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The Pastoral Epistles (PE) have generated a considerable amount of scholarly attention, if only because they cannot be left out of any commentary series, and the student has available a fair amount of help in understanding them. Nevertheless, they cannot be said to stand at the centre of interest in the NT, and to some extent they have been neglected. It is somewhat ironic that conservative scholars who regard the PE as coming directly from the pen of Paul have made remarkably little of them despite their passion to defend their Pauline character. Such surveys of NT theology in general and Pauline theology in particular as I have consulted tend to ignore them in discussions of the theology of Paul; the seven-letter Pauline corpus naturally forms the centre of such discussions for many scholars, and the PE are scarcely used even by conservative scholars, either because they find that the PE have little to add to the basic picture, or because they are aware of their doubtful status as Pauline epistles in the opinion of mainstream scholarship and prefer to base their arguments on generally acknowledged material.

More radical scholars who denied their Pauline origin sometimes did so on the basis of their alleged inferiority to Pauline thought, and hence they were tempted to allot them little authority and importance. Even today, when scholars who assign them to the post-Pauline period insist on their importance as witnesses to the character of that period, there is still sometimes a tendency to denigrate the value of their teaching, and the very fact of their late dating means that they are seen as being on the periphery of the NT.

Against this rather negative assessment, two points can be made. First, while it has been fashionable to criticize the PE for their lack of creative theological thinking, M.Y. MacDonald (1988) points out that the period when the PE were written was one that demanded not fresh thinking but the consolidation and defence of what had already been established. Consequently the PE play an important role in the institutionalization of the church. Scholars who see the PE as Pauline would probably have to say something similar about them; if they come from the end of Paul’s life, their mood could well be one of consolidation rather than of adventurous theologizing. Second, there is a good case that the PE do offer a creative approach in their own context and provide a fresh restatement of Pauline theology (P.H. Towner, 1989; A. Lau, 1996).

Commentaries

We shall begin by looking at the commentary resources available for the student. We shall not be attempting to answer
the question: 'Which is the best commentary?' What you use will depend very much on the purpose of your study. Are you a student preparing for examinations on the English or the Greek text? Do you want a medium-length introduction or a full-scale treatment? Are you prepared to read both sides of the questions that arise and evaluate them fairly? Are you simply wanting help with next Sunday's sermon or with an expository series? Do you want to wrestle in detail with the letters and have you got the linguistic equipment to use the tools provided?

When I was an undergraduate theological student in the 1950s and my syllabus included the Pastoral Epistles in Greek, there was not a lot of helpful material immediately available. I was aware of the volume by W. Lock (ICC, 1924), which was of some help on the Greek text but was rather thin compared with other volumes in the same series. I subsequently discovered N.J.D. White (Expositor's Greek Testament, 1910) and R. St J. Parry (CUP, 1920), which also still continue to be valuable for the student of the Greek text. On a popular level E.F. Scott contributed the volume in the Moffat NT Commentary (1936); more recently there was a freestanding volume by B.S. Easton (SCM Press, 1947) which expounded the case for non-Pauline authorship and was notable for a set of word-studies of the kind that William Barclay was later to develop. From the conservative side there were but two recent works. One was the newly published Tyndale NT Commentary by D. Guthrie (1957), which was as precious as gold to that generation. There was also the treatment of the Greek text by E.K. Simpson (1954), remarkable for its combination of outstanding linguistic material culled from his own first-hand reading of the Classics (no TLG to ease his labours!) and of pastoral comments written in his extraordinary flamboyant style. W. Hendriksen (1957) was just beginning to circulate. But that was about all, apart from short treatments in such works as the Interpreter's Bible (F.D. Gealy and M.P. Noyes, Vol. XV, 1955) and the Torch Bible Commentary (A.R.C. Leaney, 1960). Foreign works were either not easily accessible or beyond my linguistic capabilities. One knew that there was a massive commentary in French by C. Spicq (Études bibliques, 1947; see further below) which defended Pauline authorship, and that there were German commentaries. Here mention must be made of J. Jeremias (Das NT Deutsch, 1936), who took a conservative position and had important insights to offer. Since that date there has been a very considerable crop of commentaries which I must try to characterize briefly.

Starting with works in English on the English text, we have something like twenty commentaries to mention: C.K. Barrett (New Clarendon Bible, 1963); J.M. Bassler (Abingdon NT Commentaries, 1996); M. Davies (Epworth Commentaries, 1996); L.R. Donelson (Westminster, 1996); G.D. Fee (New International Biblical Commentary, 1988); A.T. Hanson (New Century Bible, 1982); J.L. Houden (Penguin NT
Commentary, 1976); A.J. Hultgren (Augsburg Commentary, 1984); L.T. Johnson (Knox Preaching Guides, 1987); R.J. Karris (NT Message, 1979); J.N.D. Kelly (Black's NT Commentaries, 1963); G.W. Knight III (New International Greek Testament Commentary, 1992); T.D. Lea and H.P. Griffin (New American Commentary, 1992); T.C. Oden (Interpretation, 1989); J.D. Quinn (only on Tit.: Anchor Bible, 1990); J.P. Sampley and R.H. Fuller (Proclamation Commentaries, 1978); J.R.W. Stott (The Bible Speaks Today: 2 Tim., 1973; 1 Tim. and Tit., 1996); and P.H. Towner (IVP NT Commentary Series, 1994).

Many of these works are slight in size and would not be a first choice for serious study. The most important medium-length exegetical commentaries for the student are Barrett, Fee, Hanson and Kelly. Kelly is very much in the tradition of Guthrie, a careful exegesis by a patristics scholar whose work is all the more significant in that he does not belong to any 'conservative' camp but nevertheless upholds Pauline authorship. Barrett is an outstanding example of what can be done in a short space by a scholar who treats the letters as Scripture (inspired by the Holy Spirit through an unknown author), and has some memorable comments. Hanson sees the letters as something of a declension from Paul, and has a highly individual approach to them which never fails to challenge traditional interpretations. Fee is in effect the successor to Guthrie, a fresh defence of Pauline authorship with some helpful insights and a generally deeper theological level of comment.

Houlden is much too brief in actual commenting to give a lot of assistance but important for his sharp statement of the non-Pauline position. A more recent and helpful treatment from this angle is by M. Davies, who is especially good on providing parallels from the Hellenistic background and who draws attention to the problems posed by the patriarchal teaching of the letters.

Within this group there is a new generation of commentators and series which are concerned with expounding the text for preachers, and several of these authors do so in different ways. Towner, writing on an expository level, represents the work of a specialist on the letters, and those with some background knowledge will get much by reading between the lines. Karris offers a thematic study for a Roman Catholic audience, and his enthusiasm for the letters is contagious. Johnson is another Roman Catholic who is strong on literary approaches and who accepts Pauline authorship. Oden is an American Methodist systematic theologian who has moved from a liberal to a conservative position and finds much to warm his heart in the letters. Stott treats the letters in his characteristic fashion and always has the preacher and the task of application in mind.

In addition to these shorter works we have a detailed treatment of the Greek text by G.W. Knight III (New International Greek
Testament Commentary, 1992) which explains the text fully and lucidly but without a lot of interaction with other scholars. He is a firm defender of direct Pauline authorship and of the non-teaching role of women. Much more in the tradition of the full-scale commentary which explores every possible alley is the work of J.D. Quinn, whose work on Titus (Anchor Bible, 1990) was edited and published posthumously; this is the major work in English on Titus, but its detail and the division of the material into Notes and Comment make it user-unfriendly. He dates the PE c. ad 80–85 and interprets them as urging a Pauline faith and ethics as the basis for the church’s continuing mission to bring all people to faith in Jesus. On a simpler level D.C. Arichea and H.A. Hatton (UBS Handbook Series, 1995) do not offer a commentary in the normal sense, but a series of notes to help translators of the Bible; ordinary students, not concerned with translation into tongues other than English, will still find them profitable.

On the Continent there have been a number of conservative scholars who defend Pauline authorship. Apart from the older generation of RC scholars and such conservatives as A. Schlatter, the most influential commentator to defend Pauline authorship on the basis of the secretary hypothesis was J. Jeremias. He was followed by G. Holtz (Theologischer Handkommentar zum NT, 1972), who takes a decidedly idiosyncratic position in finding the eucharist everywhere in the text. But the major exposition of direct Pauline authorship comes from the revised, massive work of C. Spicq, running to two volumes (Études bibliques, 1969). Spicq is primarily (but by no means only) a lexicographer, and his commentary is a mine of information on the occurrences of the vocabulary in other Greek sources (again all done before the TLG came on the scene!; cf. his recent Theological Lexicon of the New Testament). This is the most thorough commentary on the epistles, with lengthy discussions of virtually every point of importance, and marked by a strong Catholic piety. A similar, but much more manageable, treatment in French comes from P. Dornier, who tends to follow Spicq fairly closely (Sources bibliques, 1958). Likewise the Dutch scholar Ridderbos defends Pauline authorship (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament, 1967).

But, increasingly, Continental works deny Pauline authorship. The major work gathering together the arguments against Pauline authorship is still that of H. Holtzmann (1880); you can save yourself time by going straight back to him for many of the arguments that are still current. More recently, the standard German Protestant work is the older commentary by M. Dibelius, which was revised by H. Conzelmann and translated as part of the Hermeneia series (Philadelphia, 1972); its particular strength is the collection of parallels in thought and expression from the Hellenistic world, but it is also marked by Dibelius’s theories. These are (a) that the NT epistles tend to be addressed to general rather than particular situations and therefore contain generalities rather than precise instruction,
and (b) that the PE develop what is often called ‘bourgeois Christianity’, a form of the faith which has lost its hope of the imminent coming of Jesus and has settled down to a long haul in the world, and therefore involves living a life that is controlled by secular ethics rather than Christian eschatology. At a more general level, N. Brox (Regensburger NT, 1963) represents the new stream of RC opinion which is not bound by tradition and which tends almost to run to excess in kicking off the reins. V. Hasler (Zürcher Bibelkommentar, 1978) is the briefer Protestant equivalent which is undeniably stimulating in its originality but sometimes infuriating in its dogmatic statements of highly dubious interpretations.

Two recent German works stand out far above the others. On the one hand, there is the meticulous treatment of 1 Timothy by the Protestant J. Roloff (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar, 1988), which is of outstanding merit in its detailed discussion of the Greek text combined with excursuses on Wirkungsgeschichte (the history of the effects of reading the text; more or less what used to be called ‘history of interpretation’). On the other hand, we have the contribution to the Herders theologischer Kommentar zum NT by the Roman Catholic L. Oberlinner (Erster Timotheusbrief, 1994; Zweiter Timotheusbrief, 1995; Titusbrief, 1996), which builds on Roloff (and therefore gives much less technical detail) and presents a profound theological exegesis of the letters. Both volumes assume post-Pauline authorship and are not uncritical of some elements in the text, but on the whole they develop a very positive theological interpretation.

Nor has the stream ended. In the pipeline we have the hefty Word Commentary by W.D. Mounce, and some day there will be a replacement volume for Lock in the ICC series.

**Important issues in interpretation**

**The origin of the epistles**

It is very difficult for scholars of a conservative persuasion like myself to discuss the issues without the problem of authorship being at the centre of interest. It is the most important single issue in relation to the Pastorals. Even scholars who deny Pauline authorship still find it necessary on the whole to justify their point of view, since, even if they themselves regard the issue as closed, they have to recognize that the defenders of the traditional view are by no means cranks. Nevertheless, much discussion takes place on the assumption that post-Pauline authorship can be taken for granted.

The question of authorship has two aspects for conservative scholars. In common with other scholars, they are concerned to discover how the letters were composed. But they appear to have in general a greater concern about the ethics of the production. To many (but by no means all) scholars it does not matter whether the PE or any other NT works were produced in
ways that we would regard as deceitful. They argue that we must not measure the PE by the standards of our day but by the practice of the ancient world where pseudonymity was accepted. But conservatives would reply that the question is not what were the standards of the ancient world in general, but what were the moral standards of the early Christians in the first century. Surely these moral standards must inform our modern Christian standards and evolutions, rather than vice versa. The question then becomes whether pseudonymity is compatible with early Christian ethics, or rather, whether there are kinds of pseudonymity which might be morally acceptable. For example, if a work was produced under a pseudonym similar to that of Michael Innes or Cliff Richard, where the name is known to be a pseudonym and deception is not intended, then this could be acceptable. But if deceit is of the essence of the position, then it is a different story.

Many NT scholars begin by accepting that pseudonymity actually did take place (often by citing the PE as the surest examples) and then examine whether it can be justified ethically. Some will admit that it cannot be, and are not bothered by this conclusion, but others will argue that it was acceptable. On the other hand, if it can be established that pseudonymity was not acceptable, then this becomes an argument against the likelihood that it was used by morally upright early Christians, and becomes an incentive to look for alternative explanations of the alleged pseudonymous works.

Hence arises the question: is the existence of pseudonymity sufficiently strongly attested in the NT to make it a basis for further discussion, or is there a stronger case for the moral improbability of this practice?

*The acceptable face of pseudonymity?*

Two major works on this topic appeared almost simultaneously in 1986. L.R. Donelson holds that in the early church there is no case of known pseudepigraphical writings being accepted as authoritative. Nevertheless, pseudepigraphy certainly took place, and therefore the important thing was to do it successfully; intentional deception was practised, and the primary justification was that ‘if one had a cause which was important enough and a lie could assist, then it is “permissible” to employ a lie’ (p. 19). The cause was generally that of doctrinal correctness, and the use of an apostolic name was the way to win the contest. Deceptive pseudepigraphy was well known in the ancient world, especially in religious and philosophical areas, and there are numerous examples demonstrating the lengths to which authors would go to create the impression that their works were ‘authentic’. Thus the authors of the pseudo-Platonic letters ‘succeed due to the consummate skill of their authors in using apparently extraneous detail in the same way any person would employ such detail in a real letter to a friend’ (p. 27).
Donelson’s case has to attribute to early Christians the opposing convictions that pseudepigraphy is incompatible with authoritative Christian composition and that lies are justified by the importance of preserving doctrinal truth. It is not easy to see how any single individual could combine these two beliefs, not even by the assumption of one law for himself and another for his opponents. Further, he has to allow that ‘the scale on which the aura of verisimilitude is carried out in the Socratic letters makes the Pastorals look rather tame’ (p. 37), and it must be remembered that the style of the Pastorals does not give the impression of an author trying to reproduce the genuine Pauline style of writing. Do they really intend to deceive?

Donelson is apparently not concerned with the moral problems that pseudonymity creates for many readers who would share the NT insistence on the importance of truth in commending the gospel. A different attitude is taken by the second major writer on the topic. D.G. Meade (1986) bases his argument on the understanding of tradition in Judaism. Later authors latch on to an existing body of tradition with which they feel themselves in sympathy and proceed to ‘bring it up to date’ (his term for it is Vergegenwärtigung) or re-express it for their own time by further writings in the same tradition. There is a ‘recurring need to actualise a tradition for a future generation, and the common conviction of a continuity of revelation and interpretation which made this possible, regardless of literary genre’ (p. 215). Pseudonymity is thus a claim to authoritative tradition rather than a statement of literary origins. This statement is repeated throughout his book until you almost believe it. But then you ask what it means and conveys. Meade cannot avoid the fact that the idea was to claim authorship by the person named and thus to deceive the readers (pp. 121, 198). The theory is unsatisfactory at several points as Guthrie (1988) has shown. It is interesting and significant that the one case of an apocalyptic writing in the NT, Revelation, is a book which is not pseudonymous, for there is no reason to doubt the author was called John. One is tempted to argue that if, where pseudonymity might be expected, there is none, how much less likely we are to find it elsewhere. Further, we have to settle the question of genre. Jeremias insisted that if the writings of Paul are ordinary letters, then it must be taken into account that we know of no examples of the forging of ordinary letters. The case is admittedly different with religious and philosophical writings, and the Pauline letters may be thought to belong rather in this category. But again these are usually figures of the distant past. There is surely a distinction between writing in the name of Enoch or even of Daniel and writing in the name of so recent a figure as Paul.

Much the most sympathetic attempt to come to terms with the problem is that of R. Bauckham. The authority of the unknown author of 2 Peter ‘lies in the faithfulness with which he transmits, and interprets for a new situation, the normative
teaching of the apostles. The pseudepigraphical device is therefore not a fraudulent means of claiming apostolic authority, but embodies a claim to be a faithful mediator of the apostolic message' (pp. 161f.). Bauckham is able to hold this position because he believes that the author of 2 Peter was not attempting to deceive his readers. 'Owing to the author's use of the standard conventions of the ancient “testament” genre, contemporary readers would have recognized from this section [2 Pet. 1:12-15] that 2 Peter belongs to that genre and have understood the pseudepigraphical nature of the work' (p. 203).

It emerges that Bauckham's view is that there can be a type of pseudonymity which is not open to the usual moral objections in that it was not intended to deceive the readers. This possibility tends to be ruled out of court by contemporary scholars, but it is surely worth exploration. The point to be emphasized is that the moral objection to pseudonymity is not simply that modern Christians find it difficult to be happy with the existence of canonical works intended to deceive, but much more that it is very difficult to understand how early Christians with their concern for truth could have employed deception. Granted that heretics used deception, the attitude of mainstream, orthodox Christians was firmly against the use of the device.12

Language and theological style

If there is substance in the argument so far, we have three possible types of scenario for the letters: Pauline authorship, pseudonymity, and non-deceptive post-Pauline composition.

Few scholars today champion direct Pauline authorship, and the most common type of theory involves the use of amanuenses. (Knight hovers between direct Pauline authorship and some secretarial assistance by Luke.) The reasons for this shift lie in the areas of style and content.

The authorship of the PE has been subject to frequent investigation on the basis of statistical study of the language. A weighty contribution to the Anchor Bible Dictionary by A.D. Forbes offers a significant critique of this type of research. He curiously passes over the important work of P.N. Harrison - perhaps it wasn’t sufficiently ‘statistical’ in character - and lists five contributions:

1. He notes that W.C. Wake investigated sentence length as a criterion, but his conclusions are based on doubtful data and in any case are open to varied interpretations.

2. K. Grayston and G. Herdan undertook a much more sophisticated examination of the vocabulary of the Pauline corpus which showed that the PE, considered as a single unit, are markedly different from the rest of the corpus. But, comments Forbes, 'That this behavior is due to differing authors rather than literary form, subject matter, etc., has not been shown' (p. 189).
3. Forbes is able to point out a number of flaws in the methods of A.Q. Morton, who has written numerous works on the topic. He goes on to attempt his own examination of sentence length, and produces the interesting result that the following letters may come from the same population as Galatians: 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, Romans, 1 Timothy and 2 Thessalonians; but the following do not come from the same population as Galatians: Philippians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, Hebrews and Ephesians (Titus and Philemon were excluded from the comparison in view of their brevity for this test). From this the reader may well conclude – as does the present writer – that an analysis based on sentence length distribution is untrustworthy.

4. A. Kenny’s work is regarded as modest in its methods and goals. Its conclusions are regarded as sound.

5. K. Neumann’s work is criticized because the presentation makes it impossible for other researchers to check it. It leads to some odd results, such as ascribing parts of Galatians to Ignatius and Revelation 2-3 to Paul, unless special pleading is permitted. Although, therefore, its conclusions are fairly conservative, they are ‘too brittle to be convincing’.

Forbes is probably a trustworthy guide, although his expertise lies in the application of statistical methods to the vocabulary of the OT. Readers may well conclude in the light of his work that vocabulary and stylistic statistics have so far failed to lead to assured conclusions on the authorship of the various letters in the Pauline corpus.

However, it must be emphasized that this is not the end of the story. J.M. Gilchrist (1967) mounted a sharp criticism of the work of P.N. Harrison in which he showed that the latter repeated essentially the same argument in several different forms in his book. Nevertheless, Harrison did draw attention to an irrefutable fact, namely that the vocabulary of the Pastorals does have a different shape from that of the acknowledged Pauline letters, explain it how you will.

Further, Forbes was not able to take account of the work of D.L. Mealand (1989; 1995), who has used some refined statistical techniques on the Pauline corpus. In the second of his two articles he has analysed a variety of linguistic data, including the relative proportions of different parts of speech, word length, the frequency of different letters of the alphabet in word endings, and the use of significant items of what Harrison called ‘connective tissue’, and he argues that the PE emerge as distinctive at one end of a spectrum, with Colossians and Ephesians generally appearing at the other end.

Mealand’s tests also throw up some anomalies within the other parts of the Pauline corpus, a fact which again shows that statistical methods are not foolproof; however, they still show that there are oddities about the PE when compared with the certainly authentic Pauline letters.
To this must be added the observation, which is less easy to state in objective terms but may none the less be valid, that many scholars, myself included, get the impression of a different way of thinking and expressing theology and ethics in the Pastorals. This is not to say that the theology contradicts that of Paul (which is manifestly not the case) but that the way the author thinks is different. Just as no competent judge would be likely to confuse two unattributed sermons, one by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the other by John Stott, so there is a different theological vocabulary and a different manner of argumentation in the PE from Paul. This point weighs with me more strongly than the argument from linguistic style. We have to ask why it could be that when writing to close colleagues Paul would think in a different kind of way.

To be sure, one has to be cautious. It may seem to be a striking argument against common authorship that in Romans Paul employs questions no less than 84 times, but there is only one question in the PE (1 Tim. 3:5). The argument is strengthened when we note that 1 Corinthians contains 99 questions - but then it is dramatically weakened by the fact that 1 Thessalonians has only two questions and Philippians has only one. Further, questions are absent from Romans 12-13 and 15-16; evidently paranetical material is not the place to find them: they are a weapon of direct argument with addressees.

The problem is rather how it could be that Paul, writing to close colleagues and basing his ethical and ecclesiastical instructions on theological considerations, could ignore totally or virtually such characteristic themes as ‘flesh’, body’, the Holy Spirit, God as Father, and the concept of being ‘in Christ’, and why it should be that, again writing to colleagues, he should choose to use a new vocabulary for ethical instruction (such as ‘piety’, ‘self-control’, ‘conscience’ qualified by an adjective). Why would he switch to a kind of argument which in effect states a point and then gives the justification for it? This is not the place to develop this point, but it is clearly of great importance.

Amanuensis theories

In the light of these observations, we can understand why scholars who maintain Pauline authorship are tending to adopt some kind of indirect theory.

One possibility is the free amanuensis theory. This is ethically acceptable, where pseudonymity is not. It would be perfectly acceptable for a writer to give an amanuensis the freedom to compose a letter of which he would approve and to which he would give his authority. This kind of theory has been championed by Jeremias, Holtz and others in the past and also more recently by E.E. Ellis and J.R.W. Stott. The question then is whether there are positive indications of its validity. Does it
adequately explain the odd features of the PE, and are there any clear indications that this process took place? One important point is that the similarities between the PE appear to demand that one amanuensis was responsible for them all. If we are dealing with letters from a later period in Paul’s life, this would make possible the use of one amanuensis and the use of a different method of communication. (This fact alone means that theories which date the Pastorals at different points in the missionary career of Paul recorded in Acts are less probable.)

An important ‘state of the art’ essay, incorporating some of the author’s own original suggestions, comes from E.E. Ellis (1993). He notes that pseudopigrapha were not acceptable in the early church and that only heretics rejected the PE. He argues strongly against any suggestion of interpolation of inauthentic matter into genuine letters. According to ancient custom Paul would have retained a copy of his own letters, and he probably allowed churches to make further copies. While this procedure would allow textual variations right from the beginning, it would rule out the possibility of unauthorized and undetected interpolations. Ellis is inclined to allow the use of a secretary and of preformed traditions to account for the stylistic peculiarities in the letters. He takes the release of Paul from his (first) imprisonment in Rome as a historical certainty (with Harnack). He argues that Paul did journey to Spain and returned to Rome where he was martyred. 2 Timothy 4:10 is taken as a reference to Gaul. In view of the problems in the churches, he sent letters to his trusted co-workers in Crete and Ephesus ‘which served both as instruments of personal communication and encouragement and also as vade mecums to give apostolic authorization for their teaching’. He dates Titus and 1 Timothy in AD 65 (after Paul’s return from Spain) and 2 Timothy from Rome in AD 67 where he had been re-arrested and where shortly after he was executed. The letter form was adopted by Paul as a means of communicating with the churches, where they would be read aloud, and in the light of Paul’s Jewish background this meant that they would be treated as ‘the Word of God’. The possibility of Luke as a secretary is raised. Ellis argues for the presence of a considerable amount of pre-formed material in the letters, indicated by a number of tell-tale signs. The traditional material amounts to 43 per cent of 1 Timothy, 16 per cent of 2 Timothy, and 46 per cent of Titus. The adoption of this hypothesis may well remove a number of the difficulties for Pauline authorship. In my view, however, the tests which he proposes for the presence of tradition are not altogether convincing. One problem which is not adequately addressed is that the style of the epistles is remarkably uniform, even in the passages which are allegedly based on tradition.

Against the use of an amanuensis it should be noted that there are no positive indicators of this. There is nothing corresponding to ‘I Tertius wrote this letter’. Some scholars take
'Only Luke is with me' in 2 Timothy as a possible indicator (Moule, 1965; Wilson, 1979), although there is nothing corresponding in the other Pastorals. For a number of reasons I do not believe that this hypothesis is tenable. The style is no closer to Luke–Acts than it is to the acknowledged letters of Paul, and the way in which the theology is expressed is not that of Luke.

A rather different and undoubtedly bold solution has been proposed by M. Prior (1989). Where most defenders of authenticity who have had recourse to theories of Paul’s employment of secretaries to account for the differences in style between the letters have argued for a different secretary for the PE (or for the more free use of a secretary by a Paul who had otherwise dictated his letters word for word), Prior argues that the other Pauline letters (which generally bear the names of more than one sender) were written with the aid of secretaries but that these letters to individuals Paul wrote himself without secretarial assistance. He further claims that there is a difference in style between the letters of Ignatius to the church at Smyrna and to its bishop.

Second, he protests against assumptions that the three letters stand or fall together as regards authenticity and draws attention to the significant differences in character between them. In particular, the case against the authenticity of 2 Timothy is the weakest of the three.

Third, Prior concentrates his attention on 2 Timothy. He questions the normal interpretation which sees it as a farewell letter by a person who is about to face trial and probable condemnation. Instead, he reinterprets the material in chapter 4 to claim that Paul wants Timothy and Mark to come to him urgently because he wants their aid in his ongoing mission; 4:6-8 needs to be read in conjunction with what follows and not seen to be in an untenable tension. Paul is building up a mission team for future work. And the general tenor of the letter is to give pastoral help and encouragement to a Timothy about whose spiritual standing and effectiveness Paul had some serious concern.

This is a fascinating reconstruction of the situation. Prior makes some very shrewd and effective points. He contrasts, for example, the character of the PE with the acknowledged pseudepigrapha, the Epistle to the Laodiceans, 3 Corinthians and the Epistle of the Apostles, with which the PE show no similarities.

A key point is his interpretation of 4:6-8, where he argues that the Greek verb spendo amai does not mean 'to die'. The point is valid, but it does not seem to meet the argument that the verb is being used metaphorically of one's life draining away in sacrifice. Further, he interprets analusis as meaning 'release', i.e. from prison and bondage, for further missionary work. Here he rightly questions some of the linguistic evidence which
has been offered for the meaning ‘death’ here. But I am not sure that the case is convincing, since again it is not the meaning but the reference of the word which is the issue, and Philippians 1:23 clearly uses the verb with this reference. Further, Prior does not deal satisfactorily with 4:8, which seems to contrast what Paul has already done in v. 7 with ‘all that remains’ – the crown. Nevertheless, his work deserves to be taken seriously.

Non-deceptive post-Pauline composition

A second possibility is that the PE represent a development of genuinely Pauline material after his death. On this view the letters are the attempt by a subsequent disciple of Paul to preserve his master’s teaching and apply it faithfully to the church situation of his own day. There was no attempt at deception, and the author may have edited some actual written materials from Paul.

One point that weighs strongly in favour of this theory is the lack of any compelling and clear evidence that the PE were written at a late date. There is certainly no evidence that compels a date after AD 100, and they could well be earlier so far as their content is concerned.

Arguments for a late date tend to be based on three main areas. First, there is the question of the opposition and contrary teaching addressed by the author. The majority hypothesis is that it is somehow related to second-century Gnosticism with its cosmic dualism leading to a devaluation of the world (asceticism with regard to food; rejection of marriage) and its belief that the resurrection life is already taking place (stress on knowledge as the way to salvation). Conservative scholars tend to argue that these tendencies were already present in the first century and can be detected in the opposition faced by Paul in Corinth and Colossae (cf. Towner, 1989, ch. 2). Another view majors on the ascetic elements and argues that the nearest parallel is the kind of Christianity reflected in the Acts of Paul and Thecla where Paul is turned into an advocate of sexual asceticism (D.R. MacDonald, 1983; M.Y. MacDonald, 1988; Young, 1994a). This last view seems much more plausible than the first, since there is so little, if anything, that is specifically Gnostic or constitutes a specifically Gnostic complex of teaching. One or two recent scholars have tried to play down the Jewish elements in the opposition (Rollof, 1988), but this move does not seem to be justified. It is also clear that some of the dubious teaching could be based on a misunderstanding of Paul’s own teaching (cf. especially Schlarb, 1990). On the whole, it seems best to conclude that the opposition represents the development of a Jewish type of Christianity with strongly ascetic features and that it stands fairly close to the type of opposition faced by Paul himself.

The second type of argument is based on the ecclesiastical situation. This is generally characterized in terms of
‘institutionalization’, i.e. the development of the church into an organized system with a hierarchical system of leadership based on ‘office’ to which people are appointed (the posts of bishop, deacon; an ‘order’ of widows) over against an earlier kind of set-up in which leadership was much more informal and individuals gifted by the Spirit were able to minister quite freely. The growth of the church and the rise of heresy led to the need for a more rigid system. Affinities are then found with the developed pattern of bishops, presbyters and deacons found in Ignatius, and the PE are generally alleged to be closer to the Apostolic Fathers than to Paul. The often-assumed equivalence of bishops and elders in the PE is increasingly challenged in favour of the view that a monarchical type of bishopric was developing. A common view is that in the PE we see the coalescence of two types of leadership, a Jewish elder system and a more Hellenistic bishop/deacon system.

The most detailed study of this area is by Campbell (1994). He argues that the term ‘elders’ refers to the senior people in a community and is never the title for an office. In the early churches the elders were the (single) heads of the house churches in a given area. Campbell maintains that what is going on in the PE is the legitimation of a single episkopos in a local area ‘as leader of those who as episkopoi in their own households were already known as the elders in relation to the local church as a whole’ (p. 196). Titus is to set up leaders kata politin, i.e. one overseer per city. In this way the term episkopos shifts from being the leader of a household church to being the overseer of a town church, whereas presbuteri shifts from being the house church leaders as a corporate group to being those leaders in the town church who are not the overseer/bishop. The diakonoi are the new overseer’s helpers. Thus there is ‘monepiscopacy’ in the PE and the terms ‘overseer’ and ‘elder’ are beginning to refer to separate roles. It is, however, not until Ignatius that we find a clear terminological distinction between elders and bishops, and this arises because Ignatius is trying to curb the power of the elders and their cherished independence.

I have reservations concerning this theory, not least because it does not seem to do justice to Titus 1:5-9. Its significance is that Campbell is able to conclude that ‘there is no solid objection to bringing down the date of the Pastorals to within ten years of Paul’s death’ (p. 179).

A somewhat different view is taken independently by Young (1994a; cf. 1994b). She holds that the elders do not appear to be identical with the bishops. They are senior people, but they have some responsibilities for maintaining and teaching the tradition. She postulates that the churches were moving from an understanding of themselves purely as ‘God’s household’ to a self-identity as ‘God’s people’, a community in which the elders are the guardians of the tradition and come to be a kind of ‘governing council ...which had the authority to appoint and
advise the *episkopos* (p. 110). As with Campbell’s hypothesis, so too Young recognizes the transitional character of the situation reflected in the PE. Both views tend to support an earlier rather than a later date for the documents.

The third area for discussion lies in the *picture of Paul* in the letters. A major tendency in current scholarship is to analyse the kind of portrait of the apostle which is projected by the PE. One important question is where the author gained his picture of Paul. Did he know any of the genuine letters of Paul and made use of them in his work? Did he also know Acts or did he make use of other traditions regarding the career of Paul? Hanson is a strong advocate of the writer’s knowledge and use of the Pauline letters. In greater detail P. Trummer has examined the way in which Pauline traditions are taken into the Pastorals.

A somewhat different task is undertaken by M. Wolter (1988) who wants to examine the nature of the Pastorals as Pauline traditions, *i.e.* as works which intend to be read as the ongoing legacy of Paul to the churches. The PE thus become the vehicle of Pauline tradition and are important for the way in which they present pictures of Paul himself and of his theology. The picture which emerges is, to be sure, rather different from that of the historical Paul. Scholars who have examined this issue generally conclude that Paul is presented much more paradigmatically as the one and only apostle, on the foundation of whose teaching the gospel rests, the exemplary convert, apostle and martyr. Such a picture could not possibly have been produced by Paul himself: it is idealized and exaggerated and represents later veneration of a founder-figure. It is part of an elaborate fiction, involving the portraits of Timothy and Titus and the other people mentioned in the *personalia*, all of which are utilized in order to provide positive and negative examples for readers to follow or reject respectively.

These scholars thus explain the apparently Pauline features of the epistles, which would be regarded by traditionalists as evidence for Pauline authorship, in terms of the conscious reproduction of Pauline ‘tradition’, the attempt to create a Pauline impression.

Very often such scholars assume that a post-Pauline explanation must be given of material which might well be interpreted as Pauline. More accurately put, assuming that the material is post-Pauline, they then give a corresponding interpretation of it, although one might equally well interpret it on the assumption of Pauline authorship. The vital question which then arises is: which of the two types of interpretation has claim to the greater plausibility? Here P.H. Towner (1995) has shown that the way in which scholars interpret the material in the letters can be influenced by their prior assumptions and that the radical interpretation is not necessarily the right one.
The problem of structure

A comparative study of commentaries on the PE will quickly reveal that there is a remarkable lack of unanimity on the question of the structure of the letters. Three types of approach may be listed.

1. There is the attempt to determine a logical structure in each of the letters, generally on the basis of the parameters of ancient epistolary stylistic conventions and of the subject-matter.

2. There is the view that the letters show no overall structure, and that the best that can be done is to identify and label the constituent paragraphs without trying to show how the paragraphs are related to one another. This is the view of Hanson and of Fee. It has been carried to the limit by J.D. Miller (1989), who holds that the PE have no logical structure whatever but consist of a set of isolated items loosely strung together.

3. The kind of discourse analysis practised by the Summer Institute of Linguistics has been applied to the Pastorals and produces some interesting results (Blight, 1977; Smith and Beekman, 1981; Banker, 1987).

Without going into details, I think that it can be shown that view 2 does not do justice to the character of the letters. They do show signs of careful structuring, even if that structure is not immediately obvious. A combination of insights from approaches 1 and 3 leads to an understanding of the letters as orderly compositions.

A different but related question for advocates of non-Pauline authorship concerns the character of the letters as a corpus. If the letters were not written ad hoc by Paul (or somebody else) and thus as individual compositions, the question arises whether they were written as independent pieces by their author, or were regarded as forming a collection in their own right, and, if the latter is the case, the further questions arise as to the order of composition or the order in which they were intended to be read. Earlier scholars argued about the order of composition, and some held that 2 Timothy (which has the most Pauline material in it) was composed first, then 1 Timothy, and finally, when the writer was running out of inspiration, Titus (Easton, 1947). More recent scholars discuss the order in which the PE were meant to be read. Most argue that 2 Timothy was clearly meant to be read last and that 1 Timothy was meant to be read first because it gives the fullest introduction to who ‘Paul’ is (Wolter, 1988). Quinn (Titus pp. 19f.) wants to read Titus first. The fact is, of course, that there is a tendency to read the Pastorals as a corpus precisely because they show common characteristics as a group, but now the argument is that they were always meant to be read as a group and in a particular order.
The nature of the theology

There have been one or two recent attempts to discuss the theology of the PE as a whole. The most important of these is that of P.H. Towner (1989), whose particular concern is with the ethics of the epistles. His major contribution is to argue that the ethical teaching is firmly rooted in theology. Consequently, his monograph does in fact cover the main issues in the letters. He demonstrates the centrality of Christology and soteriology in the letters and shows how the forms of expression may be new but the content is traditional. He is able to confirm the view of other scholars that the interpretation of the letters in terms of a waning of eschatological hope and the development of a Christian Bürgerlichkeit (Dibelius) is misguided (cf. Kidd, 1990; Schwarz, 1983). He rightly stresses that the epistles have a missionary dimension.

A very similar position is taken by F. Young (1994a) in her exposition of the theology of the letters, although she would place them later than Towner and sees them more as an attempt to reclaim the Pauline heritage for churches towards the end of the first century. M. Davies (1996b) devotes the major part of her introduction to the Pastorals to their theology and ethics.

The ecclesiology of the PE was investigated by D.C. Verner (1983), who shows the centrality of the household concept for the author over against the body metaphor used by Paul. The significance which he finds is that this is a more institutionalized understanding of the Church, and it allows the development of a patriarchal understanding of leadership and ministry with an authoritarian character. This in turn raises the question of the place of women in the Pastorals, an issue too major to be tackled as a subheading in this survey. Suffice it to say that there are two trends in interpretation. On the one hand, there is the approach of scholars like Fee who explain the apparent subordination of women in terms of the cultural setting of the time and the problems caused by the association of women teachers with the author's heretical opponents. On the other hand, there is the quite remarkable conjunction of some conservative evangelicals (Köstenberger et al., 1995) and radical liberation theologians (Wagener, 1994) in claiming that the aim of the letters is to put women firmly in their place and forbid them any share in the leadership of the church as a matter of theological principle; the difference is that the former group accept this verdict and the latter strongly reject it for the church today.

That the theology is not expressed in the same way as that of Paul is patent. The major part of Donelson's monograph is devoted to a study of the method of argumentation; he devotes particular attention to the enthymeme or 'deductive argument' and to the paradigm or argument from example. The analysis demonstrates that the writer of the PE does think logically and
coherently and does not simply string thoughts together loosely, as some interpreters have held.

What we actually have in the letters is an interesting combination of a stress on traditional teaching, which must be handed on faithfully, and new ways of presenting it. Three examples will make the point.

First, there is the Christology, which is expressed in terms of the epiphany of Christ. This term is used to refer to both his first advent and his second advent. It conveys the reality that God himself in his saving power is revealed in Christ. This is in effect a doctrine of incarnation, yet the traditional terminology is not used, and the concept of epiphany is a fresh one which was not used by Paul (Lau, 1996). The old wine is being preserved in a new skin.

Second, there is the relationship between grace and works as ways to salvation. Again, the way in which the antithesis is presented is somewhat different from that found in the earlier Pauline letters, where the point is posed in terms of faith and works. But the more basic antithesis between grace and works lies beneath the surface in Romans and comes up clearly in Ephesians. The doctrine is Pauline, but it is expressed in a new manner; this time, old terminology and formulations are given fresh life to deal with a new situation (Marshall, 1996).

Third, there is the nature of Christian living. The PE use the terminology of ‘piety’ (eusebêia) and ‘self-control’ (sophrosyne) to express a way of life that corresponds to the Hebrew concept of the ‘fear of the Lord’ (Towner, 1989, ch. 7). They thus employ language that is characteristically Hellenistic and was very much at home in the ethical writings of the time, but they employ it in such a way that the character and motives of the conduct are genuinely Christian.

It follows that there is nothing ‘tired’ or characteristic of an alleged ‘old age’ mentality about these letters. The concept of an aged Paul, no longer able to express himself creatively, and writing in a different style from that of his peak, must be put aside as being inappropriate. It is true that the writer was consolidating rather than innovating, but he does so in a vigorous manner. He responds positively to the situation created by the opposition. For his concern is for the truth of the gospel as the message of salvation rather than with simply demolishing opponents. Elsewhere I have taken issue with the verdict of James Denney that the author of the PE was ‘sometimes only orthodox’; the letters are shaped by controversy which dictates their content to a considerable extent, but the fire of the Spirit still burns brightly (Marshall, 1993).

Or does it? The debate here may be summed up by referring to two essays by Horrell (1993) and Young (1992). Horrell is concerned with the way in which scholars may reinforce and
confirm the ideology of a text instead of penetrating it critically, and argues that this can happen with some sociological approaches to the NT. He claims that while attempting to preserve the Pauline tradition the PE in fact subtly transform it; it is not only the opponents who transform Paul's teaching. One aspect of what is happening is the use of the writer's ideology to reinforce the social domination imposed by superior upon subordinate groups, men upon women and owners upon slaves (cf. M. Davies, 1996a, pp. 17–21, 45–7).

Young asks how we are to read in an ethically responsible way texts which are pseudonymous, and she claims that we should try to find out what the author wished to communicate to his implied readers. We shall ask how the Pauline tradition 'is appropriately developed further for a new situation' and how the letters challenge other readers who claim to be in the same tradition. 'In other words, a responsible reading must involve attention both to past meaning and future potential. And maybe then the suspicion or neglect with which these little letters have been treated will be superseded by a recognition of their power to transform, to communicate Paul's gospel in simple summary slogans, to motivate mission, to confirm Christian identity and even, with some critical adaptation, to structure positively relationships within the Church' (p. 120).

There, then, is the tension between those who see the PE as leading to the entrenchment of unjust power structures in the Church and those who see them as capable of renewing the Church. How may it be resolved? In the last analysis, it is a matter of exegesis of the letters within their ancient setting. The problem is how far commentators can set aside or allow for their own presuppositions in determining what the text actually says before they move into the problem of interpreting it for today. The PE thus constitute an intellectual challenge to us to discover precisely what is going on in them.

Despite the questioning by some writers of elements in the PE, there is an increasing common awareness that, whatever our answers may be to the problems of situation and manner of composition, these letters have a significant role within the canon of the NT. In their day they had an important task to fulfil in dealing with a church situation characterized by the rise of heresy and opposition to the Pauline message. They still have important things to say today to a Church that equally needs to maintain its link with its roots in the gospel and to stand firm against any modern divergences from it.
Bibliography

Commentaries


**General**


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1 For a fuller bibliographical article see Schenk.

2 *I.e.* Rom., 1 and 2 Cor., Gal., Phil., 1 Thes., Phm. Scholars increasingly ignore Eph., Col. and 2 Thes. in discussions of Pauline theology since even these letters are regarded as post-Pauline.

3 For earlier surveys of commentaries see Ziesler, 1988; Warren, 1960.

4 There were, of course, plenty of other volumes in English that one should maybe have known about. There were the nineteenth-century classics by C.J. Ellicott (London: Longmans, 1861) and J.E. Huther (Edinburgh, 1881), strong on exegesis of the Greek text. There were expositions by P. Fairbairn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874, repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956) and A. Plummer (Expositor's Bible, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888). Coming right at the end of the nineteenth century was the little Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary by J.H. Bernard (CUP, 1899, repr. Grand Rapids: Baker), valuable for its textual notes. Idiosyncratic and not very helpful was R.A. Falconer (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1937). Others included E.F. Brown (Westminster Commentaries, 1917). Nor should I fail to mention W.E. Vine (London, 1925): he was a fine Greek scholar, but his commentary is devotional; and R.F. Horton (Century Bible, 1901, with a good introduction). Hanson also produced the much shorter volume in the Cambridge Bible Commentary (1966).

J. Calvin, 2 Corinthians and Timothy, Titus and Philemon, in the new translation by T.A. Smail, was published by Oliver and Boyd (Edinburgh) in 1964, and has been recently reprinted (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996).

The introductory material in the commentary needs to be supplemented by her Sheffield NT Guide on The Pastoral Epistles (1996a).

It would appear that Quinn left material on 1 and 2 Tim. which may reach publication.

In effect their work supersedes the earlier volume by R.G. Bratcher (Translator's Guide. London, 1983).

Meade appears to confuse anonymity with pseudonymity. If the Gospels are anonymous, as he claims (p. 114), this is not the same thing as pseudonymity. But are the Gospels in fact anonymous? Theophilus must have known who was writing a Gospel for him, and the identity of the disciple who wrote the Gospel of John was also known. One doesn't have to incorporate one's name in the text of a book to prevent it being regarded as anonymous!

Baukham's article (1988) deals with the fact that not only the author but also the addressees of pseudonymous writings are pseudonymous. His own position on the problem is to be found in his commentary on Jude. 2 Peter (Word Biblical Commentary, Waco: Word, 1983), pp. 158–62.

The difference between orthodoxy and heresy was understood well enough by the time of the PE. See especially Skarsaune, 1994.

For the various theories concerning the placing of the PE at different points in Paul's career see especially Lestapis, 1976; Reicke, 1976; van Bruggen, 1981.


The letters reflect a real movement and not a fictitious or 'ideal' one; see Schlarb, 1990.

It must always be remembered that Gnosticism is a particular constellation or combination of various motifs which can one and all exist independently without necessarily having a specifically Gnostic colouring. For example, a body–soul dualism and a division of humanity into the elect and the non-elect are typical features of Gnosticism but also exist in other, earlier, religious contexts.