Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles


I. Pastoral letters claim to be written by the Apostle Paul
   
   A. All begin with “Paul and apostle ... to ...”, just as other Pauline letters
   
   B. Refer to specific people known in Acts and other letters
   
   C. However, they refer to events not recorded in Acts (e.g. chained in a cold dungeon on Rome (2 Tim 4:13; 1:16; 2:9), not in a rented house as in Acts 28:30; ministry in Crete (Tit 1:5))

II. Major views of authorship
   
   A. Pseudepigraphy: Pseudonymous long after Paul’s death (perhaps 40 years) [Barrett; Davies; Hanson; Harrison (1921)]
   
   B. Allonymity: Close disciple of Paul, shortly after his death. Uses some written materials from Paul and recollection of his teachings [Marshall; C.F.D. Moule (says it was Luke)]
   
   C. Genuine: [Fee, Guthrie, Johnson, Mounce; Knight]
      1. Amanuensis writing with Paul’s authority, but more freedom than other letters (Luke?)
      2. Written directly by Paul, or with a different amanuensis than other letters

III. Problems with pseudonymous view
   
   A. Early Christians were strongly committed to truth. No solid evidence that early Christians were more lax than 2nd century Christians
   
   B. Pseudepigraphal documents were rejected by early Christians when determining the canon (although some were read popularly, knowing that they were pseudepigraphal)
   
   C. No evidence of any early Christians doubting it to be genuine
   
   D. Although Marcion did not list them in his canon (140), he was very selecting and it may be because they disagreed with his views.

IV. Problems with allonymity view
   
   
   B. Personal notes to individuals (1 Tim 1:2-3; 2 Tim 1:17; 4:6-11; Tit 1:5; 3:12-15).
   
   C. It is hard to see this is not an attempt to deceive. Why include as if to make it seem the letter is really in Paul’s life?
   
   D. Doesn’t solve problem that early church did not accept forgeries as Scripture.

V. Pseudonymous /later dating arguments
   
   A. Heresy like 2nd century Gnosticism
B. Church organization more developed (contrast 1 Corinthians)

C. Language and style different from Paul’s letters
   1. P.N. Harrison (1921): definitive argument based on statistics
      a. Of 848 words that are not names, 306 are not elsewhere in Paul’s other letters—double other
         letters (including Col/Eph); 175 nowhere else in NT
      b. Of the 306 not on Pauline Epistles, 211 are in the 2nd century Church Fathers
      c. 211 of 214 Greek particles found in Paul do not occur in Pastorals
      d. Grayson and Herdan (1959-60) did more sophisticated statistical work. Others have done work
         with computers
   2. Many common Pauline words not used (uncircumcision, die, free, work, preach the Gospel, give
      thanks, boast, heaven, spiritual, to do, wisdom, body, son, rejoice, soul)
   3. Different style: long strings of nouns, advective, rare words, different argumentation; missing many
      of the conjunctions and particles common in Paul
   4. Elevating himself as an example (chief of sinners)

D. Theology is different and even Pauline theology is expressed differently
   1. Lack of typical Pauline ideas (God as Father, “in Christ”, work of Spirit in believer)
   2. New ways of expression (“this saying is trustworthy”; Christian living as godliness, self control;
      Christ’s return is “epiphany (only in 1 Thess 2:8); more of language of Greek speaking Judaism than
      elsewhere in Paul

E. Cannot fit historical references into the life of Paul from Acts and genuine letters
   1. e.g. Paul’s only visit to Crete was on his way to Rome as a prisoner; no reference to leaving Titus in
      Crete (Tit 3:12)
   2. Different people involve in 1 & 2 Timothy than in Paul’s missionary journeys in Acts

VI. Response to pseudonymous /later dating arguments

A. Heresy like 2nd century Gnosticism
   1. All of the problems can be explained in situations Paul faced
   2. Nothing clearly and uniquely Gnostic
   3. More sectarian-Jewish, with emphasis on the Law and Jewish speculations (Tit 1:10, 14: 1 Tim 1:7)
   4. Similar to problems Paul faced at Corinth and Colossae

B. Church organization more developed
   1. Paul appointed elders even in the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23)
   2. Local church structure similar to Philippians (1:1: overseers and deacons); closer to this than Ignatius
      (AD 110) with a single bishop in charge with elders and deacons under him
   3. Organization fits a time when Paul there was a need for structures to deal with growth and heresy (cf.
      Rom 16:17-18; Acts 20:17-35)
   4. Need for more structured leadership arose due to the passage of time, with growing churches (and
      apostles could not be everywhere), growing heretical opposition

C. Language and style different from Paul’s letters
   1. Linguistic statistics requires a fairly sizable sample to make meaningful statements. The Pauline
      epistles are not that large a body to determine what is unique about the author’s style
   2. Different audience (single church leader, close coworker; not a congregation)
   3. Different subject matter and purpose. Most unusual words are in passages dealing with themes for
      church leaders
   4. Don’t underestimate the versatility of a competent writer
   5. Style of writing changes with age. Paul was writing over 15-20 years.
   6. Author incorporated existing traditions (Ellis 1999 identifies much such material)
7. May be due to using a different amanuensis, particularly since he was in prison
8. Vocabulary statistics
   a. Most words found in 2nd century Fathers are also found on writings prior to AD 50
   b. Paul certainly knew more than than 2177 words used in the other letters
   c. Of the 306 words, 127 occur only in 1 Timothy, 81 in 2 Timothy, 45 in Titus alone. This does not
      mean that there are 3 different pseudonymous authors
   d. Argument from particles and connective ignores that half of the Pauline particles and connectives
      appear in the Pastorals.
9. Paul uses himself as an example in his letters.

D. Theology is different and even Pauline theology is expressed differently
   1. Yet it is not inconsistent with Paul’s other letters
   2. Many important Pauline themes (e.g. the nature of the gospel, justification) are mentioned, though
      not in as much detail: Christ came to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15); justification by grace (Tit 3:7);
      salvation because of God’s mercy and grace, not works (1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 2:10; 3:5);
      salvation by faith in Christ (1 Tim 3:13); election (Tit 1:1)
   3. Paul does not mention all his doctrines in every letter, even the undisputed ones
      a. e.g. justification is only mentioned in Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians. Other Paulines are not
         rejected even without this doctrine
   4. Lack of details on core doctrines may be due to writing to coworker, not correcting a heresy in a
      church.

E. Cannot fit historical references into the life of Paul from Acts and genuine letters
   1. Option 1: These could be fit into Acts
      a. Acts does not pretend to be exhaustive of everything Paul did
      b. e.g. Acts 20:31 says Paul was in Ephesus for 3 years. Yet during this time he went to Corinth (2
         Cor 1:23-2:1). He could have made other journeys.
      c. We just don’t have enough information, but no one can say he did not do these trips
   2. Option 2: Paul was released from prison after Acts 28 and had another missionary journey for 2-3
      years, before another Roman imprisonment when he was martyred.
      a. 1 Clement says Paul “journeyed to the outer limits of the West”, which best fits Spain, not Rome
         (hardly the outskirts of the Roman empire). Other Church Fathers refer to a further missionary
         journey
      b. Acts ends with it likely that Paul will be released.
         1) Festus said he did nothing deserving death (Acts 25:25) and Agrippa said he would have
            been released if he had not appealed to Caesar.
         2) He is living in a rented house, not a dungeon awaiting death (Acts 28:16, 30)
   3. Why would there be so many personal reminiscences that are not confirmable from Acts if it is
      pseudepigraphal – they don’t add to the verisimilitude.
      a. Desire to have someone bring Paul’s cloak and scrolls (2 Tim 4:13)
      b. Hoping Timothy will come soon, but no certainty if he will be delayed (1 Tim 3:14-15).
      c. Onesiphorus searched for Paul in Rome but could not find him (2 Tim 1:16-17)
      d. These are not like the legendary stories of the 2nd century Acts of Paul. More like the throw away
         personal notes of the genuine letters of Paul.