

Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon*

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The question of authorship usually dominates discussions of the states of the Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament canon. A number of factors have often been suggested as important to consider: chronology, epistolary format, style, content, and theology. This paper's concern is not ultimately to adjudicate the issue of authorship, but to examine some of the evidence, and then to raise some questions regarding canon that are suggested by the conclusions.

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In considering the status of the Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament canon, the issue usually reduces down to that of authorship. That is, was Paul the author and/or originator of the letters (even if he had some form of help or assistance in their composition), or was he not, in which case though attributed to him were they composed by someone else and hence are they pseudepigraphal? In arriving at an answer, a number of factors have often been suggested as important to consider: chronology, epistolary format, style, content, and theology.¹ It is one of the received traditions in New Testament scholarship that Paul is not the author of the Pastoral Epistles, a view held by the vast majority of scholars, although there are a few

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well-known and outspoken voices to the contrary.² My concern is not ultimately to adjudicate this dispute, but to examine some of the evidence and then to raise some questions regarding canon that are suggested by the conclusions.

In the formulation above, I have drawn a disjunction between Pauline and non-Pauline authorship. There is a distinct possibility, however, that the equation is more complex than that, and that there may be intermediary positions. It has been suggested that Paul

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¹ Among others, see E. E. Ellis, *Paul and his Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 49-57, although my conclusions move in a very different direction. Most commentaries and introductions address these issues.

² The issue is well summarized by G. W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 21-22.

may well have had scribal help, such as by Luke (2 Tim 4:11), in composing the letter.³ Although we know quite a bit about the widespread use of scribes of various sorts in the ancient world,⁴ we do not know very much of direct relevance concerning how Paul used his scribes. It is dubious to posit scribal independence as a means of accounting for supposed discrepancies when we have two such letters as Romans, which has a direct claim to scribal intervention (Rom 16:22), and Galatians, with the strong implication of use of a scribe (Gal 6:11-17). In theology, as well as language, they are very similar, even though we do not know if the same scribe was used for both. This may well indicate the force of the Pauline personality, but makes it difficult to prove much regarding the use of a scribe. The issue of co-authorship is similar. This solution to the difficulties, therefore, looks too much like special pleading.

A second intermediary position is the fragmentary hypothesis of Harrison,⁵ in which it is posited that actual Pauline fragments are embedded within the Pastoral Epistles and hence justify a removed sense of Pauline authorship (although this is not how Harrison used his evidence). Harrison distinguishes between essentially two kinds of Pauline material in the Pastoral Epistles: various phrases taken

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from the authentic Pauline letters and supposedly authentic fragments found nowhere else. The various phrases taken from the authentic Pauline letters do not give reason enough to call these letters Pauline any more than Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* has reason to be attributed to its respective passive contributors. Regarding the unattested fragments the major difficulty—and one not easily overcome—is that of determining which fragments are original. Harrison decides that those that refer to events of a personal nature between Paul and Timothy or Titus are original, since their personal character would be the most plausible reason for their inclusion. This would appear to be the only criterion that could be used to account for such fragments, and establishes at least a plausible case for their genuineness, although they may simply be fabrications, possibly used to create the appearance of genuineness. However, this reliance upon personal references cannot be extended very far, since Harrison finds no instances of these kinds of statements in 1 Timothy, much of 2 Timothy and most of Titus. How does this solve the difficulties if there are no fragments in 1 Timothy (I refuse to take seriously the idea that the opening Παῦλος is all that is authentic and hence a justification for composing the rest of the letter), and virtually none in Titus except 3:12-15 (and the opening Παῦλος)?

³ See, e.g., C. F. D. Moule, "The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal," *BJRL* 47 (1965) 430-52; and R. P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations. II. The Acts, the Letters, the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. ed., 1986) 301-3, following P. J. Badcock for the view that Luke wrote them during Paul's lifetime (*The Pauline Epistles*, 1937, ch. 6); and S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1979) esp. 3-4; and J. D. Quinn, "The Last Volume of Luke: The Relation of Luke-Acts to the Pastoral Epistles," *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (ed. C. H. Talbert; Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978) 62-75, for the view that Luke wrote them after Paul's death and they are thus pseudepigraphal.

⁴ E.g., E. R. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2.42; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991).

⁵ See P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921); followed by K. Grayston and G. Herdan, "The Authorship of the Pastorals in the Light of Statistical Linguistics," *NTS* 6 (1959-60) 1-15.

I turn now to the other major factors to consider when weighing the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. The first is chronology. The chronological difficulty with the Pastoral Epistles is placing them within the established Pauline chronology reconstructed from the letters and Acts.⁶ 1 Timothy is apparently written from Macedonia (1:3), Titus to Crete, where there is apparently an established Pauline church (1:5), and 2 Timothy from imprisonment somewhere (1:16-17). But simply comparing this information with the Pauline letters, I fail to see the great difficulty with these place names and events. Paul was in or had every intention of going to Macedonia several times during the course of his travels, as his authentic letters state (1 Cor 16:5; 2 Cor 1:16; 2:13; 7:5; Phil 4:15), and he was imprisoned several times, again according to his authentic letters (2 Cor 6:5; 11:23; Phlm 1, 9), so 1 Timothy and Titus could easily be placed within the Pauline letter chronology. Nowhere does Paul actually state that he was in Crete (the only evidence of this is Acts 27:7 during his transportation to Rome), but then Titus 1:5 may not be saying that Paul actually left Titus there but left him to his task, Paul being

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elsewhere.⁷ Does 2 Tim 4:16 imply a previous imprisonment, as some have argued, or only a previous defense, which the language could well indicate?⁸ Since we do not know all of Paul's travels from the letters (the key example being Paul's so-called tearful visit to Corinth from Ephesus in the midst of his correspondence with them),⁹ there is the possibility that he made a significant trip there. It seems to me that the letters themselves do not create serious difficulties, until Acts is introduced, although even then the difficulties do not seem to be beyond at least plausible conjecture. The most plausible explanation seems to be that neither Paul's letters nor Acts gives a complete chronology of Paul's life and travels, and hence it is impossible to decide on the basis of chronological issues what to do with the Pastoral Epistles.

The second issue is epistolary format. The issue of epistolary format includes several different considerations, often raised in the light of the hypothesis that these letters are not authentically Pauline because they do not conform to Paul's typical epistolary style. The personal elements, typical of his personal letters, so the argument goes, have receded into the background as church interests emerge.¹⁰ But which personal letters are these that would provide suitable examples for comparison? Philemon, addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the church? Some would say that Philemon is the only authentic personal letter in the Pauline corpus, while others would question whether even Philemon is a genuine personal letter.¹¹ If this is the case, it is difficult to

⁶ See L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 382-83. Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) esp. 67-85.

⁷ This may well explain why Paul has to explain why he left Titus to get on with the task, since if he had actually left him it is plausible to think that he would have told him why. See Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 383.

⁸ See Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 383.

⁹ So say many commentators. See W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. H. C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 286-87.

¹⁰ M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 1.

¹¹ See, e.g., Kümmel, *Introduction*, 249, who recognizes the personal element but also that the letter was a part of early Christian missionary writing and not private correspondence.

dismiss categorically the Pastoral Epistles as personal letters on the basis of aberrant epistolary form, since there is only one or no authentic Pauline personal letter for true comparison.¹²

According to Dibelius and Conzelmann, 2 Timothy best fits the picture of the Pauline letter because the personal element is "strongly emphasized," as was noted above in terms of the fragmentary theory. Titus holds a mediating position, since addressing instructions to a person where there is not an established church order is at least un-

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derstandable. 1 Timothy, however, "affords the most difficulties. For here, personal elements fade into the background."¹³ But how does one determine this fading of the personal elements? Subject matter alone is not a sufficient criterion, since it does not compromise the integrity of a personal letter to discuss matters that affect those other than the primary person(s) involved. One would think that there must be some formal means in the language of the letter to establish this. This cannot be proven, however, since there is no instance of second person plural verb forms (only second person singular), and no instance of second person plural pronouns (only second person singular, apart from the formulaic closing in 6:21).¹⁴ So far as formal criteria are concerned, I am not sure how much more certainly one could establish the features of personal address of 1 Timothy than by this. The result is that the argument regarding a different epistolary format is not sufficient to establish non-Pauline authorship.

Concerning style, there has been much dispute regarding the Pastoral Epistles. Debate regarding style falls essentially in two areas: vocabulary and style proper (although there is significant overlap between the two). Beginning with Harrison in particular, there have been numerous statistical studies undertaken to show how uncharacteristically un-Pauline the vocabulary and style of the Pastorals is on the basis of a high number of hapax legomena, varying word or word-class frequencies, and more regular and less varied sentence structure.¹⁵ There have likewise been a number of studies that have countered these claims by showing flaws in the calculations regarding vocabulary and arrangement, by configuring the vocabulary items counted in different ways in relation to the other Pauline letters, the rest of the New Testament and other corpora, and by arguing that differences of context and subject matter require modified word-choice and sentence structure.¹⁶ There are two unresolved issues regarding the use of style. The first is with regard to the appropriate sample for discussion. In Neumann's recent discussion of the issue, he includes a survey of the numbers proposed. These range

¹² F. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 134.

¹³ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 1.

¹⁴ J. T. Reed, "To Timothy or Not: A Discourse Analysis of 1 Timothy," *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research* (ed. S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson; JSNTSup 80; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 106.

¹⁵ See K. J. Neumann for a survey of research and bibliography (*The Authenticity of the Pauline Epistles in the Light of Stylostatistical Analysis* [SBLDS 120; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990] esp. 23-114).

¹⁶ See Neumann for his results, which conclude far more traditionally than most previous studies (*Authenticity of the Pauline Epistles*, 115-226); A. Kenny, *A Stylometric Study of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); and D. Guthrie, "Appendix: An Examination of the Linguistic Arguments against the Authenticity of the Pastorals," *The Pastoral Epistles* (TNTC; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2d ed., 1990) 224-40.

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from 85 to 3500 words in recent studies, and as high as 10,000 words in earlier studies. Neumann lists all of these as "successful" studies, by which he does not mean that they have actually been confirmed in their results but that apparently they have been executed by their own principles. Few of these studies are of biblical documents. What is evident is that there is no agreed upon number of words for a sample. Thus Neumann apparently arbitrarily decides that 750 words will be his sample size, not on the basis of a reasoned argument but so that Pauline letters can be included. Even so, Titus with its 659 words is still too small.¹⁷

The second consideration regarding style is what exactly is being determined and how significant the findings must be before it can be decided that something is or is not Pauline. The methods used to determine authorship are almost as varied as those scholars doing the calculations, with very little control on what criteria are being used and what would count as an adequate test of the method. Furthermore, despite the appearance of scientific accuracy, as Neumann's study illustrates one must still interpret the results. What does it mean that one of the early church father's writings satisfies certain statistical tests and is placed close to the authentic Pauline letters, whereas one of the disputed Pauline letters is further away? What does it mean that one of the supposedly authentic Pauline letters is further away? In other words, how much variety is tolerable in the statistical outcome before one questions authorship? This has not been determined.¹⁸ In the light of these two major difficulties, it is extremely difficult to use statistics to determine Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Certain impressions can be formulated and examples can be cited, but the results are not certain enough for anything concrete to be established.

With regard to content as a criterion for authorship (and here I make a distinction with regard to theology for the sake of the exercise) I refer to the formalization of church order.¹⁹ In many scholars' minds, the Pastoral Epistles appear to be referring to an established church structure. This structure has formal offices (elders, overseers/bishops, deacons), with people who occupy these positions having authority over the other members of the community. The charisma of the Spirit, according to this view, has been curtailed and has been replaced by an orderly succession through the laying on of hands.

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Furthermore, the church finds itself responding to a form of gnosticism (1 Tim 6:20), not known until the second century, that advocates asceticism and a kind of legalism (1 Tim 1:7; 4:3, 8; Titus 3:9) in the context of a realized eschatology (2 Tim 2:17-18). This is all seen to reflect an early Catholicism typical of what is said to be seen in writings of the second century and later, especially those influenced by gnosticism. In order for this

¹⁷ 1 Timothy has 1,591 words and 2 Timothy 1,238. These statistics are from Kenny, where he cites various sources (*Stylometric Study of the New Testament*, 14-15).

¹⁸ . See B. M. Metzger, 'A Reconsideration of Certain Arguments against the Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles,' *ExpTim* 70 (1957-58) 94.

¹⁹ See, e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 341-45; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 378-82.

picture to emerge, however, one most successfully deal with several issues. The first is to explain how it is that Phil 1:1 uses the terms bishops/overseers and deacons, singling them out in the very order in which they appear in 1 Timothy 3.²⁰ They are not defined in Philippians, which leaves it open that they could be interpreted in a functional and non-technical sense, although it is also possible that they could reflect an early form of institutional structure already present in the Pauline churches. What would it mean that the terms were only functional and non-technical designations, if the people concerned were divided into these categories and performing appropriate tasks? Incidentally, the author of Luke-Acts may know something of this in Acts 14:23 with reference to elders being appointed in the Pauline churches. The second issue concerns the form of opposition being dealt with in the Pastoral Epistles. Although the tendency is to place the opponents in the second century, there is some question whether any of the practices or apparent beliefs spoken of in the Pastorals are totally unfamiliar to the authentic Pauline letters (e.g., 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1-3; 15:17-19; Gal 4:8-10; cf. also Col 2:20-22).²¹ Thus the content of the Pastoral Epistles is not sufficient to establish non-Pauline authorship.

Finally, the theology of the Pastoral Epistles must be discussed in terms of its bearing upon the issue of authorship. There is vociferous argumentation on either side of the debate, often at cross-purposes with regard to this issue.²² For example, certain terminology that grantedly occurs in the authentic Pauline writings is used in different ways. Thus, the concept of faith, which in the authentic Pauline letters seems to be a subjective or obedient response to God, takes on the more objective sense of a common body of belief or a virtue, or even Christianity itself (e.g., 1 Tim 1:2, 5, 14, 19; 2:7, 15; 3:9; 4:1, 6, 12; 5:8, 12; 6:10, 11, 12, 21; 2 Tim 1:5; 2:22; 3:8, 10; Titus 1:4, 13; 2:2; 3:15). This tradition is to be received and protected, where it is also to be passed on. Righteousness, which in the authentic

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Pauline letters signifies the state of being in right relation with God.²³ in the Pastoral Epistles seems to take on the more neutral and objective sense of justice (e.g., 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 4:8; Titus 1:8). Love, which is a key virtue in the authentic Pauline writings, is seen as one virtue among others in the Pastoral Epistles, often side-by-side with faith (e.g., 1 Tim 1:14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 1:7, 13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2). The Pauline phrase ἐν Χριστῷ (which has been variously interpreted but seems to indicate some sort of spherical relation in which believers find themselves)²⁴ seems to have taken on a more technical sense of "existence within the Christian community" in the Pastoral Epistles (e.g., 1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 1:2, 9, 13; 2:1, 10; 3:12, 15). In the Pastoral Epistles, God is called saviour six of the eight times that such phrasing appears in the New Testament (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). For members of the

²⁰ Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 107. Cf. W Schenk, who takes this reference as a later interpolation (*Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984] 78-82). The textual evidence cannot be made to show this.

²¹ Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 384.

²² On the theology of the Pastoral Epistles, see Young, *Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 47-73; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 32-38; Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 386.

²³ See most recently M.A. Seifri, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1992) esp. 255-57.

²⁴ S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Biblical Languages: Greek 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2d ed., 1994) 159.

community, in the Pastoral Epistles conscience is either good and pure or soiled and seared rather than being weak and strong (e.g., 1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Titus 1:5), just as teaching is now either healthy or sick (1 Tim 1:10; 4:6; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7). There are also a few ideas that are unique to the Pastoral Epistles, often related to the use of unique words or phrases. An example would be "faithful is the saying" (e.g., 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8), for which there is no true parallel in the authentic Pauline epistles.²⁵ Or perhaps 1 Tim 1:13 reflects non-Pauline thought, where Paul is said to have been shown mercy by God because of his previous ignorance and unbelief.²⁶ But ideas that are unique to the Pastoral Epistles are admittedly few. Nevertheless, there are perceivable theological differences, at least in their context of usage. It is not that these concepts are not present for the most part in the authentic Pauline letters, but that there has been some element of development. But how much and what kind of development—is it complementary development, and hence still possibly Pauline, or is it contradictory, and hence probably non-Pauline?²⁷ The latter is really necessary to establish the distinctiveness and hence

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non-Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, but it also raises the question of how and why they were incorporated into the canon. Whereas the arguments from chronology, epistolary format, style and content are finally inconclusive, it seems to me that the theological data are the only—or at the least the strongest—evidence that raises justifiable doubt regarding Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. This evidence brings to the fore the two serious questions with which this paper is concerned, however, and these are how it was that the letters were accepted into the Pauline corpus if they are not by Paul (or a scribe such as Luke) and reveal a developed theological perspective, and what implications this has for the issue of canon.

In dealing with authorship, the question of pseudonymy must be discussed. Whereas there are a number of works that are formally anonymous in the New Testament, such as all four Gospels, Acts, Hebrews and the Johannine Epistles, so far as pseudonymous works are concerned, only those with explicit claims to authorship can be considered.²⁸ These potentially include the Pauline Epistles (i.e., 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles) and the Petrine Letters. Before assessing the theological argument in terms of pseudonymous

²⁵ As even G. W. Knight III admits (*The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979] 1).

²⁶ I owe this example to J. T. Reed from personal conversation. I have benefited immensely from discussion of these points with him.

²⁷ Cf. P Pokorny, who notes that the theology of the Pastoral Epistles is a relatively logical development from Paul's authentic writings, but only appears so divergent when compared with other supposedly deutero-Pauline writings, such as Colossians and Ephesians (*Colossians: A Commentary* [trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991] 6-7 and table 2).

²⁸ K. Aland has made a virtue of pseudonymity by arguing that it derives from anonymity. See his "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries;" *JTS* 12 (1961) 39-49; repr. in *The Authorship and Integrity of the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965) 1-13. The fact that school exercises and even fiction were written under pseudonyms does not really enter into the equation, since they were part of an accepted convention whereby readers understood what was being done. See E. E. Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents;" *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (ed. M. J. Wilkins and T. Paige; JSNTSup 87; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 212; B. M. Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha;" *JBL* 91 (1972) 4; contra M. Kiley, *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy* (The Biblical Seminar; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986) 18.

authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, something must be said about pseudonymous authorship as a concept in the ancient world. This is a large topic, so a thorough analysis cannot be offered. The question that must not be asked is whether pseudonymous writings existed in the ancient world. They did, and these included letters. The evidence for this can apparently be seen in at least two ways: there are comments in the ancient writers including those of the early church regarding writings that are known to have false authorship; and there are a number of writings, especially of a literary type, such as the Platonic and Cynic letters, that have been

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determined to be pseudonymous.²⁹ The issue for this paper is whether pseudonymous writings exist in the New Testament, in particular whether the Pastorals are pseudonymous.

Before evaluating this, it is worth noting how pseudepigraphal literature was handled in the ancient world as well as in the early church. Discussions such as this often note that ancient secular writers were aware that some of the writings they were dealing with were pseudonymous. For example, Suetonius describes a letter of Horace as spurious, Galen took only thirteen of the sixty or eighty Hippocratic texts as genuine and was concerned that his own works were being infiltrated by those he did not write, Philostratus disputes a work by Dionysius, and Livy reports that, when discovered, books attributed to Nuna were burned.³⁰ The same is apparently true in Christian circles. There may have been known examples where writers commented favorably upon the possibility that there were pseudonymous writings in their midst unknown to them, but there certainly were not many and it was not the usual pattern of response.³¹ The general if not invariable pattern was that if a work was known to be pseudonymous it was excluded from the canon of authoritative writings.³² For example, Tertullian in the early third century tells of the author of "3 Corinthians" (mid second century) being removed from the office of presbyter (Tertullian, *On Baptism* 17),³³

²⁹ See L. R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (HUT 22; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1986) esp. 9-23 and 23-42. It may be true that there is less evidence of Christian pseudepigraphal letters (see D. A. Carson, D. J. Moo, and L. Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992] 367-68), but as the argument below explores, that may only mean that there was less detection.

³⁰ See Kiley, *Colossians*, 18 and nn. 9, 10, 11, 12, cf. pp. 17-23; Metzger, "Literary Forgeries and Pseudepigraphy," 6 and passim, who discusses many instances of exposed pseudepigrapha.

³¹ Perhaps this is what distinguishes the Muratorian fragment's reference to the Wisdom of Solomon, although this text is problematic: it may only be a reference to Proverbs, the Latin may be better understood not as referring to "friends" who wrote the Wisdom of Solomon but to Philo the translator, the book is placed in the New Testament canon, and—on top of all of this—it is not claimed in the book to be by Solomon. See Kiley, *Colossians*, 120 n. 8; G. M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 13-14, 200-205; contra p. 201, where Hahneman claims that "The Wisdom of Solomon professes King Solomon as its author (7:1-4 ...)." In fact, the book nowhere mentions Solomon, and thus is at best anonymous, not pseudepigraphal (although the way the authorship is implied may suggest deception). See D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; Garden City: Doubleday, 1979) 5.

³² This does not mean that the writing might not have been used in other ways, however, just that its canonical status was changed.

³³ See Carson, Moo and Morris, *Introduction*, 368-69, who also cite the example of the Epistle to the Laodiceans, which was clearly rejected by the early church, along with a letter to the Alexandrians, according to the Muratorian fragment (see Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 196-200).

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Bishop Serapion in c. 200 reportedly rejected the Gospel of Peter (Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.12.1-6),³⁴ and Bishop Saloniun rejected Salvian's pamphlet written to the church in Timothy's name.³⁵ There are other examples as well. Granted, the several means and reasons by which pseudepigrapha were exposed and excluded are diverse. Nevertheless, Donelson observes that "No one ever seems to have accepted a document as religiously and philosophically prescriptive which was known to be forged. I do not know a single example."³⁶ He is including both Christian and non-Christian documents in his assessment.

Contrary to much discussion, it is not so simple to establish pseudonymous authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, especially by appealing to other letters that are disputed, such as Ephesians or possibly 2 Thessalonians and Colossians, or 2 Peter. This appeal introduces a circularity to the argumentation which can only be solved by discovery of some outside criteria that can adjudicate. This poses difficulties in several respects. There are no known explicit statements from the first several centuries of the Christian church to the effect that someone knew that the Pastoral Epistles were pseudonymous, so this line of enquiry does not resolve the issue. Nor is it sufficient to cite a number of non-canonical Jewish or especially Christian documents as examples of pseudonymous literature, as if this proves its existence in the New Testament.³⁷ The fact that these documents are non-canonical is apparently confirmation of the fact that documents that were found to be pseudonymous did not make it

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into the canon. If anything, it might constitute a *prima facie* argument that the Pastoral Epistles should be considered authentic, since they are in the canon. The evidence that is not positive regarding the Pastoral Epistles, such as lack of their inclusion in p⁴⁶, is at best ambiguous, not negative, since there are a variety of possible explanations (in the case of p⁴⁶ one must consider the state of preservation of the manuscript, above all). Some argumentation that does not appeal to the body of primary texts in dispute must be found.

³⁴ According to Eusebius, Serapion, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote to the church at Rhossus in Cilicia, after he had discovered the Gospel of Peter being read. He is reported as saying, "we receive both Peter and the other Apostles as Christ; but as experienced men we reject the writings falsely inscribed with their names, since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers."³⁴ Although the process that led to the Gospel's exclusion is complex, in any case it was excluded, despite initial tolerance because it was seen to be innocuous. The possible ambiguity regarding the process that led to its exclusion is of course not an argument that pseudepigrapha were included in the canon.

³⁵ Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 20-22; Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity," 218. Donelson also points out the shortcomings of this approach that uses Plato's concept of the noble lie, that is, that it is in the best interests of the readers that they not know or are deceived regarding authorship by someone other than the purported author (pp. 18-22). Kiley claims that this gives valuable insight into pseudepigraphers' motives (*Colossians*, 21). This is true. What he fails to see is that it also shows that when they were detected their work was discredited, no matter how noble the motive.

³⁶ Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 11.

³⁷ A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 1990) lxx-lxxi.

Meade has put forward a suggestion that has been fairly widely accepted.³⁸ His supposition is that within the Old Testament there is a tradition of pseudonymous literature, in which traditions were supplemented, interpreted and expanded in the names of earlier authors. Meade gives three major traditions, the prophetic tradition, the wisdom tradition and the apocalyptic tradition. The only one of relevance for discussing the New Testament, it seems to me, is the prophetic tradition.³⁹ In the prophetic tradition, in particular Isaiah, he sees the growth of the tradition developed by anonymous writers whose writings were attached to the earlier authentic Isaiah. Hence Second Isaiah is not by the historical figure of Isaiah, attested through First Isaiah itself and elsewhere in the Old Testament, but can in fact only be understood in terms of First Isaiah.

Several factors need to be considered further before this pattern can be applied to the New Testament, however. It is easy to think that one is seeing in Meade's argument a parallel to the example of the Pastoral Epistles when it is observed that there is a pattern of attributing writings to a recognized figure, quite possibly and even probably after the person was dead, and that this practice was known to the audience. But beyond this superficial similarity, I have questions about the relevance of Meade's model for studying the Pastoral Epistles.

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First, the type of literature is different. Isaiah is anonymous literature and better compared with, for example, the Gospels. The Pastoral Epistles are directly attributed to a known author. Second, the process of literary production is quite different. In the Isaianic writings the tradition is expanded and compiled and the document itself grows. In the Pastoral Epistles, the argument would have to be that the tradition grows, but by adding new documents to the corpus, not by expanding others. Perhaps the entire Pauline corpus was seen to be expanding. But this would imply that the corpus had already been gathered together—something not sufficiently known for us to use it as an interpretative tool⁴⁰—and that the theology posed no problem when placed side by side with the authoritative Pauline letters. Inclusion must have been early, since attestation of the letters in the church fathers is possibly as early as 1 Clement and apparently well established by the third quarter of the second century (e.g., Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and perhaps the Muratorian Canon).⁴¹ Perhaps, it could be argued, there is expansion in 2 Timothy if a process

³⁸ D. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* (WUNT 39; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1986) esp. 17-43. His position has been accepted by, for example, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxviii.

³⁹ The wisdom tradition does not apply since in several of the works no name of an author is given (e.g., Qoheleth and Wisdom of Solomon). For those that make a claim to authorship, Psalms of Solomon is clearly a later misattribution, the information in Canticles or Song of Songs/Solomon is ambiguous since the attribution does not claim authorship (other references to Solomon in the book do not depict him as author), and Proverbs claims many different authors. The Apocalyptic tradition does not apply, since there is no evidence of any historical Daniel outside of the book of Daniel to whom to make cross-reference (see J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1984] 68-70). The other apocalyptic writings cited are already non-canonical, and hence not germane to the argument. In fact, since the apocalyptic material for the most part is not in the canon, it constitutes an argument not only for the existence of pseudepigrapha but the canonical rejection of it, quite probably because it was known not to originate with the attested author.

⁴⁰ See most recently D. Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

⁴¹ There is dispute over this evidence, with Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 13-14 (following Bernard, Falconer, White and Kelly), arguing for an early date, and Kümmel, *Introduction*, 370-71, arguing for a later date. The negative evidence from Marcion, namely his rejection of the Pastoral Epistles, commented upon by Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 5.21), appears to indicate at least a mid first century recognition of the Pastorals. See L. M. McDonald on Marcion's importance (*The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* [Nashville:

similar to Harrison's is considered, but as was observed in discussion of the fragmentary hypothesis, this does not seem satisfactory. First, there is no real sense of expansion and development of the tradition, since the authentic material is thought to be only personal references with all of the theology attributable to the pseudepigrapher. Second, this does not satisfactorily explain 1 Timothy and Titus, where there are not significant chunks of original material or even personal references to expand.⁴² Third, and most problematic for our discussion, Meade himself admits that one cannot use the tool that he has devised for discovering the pseudonymous origins of a given piece of literature.⁴³ His schema, according to his own analysis, is devised to explain the possible development of the tradition once it has been shown that the material is pseudonymous. Besides the fact that he must devise several different plausible scenarios to account for these developments of tradition according to the type of literature, his proposal does not

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solve the issue being considered here. To my knowledge, there has been no scheme proposed that circumvents the difficulties raised above. Before drawing out the implications for canon, it is important to raise the issue of deception in relation to pseudonymous literature. This has been a particularly sensitive issue in the discussion. Apart from Donelson and only a few others, there are few scholars who apparently want to admit that deception may have had a role to play in canonical formation and acceptance of any of the books in the New Testament. As he notes, there were all sorts of encouragements for skillful pseudepigraphal writings, including pietistic motives prompting those in the church to speak for an earlier figure,⁴⁴ and self-serving motives, such as the money paid by libraries for manuscripts by particular authors. This all occurred in the context of the apparently guaranteed exclusion of any document from an author's canon upon discovery of its pseudonymous nature. This forces Donelson to conclude that the only way to speak of the Pastoral Epistles is in terms of their being produced and consequently accepted into the canon in conjunction with deception.⁴⁵ Of course, he assumes that these letters are not genuinely Pauline. He goes further—too far in my estimation—in agreeing with Rist that eighteen of the 27 books of the New Testament are pseudepigraphal and were included under deceptive means. Not only is he confusing anonymity with pseudonymity, but he is taking a very small group of the Pauline letters as genuine.⁴⁶

But Donelson's analysis needs to be considered further especially in terms of the circumstances surrounding the production of the Pastoral Epistles, in particular with reference to their personal features and the original audience or receivers of the letters. Whereas many scholars have struggled with the difficulties surrounding the situation of these letters if they are authentic, the same questions must arise regarding pseudonymous authorship. As Meade has recognized, if

Abingdon, 1988] 86-89). On the disputed date of the Muratorian fragment, see Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, passim.

⁴² Meade admits to the unique shape of the "threefold corpus" of the Pastoral Epistles (*Pseudonymity and Canon*, 12).

⁴³ Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon*, esp. 16.

⁴⁴ It is questionable whether this motive can be equated with an innocent motive. See Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 10.

⁴⁵ Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 54-66.

⁴⁶ Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 16, citing M. Rist, "Pseudepigraphy and the Early Christians," *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (ed. D. E. Anne; FS A. P. Wikgren; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 89.

they are pseudonymous, there is a "double pseudonymity" of author and audience.⁴⁷ What sort of a situation was at play when these letters were received into the church? It is undecided, even by those who take the Pastoral Epistles as pseudonymous, when the letters were written and/or regarded as authoritative, with dates ranging from an early date of 80-90 to a late date of the late second

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century. In any case, the audience would almost assuredly have known that Paul was dead. Were the letters simply introduced as new letters from Paul, or at the least inspired by the situation such that Paul would have said these things had he been there? Many have argued that these pseudonymous writings are transparent fictions, and no one would have thought them actually to have been written by Paul.⁴⁸ This encounters the severe problem of why they were accepted into the canon in the light of the apparently universal response by the early church to known pseudepigrapha: they were rejected *carte blanche*. Also, this theory does not account satisfactorily for three important features of the letters. The first is the specific selection of Timothy and Titus as the recipients of the letters, two men who were also dead or who were themselves in some sense literary creations. The second is the need for inclusion of very personal details, especially in 2 Timothy regarding Paul's own life. And the third is the acceptance and endorsement of their developed theology.

Perhaps the letters were not simply introduced as what Paul would have said, but they were in some way subtly integrated into a collection of Paul's letters, or slipped undetected into a collection that was being put together. What could have accounted for such an action? It is easy to say that only the best motives would have governed this behavior, in the sense that the person was a follower of the great apostle and thought that he had been inspired to pass on words that the apostle would have conveyed to a serious situation. Of course, the person—and I think that ultimately we must speak of a person or at the least a very small group of confederates—must have known that to come forward and say that the letter was not by Paul would have meant its immediate exclusion (as well as the person being in some ecclesiastical trouble), otherwise the efforts taken for its inclusion would not have been necessary. To extend this further, the same person may not have slipped the document into the system but have discovered the document one day in a pile of the Pauline letters, and upon reading it realized that this was Paul's word to a particular situation. This encounters three difficulties requiring explanation. The first is again the endorsement of the recognizably developed theology of the Pastoral Epistles. The second is that the time lag between writing and discovery must have been relatively short, since the letters appear to have been accepted fairly soon. This means that the risk of detection must have been much greater. The third is that it simply pushes back the deception a little further. In any case, deception becomes a part of the process. In this instance, it was a successful

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deception, since the church apparently accepted the letters as genuine (at least until fairly recent times).

⁴⁷ Meade, *Pseudonymity in the New Testament*, 127.

⁴⁸ On the issue of the Pastoral Epistles being transparent fictions, see Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 46.

In his commentary on Ephesians, Lincoln recognizes—if only in passing—several of these issues. At the end of his discussion, however, he says that pseudonymy does not affect canonicity or detract from the validity or authority of the particular pseudonymous document as part of the New Testament canon. He argues that to worry about such a thing is committing what he calls the “authorial fallacy,” which he defines as setting more store by who wrote a document than by what it says.⁴⁹ This is a questionable argument, it seems to me. The question of authorship does have implications, and serious ones, even if it does not (and this is a debatable point) affect our understanding of what a document says. First of all, the Pastoral Epistles are ascribed to a particular author, one who is well known in the New Testament. It is not that they are anonymous and without any line of definite connection. Why would the pseudepigrapher have selected Paul if authorial ascription was not important? Second, even if one must not discover who the particular author is to have some sense of how to read the letter, for Ephesians, as well as the Pastorals, I think that it does make a difference whether one knows or at least has some rough idea in one’s mind whether the situation being addressed is one in the 50s or the 180s, whether one is reading a letter confronting problems at the beginning of the Christian movement or whether the letter is a response to developed problems of church order, etc. Third, the evaluation of whether Ephesians or the Pastorals are pseudonymous is done in terms of evaluating them with reference to the authentic Pauline letters, otherwise there would be no issue at all. If Lincoln really believes that authorship makes no difference, then perhaps even asking the question of authorship at all is unnecessary or committing the “authorial fallacy,” for this as well as any other book of the New Testament. At the least it is one that he need not have fretted over and confessed that he had changed his mind as he had read Ephesians more attentively over the years. But most important, the authorial question has consequences in terms of canon. Is Lincoln hypothesizing that the canon should still be open and that documents that say the right things, whoever they are written by and whenever written, should be included? I doubt it. What he seems to be saying is that the documents that we are considering are part of the accepted canon of documents of the church, and hence should not be deleted but interpreted within that group. What is missing, however, is a recognition of how the church’s canon came to be. I doubt that Lincoln would say that the canon was given directly by God one day and had

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no more historical process to it than that. What he would probably say—along with most others—is that canonical formation was a complex process involving various historical, theological and interpretative issues, some of which have been raised above. As I have tried to point out, these various issues have an influence upon how we view the documents that are included within the canon.

With regard to the canon, a number of facts must be faced with regard to the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. It seems to me that much of the evidence regarding authorship of the Pastorals is sufficiently ambiguous that the issue cannot be decided simply on the basis of these factors. The only reasonably strong basis for exclusion is the developed theology, seen by many to be out of harmony with the recognized Pauline Epistles. The fact that it is the theological issues that are the most distinguishing and yet the letters were accepted without any pronouncement to the contrary prompts the thought that there must have been some other important factors at play if the letters are not Pauline. If they are not authentically Pauline and yet are considered part of

⁴⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxxiii.

the canon, one must face what it means for these books to be a part of the New Testament canon. It is not as easy as Lincoln says simply to dismiss this question.

For some, the concept of an authoritative canon is completely outmoded. This does not mean that many of the questions raised in this paper are unimportant, however. The process of canonical formation in the early church, although we may not know as much as we would like, is an important one for a variety of reasons, including not only the historical ones but also the theological ones. For those who are concerned with the canon of authoritative scriptures, if the Pauline Epistles are not by Paul, in the light of what has been said above, other issues are brought into prominence.

First, in the light of theological development and possible pseudepigraphal authorship, the question must be asked to what degree—if at all—the Pastoral Epistles can be used in establishing Pauline theology. Pauline theology is here a slippery term, but one that must be defined at least in part. For some, it may mean a theology of all of the letters attributed to Paul, whether they are genuine or not, perhaps because they are simply in the canon. This would mean that the Pastoral Epistles would constitute evidence for diversity in Pauline theology so defined. What I am concerned with, however, is trying to establish a Pauline theology that reflects a theology based on what Paul may have actually thought, as reflected in the only evidence and means of access we have. If the Pastoral Epistles are not part of the genuine letters, I think that it calls into question whether they can be used to create a Pauline theology in this sense. They may be part of a record of how some people responded to Paul, how others developed

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his thought, how some people applied his ideas to later situations, or even how some people wished Paul could have spoken, but they can never be more than only one interpretation among many others. The fact that they were included in the canon may in some sense have enhanced their authority and may mean that they represent the most influential or powerful followers of Paul, but it does not raise their level of authenticity and hence the quality of their witness. They are still not authentically Pauline and thus should not be used to formulate a Pauline theology.⁵⁰

Second, I think that we must come to terms with the question of deception in the New Testament, and in particular with regard to the Pastoral Epistles. Is it so hard to believe that the early church was in some way fooled into accepting these letters? If the letters are not authentic, that must be the answer, since there is no record of objection to their acceptance.⁵¹ It seems likely, if the letters are inauthentic, that someone tried to ensure their acceptance by including personal details.⁵² In some respects, this makes the question of the Pastorals different from that of Ephesians, because personal references of a specific sort abound.⁵³ Why would so many personal details have been

⁵⁰ This of course raises the issue of a canon within a canon. On this issue, see E. Käsemann, "The Canon of the New Testament Church and the Unity of the Church," *Essays on New Testament Themes* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM Press, 1968) 95-107; cf. also J. D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word* (London: SCM Press, 1987) 141-42, 161-74, but who dodges the bullet by opting for the level of "final composition" (p. 172).

⁵¹ If such objection were to be discovered, it would further support the case for recognizing their pseudepigraphal status.

⁵² See Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument*, 27.

⁵³ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 127. See Lincoln where he notes regarding Ephesians the lack of personal greetings in support of the author not having intimate contact with the readers (*Ephesians*, 1x-1xi).

included in the letters by a faithful disciple unless that faithful disciple, knowing that exposure as a forger would have meant trouble for himself and his writings, was using every means possible to create as plausible a deception as possible? The disciple's motives for writing may have been noble, including finding a way for Paul to speak to his community, but deceptive it was, nevertheless. The noble lie is still a lie.

Perhaps one will decide that on the basis of this it makes no difference that deception was a part of canonical formation. This raises a new set of questions. For example, have certain documents been excluded from the canon simply because they were exposed as pseudonymous, when their motives for being written may have been no worse than those of others and their content may well have been perfectly orthodox, perhaps even more edifying than some others, including the Pastorals? Why should these documents have been excluded simply because they were unable to escape detection? Why

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should the successfully deceptive document be privileged over the others, simply by tradition, lack of perception, or historical precedent? Perhaps one will decide that on the basis of this analysis pseudonymous authorship, and the possibility of deception, make a lot of difference in the question of canon and its formation. If that is so, what happens to the concept of canon, and what happens to the view of the canonical process, whether evaluated from historical, theological or exegetical perspectives? It may well be necessary to conclude that even though the early church failed to detect the non-Pauline nature of the letters one must now decide to exclude them from their place as canonical writings. Or, it may be necessary (even if begrudgingly) to accept them as Pauline, because the alternative demands that we give up too much that we are unwilling to sacrifice.

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