

FIRST TIMOTHY CLASS NOTES

Authorship

First Timothy belongs to a group of epistles, along with 2 Timothy, and Titus, commonly designated the Pastoral Epistles.¹ Until the nineteenth century, all the Pastorals were commonly attributed to Paul the Apostle. However since that time, scholarly opinion has shifted considerably, and many interpreters today reject Paul as the author of the Pastorals. Instead, it is held that the Pastorals are second century pseudonymous writings.²

There are at least six commonly given reasons for rejecting Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. First, the events mentioned in the Pastorals do not seem to harmonize with the events recorded in Acts. Second, the Pastorals seem to picture a more developed church structure than existed in Paul's day. Third, the Pastorals appear to contain different doctrinal emphases than other accepted Pauline writings.³ Fourth, the Pastorals appear to presuppose a heresy (full-blown Gnosticism)⁴ which did not exist until the second century. Fifth, certain statistical studies indicate that a number of the words used in the Pastorals are not used by Paul elsewhere in his writings or in the NT.⁵ Sixth, some have noted significant differences in syntax between the Pastorals and Paul's accepted writings.

While it must be acknowledged that these concerns are legitimate, the overall case for maintaining Pauline authorship is stronger. Not only can the concerns above be addressed

¹ This designation has been used of 1–2 Timothy and Titus since the eighteenth century.

² Critical scholarship typically accepts only seven Pauline epistles as authentic (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians 1 Thessalonians, Philemon).

³ For example see A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 3.

⁴ Passages in the Pastorals that seem to address Gnostic concerns include 1 Tim 1:3–10; 2:4–5; 9–15; 4:3, 10; 5:3–16, 18, 23; 2 Tim 2:8, 18; 3:1–9; 4:1; Titus 1:10–16; 2:11; 3:3, 9. See PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 75–6, and EDWIN YAMAUCHI, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 49–51.

⁵ The literature here is substantial. A partial list includes, K. Grayston and G. Heridan, "The Authorship of the Pastorals in the Light of Statistical Linguistics," *New Testament Studies* 6 (October 1959): 1–15; P.N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921); P.N. Harrison, "The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles," *Expository Times* 67 (1955–56): 77–81; J. J. O'Rourke, "Some Considerations About Attempts at Statistical Analysis of the Pauline Corpus," *Canadian Bible Quarterly* (1973): 483–90; Thomas Arthur Robinson, "Grayston and Herdan's 'C' Quantity Formula and the Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 282–88.

adequately,⁶ but there are at least six good reasons for accepting Pauline authorship. First, the Pastoral Epistles claim to have been written by Paul (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:1; Tit. 1:1). Second, although the Pastorals do differ somewhat from other Pauline writings, the overall feel is still very much Pauline. Third, autobiographical references within the Pastorals coincide with what is known about Paul (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:12–14; cf. Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–2; 22:4–5; 26:9,10–11; Phil 3:6). Fourth, personal references to Timothy, Titus, and others give the impression of genuine personal correspondence. Fifth, neither Paul (cf. 2 Thess 2:2; 3:17) nor the early church appears to accept the practice of pseudonymity.⁷ Sixth, Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles was held by the early Church Fathers including Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, 2.14.7), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, 2:11), Origen (*Against Celsus*, 1.63), and Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.3–4). The Pastorals are also included in the Muratorian Canon (c. A.D. 180).⁸

Date

The date of the Pastorals is dependent on the issue of authorship. If one rejects Pauline authorship then a late first century or early second century date is usually suggested. However, if one holds Pauline authorship then the date would be sometime in the sixties since Paul apparently is martyred in the mid-to-late sixties A.D.⁹ Most likely, Paul wrote 1 Timothy soon after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 61–62) and before his re-arrest and final imprisonment. Thus, we suggest a date around A.D. 62.

Original Recipients

The Pastorals were written to Timothy and Titus, although the content in the epistles suggest that Paul expected the letters to be read to their respective churches. For 1 Timothy, the recipient is identified as Timothy (1 Tim 1:2). Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). He was probably led to the Lord by Paul himself (Acts 16:1). He was a faithful servant and traveling companion of Paul (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 16:10; Phil 2:19–22; 1 Thess 3:2).

Historical Setting

First Timothy was probably written to Timothy when he was ministering in Ephesus (1:3). Paul apparently is writing from Macedonia (cf. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13) shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 60–62).

⁶ See for example Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 607–49, George W. Knight, III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 21–52.

⁷ Guthrie also has written a helpful overview of the historical development of pseudigraphy and NT studies. See D. Guthrie, “The Development of the Idea of Canonical Pseudigraphy in New Testament Criticism,” *Vox Evangelica* 1 (1962): 43–59.

⁸ However, the Pastorals are not included in the Marcionite Canon (c. 140) nor in \mathfrak{P}^{46} .

⁹ Church tradition has Paul martyred under Nero who committed suicide in A.D. 68. Thus, Paul would have been put to death sometime prior to this.

Canonicity

First Timothy (and the other Pastoral Epistles) appears to have been readily accepted as canonical. The Pastorals were considered Pauline and they were quoted as authoritative by the early church fathers. Indeed, there are only a few instances in which the Pastorals are questioned (e.g., Marcian, Tatian). The church historian Eusebius apparently includes the Pastorals among the “fourteen epistles” of Paul (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.3.4–7) and they are included in the Muratorian Canon.

Purpose

Two passages in 1 Timothy are instrumental in determining Paul’s purposes for writing the epistle. The first passage is 1:3–4 reminds Timothy that he was placed in Ephesus in order to combat false teaching.¹⁰ But it is worth noting that, “The pastoral Epistles are primarily practical rather than theological. The emphasis lies rather on the defense of doctrine than on its explication or elaboration. The distinctively doctrinal passages comprise only a small part of the whole; Timothy and Titus had already been instructed.”¹¹ The second instructive passage is 3:14–15. Paul writes, “I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household . . .” In the midst of these challenges Paul writes to Timothy to strengthen and encourage him. As Mounce summarizes:

. . . . Paul wrote the first epistle to Timothy: (a) to encourage Timothy to stay on at Ephesus and deal with the significant and difficult issues that had arisen; (b) to provide authoritative instruction on how the household of God was to conduct itself in case Paul delayed in coming; and (c) to combat directly the opponents and their teaching and to remind Timothy of how he was to conduct himself and what he was to teach. The underlying purpose was then to encourage Timothy in his work but also to transfer Paul’s authority to Timothy in his fight against the opponents.¹²

In conclusion, we suggest that two common misconceptions about purpose should be avoided. On the one hand, those who view 1 Timothy simply as a manual of church order tend to miss the overall significance of false teaching and the occasional elements of the epistle. On the other hand, those that suggest that 1 Timothy is merely occasional and ad hoc miss the universal

¹⁰ Fee suggests that the false teaching was coming from some of it’s the Ephesian’s own elders. Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 8.

¹¹ Ralph Earle, “1, 2 Timothy,” in *The Expositor’s Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 345.

¹² William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Lynn Allan Losie, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lix.

nature of some of the material. Neither of these views does justice to the text. We suggest that it is best to keep both the occasional and universal elements in tension.

Contribution

The contribution of 1 Timothy is at least threefold. First, it provides significant insight into the relationship that Paul shared with Timothy, and insight into the character of Timothy himself. Second, although 1 Timothy is more than a church manual, nonetheless, it provides significant revelation concerning church organization. Third, 1 Timothy shows the priority and relevance of apostolic teaching for the faith and practice of the church.

Literary Features and Structure

First Timothy follows a fairly common epistolary form. This epistle contains a salutation (1:1–2), a body (1:3–6:21a), and a conclusion (6:21b).

As far as the content is concerned, it is generally acknowledged that, the Pastorals in general, and 1 Timothy in particular includes pre-existing material. The confession of 3:16, the “trustworthy sayings” (1:15; 3:1, 11; 4:9), doxologies (1 Tim 1:17; 6:15–16), and vice list (1 Tim 1:9–10) are probable examples of this pre-existing material. Indeed, E. E. Ellis has estimated that pre-existing material constitute about forty-three percent of 1 Timothy.¹³

Message

The message of 1 Timothy is, “Leaders build a healthy church by recognizing and rejecting false teachers and through sound doctrine and sound conduct.”

Basic Outline

- I. Paul introduces his epistle and expresses a word of greeting to his “true child” in the faith (1:1–2).
- II. Leaders must confront false teachers because they undermine sound doctrine (1:3–20).
- III. A healthy church practices sound conduct (2:1–3:16).
- IV. A healthy church recognizes and responds to threats against sound doctrine and sound conduct (4:1–16).
- V. A healthy church is characterized by sound conduct in its various groups (5:1–6:2).
- VI. Leaders must recognize false teachers and reject their influence so they can teach others to do likewise (6:3–21).
- VII. Paul gives a concluding blessing to Timothy (6:21b).

Exposition

- I. Paul introduces his epistle and expresses a word of greeting to his “true child” in the faith (1:1–2).**

¹³ E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Rolf Rendtorff, Biblical Interpretation Series 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 116.

II. Leaders must confront false teachers because they undermine sound doctrine (1:3–20).

- A. Timothy is reminded of the problem of false teachers and his responsibility to confront them (1:3–7).
- B. False teachers must be confronted because they undermine sound doctrine and the gospel entrusted to Paul (1:8–11).
- C. Paul reminds Timothy of how the gospel has been entrusted to him (1:12–17).
- D. Paul charges Timothy to fight the good fight and keep the faith (1:18–20).

III. A healthy church practices sound conduct (2:1–3:16).

- A. Sound conduct includes the practice of evangelistic prayer (2:1–7).
- B. Sound conduct is the responsibility of both men and women (2:8–15).
 - 1. Men are to pray with the right attitude (2:8).
 - 2. Women are to maintain godly conduct (2:9–15).
- C. Sound conduct is required for elders and deacons (3:1–13).

QUALIFICATIONS OF OVERSEERS (1 Timothy 3:1–7)	QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS (1 Timothy 3:8–13)
Above reproach	Worthy of respect
One woman man	Sincere
Temperate	Not indulging in much wine
Self-controlled	Not pursuing dishonest gain
Respectable	Hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience
Hospitable	First tested
Able to teach	Blameless
Not given to drunkenness	
Not violent	Wives (women?) are to be women worthy of

	respect
Gentle/Kind	Not malicious talkers
Peacable	Temperate
Not a lover of money	Trustworthy in everything
Manages his own family well	
Not a recent convert	One woman man
Good reputation with outsiders	Manage his children and his household well

1. Sound conduct is required for overseers/elders (3:1–7).

2. Sound conduct is required for deacons (3:8–13).

D. Sound conduct is the reason that Paul wrote Timothy (3:14–16).

IV. A healthy church recognizes and responds to threats against sound doctrine and sound conduct (4:1–16).

A. A healthy church recognizes threats to sound doctrine (4:1–5)

B. A healthy church responds to sound doctrine by identifying it and rejecting it (4:6–16).

1. A good servant points out threats to sound doctrine and rejects it (4:6–10).

2. A good example prescribes and teaches sound doctrine and practices sound conduct (4:11–16).

V. A healthy church is characterized by sound conduct in its various groups (5:1–6:2).

A. Sound conduct is to be practiced in relating to all age groups (5:1–2).

B. Sound conduct is to characterize the treatment and behavior of widows (5:3–16).

1. Paul instructs Timothy regarding the treatment of older widows (5:3–10).

2. Paul instructs Timothy regarding the treatment of younger widows (5:11–16).

C. Sound conduct is to characterize the treatment of elders (5:17–25).

1. Elders should be remunerated properly (5:17–18).

2. Elders should be rebuked properly (5:19–20).

3. Elders should be selected properly (5:21–25).

D. Sound conduct is to characterize the behavior of slaves (6:1–2).

VI. Leaders must recognize false teachers and reject their influence so they can teach others to do likewise (6:3–21).

A. False teachers can be recognized by their false doctrine and greed (6:3–10).

B. Timothy is to reject false teachings and pursue righteousness (6:11–16).

C. Timothy is to teach the rich to do good (6:17–19).

D. Timothy is to guard sound doctrine (6:20–21a).

VII. Paul gives a concluding blessing to Timothy (6:21b).

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