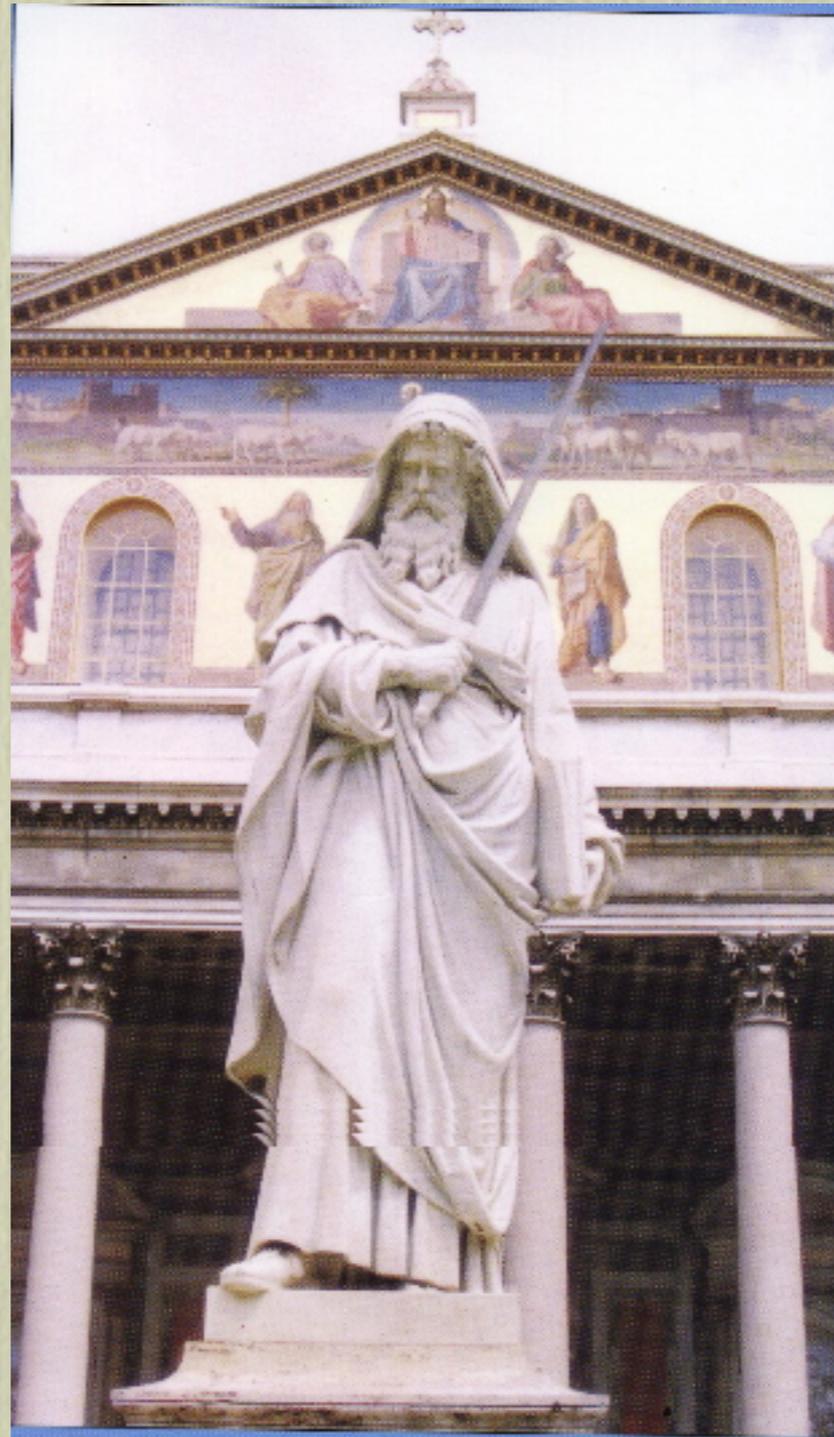


17. Beyond Acts



The church erected on the site of Paul's burial

Clement speaks of Paul's martyrdom in a letter written from Rome at the end of the first century: 'Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to **the extreme limit of the west**, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience' (1 Clement 1.5).

The ‘**extreme limit of the west**’ has been interpreted as a reference to Spain. It is possible that Paul did fulfil his dream (Romans 15:24) and that he headed to Spain upon his release from custody in Rome. This would have meant going into an area where Greek was not the common language. If he did in fact go to Spain, problems of communication may have been enough to convince him to cut this mission short and return to his earlier mission fields in the east.

Ignatius of Antioch in the opening years of the second century also speaks of Paul's martyrdom (To the Ephesians, 12), as does **Tertullian** in his *Prescriptions against Heresy* (36.3).

In his History of the Church, composed in the early years of the fourth century, **Eusebius** writes of Paul's release from prison and of his martyrdom: 'After defending himself, the Apostle was again sent on the ministry of preaching, and coming a second time to the same city [Rome] suffered martyrdom under Nero. During this imprisonment he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, indicating at the same time that his first defence had taken place and that his martyrdom was at hand ... It is recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day. [continued on following slide]

It is confirmed likewise by [Caius](#), a member of the Church, who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. He, in a published disputation with Proclus, the leader of the Phrygian heresy, speaks as follows concerning the places where the sacred corpses of the aforesaid apostles are laid: ‘But I can show the trophies of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian way, you will find the trophies of those who laid the foundations of this church.’

That they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by [Dionysius](#), bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans, in the following words: ‘You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time’ (History of the Church, 2.22; 2.25.5).

Introducing the Pastoral Epistles



2 Timothy
from Rome
67AD

1 Timothy
from
Macedonia
65AD

Titus from
Nicopolis
65AD

There is unanimous agreement that this Letter to Titus and the two letters to Timothy form a special subgroup of the Pauline letters. Like the letter to Philemon, they are addressed to individuals: to Titus in Crete and to Timothy in Ephesus. All Paul's other letters are addressed to communities.

However, not too much should be made of this, for there are indications in the letters that they are meant to be read by the communities. They purport to be letters of advice and instruction sent to Titus and Timothy in their role as church leaders. Paul is just as interested in the communities knowing that he expects them to accept the leadership of Titus and Timothy as guaranteed by Paul's own authority. Because of their pastoral nature they are commonly referred to as 'Pastoral Epistles'.

The author introduces himself as Paul and there is no evidence from the early church or, indeed, for the first eighteen hundred years of the church's life, of any dispute about the identity of the author. However, modern critical scholarship has brought us to the situation today in which the majority of scholars (but not all) either argue or assume that someone other than Paul composed these letters in his name.

Could Paul have composed the Pastoral Epistles?

I. Could what is written in these letters fit the situation of Crete and Ephesus in the sixties?

First, nothing in what is written requires a situation significantly different in time from the period just before Paul's death. Secondly, a number of considerations favour this time rather than late in the century. The stress placed on the authority of Paul's representatives indicates a less developed stage of local leadership than we find, for example, in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, composed in the early years of the second century. More significantly, the pastoral letters envisage a situation in which there is still an expectation of growth and development in Jewish Christian communities. This was not the case in the latter decades of the first century. Furthermore, the various problematic situations mentioned in these letters can be paralleled from Paul's other correspondence.

2. Could what is said have been said by Paul, or does it reveal an author with different ideas, different values, different concerns?

The fact that these letters were accepted for so long as being written by Paul is itself an indication that they not only do not contradict Paul's thought, but that they have been read as being consistent with it.

They have a special and limited focus and aim. They are unique among his letters in that they are written to church leaders precisely in their role as pastors. They contain advice and instruction about the responsibility of Paul's representatives in their guiding of the communities in living a Christian life. Ministry and ethics are central. This unique focus is adequate explanation for the special content and vocabulary.

We might assume that most of what Paul writes in these letters was already known by Titus and Timothy after years working closely with Paul. He might sound as though he is instructing them, but he is rather instructing the communities to expect this kind of instruction and leadership from them. In his excellent introduction to the Anchor Bible commentary on Titus (1990), Jerome Quinn writes: 'Titus and Timothy are models of Paul and models for believers as they are designated to carry on the apostle's work, carry out his commands, imitate his sufferings, teach his gospel and practise it themselves, preside at the liturgy, receive material support for their ministerial work, and choose other men who in their turn will share their apostolic ministry' (*The Letter to Titus*, page 15).

So

1. What is written in these letters fits the situation of Crete and Ephesus in the sixties?
2. What is said could have been said by Paul. It is consistent with Paul's ideas, different values, and concerns?
3. What about the style? Could Paul have written in this way? As already noted, the special vocabulary is not a problem. It is adequately explained by the focus and unique content of the letters. Paul's use of certain technical words that are not in his usual vocabulary can be adequately explained without having recourse to the hypothesis of another author.

Authors note the lack of many of the connecting particles that we are accustomed to find in Paul's writing. However, this, too, can be explained sufficiently by the focus of the letters. In his other letters which are written to communities, Paul is often arguing certain points. This is not the case here. He feels no need to persuade Titus or Timothy. They know why he is insisting on certain things. His purpose is rather to state what is to be done in acting decisively to strengthen their communities against divisive ideas that are undermining the gospel. There is no need for the many particles that would have been needed in the cut and thrust of argument.

This also helps explain the relative lack of the kinds of spontaneous and energetic outbursts that we associate with Paul. He is not writing to communities about their problems or questions or about his personal relationship with them, nor is he writing a friendly letter to a co-worker. He is laying down policy concerning government to ensure a continuance of the kind of authority that is needed when he himself is no longer around.

One would expect a certain impersonality, a certain formality, a certain lack of spontaneity as he expresses principles to which he has given much thought. It is unusual for Paul to put so much stress on tradition, rather than on his own divine commission. Perhaps, knowing that he will not be with them much longer (for reasons of age, health, threat to his life), he purposely stresses tradition which will still be there when he is gone, and which is not dependent on his personal presence.

We hear in these letters a number of Paul's concerns.

We hear his concern that Christians in the various communities, Jewish and Gentile, remain in communion by being faithful to the tradition which they have received.

We hear his concern that they remain in communion with other Christians by their love and by maintaining unity in the church.

We hear his concern that they remain in communion as they hold firm to the gospel in the hope of sharing Jesus' eternal communion with God in the glory that awaits them.

Perhaps the strongest call that we hear ringing out in these letters is Paul's concern that Christians continue the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world, for Paul is passionately convinced that God wills every person to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is for this reason that he seeks to support the authority of the leaders against false teaching that could undermine this mission.

Personally, I have no trouble hearing Paul in these writings. It is an older Paul (he may be about seventy years old at the time of writing). It is a Paul who is very concerned that erroneous teaching, if not checked, could wreck the church. It is also a Paul who loves Christ and in whose heart the fires of a missionary still burn strongly.

If Paul is, indeed, the author, it seems likely that these 'Pastoral Letters' belong to the period between Paul's release from his Roman prison in 62 and his martyrdom there, traditionally dated in 67. It would seem best to place his Letter to Titus and his First Letter to Timothy during his sojourn in the east, perhaps in 65. Eusebius tells us that his Second Letter to Timothy was composed during his second imprisonment in Rome, just prior to his martyrdom.

Introducing the Pastoral Epistles



2 Timothy
from Rome
67AD

1 Timothy
from
Macedonia
65AD

Titus from
Nicopolis
65AD

When Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans in Corinth in the early months of 57AD, he was thinking that his time in the east had come to an end. He kept experiencing in prayer a call to go to Rome and he was already planning to go west to Spain (Romans 15:24,28). However, since those plans were formed, Paul has spent two years in custody in Caesarea and a further two in Rome. If his letter to the Philippians was written from prison in Rome, it is clear that he is now planning to return to the east (see Philippians 2:24). We assume that he did so, that he composed Titus and 1Timothy while in the east, that he was recaptured, imprisoned in Rome and composed 2Timothy in Rome before his execution in 67AD.

The church historian, **Eusebius**, writing in the opening years of the fourth century, has this to say regarding Paul's Second Letter to Timothy: 'After defending himself, the Apostle was again sent on the ministry of preaching, and coming a second time to the same city suffered martyrdom under Nero. During this imprisonment he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, indicating at the same time that his first defence had taken place and that his martyrdom was at hand' (*History of the Church*, 2.22).

All the indications are that Eusebius is correct. Paul writes from prison (2 Timothy 1:8). He has been in Asia, for he mentions that he 'left Trophimus ill in Miletus' (2 Timothy 4:20). This must have happened after his first imprisonment in Rome, because Trophimus was in Jerusalem when Paul was taken into custody (see Acts 21:29), and Paul could not have been to Miletus between that and his two-year house arrest in Rome.

He seems also to have visited Troas recently (2 Timothy 4:13). Timothy seems to be somewhere in the Roman province of Asia. Paul asks him to give his greetings 'to the household of Onesiphorus' (2 Timothy 4:19), who is also mentioned as having contributed to the work of the church in Ephesus (2 Timothy 1:18). When Paul writes: 'I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus' (2 Timothy 4:12), it is unclear whether he is saying that he is sending Tychicus who can be a support to Timothy in Ephesus, or whether perhaps Timothy has found Ephesus too hard and has left there so that Paul is replacing him.

Paul is back in Rome and in prison. This imprisonment is not like the house arrest mentioned in Acts in which Paul ‘welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance’ (Acts 28:30-31).

This time a friend had difficulty finding him (2 Timothy 1:17), and he is ‘chained like a criminal’ (2 Timothy 2:9). He has already undergone a trial which was successful in that it did not lead immediately to execution (2 Timothy 4:16-17), but he knows that death is not far off (2 Timothy 4:6).

Even scholars who find reasons to assert that Titus and 1 Timothy are written by a later disciple, find little or nothing in 2 Timothy to support a similar conclusion. There is every reason to be confident that in reading 2 Timothy we have the privilege of reading Paul's final communication with a man who has been a close companion for more than twenty-five years, and for whom he has the deepest affection.

At the end of my commentary on Acts I offer a reflection on key themes:

1. The presence and action of the Spirit of the exalted Jesus.
2. This is experienced in Prayer
3. Witnessing to Jesus.
4. The Good News is intended for everyone.