequences like that noted (earlier) about Titus or that in 2 Timothy 4:9–18 nearly defies reason.

Second, the historical situation of the Ephesian church presupposed in 1 and 2 Timothy, which fits well the period of the 60s, as has been pointed out, scarcely fits what is otherwise known about that church around the turn of the century, the time the pseudepigrapher would have written (see note 12). Third, and most difficult of all, is to find an adequate reason for such an author to have written these letters and, most significantly, to have written three letters. If one can make a good case for 1 Timothy, it is equally difficult to understand why then the author also wrote Titus, and above all why, given the alleged reasons for 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy—it simply does not fit those reasons (see note 14).

Another solution, which enjoyed a long period of favor, was to see the letters as pseudepigraphic but to argue that the author used some genuine fragments of Pauline letters. Although this might help to explain some of the genuine Pauline features of the letters, it, too, runs aground on the questions of occasion and purpose, not to mention that the alleged fragments are of a piece with the rest in vocabulary and style.

More recently the Pauline elements have been explained in terms of the author’s use of a variety of sources, including some authentic historical data. But this view also founders on the matter of the occasion and the purpose of the letters and why there were three.

The Traditional Solution

When all has been said, the traditional solution, despite the difficulties, still seems to be the best one. It affords the distinct
advantage of being able to take account of more of the hard historical data, not to mention being able to offer a satisfactory accounting of all three letters, both as wholes and in all of their individual parts, as the following commentary hopes to demonstrate.

The chief difficulty with the tradition still remains: how adequately to account for the different language and style. But on this point it must be noted emphatically that, for all the differences, they are still far more like Paul in these matters than otherwise. The best solution is that Paul used a different amanuensis for these letters than for earlier ones (or did he actually write these himself after having used amanuenses earlier?). Although this solution admittedly has its own difficulties (e.g., the actual role of the amanuensis in composition\textsuperscript{39}), the large number of correspondences in vocabulary with Luke–Acts makes the hypothesis of Luke as this amanuensis an attractive one.\textsuperscript{40} But on this matter, one can only conjecture. To say that Paul is the author of the PE means that the letters ultimately come from him in the historical settings contained within them. It does not say how they came from him; the final answer to that question is not available to us.

\textbf{Notes}


2. On Timothy's circumcision, see M. Hengel, \textit{Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 64, who notes that because Timothy had a Jewish mother, he would have been considered a Jew. Failure to have had him circumcised would have been tantamount to supporting apostasy and thus would have effectively cut off Paul's mission as being to the "Jew first." For Paul's own statements on missionary policy, see 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

3. The refusal to have the Gentile Titus circumcised is equally in keeping with 1 Cor. 9:19-23 (see note 2). In this case the gospel as freedom for Gentiles is at stake. In Paul's Christian world view, circumcision
of a Jew for ministry among Jews (Timothy) and circumcision of a Gentile in order to have standing with God as a believer (Titus) would be two radically different things.

4. This date is in keeping with the view that sees Gal. 2:1–10 as a Pauline expression of the same event as that recorded in Acts 15 (as Kümmel, Introduction, pp. 295–304, against Guthrie, Introduction, pp. 450–65, who would date it about two years earlier). In either case, Titus became Paul’s traveling companion earlier than Timothy.

5. It is particularly difficult to imagine why a pseudepigrapher would have chosen Titus as the recipient of one of these letters, all the more so when one considers the evidence of Acts. This is especially true for those who argue that the author knew Acts and was dependent on it for many of his data and is likewise so for those who think the author of Luke–Acts also wrote the PE (see, e.g., S. G. Wilson, Luke and the Pastoral Epistles).

6. For a typical expression of this difficulty see Kümmel, Introduction, pp. 375–78, or E. F. Scott, pp. xvii–xx. On this matter J. A. T. Robinson (Redating the New Testament) rightly contends: “The very difficulty of squaring them with any itinerary deducible from Acts or the other Pauline epistles is a strong argument for their authenticity” (p. 72). At least, the matter is stalemated here, and finally depends on how one evaluates the other data.

It should be noted that Robinson’s own attempt to place them at three different times in the earlier life of Paul (1 Timothy between 1 and 2 Corinthians, Titus after Romans, and 2 Timothy after Colossians-Ephesians-Philemon) founders on the fact of their homogeneity with one another and their dishomogeneity with the other letters. See note 35.

7. For a presentation of the data for and against the traditional view of the provenance of these letters, see Guthrie, Introduction, pp. 472–78. This is still the majority view, although Kümmel argues for the Caesarian imprisonment of Acts 23:23–26:32 (Introduction, pp. 346–48), and some hold to an otherwise unknown Ephesian imprisonment (most recently H. Koester, Introduction to the New Testament, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], vol. 2, pp. 130–35, for Philippians and Philemon; Koester rejects Colossians and Ephesians as having been written by Paul).

9. This very point has been argued recently by two who hold to pseudopigraphy: Hanson, pp. 14–23 (on the mission to Crete, see esp. pp. 22–23), and J. D. Quinn, "Paul's Last Captivity."

10. One of the curiosities of some who advocate pseudopigraphy is their willingness to argue that since the author probably wrote all three letters at the same time, it is "difficult to see any particular reason why one letter should be put either before or after another" (Hanson, p. 27; cf. R. J. Karris, p. 3). But such a position seems to abuse the internal evidence rather severely. It is difficult to imagine the psychology of an author who would give so many internal clues as to the order in which the letters were to be read and then not care at all that they be read in that order. This is especially true of 1 and 2 Timothy. If, for example, the pseudonymous author intended them to be read in the order 2 Timothy-1 Timothy, why were they not numbered that way? In this case the internal evidence is decisive. By the very clues put in the letters, the author at least intended them to be read in their present order.


12. For example, 1 and 2 Timothy simply cannot be squared with what is otherwise known about the church in Ephesus around the end of the first century A.D. If, as most believe, the Revelation comes from this period, then this church is "orthodox" whatever else (Rev. 2:1-7)—precisely 180 degrees from the picture that emerges in the PE. A similar picture of impeccable orthodoxy appears in Ignatius' letter to this church (ca. A.D. 110–115). Given these data, it can hardly have been the church in Ephesus that was capitulating in the time of our alleged author. Why, then, one wonders, these fictions about this church? and for whom specifically? But such questions are simply avoided by the proponents of pseudopigraphy.

13. See Hanson, pp. 28–31, 42–47: cf. D-C and esp. Gealy, who takes this position to its most radical stance.

14. The avoidance of this crucial question is one of the puzzles of scholarship on the PE. The closest thing to an answer is offered by R. J. Karris (pp. 3–6, 45–47), who tries to resolve this under the rubric of an author's "fictionalizing" his or her audience in order to communicate with them. That may help to explain how 1 and 2 Timothy can differ so much from one another, but it scarcely answers the real question, Why three letters? Furthermore, an author "fictionalizes" the audience only when he or she is writing more generally (such as in the case of this commentary); it is not the stuff of letters, which are ad hoc and intended to address specific, identifiable situations.

Hanson seems to offer that the reason for three letters has to do with the nature and amount of material the author had in hand and wanted to include. But this founders, as Hanson himself is forced to ad-
mit, with the existence of Titus: "one is led to suspect that Titus was written last of all and that the author was beginning to run short of material" (p. 47). This very acknowledgement demonstrates the difficulty—which is never adequately addressed.

15. For such a view from the perspective of authenticity, see Guthrie, pp. 52-53, or Kelly, pp. 59-60 and throughout. How deeply entrenched this point of view is came home forcefully to me when a student who had sat through my course began his term paper with this sentence: "The Pastoral Epistles are not private letters but rather are for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline!"

16. Interestingly, this datum is almost totally disregarded by scholarship—on both sides of the question of authorship. It seems to have been overlooked by conservative scholars because of their view of the purpose of these letters—to establish church order—and this passage in Acts did not seem to fit that view. Others have disregarded it because they consider the speech to be unhistorical, created by the author of Acts himself (see, e.g., E. Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], pp. 595-98). But that scarcely resolves anything. Even if the author created the speech, its very creation "after the fact" argues strongly for the fact itself. Hence whether actual prophecy or "prophecy from hindsight," the data of this speech strongly support the position taken in this commentary.

17. By and large scholarship has subsumed the question of who the heretics were under that of what the heresy was, and it is generally assumed, if not always articulated, that the opponents were outsiders. An exception may be found in E. E. Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents," p. 114: "Unlike the earlier letters, the opponents appear to include a considerable number of former co-workers whose apostasy creates an especially bitter situation."

18. For a recent and very helpful discussion, see P. T. O'Brien, Colossians, Philemon, WBC 44 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), pp. xxvii-xli.


20. For an overview of this perspective, see P. T. O'Brien (note 18), pp. xxxvi-xxxviii, and the literature there cited.

21. This view of the opposition is similar to that presented by E. E. Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents," pp. 101-15, esp. 112-15. The ties of this heresy to that found earlier in Colossae were first spelled out in some detail (although I differ some in emphasis) by J. B. Lightfoot, Biblical Essays, pp. 411-18.

22. This is one of the features of the PE that is commonly pointed out as being non-Pauline. Note, e.g., how this becomes crucial for the
argument in R. J. Karris, "The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles."

23. One of the less convincing perspectives on the PE advocated by some suggests that "one of [their] most remarkable features . . . is their single-minded emphasis on Paul's apostolic authority" (Hanson, p. 24; cf. R. F. Collins, "The Image of Paul in the Pastorals," LTP 31 [1975], pp. 147-73). But one wonders how this could have been seen at all apart from a prior commitment to non-Pauline authorship. In comparison with Galatians or 2 Corinthians, for example, the emphasis on Paul's own authority in the PE is rather mild.

24. For a fuller development of this position, see Kümmel, Introduction, pp. 382-84, or any of the commentaries that hold to non-Pauline authorship (e.g., D-C, Easton, Hanson, Scott).

25. One can be sure, for example, that if we did not have 1 Corinthians, one of the "assured results" of NT scholarship would be that Paul and his churches knew nothing of the Eucharist. Indeed, but for the abuses in the church in Corinth, one can only imagine what other assured results based on silence there might be.

28. See, e.g., Hanson, pp. 31-38.
30. Against Marcion 5.21.
31. For a full display of this evidence, see Bernard, pp. xiii-xxi.
32. See esp. the useful summary in Barrett, p. 6.
33. See, e.g., the assessment by N. Turner, Style, vol. 4 of J. H. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), p. 105: "We cannot say that the Greek style is the most elegant in the PE, but it is the least Semitic, most secular, and least exciting. It is commonplace."

34. This is especially true of P. N. Harrison's classic study, The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles. See the literature cited by Guthrie, Introduction, p. 607, notes 1 and 2.
35. P. 24.
36. As, e.g., E. F. Scott.
37. This was the position espoused by Harrison in The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles. It especially had a period of long favor with British scholars. For a critique, see Kelly, pp. 28-30.
38. Hanson, pp. 14-23, 28-31, 42-47.
39. There is evidence from Cicero that he used two different amanuenses, with two considerably different styles of dictation, when his purposes for writing differed (Letter to Atticus, 13.25.3; see G. J. Bahr, "Paul
the case of the PE one would have to allow for more than simple dic-
tation; the amanuensis seems also to have become partly writer. Why
Paul would have changed his compositional style at this point in his life
has not been adequately explained.

40. See esp. C. F. D. Moule ("The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles:
A Reappraisal"), who sees them as written by Luke for Paul during Paul's
lifetime. For the view that Luke is their author, but as a pseudepigrapher
after Paul's death, see S. G. Wilson, Luke and the Pastoral Epistles, and
the Pastoral Epistles."
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