

The Paulinism of Titus and Timothy: How the Pastoral Letters Reflect First Century Christianity

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The New Testament canon as we know it today was compiled in 367 CE by Athanasius of Alexandria. The reliability of Christian scriptures had been debated for three centuries by that point, with many gospels and epistles determined to be forgeries and others considered authentic. Thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament that were accepted claim to be written by Paul of Tarsus. The authenticity of some of them, however, has been questioned by scholars for centuries since. Of the thirteen, seven are considered “authentically Pauline”—Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, and First Thessalonians—and three more are called “Deutero-Pauline”—Second Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians—and have scholars divided over their authenticity. The letters of First and Second Timothy and Titus, however, collectively known as the “Pastorals,” are traditionally believed to have been written by Paul shortly before his execution, but are almost universally rejected today as pseudepigraphal forgeries on account that their situational context seems to reflect the second and third centuries, while Paul died in the mid-first. The criticism falls mainly on two aspects of the letters: Gnosticism/Marcionism and the advanced church hierarchy. Critical rejection of Paul’s letters has remained largely within scholarly circles for the past two centuries, while the

public generally accepted all New Testament epistles based on tradition. This changed when world-renowned religious professor Bart Ehrman published his New York Times Bestselling book *Forged: Writing in the Name of God* in 2011. While some of Ehrman's arguments were criticized by both the public and within scholarly circles,¹ the popularity of his theories brought the reliability of the New Testament to public attention. Proving the authenticity of Paul's Pastoral letters, which are the most debated of all biblical epistles, could restore faith in the reliability of the Bible, an idea that has been steadily declining since 2012, possibly due in part to Ehrman's book, according to a News Gallup Poll published in 2020 (Saad, 2020). By drawing on first century texts and the writings of ancient scholars, a closer inspection of the Pastorals reveals they are conducive to the first century. The false heretics adhere too closely to the Jewish Law to belong to the antisemitic religion of Marcionism and the "Gnostic" teachings found in the Pastorals are also found throughout Paul's undisputed works and reflect certain philosophies of the first century, such as Jewish Mysticism. Additionally, the church roles found therein are too fluid to reflect the distinguishable hierarchy of later centuries, with interchangeable titles, such as overseer/elder/bishop, and the roles of bishop and deacon are connected, as they were in the first century before being separated by the late second-early third. After establishing the authenticity of the Pastorals, Paul's final months can be retraced using internal references.

The name "Pastorals" comes from their focus on issues and guidelines pertaining to pastoral oversight at early Christian churches. These three letters were first grouped together under the name Pasto-

1. Throughout *Forged*, Ehrman often changes his stance on the authenticity of Acts, leaving the strength of his other arguments questionable. Ehrman ultimately considers the book of Acts a forgery because it contradicts details of Paul's life found in the undisputed letter of Galatians (Ehrman, 2011, p. 204-205), but also declares the book of James a forgery because it contradicts details of James' life found in Acts (ibid, p. 198). Ehrman also repeatedly uses Acts 4:13, which states that Peter and John were "uneducated," as a factual statement to prove they were illiterate and could not have written any of the five epistles ascribed to them (ibid, p. 75).

rals by David Nicolaus Berdot in his 1703 *Exercitatio theologica-exegetica in epistulam S. Pauli ad Titum*, and further solidified in 1726 by Paul Anton's *Exegetische Abhandlung der Pastoral-briefe Pauli an Timotheum und Titum* (Guthrie, 2009, p. 19). Critical rejection of the Pastorals being authentically Pauline began with a letter written in 1807 by Friedrich Schleiermacher, in which Schleiermacher found the vocabulary of 1 Timothy to be too inconsistent with Paul's other letters (Planck, 1808, p. 3), but he did believe that 2 Timothy and Titus were authentically Pauline and whoever forged 1 Timothy drew off the other two (Planck, 1808, p. 3). Schleiermacher's analysis was destroyed by critics of the time (Patsch, 1999, pp. 24-31), although all three letters would eventually be universally rejected by most scholars. While many different arguments have been put forth to combat Pauline authorship, most center around a post-first century dating and since Paul was executed by Nero around 64 CE, a second century dating would make them too late to be authentic. The elements pointed out as evidence for this late dating—vocabulary, theology, Gnosticism, and especially church order—are all viewed as more conducive to the second century than the first. A closer inspection of the letters and ancient sources, however, reveals that the situational context of the Pastorals does reflect these elements in the first century.

Perhaps the earliest reference to the Pastorals can be found in Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians (Marschall, 1999, p. 3). It is debated exactly when this letter was written, but it was somewhere between 98 CE and 166 CE.² These dates come from the letter's explicit reference to the martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch, which traditionally occurred under the reign of Emperor Trajan, who ruled the Roman Empire from 98 to 177 CE,³ and the date of Polycarp's death.

2. Using Polycarp's letter to date the Pastorals becomes more complicated if you consider the majority opinion that the letter is a composite of at least two different ones, an idea first put forth in 1936 by Percy Neale Harrison (Harrison, 1936, p. 15). The dispute comes from a chronological inconsistency between chapters 9 and 13: in chapter 9, Polycarp references the death of Ignatius, but in chapter 13, Polycarp has just received a letter from Ignatius, who is apparently still alive (Polycarp to the Philippians, 9, 13).

According to Eusebius, Polycarp was martyred by Marcus Aurelius circa 166-167 CE, while the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* lists the date as February 23, 155 CE (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 21:1). Regardless of exactly when Polycarp's letter was written, it must have been written before or during the mid-second century, and its reference to the Pastorals rules out a late second century dating. This date, however, still postdates Paul's death by about one hundred years.

The Muratorian Fragment is the oldest surviving list of the New Testament canon. It is usually dated to 170 CE due to an internal reference to the recent service of Pius I, who served as bishop of Rome from 140-155 CE. A minority of scholars, however, date the Fragment to as late as the fourth century (Sundberg, 1973, p. 1-41). The list accepts all thirteen epistles claimed to be written by Paul, and actually contrasts them with inauthentic epistles that were circulating at the time, including the letters to Alexandria and Laodicea:

[Paul] wrote, besides these [nine church letters], one to Philemon, and one to Titus, and two to Timothy, in simple personal affection and love indeed; but yet these are hallowed in the esteem of the Catholic Church, and in the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There are also in circulation one to the Laodiceans, and another to the Alexandrians, forged under the name of Paul, and addressed against the heresy of Marcion; and there are also several others which cannot be received into the Catholic Church, for it is not suitable for gall to be mingled with honey (*Muratorian Fragment*, paragraph 3).

The early Christian scholar Origen of Alexandria, who lived from 184-253 CE, rejected the tradition that Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews but seemed to accept the other thirteen Pauline epistles

3. Fourth-century historian Eusebius of Caesarea wrote that Ignatius was murdered by Trajan, but modern scholars doubt Eusebius' credibility and believe he intentionally dated church leaders as early as possible to prove that they were appointed by the original apostles (Barnes, 2008, p. 120). An apparent reference to Gnostic Ptolemy, which became popular in the 130s CE, in one of Ignatius' letters leads some scholars, such as Timothy Barnes, to believe Ignatius died possibly as late as the 140s CE (*ibid*).

(Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.25.11-14). It is even believed that he wrote a commentary on Titus and possibly one or both 1 and 2 Timothy, although these have all been lost (Heine, 2000, pp. 117-133). Titus Flavius Clemens, better known as Clement of Alexandria, made references to all of Paul's letters except Philemon at some point throughout his work (Metzger, 1987, p. 131) and referenced either Titus or 1 Timothy in 1 Clement 1.3:

[Paul] instructed the young to think temperate and proper thoughts; [he] charged the women to perform all their duties with a blameless, reverent, and pure conscience, cherishing their own husbands, as is right; and [he] taught them to abide by the rule of obedience, and to manage the affairs of their household with dignity and all discretion (1 Cl. 1.3; Holmes, 1993, pp. 28-29)

Besides setting a maximum date for the writings of the Pastorals, these early references to them from Polycarp, Origen, Clement, and the Muratorian Canon, some of which go as far as to contrast them with forged letters, show that the early Church and the Apostolic Fathers unanimously accepted the letters as Pauline, a tradition which held up until the seventeenth Century.⁴ While the Pastorals are not included in Papyrus 46, which dates to 175-225 CE, and is the oldest Greek manuscript that lists the Pauline Corpus, or in the early fourth century Codex Vaticanus—the oldest existing copy of the Bible—, these omissions can be easily explained.^{5,6} The only notable omission

4. Other ancient writers who confirmed the authenticity of the Pastorals include Heracleon in 165 CE, Hegesippus in 170 CE, St. Justin Martyr (100-165 CE), the Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons in 180 CE, St. Irenæus (130-202 CE), and Theophilus of Antioch, who referred to them in 181 CE as theios logos: the "divine word" (The Pastorals, "External Evidence").

5. Papyrus 46 (P46) is missing seven leaves and the Pauline letters of 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, and the Pastorals. Sir Frederick George Kenyon calculated that these letters would require ten leaves and that the Pastorals were the best fit for the ones not included (Duff, 1998, pp. 578-590). Recent scholarship, however, has found problems with Kenyon's calculation, with leading scholar Jeremy Duff concluding that "the scribe always intended to include the Pastorals, but simply miscalculated the space required. P46 cannot be used as evidence for a Pauline corpus omitting the Pastorals" (Duff, 1998, p. 578).

6. The Codex Vaticanus also omits Philemon, Revelation, and chapters 9-14 of Hebrews (Britannica, "Bible").

from antiquity is Marcion of Sinope's canon, the first collection of Christian scriptures ever compiled, which was completed circa 130-140 CE (BeDuhn, 2014, pp. 3-6, 23-24). This canon included *the Gospel of the Lord*, later known as the *Gospel of Marcion*,⁷ and the *Apostolikon*, a collection of all the Pauline letters, except the three Pastorals.⁸

Many scholars believe that the Pastorals were written in the late second century to combat Marcionism and Gnosticism (Johnson, 1986, p. 384). Since they are not included in Marcion's canon, scholars have suggested that they were written after the canon was completed. It is more likely, however, that Marcion rejected the Pastorals because they taught doctrine that opposed his, but that does not mean that they were written for the purpose of opposing Marcionism. Marcion rejected the Pastorals on the same basis he rejected the other gospels and epistles, especially the Johannine works, and altered Luke to omit parts of it he did not like. It is estimated that the four gospels were written between 70-100 CE, with the most likely dating being accepted that Mark was written first, between 65-75 CE (Perkins, 2007, p. 137), John was written last, around 90-100 CE (Lincoln, 2005, p. 18), and Matthew and Luke were written between 80-95 CE (Perkins, 2007, p. 250-253). The dates of the Gospels, which predate Marcion's canon by forty to seventy years but are not included in it, show that the lack of inclusion of the Pastorals cannot be used for a post-Marcion dating of them.

Alternatively, some say that the Pastorals were written with the specific purpose of combating Marcion's teachings, but this is unlikely

7. While the original Gospel is lost, it is known that it was a variation of the Gospel of Luke. Which Gospel came first has been debated since they were written, but most scholars and the Ancient Church Fathers agree that Marcion corrupted Luke in order to fit his own theology, although others believe Luke added material to Marcion's gospel (Ehrman, 2003, p. 108).

8. Paul's letter to the Ephesians was not included, although a letter to the Laodiceans was. Many scholars believe they were the same letter, since the earliest copies of Ephesians lack that designatory name, and Paul's letter to the Colossians mentions a Laodicean letter, which is now lost but whose description is very close to Ephesians.

due to the context. The Pastorals speak of the false opponents being “teachers of the law” (1 Timothy 1:7) and following “Jewish myths” (Titus 1:14), but Marcion was extremely anti-Jewish (Ehrman, 2007, p. 33). Paul writes that there is “only one God” (1 Timothy 1:17), who was also the savior of humanity (1 Timothy 2:3), and that the “heretics” taught false interpretations about the power of that God (2 Timothy 3:5). Marcion believed that the creator God was a lesser deity and different from the savior God who Jesus talked about, seeming to fit into the category of the heretics (Ehrman, 2007, p. 33), but this theology is common throughout Paul’s undisputed letters and the majority of the New Testament. Other seemingly anti-Marcionite passages include the “heretics” teaching the resurrection has already passed (2 Timothy 2:18), while Marcion taught that salvation happened in the present, and Jewish scripture is affirmed (1 Timothy 1:18, 2 Timothy 3:15-16) but Marcion rejected all of it from his canon (Ehrman, 2007, pp. 33–34.). The Pastorals also encourage women to love their spouses (Titus 2:4), as Paul had previously written that the “greatest gift was love” (1 Corinthians 13:13), but the “heretics” mentioned in chapter 7 of Ignatius’ letter to the Smyrnaeans do not love; they are unnamed, although some scholars believe it to be a reference to Marcion since, being so well known, he would not need to have to been identified. “They, therefore, who speak against the gift of God, die disputing. But it were better for them to love, that they might also rise again. It is, therefore, proper to abstain from such, and not to speak concerning them, either in private or in public” (Ignatius to Smyrnaeans 7:1-2). It is likely, then, given Marcion’s rejection of other first century texts and that the teachings of the Pastorals reflect Paul’s theology in his undisputed works, Marcion may have rejected them for the same reason he rejected other texts which opposed his religion (Gundry, 2012, p. 428).

Besides Marcionism, scholars believe that the false heretics in the Pastorals reflect a school of Gnosticism that was not present until the

late-second or early-third century (Johnson, 1986, p. 384). Many identify 1 Timothy 6:20 as referring to second century Gnosticism in its use of the Greek word for “special knowledge,” γνῶσις⁹: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.” This word Paul uses is a common Greek noun for knowledge. The problem with seeing the word as referring to Gnosticism is that Paul uses it twenty-two other times throughout his undisputed writings, but this interpretation is only applied to the Pastorals (Ong, 2016, p. 123). Contextually, the closest application Paul uses the word is in 1 Corinthians 8:1-2, where he warns against “γνῶσις φυσιοῦ,” or “superior knowledge,” but a Gnostic interpretation is not usually applied to Corinthians (Ong, 2016, p. 123): “Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that ‘all of us possess knowledge.’ Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge” (1 Corinthians 8:1-3). Paul also refers to this “special knowledge” in the famous “Love” passage of 1 Corinthians: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

Another type of Gnostic knowledge that is alleged to be in the Pastorals is ἐπίγνωσις ἀληθείας, or “knowledge of truth,” referenced twice in the Pastorals: 1 Timothy 2:3-4—“This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”—and 2 Timothy 3:6-7—“For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.” This proper knowledge seems to be contrasted with “false knowledge” (ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως) in 1 Timo-

9. γνῶσις – gnosis, from where the word Gnosticism is derived.

thy 6:20: “Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.” The context of the word *γνῶσις* has led scholars Jerome Quinn and William Wacker to conclude it is used to contrast the “false teachers” with the proper teachings of the Gospel, especially considering the verses lack the implication that this knowledge leads to salvation, which was the main focus in second century and later Gnosticism (Quinn, 2000, pp. 557, 560). The idea that special gnosis led to salvation was also prominent in Marcionism, which, according to Irenaeus, taught that “salvation will be the attainment only of those souls which had learned [Marcion’s] doctrine; while the body, as having been taken from the earth, is incapable of sharing in salvation” (Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 1.27:3).

Further alleged evidence of Gnosticism in the Pastorals are the teachings of the “heretics,” or “false teachers.” These include the resurrection having already occurred (2 Timothy 2:17-18), physical asceticism being encouraged (1 Timothy 4:3,8), marriage being forbidden (1 Timothy 4:3), and following the Jewish Law was necessary (Titus 3:9, 1 Timothy 1:7). These teachings were common with second century Gnostic teachers (Johnson, 1986, p. 384), although they are not unique to the Pastorals and can be found scattered throughout Paul’s authentic letters, especially the widely accepted 1 Corinthians.¹⁰ Some advocates for Gnosticism being present the Pastorals recognize a dualism inherent in the aforementioned teachings, apparently alluding to the second century Gnostic emphases on the distinction between the “good” Creator and the “evil” creation (Ong, 2016, p. 123). This duality is most evident in 1 Timothy 4:3-4: “They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving.” William Mounce

10. See 1 Corinthians 7:1, 8:1-3, 15:17-19; Galatians 4:8-10; and Colossians 2:20-22 (Johnson, 1986, p. 384).

argues that κωλυόντων γαμεῖν, ἀπέχεσθαι βρωμάτων (“forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods”) indicates the aspects of the law that the opponents forced others to obey, asceticism in this case (Mounce, 2000, p. 238). Considering a similar passage in Colossians 2:16-23, Mounce concludes it unlikely that abstinence is being used in a dualistic fashion found in second century Gnosticism and rather that ἀπέχεσθαι βρωμάτων¹¹ is simply part of the larger list of the false teachings (Mounce, 2000, p. 238). Those who adhere to Mounce’s theory believe the opponents were teaching people to live the “paradise lifestyle” found in the Garden of Eden, where certain foods were forbidden,¹² vegetarianism was practiced, marriage was said not to exist at the resurrection,¹³ and child-bearing was prohibited¹⁴. (Towner, 1994, p. 103-104).

Paul’s description in 1 Timothy 4 has been compared to a second century Gnostic group called the Encratites, who practiced abstinence from marriage and meat (Kitagawa, 1980, p. 208). Indeed, Paul may be referring to them even if the letter is authentic and from the mid-first century, as the full statement implies that God told him in a vision that this group would form “at a later time”: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Spiritual prophesy aside, this type of abstinence is not unique to the Pastorals. References to marriage and certain foods being prohibited by the false teachers can be found throughout many of Paul’s letters (Johnson, 1986, p. 384). For example, 1 Corinthians

11. “Demand abstinence from foods.”

12. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

13. “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30).

14. In 1 Timothy, Paul writes that women “will be saved through childbearing” (1 Timothy 2:15), and some believe he was combatting another teaching of the opponents that may have forbidden it (Ong, 2016, p. 124).

7:1— “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is well for a man not to touch a woman’”— and Colossians 2:20-22— “If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch?’ All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings.” It seems that certain community members in the early Church were already advocating abstinence by the 50s CE at the latest, and this teaching may have evolved into later Gnostic groups, such as the Encratites.

Another possible reference to Gnosticism, which A.T. Hanson believes makes the strongest case (Hanson, 1982, p. 25), is the reference to “genealogies.”¹⁵ Philip Towner compared the “endless genealogies” to the Gnostics fascination with tracing the history and hierarchy of aeons,¹⁶ although Hanson refutes this theory on the ground that Paul’s references to genealogies are vague and missing the archon teachings of Gnostics (Towner, 1987, p. 114). Mounce believes that the genealogies are references to the “false teachers” tendency to study the Hebrew Bible, in particular the Paradise and Creation stories in Genesis, specifically the family lineage passages in Genesis 4-6 (Mounce, 2000, p. xcvi). While Gnosticism was rooted in Jewish Mysticism, Gnosticism itself was anti-Semitic for the most part. Gnostic texts found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt were often rooted in “a violent rejection” of Judaism itself and the Jewish God (Cohen, 2010, p. 286). It seems unlikely, then, that the “false teachers” in the Pastorals were Gnostics due to their emphases on adhering to the Jewish Law, including the aforementioned asceticism, and some were Jews themselves, as the following passages show.

1 Timothy 1:6 — “Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, without

15. Referenced in 1 Timothy 1:4 and Titus 3:9.

16. In Gnosticism, “aeon” was the emanation of God that was responsible for all being.

understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.”

Titus 1:10-11 — “There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach.”

Titus 3:9 — “But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”

Elements of early Jewish Mysticism can also be found in Paul’s undisputed letters, such as in the following passage from 2 Corinthians,¹⁷ written circa 55 CE:

“I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat” (12:2-4).

Besides Gnosticism, others challenge the Pastorals based on the advanced church hierarchy found therein, with bishops, deacons, deaconesses, presbyters, and widows all given roles and qualifications. Although the three letters are grouped together as the “Pastorals,” 2 Timothy does not mention church order at all and only three verses of Titus deal with the issue (1:6-9). The little information in Titus is merely a generalized overview of the characteristics church elders¹⁸.

17. The non-canonical Second Book of Enoch, dated to the late first century, also describes a system of heavens similar to Paul’s understanding in Corinthians (2 Enoch 1-22). These Mystic teachings on spiritual realms were clearly well-known in the first century and not unique to a later second century school of Gnosticism.

18. The only role mentioned in Titus is elder/overseer. There are no deacons, deaconesses, presbyters, or bishops.

should possess, and not nearly as detailed as the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy (Johnson, 1986, p. 385).¹⁹ When read closely, the qualifications in Titus technically take up one single verse of the whole letter (v.6), with the other three verses in the section expanding on what makes a person blameless (v. 7-9). The “blameless” section itself is very generalized and similar to other Pauline works, such as the following excerpt from the “love passage” of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

When compared to the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, written around 115 CE, scholars believe that the Pastorals seem to be more conducive to the early second century rather than the mid-first century (Johnson, 1986, p. 385).²⁰ For example, a passage from Ignatius states:

It is therefore necessary, whatsoever things ye do, to do nothing without the bishop. And be ye subject also to the presbytery, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, in whom, if we live, we shall be found in Him. It behoves you also, in every way, to please the deacons, who are [ministers] of the mysteries of Christ Jesus; for they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God (Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians 2.2).

19. See Titus 1:6-9: “An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

20. See Ignatius to the Ephesians 2.2: “It is therefore meet for you in every way to glorify Jesus Christ who glorified you; that being perfectly joined together in one submission, submitting yourselves to your bishop and presbytery, ye may be sanctified in all things.” See also Ignatius to the Magnesians 3.1: “And you it beseemeth not to despise the youth of your bishop, but to award all reverence unto him, respecting the power of God the Father which is in him, even as I have known the sacred presbyters to do, not having regard to his apparently youthful position, but as wise men in God yielding unto him: yet not unto him but unto the Father of Jesus Christ, who is bishop of all.”

The main difference between the Pastorals and Ignatius' letters is that Ignatius reflects a system where church hierarchy is essential to the well-being of the church and the offices reflect God and Jesus Christ Himself (Schweizer, 1979, p. 153).²¹ The church positions in the Pastorals, on the other hand, are not defended, interpreted, legitimized, or presented as "sacral" (Johnson, 1986, p. 385). Since the sacredness of the Church did not become prominent until the second century, its absence in the Pastorals could indicate the letters predate this theology. The church positions themselves, however, have been thought of as being too advanced for Paul's time. Contrary to popular belief, they are not as rigid in the Pastorals as some scholars believe. For example, the titles of "elder" and "bishop" are both used interchangeably with "overseer":

1 Timothy 3:1-2: "The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of overseer desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach..."

Titus 1:5-7: "[You] should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless."

The First Epistle of Clement, written in the late first or early second century, contains many references to church positions. The title of "overseer" is never used and the term "elder" is not a church position, but rather used to distinguish between the young and the old: 1

21. See *Ignatius to the Trallians* 2.2: "Be ye subject to the bishop as to the Lord, for 'he watches for your souls, as one that shall give account to God.'" *Ignatius to the Trallians* 3.1: "In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church." *Ignatius to the Ephesians* 5.1: "For if I in a short time had such converse with your bishop, which was not after the manner of men but in the Spirit." *Ignatius to Polycarp* 6.1: "Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. I am devoted to those who are subject to the bishop, the presbyters, the deacons. May it be granted me to have my portion with them in the presence of God."

Clement 3:3— “Thus the mean men were lifted up against the honorable; those of no repute against those of good repute; the foolish against the wise; the young against the elder”; 1 Clement 21:6— “Let us honor our elders. Let us instruct the young in the discipline of the fear of God.”

The title of “deacon” is used in conjunction with “bishop” in many Christian documents from the first century, although there is a distinguishability between the two titles in 1 Clement: 1 Clement 42:4— “...they appointed their firstfruits to be bishops and deacons over such as should believe”; 1 Clement 42:5— “I will establish their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith”; 1 Clement 44:4— “For it will be no small sin in us if we depose from the office of bishop those who blamelessly and piously have made the offerings.” This connection between bishops and deacons is also found in the *Didache*, one of the earliest Christian treatises from the first century, and in Paul’s undisputed letter to the Philippians.²² In the *Didache*, the bishops and deacons are linked to the “ministry of prophecy and teaching.”

Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honourable men together with the prophets and teachers (Didache 15:1-2).

In 1 Clement 59:3, God Himself is portrayed as the ultimate bishop who consecrates the office, similar to the sacredness of the positions found in Ignatius’s letters: “God of all flesh...who art the maker and bishop of every soul...and out of all hast chosen those that love thee through Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, through whom thou hast taught us, hast sanctified us, hast honored us.”

22. See Philippians 1:1-2: —“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus; To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

These passages, among others, make it clear that it was not until the second century that church titles became more concrete, although there was still a level of interchangeability in some aspects. For example, the letters of Ignatius of Antioch are the only Christian writings from the first century that distinguish between Monarchical bishops,²³ while other writers continued to equate the title with presbyters or pluralize the title (*episkopoi*, or bishops). This was still common even in the fourth century, evident by Jerome's letter 146: "Therefore a presbyter is the same as a bishop is" (Jerome, 1881, p. 73). The term presbyter, from the Greek *presbyteros*, literally means "elder," and was used by first century Christians to refer to bishops serving as overseers (Bromiley, 1979, p. 516). The Church in Jerusalem, which was led by James, is described in Acts as having a college of "presbyteros," although this is usually translated in English Bibles as "elders," from the Greek *πρεσβύτερος*.²⁴ Jerome also confirmed that the early church was presided over by presbyters:

The churches were governed by the common counsel of the presbyters. But, after that each one was accustomed to regard those whom he had baptized as his own disciples and not of Christ, it was decreed in the whole world that one chosen from among the presbyters should be placed over the others...Therefore, as presbyters may know that by the custom of the church they are subject to the one who has been placed over them; so also bishops may understand that they are greater than presbyters more by custom than by the veritable ordinance of the Lord (Jerome, 1881, pp. 73, 74).

Similarly, the word "deacon" comes from the Greek *diákonos* (*διάκονος*) and tradition holds that the office of deacons began with the selection of the seven men to aid with charity work in Acts 6, as *diákonos* means minister or servant (Liddell, 1889, p. 112).

23. A monarchical bishop was one bishop who served as overseer to every house church in a city.

24. Examples of this translation can be found in Acts 11:30, 14:23, and 15:22.

Outside of the Pastorals, “deacons” are mentioned in Paul’s letter to the Philippians (1:1) and women deacons²⁵ are mentioned in Romans: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae” (16:1). The earliest Latin reference to female deacons comes from Pliny the Younger’s letter to Emperor Trajan, written circa 110-112 CE: “I believed it was necessary to find out from two females who were called deacons, what was true—and to find out through torture” (Madigan, 2011, p. 26). Neither of these references refer to “deaconesses”²⁶ as an order, and the word “deaconess” does not actually appear in the New Testament. The women in 1 Timothy, like the women Pliny tortured, are simply women who are deacons and a separate order is not indicated. In fact, Paul does not even call attention to the female deacons; requirements for women are mentioned in the middle of the qualifications for deacons in general:

Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money... Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well (1 Timothy 3:8, 11-12).

Since Paul mentions elders by age (1-2), then widows (3-16), then the church office of elders (17-22) in chapter 5 of 1 Timothy, some argue that the “enrolled widows” were actually an order of widows who served the churches (Keener, 2016, 1 Timothy 5:3-16). The section’s place in the letter, however, comes in the middle of Paul instructing the elders how to act and treat other believers, widows included, before setting instructions for elders pay (4:6-16, 5:1-17). It seems unlikely, then, that Paul was referring to a special order of widows. It is evident from several early Christian sources that elders, bishops, deacons, and presbyters were all titles used to refer to individuals in leading positions in the church. It is not unique to the Pas-

25. διάκονος, or *diákonos*

26. διακόνισσα, or *diakonissa*

torals, nor does the structure indicate a late second to third century hierarchy. Besides the hierarchy itself, however, the qualifications seem to be at odds with some of Paul's ideologies. For example, Paul famously spoke against marriage—"to the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am" (1 Corinthians 7:8)—but in the Pastorals, according to scholar Bart Ehrman, "the author *insists* that the leaders of the church be married" (Ehrman, 2012, p. 100). These passages include 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 12; and Titus 1:5-6²⁷. A closer inspection of the verses, however, show that Paul is not saying all bishops have to be married, only that, if they are married, it should only be to one wife.²⁸ This understanding fits Paul's ideology very closely, as he often spoke against marriage, particularly remarriage, as evident in 1 Corinthians 7:27: "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife."²⁹

The church hierarchy was not invented by Paul. Many features of the early Christian church, including those found in the Pastorals, are consistent with Hellenistic and Diaspora Jewish synagogues. As James Burtchaell explains:

The presiding officer, the college of elders and the assistant appear to carry over from synagogue to church. As in a Jewish context, so in a Christian: the authority to initiate and formulate policy on behalf of

27. 1 Timothy 3:2-3— "Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money." 1 Timothy 3:12— "Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well." Titus 1:5-6— "I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious."

28. Translations vary whether the bishops should only be married once (i.e. NRSV), as in forbidding remarriage, or only have one wife (i.e. NASB), seeming to forbid polygamy, but the general sentiment is always the same.

29. See also 1 Corinthians 7:10— "To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife."

the community resides in a group, and that group is served by a presiding officer who appears to be stable in that position. He disposes of the services of one or more assistants whose duties can extend to the limits of the community's program, but he is especially occupied with provisioning those whose welfare depends upon community funds (Burtchaell, 1992, p. 339).

The title of "elder" in specific was used by Diaspora synagogues for those with the greatest wisdom, and they provided leadership roles in the synagogue (Keener, 2014, Titus 1:5). Besides the church positions, the public reading of Scripture³⁰ during gatherings and calling elders "father" and "mother"³¹ came from Diaspora Synagogues, as well (Keener, 2016, 1 Timothy 4:13, 5:1-2). As scholar Craig Keener notes, "Paul followed the convenient, conventional form of synagogue leadership in his culture rather than instituting entirely foreign leadership structures" (Keener, 2014, Titus 1:5). By doing so, conversion would be easier and the institution of church structure and leadership would not be as complicated as inventing an entirely new system would have been.

Assuming that the letters are authentically Pauline, and by attempting to place the events described in the Pastorals in their chronological order, in addition to drawing on other Biblical accounts and historical evidence, it can be proven that Paul embarked on a fourth missionary journey before his death not described in the book of Acts and this journey can be retraced and more information about the final years of the apostle can be discovered. According to the book of Acts, Paul went on three missionary journeys over the course of about

30. In Diaspora Synagogues, a law scroll would be read and then explained; by the early second century, Christian texts were already being read in the church (Keener, 2016, 1 Tim. 4:13)

31. "Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters—with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

thirty years, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. After being arrested in Jerusalem and imprisoned there for two years, Paul was sent to Rome to be tried before Emperor Nero, and Acts never describes the outcome of Paul's trial before Caesar, instead ending with him serving two years of house arrest in Rome, "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). Paul was beheaded by Nero around 64 CE and most people assume that this happened at the end of those two years. The Pastoral letters, however, give evidence that Paul survived his first Roman trial and went on a fourth missionary journey, possibly all the way to Spain.

The events described in the Pastorals seem to take place after Acts, indicating that Paul won his case before Nero. In 2 Timothy 4:16, Paul mentions that everyone deserted him during his "first defense." Clearly, this implies a second defense, or it would not have to be numerically identified. It is not surprising that Paul won his Roman appeal, given that neither the Roman Tribune Claudius Lysias, Felix the governor, Felix's successor Festus, or King Herod Agrippa found any charges against him.³² At the hearing which granted Paul's appeal to be tried in Rome because he was a Roman citizen, Herod admitted to Festus the governor after conversing with Paul that "this man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment... [he] could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor" (26:31-32). If Paul did win his appeal before Caesar, where did he go afterwards? In his letter to the Romans, in which he mentions his upcoming trip to Jerusalem, Paul indicates that he has been desiring for many years to visit the church in Rome on his way to Spain (Romans 15:23-24). He later writes that once he leaves Rome, he plans to go directly to Spain from there (Romans 15:28). Instead, Acts tells us that Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, imprisoned there for two years, and then sent to Rome. If

32. See Acts 21-27 for the full story of Paul's arrest that ended in him being transferred to Rome.

Paul planned to go to Spain directly after Rome, he could have carried out that plan. The Bible does not say whether or not he went, but many ancient sources indicate that he did. These references include 1 Clement, the Muratorian Fragment, Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, and Jerome.³³ The letter of 1 Clement, which is the most reliable of the sources given it was written no more than 30 years after Paul's execution, says that Paul reached "the farthest limits of the West," which would have been understood as Spain at the time. It is unknown, however, if Clement meant Paul himself literally traveled to Spain or if his Gospel message reached all the way to Spain because his exact phrasing leads credibility to both interpretations. Spain was about a seven to ten-day journey from Rome by sea, so it would not have necessarily been a long trip. In the Pastorals, however, Paul never mentions a trip to Spain, and scholar Luke Timothy Johnson determined that all the cities he does mention are in the East, the complete opposite direction (Johnson, 1986, p. 383). The evidence that exists is too inconclusive to indicate if Paul actually went to Spain after his Roman appeal. If he had, it probably took place before the events described in the Pastorals, given the geographical displacement, and immediately following his release from Rome.

Whether or not Paul went to Spain, of all the cities he mentions in the Pastorals, location proximity suggests that he went to Crete first (Titus 1:5). Paul had visited Crete, specifically the city of Fair Havens, very briefly on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7-8). Now returning to Crete, he commissions Titus, a trusted Greek disciple of his, to appoint elders/bishops based off his qualifications: "someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious" (Titus 1:6). Paul had to move on and left Titus in charge to finish the work he started on the trip to Rome two years previously. From Crete, Paul probably went to

33. See 1 Clement 5:5-7; the Muratorian Canon 34-39; Catecheses, Lecture 17.26; Second Timothy, Homily 10; Jerome's Amos cap.5.

Ephesus next to meet with Timothy.

In Ephesus, Paul faced many hardships, including opposition from a group from Asia Minor (2 Timothy 1:15). Among this group was Phygelus and Hermogenes; the nature of their opposition is unknown and Paul does not mention what became of them. Among the faithful in Ephesus, however, was Onesiphorus, who rendered much service to Paul (2 Timothy 1:18). The details of his aid are unlisted, but his dedication to Paul in Rome may provide some hint as to the extreme nature of the help (2 Timothy 1:16-17). More trouble came from Alexander the coppersmith, who “did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds (2 Timothy 4:14). Since Paul warns Timothy to “beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message” (2 Timothy 4:15), Alexander more than likely lived in Ephesus, where Timothy is. This Alexander is sometimes identified with one mentioned in Acts 19, when Paul’s anti-idol message disrupted the silversmith business that was important to Ephesus’ well-being. Demetrius the silversmith, whose business of making idols of Artemis was disrupted by Paul’s declaration that “gods made with hands are not gods” (Acts 19:26), led a mob against Paul and a riot broke out in the Ephesus theater. A man named Alexander tried to make a peaceful defense, but the mob silenced him when they realized he was a Jew (Acts 19:33-34). The connection between Demetrius the silversmith and the Ephesian Alexander makes it likely that Alexander the coppersmith is the same person as the one in the theater. If so, Alexander probably agreed with Demetrius and suffered from the decrease in business due to Paul’s message and turned against him. The nature of the “great harm” Alexander leveled against Paul is unknown, but it could have been as simple as leading people away from the faith or as personal as betraying Paul to the authorities or testifying against him at his trial. This Alexander could also be the same one mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:19-20: “By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alex-

ander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Hymenaeus is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:16-18: “Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some.” Taking the passages together, it seems that the opposition Paul faced from those from Asia Minor—including Phygellus, Hermogenes, Alexander, Hymenaeus, and Philetus—was that they were saying the resurrection had already passed and were successfully leading people away from the gospel. Throughout the Pastorals, other hints of the false teachings can be found and many scholars believe they were teaching an early form of Gnosticism, as explained earlier.

Leaving Timothy in charge at Ephesus to oppose the false teachers, Paul left for Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). If the letters of Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon—collectively known as the Prison Letters—were written during Paul’s two-year house arrest in Rome, as most believe, he may have fulfilled his promise to visit Philemon in Colossae (Philemon 1:22) and the church in Philippi (Philippians 2:24) after his release on his way to Macedonia. If the letters were written during a different imprisonment, such as Caesarea or Ephesus, these two stops could have been made years earlier and are not part of his fourth and final missionary trip. It was at this point, after leaving Ephesus and during the Macedonian trip, Paul probably wrote Titus and 1 Timothy. He does not say where he is, but a mention of leaving his follower Erastus in Corinth may suggest he wrote the letters there (2 Timothy 4:20). Erastus was the city treasurer of Corinth, so it is logical why he remained there (Romans 16:23). In the letter to Titus, Paul says he plans to spend the winter in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Paul tells Titus he will send either Artemas or Tychicus to him (Titus 3:12) and since Tychicus was sent to Timothy

in Ephesus (Kenner, 2016, 2 Timothy 4:12), Artemas probably delivered Titus' letter. Paul asks Titus to send Zenas the Lawyer and Apollos to meet him in Nicopolis, "and see that they lack nothing" (Titus 3:13). He hopes to visit Timothy soon but feels he will be delayed (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

After writing 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul journeyed to Miletus, where he was forced to leave Trophimus because he was sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul does not mention Trophimus' fate, suggesting he himself did not know what came of him, and probably expected Timothy to check on him on his way to Rome. Paul then went to Troas, where he left his cloak, books, and parchments with a man named Carpus (2 Timothy 4:13). The fact that Paul left his cloak indicates it was spring or summer, so he had yet to reach Nicopolis for the winter, and leaving his other belongings imply a hurried departure from Troas. It is possible Paul had to flee the city to escape persecution, as he was well accustomed to, but he never indicates that was the case here. Troas is the final city Paul mentions, and he immediately mentions the "great harm" Alexander the coppersmith did to him in the next verse (2 Timothy 4:14). It seems likely that Paul was arrested in Troas, possibly as a result of Alexander's actions. It is unknown why Paul was arrested again, but his second Roman trial did not end favorably. Nero had begun a widespread persecution of Christians, and Paul was a major figure in Christianity. This time, Paul was imprisoned in the cold dungeon of Mamertine Prison where he awaited his execution.

In his final letter, Paul begs Timothy to come to him so he can see his beloved adopted son one last time, adding that everyone else has left him, either by desertion or to continue mission work. "Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:9-11). Mark may be John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas whose abandon-

ment of Paul in Pamphylia led to the split between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40). Perhaps Paul wanted to make amends with his old friend before his death, or they had reconciled some time earlier in an undescribed event. Onesiphorus, who aided Paul in Ephesus, also helped him during this final imprisonment. Paul writes that “when [Onesiphorus] arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me” (2 Timothy 1:17). Onesiphorus “often refreshed” Paul and “was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Timothy 1:16). Since Paul only addresses Onesiphorus in the past tense, sends greetings to “his household” (2 Timothy 4:19), and prays that “he will find mercy from the Lord on that day” (2 Timothy 1:18), scholar John Rutherford believes that Onesiphorus had died by the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy (Rutherford, 2013). Whether he was executed in the persecution or if he simply died from an illness is unknown. Epaphroditus almost died from a life-threatening illness he contracted while delivering gifts from Philippi to Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, although he recovered (Philippians 2:26, 27). However Onesiphorus died, it is clear that he remained loyal to Paul and the faith until the end. Besides Luke, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia “and all the brothers and sisters” are with Paul (2 Timothy 4:21). Unlike his previous imprisonments, where he was granted certain accommodations and allowed a little freedom, Mamertine was notoriously wet and cold, which is probably why he asks Timothy to bring his cloak before winter (so he can keep warm) and his books, to help pass the short time he has left. Tradition holds that Paul was beheaded by Nero in 64 CE and since he was a Roman citizen, he was allowed a Roman execution as opposed to the barbaric punishments leveled at other Christians. Despite this, Paul makes clear to Timothy that he is at peace with his fate.

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved

for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 18).

In addition to the second century dating theories, scholar Craig Keener concluded in 2016 that the amount of personal details relevant to Timothy in the Pastorals makes it unlikely that a forger could have invented them so accurately (Keener, 2016, 2 Timothy 4:20). Tychicus probably delivered the first letter to Timothy and they knew each other according to Acts 20:4; metalworkers opposed Paul in Ephesus, Timothy's location according to the first letter (4:14); and Erastus and Trophimus were Timothy's fellow workers in Acts 19:22, 20:4 (ibid). Piecing together the references from the letters to Titus and Timothy, as well as evidence from other works in the New Testament, it seems likely that Paul won his appeal before Nero and was released from house-arrest after two years. Afterwards, he may have gone to Spain, but this is unclear. From Rome or Spain, Paul then traveled to Crete to instruct Titus how to appoint elders for the church Paul had started there, probably on his way to Rome two years earlier. From there, Paul traveled to Ephesus to encourage Timothy on how to deal with false teachers from Asia Minor, including Alexander the coppersmith, who may be the same Alexander who was part of the Ephesian riot some five years earlier. A Christian named Onesiphorus tended to Paul in Ephesus until Paul left to travel to Macedonia, and he may have visited Philemon in Colossae and the members of the church in Philippi at this time. He then traveled to Corinth, where he wrote the letters of Titus and 1 Timothy, sending Artemas to Crete to deliver Titus' letter and Tychicus to Ephesus to deliver Timothy's letter. Planning to spend the winter in Nicopolis, Paul left Erastus, the city treasurer, behind in Corinth and traveled to Miletus. There, he was forced to leave Trophimus behind because he was sick

and went to Troas. He was probably arrested there in the spring or summer, perhaps having been betrayed in some way by Alexander, and was forced to leave his belongings with Carpus. Back in Rome during the wide persecution of Christians, who have been blamed by Nero for the Great Fire, Paul is sentenced to death. While awaiting execution in the dungeon of Mamertine Prison, Paul finds himself alone except for Luke, his faithful physician. Onesiphorus came to Paul's aid again, but died shortly after arriving in Rome, either by illness or execution. Paul writes to Timothy one last time, hoping to see him before his death, but it is unlikely that this happened. Faithful to the end, Paul is content with his fate and, being a Roman citizen, he is beheaded instead of dying a brutal death in Rome's arenas or in some other inhumane way.

Although the Pastoral letters of Paul—Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy—are rejected as authentically Pauline on the basis that their content reflects a late second-century setting, there is evidence that they can be dated to the first century and, by extension, could have been written by Paul. The letters were widely known and accepted by the mid-second century at the latest and were even compared to inauthentic Pauline works to show their authenticity. The earliest collections of Christian literature accepted them as canon, with the exception of Marcion, who rejected them because they opposed his religion, just as he rejected the other sixteen works that would eventually become part of the New Testament for the same reason. When compared to the other works that Marcion rejected, their lack of inclusion makes sense and does not indicate a post-Marcion dating or that they were written to explicitly combat Marcionism. The Gnosticism and heretical teachings scholars find in the Pastorals can also be found throughout Paul's undisputed works and reflects certain philosophies of the first century, such as Jewish Mysticism. Others find the advanced church structure evidence of a post-Pauline dating. The

church titles found therein, however, are too fluid to reflect the distinguishable and spiritually enforced hierarchy of later centuries. Not only are titles interchangeable, such as overseer/elder with bishop, the roles of bishop and deacon are connected, as they were in the first century until they were separated by the late second-early third century. Other titles, such as deaconess, are not actually found in the Pastorals, nor are a special order of “widows.” The titles that are used were prominent in early Christianity, evident from Paul’s authentic letters, the book of Acts, and the writings of ancient historians. The evidence is plentiful that the concepts in the Pastorals that are used as ground for disputing their authenticity do reflect early Christian churches from the first century and, by extension, it seems likely that Paul did in fact pen the letters of Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy. Proving this not only indicates a fourth missionary journey not described in the book of Acts, providing more details to Paul’s final years, but would also help validate the reliability of Christianity, a religion that has been steadily declining in popularity since the alleged forgeries of the New Testament reached public attention in 2011.

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