

Pauline Authorship

The Pauline epistles are the fourteen books in the New Testament traditionally attributed to Paul of Tarsus, of which thirteen are explicitly ascribed to Paul, and one, Hebrews, is anonymous. Except for Hebrews, the Pauline authorship of these letters was not academically questioned until the nineteenth century.

Seven letters are generally classified as “undisputed”, expressing contemporary scholarly near-consensus that they are the work of Paul: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Six additional letters bearing Paul's name do not currently enjoy the same academic consensus: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus. The first three, called the "Deutero-Pauline Epistles," have no consensus on whether or not they are authentic letters of Paul. The latter three, the "Pastoral Epistles", are widely regarded as pseudographs, though certain scholars do consider them genuine. There are two examples of pseudonymous letters written in Paul's name apart from the alleged New Testament epistles. Since the early centuries of the church, there has been debate concerning the authorship of the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews, and contemporary scholars reject Pauline authorship.

Scholars use a number of methods of historiography and higher criticism to determine whether a text is properly attributed to its author. The primary methods used for Paul's letters are the following:

Internal evidence

The first method can include personal testimony in the letter, claims of authorship, biographical details, and so forth. This evidence is important in spite of its problems. For example, the Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous, which caused Pauline authorship to be questioned as early as the writings of Origen in the third century.

External evidence

External evidence is testimony to the authorship of a text within antiquity, statements made by those who had access to reliable sources now gone. External evidence includes ancient authors quoting Paul, naming Paul's works, or expressing ideas and phrases common to Paul. Use or mention by another implies the quoted precedes its being quoted. It helps to date when Pauline authorship was accepted. An earlier date can lend credibility to genuine Pauline authorship. For example, the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is named by Irenaeus in the mid second century. It's improbable the text was made after this date. The text seems to have been known to Justin Martyr and Ignatius in the very early second century when people who knew Paul in person could have been alive. The lack of witness by ancient sources suggests a later date, an argument from silence. The difficulty includes the incompleteness of the historical record: many ancient texts are lost, damaged, or revised. For example, two early lists of accepted biblical books, the Muratorian fragment and Papyrus 46, are damaged. It is thus hard to know what texts were on the first list.

Historical setting

An independently-written narrative of Paul's life and ministry, found in the Acts of the Apostles, is used to determine the date, and possible authorship, of Pauline letters by locating their origin within the context of his life. For example, Paul mentions that he is a prisoner in his Epistle to Philemon 1:7; J. A. T. Robinson argued that this captivity was Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea, W. M. Ramsay identified this as Paul's captivity in Rome, while others have placed the captivity in Ephesus. One difficulty with this position is the limited data available on Paul's historical setting, and this is especially true with the conclusion of the narrative of Acts prior to Paul's death.

Language and style

Vocabulary, sentence structure, employment of idioms and common phrases, etc. are analyzed

for consistency with the author's other known works. A similar style implies common authorship, whilst a radically divergent vocabulary implies different authors. For example, E. J. Goodspeed argued that the vocabulary of the Epistle to the Ephesians showed a literary relationship with the First Epistle of Clement, written around the end of the first century. Similarly, E. Percy argued that the speech and style of Colossians more strongly resembled Pauline authorship than not. Of course, style and language can vary for reasons other than differing authorship, such as the subject of the letter, the recipient, the circumstances of the times, or simply maturation on the part of the author.

Contents and theology

Similar to language and style, doctrinal consistency and development are analyzed relative to the author's other known works. A theological matter like the eschaton or the Mosaic Law could be repeated in the works in question. A consistent point of view implies a common author. Contradictory or unrelated teachings imply multiple authors. For example, W. Michaelis saw the Christological likeness between the Pastoral Epistles and some of Paul's undisputed works, and argued in favor of Pauline authorship. A problem with this method is analyzing the coherence of a body of diverse and developing teachings. This is seen in the disagreement between scholars. For example, with the same epistles mentioned above, B. S. Easton argued their theological notions disagreed with other Pauline works, and rejected Pauline authorship. G. Lohfink argued the theology of the Pastoral epistles agreed with Paul's, but took this as proof someone wishing to enjoy the authority of an apostle copied the famous church leader.

The undisputed epistles

The name "undisputed" epistles represents the general scholarly consensus asserting that Paul authored each letter. However, even the most undisputed of letters, such as Galatians, have found critics. Moreover, the unity of the letters is sometimes questioned. 1 and 2 Corinthians have garnered particular suspicion, with some scholars, among them Edgar Goodspeed and Norman Perrin, supposing one or both texts as we have them today are actually amalgamations of multiple individual letters. There remains considerable discussion as to the presence of possible significant interpolations, among them Romans 1:18-2:29, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 and Galatians 1:13-2:14. However, such textual corruption is difficult to detect and even more so to verify, leaving little agreement as to the extent of the epistles' integrity.

Romans

First Corinthians

Second Corinthians

Galatians

Philippians

First Thessalonians

Philemon

These letters are quoted or mentioned by the earliest of sources, and are included in every ancient canon, including that of Marcion (c.140). There is no record of scholarly doubt concerning authorship until the nineteenth century when, around 1840, German scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur accepted only four of the letters bearing Paul's name were genuine, which he called the Hauptbriefe (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Galatians). Hilgenfeld (1875) and H. J. Holtzmann (1885) instead accepted the seven letters listed above, adding Philemon, 1 Thessalonians, and Philippians to Baur's list; few scholars have argued against this minimal list.

The epistles all share common themes, emphasis, vocabulary and style; they exhibit a uniformity of doctrine concerning the Mosaic Law, Jesus, faith, &c. All of these letters easily fit into

the chronology of Paul's journeys depicted in Acts of the Apostles.

Colossians

Though Colossians is witnessed by the same historical sources as the undisputed texts, Pauline authorship of Colossians has found some critics. It was originally doubted by F. C. Baur, though others working from his general thesis, such as H. J. Holtzmann, argued that an original brief Pauline text experienced many interpolations by a later editor. The basis for this early objection was that the letter aimed at refuting Gnosticism, a heresy not serious until the early second century. This thesis subsequently declined, especially following the analysis of Gnosticism by R. Wilson, where he contended that the supposed parallels were unsupported.

Another argument centers on differences in style and vocabulary. W. Bujard attempted to show significant stylistic differences between Colossians and Paul's other works, such as unusual genitive constructions (1:27, 2:11, 2:19, 3:24). Others have analyzed the style and reached opposite conclusions, pointing to common Pauline idiom and phrase such as *en christo* and *en kurio*.

The extensiveness of the theological development in the epistle compared to other epistles has led to skepticism concerning Pauline authorship. H. Conzelmann made such an argument, pointing to differing theological concepts of "hope". Others accepting this analysis have asserted that the text is merely a late text of Paul, though the thesis has hardly found wide scholarly concurrence. It has been observed that Paul's criticism of strict adherence to "the law" is typical of the genuine Pauline letters.

The situation of the letter also supports the idea of Paul as author, matching the personal friendships expressed in the Epistle to Philemon, making many greetings relating to personal acquaintances. The connection with Philemon, an undisputed letter, is significant. A certain Archippus is referred to in both (Philemon 2, Colossians 4:17), and the greetings of both letters bear similar names (Philemon 23-24, Colossians 4:10-14).

Ephesians

The author of the epistle claims to be Paul in the opening address, itself identical to those of Second Corinthians and Colossians. There were few doubts in the early church that Paul wrote Ephesians: early church fathers authoritatively quoted from it, and examples include Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus, among others. The letter also appears in the Marcion canon (140) and the Muratorian fragment (180).

The authenticity of this letter was first disputed by the Dutch Renaissance scholar Desiderius Erasmus, and in more recent times has drawn detailed criticism.

The letter is made up of 50 sentences, 9 over 50 words. The closest, Romans, has 3 out of 581 sentences of such length. E. J. Goodspeed, and C. L. Mitton argued the style was unlike Paul's other works. Many words in the letter are not in the "undisputed" epistles. A. van Roon argued the style is consistent with Paul, and thought the entire linguistic analysis dubious. In antiquity, the Greek Church Fathers, many of whom noticed the divergent Greek style of Hebrews, made no such comments about Ephesians.

Theologically, the word *ecclesia* (church) is used to refer to the universal church rather than, as Paul typically employs it, to the local churches that he had founded. Also, the eschatological tone is more subdued than in other letters: the expectation of Christ's imminent return is unmentioned, while future generations are, as is a concern for social order. W. G. Kummel argued that the theology is beyond Paul.

There is a close literary relationship between the Colossians and Ephesians. Over forty passages in Ephesians are expansions or variations of passages in Colossians. E. F. Scott argued that Paul used one letter as a model for the other, whereas others have considered Ephesians to be derivative of

Colossians, edited and reworked by another. Donald Guthrie summarized the implications of this: "Advocates of non-Pauline authorship find it difficult to conceive that one mind could have produced two works possessing so remarkable a degree of similarity in theme and phraseology and yet differing in so many other respects, whereas advocates of Pauline authorship are equally emphatic that two minds could not have produced two such works with so much subtle interdependence blended with independence."

Paul founded and built up the church in Ephesus; however, this letter does not appear to contain the usual specific greetings, seen in Paul's other letters, addressed to people he remembers. There is some evidence that the Letter to the Ephesians might have been sent to several different churches. Some of the oldest manuscripts of this letter are not addressed to "God's holy people who are at Ephesus," but merely to "God's holy people." Marcion, around 180, quoted from this letter and attributed the quote to Paul's "Letter to the Laodiceans." In the 17th century, James Ussher suggested that this might have been a "circular letter" that Paul sent to several churches, including Ephesus and Laodicea. This would explain why Paul's usual personal greetings are absent: these could not be included in a letter sent to several different churches.

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

The epistle was included in the Marcion canon and the Muratorian fragment; it was mentioned by name by Irenaeus, and quoted by Ignatius, Justin, and Polycarp. In recent times, criticism of Pauline authorship was raised by H. J. Holtzmann and G. Hollmann (see above). Much of the dispute concerns the linguistic similarity between 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians. For example, 1 Thess 2:9 is almost identical to 2 Thess 3:8. This has been explained in the following ways: Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians soon after writing 1 Thessalonians or with the aid of a copy of 1 Thessalonians, or Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians himself but a later writer imitated him, or the linguistic similarities are seen as subtle enough to make imitation an unnecessary hypothesis.

Udo Schnelle argued that 2 Thessalonians was significantly different in style from the "undisputed" epistles, characterizing it as whole and narrow, rather than as a lively and abrupt discussion on a range of issues. Moreover, Alfred Loisy argued that it reflected knowledge of the synoptic gospels, which, according to certain synoptic theories, had not been written when Paul wrote his epistles. Bart D. Ehrman viewed the insistence of genuineness within the letter and the strong condemnation of forgery at its start as ploys commonly used by forgers. However G. Milligan observed that a church which possessed an authentic letter of Paul would be unlikely to accept a fake addressed to them.

The Eschatology of each letter to the Thessalonians, it is argued, is considerably different.

Norman Perrin claimed that, in the time of Paul, prayer usually treated God the Father as ultimate judge, rather than Jesus. From this hypothesis he contrasted 2 Thessalonians 3:5 and 1 Thessalonians 3:13, and contended that the letter was written after Paul's death. Contrariwise Nicholl has put forward a substantial argument for the authenticity of Second Thessalonians. He argues that 'the pseudonymous view is ... more vulnerable than most of its advocates conceded. ... The lack of consensus regarding a date and destination ... reflects a dilemma for this position: on the one hand, the date needs to be early enough for the letter to have been accepted as Pauline ... [on] the other hand, the date and destination need to be such that the author could be confident that no contemporary of 1 Thessalonians ... could have exposed 2 Thessalonians as a ... forgery.'

The Pastoral Epistles

The First Epistle to Timothy, the Second Epistle to Timothy, and the Epistle to Titus are often referred to as the Pastoral Epistles, and, after Hebrews, are the most disputed of all the epistles attributed to Paul.

Despite this, these epistles were accepted as genuine by many, perhaps most, of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers. Some scholars have argued that the letters were certainly accepted as Pauline by the time of Irenaeus (c. 115). They were also included in the Muratorian fragment. According to Jerome, the gnostic Christian Basilides also rejected these epistles, and Tatian, while accepting Titus, rejected other Pauline epistles. Marcion (c. 140) excluded all three, along with Hebrews, from his otherwise complete Pauline corpus, and it is impossible to determine whether or not he knew of them. D. Guthrie, for instance, argues that the epistles' theology would have been cause to reject the letters since it was incompatible with certain passages, such as 1 Tim 1:8 and 1 Tim 6:20, while Ehrman suggests that second-century proto-orthodox Christians had motivation to forge the Pastorals to combat the Gnostic use of other Pauline epistles. Even the ancient writer Tertullian (c. 220), in *Adv. Marc.* V.21, expresses confusion as to why these epistles had not been included in Marcion's canon. Modern scholars postulate that the Pauline Epistles originally circulated in three forms, for example, from *The Canon Debate*, attributed to Harry Y. Gamble:

"Marcion's collection that begins with Galatians and ends with Philemon;"

"Papyrus 46, dated about 200, that follows the order that became established except for reversing Ephesians and Galatians;"

"[T]he letters to seven churches, treating those to the same church as one letter and basing the order on length, so that Corinthians is first and Colossians (perhaps including Philemon) is last."

Beginning in the early 19th century, many German biblical scholars began to question the traditional attribution of these letters to Paul. The vocabulary and phraseology used in the Pastorals is often at variance with that of the other epistles. Over 1/3 of the vocabulary is not used anywhere else in the Pauline epistles, and over 1/5 is not used anywhere else in the New Testament, while 2/3 of the non-Pauline vocabulary are used by second century Christian writers. For this reason, and because of a claimed precedence of 1 Clement, some scholars have associated these works with later 2nd century Christian writings. The precedence of 1 Clement was challenged by R. Falconer, while L. T. Johnson challenged the linguistic analysis as based on the arbitrary grouping of the three epistles together: he argued that this obscures the alleged similarities between 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, between Titus and the other travel letters, and between 2 Timothy and Philippians.

Norman Perrin argued that Paul's travels to Crete (Titus 1:5-6), again to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), and Troas (2 Tim 1:15, 4:13) cannot be fit into any reconstruction of Paul's life or works as determined from the other epistles or from Acts. In this he was preceded by several scholars who rejected Pauline authorship. Robinson argued against this analysis, while others have debated whether this should be grounds for rejection of Pauline authorship, as Acts concludes while Paul is still alive. Harnack, Lightfoot and other scholars have suggested hypothetical scenarios that would have these epistles written near the end of Paul's life without contradicting biographical information in the other epistles or Acts. Scholars arguing for the authenticity of the pastorals posit a "second career" of Paul to explain the occasion for the visits mentioned in these letters, though contemporary scholars generally consider the "second career" of Paul to be a creation of later Christian communities.

Other reasons for a second century date have been argued. The Pastoral Epistles lay out church organization concerning the character and requirements for bishops, elders, deacons, and widows. Some scholars have claimed that these offices could not have appeared during Paul's lifetime. In terms of theology, some scholars claim that the Pastorals reflect more the characteristics of 2nd century (Proto-orthodox) church thought, than those of the 1st century. In particular, whilst in the 1st century the idea of Christ's return being immediate was current, (as also described in the non-pastoral epistles), in the 2nd century it was seen as more distant, matching the choice of the pastorals to lay down instructions for a long time after the passing away of the apostles. Lastly, some have argued that the

Pastorals condemn forms of Hellenic mysticism and gnosticism, which were seen as not significant in the first century; however, recent scholarship into first century Gnosticism has suggested an earlier dominance of Gnostic views.

Hebrews

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the most commonly-rejected of all seven disputed epistles of the traditional Pauline corpus. Unlike its thirteen peers, it is internally anonymous, though early manuscripts do mention his name in their title headings. Moreover, scholars, such as Robert Grant and Harold Attridge, have noted the many obvious differences in language and style between Hebrews and the Pauline correspondence known to be authentic.

Church Fathers, including ante-Nicene writers such as Tertullian, noted the different manner in which the theology and doctrine of the epistle appear. This variance led many to name other candidates for authorship, such as the fellow traveler of Paul called Barnabas (favored by Tertullian), a follower of John the Baptist called Apollos (favored by Martin Luther and several modern scholars), as well as less likely candidates such as Silas.

Origen (c. 240), as quoted by Eusebius (c. 330) had this to say on the matter: "That the character of the diction of the epistle entitled To the Hebrews has not the apostle's rudeness in speech, who confessed himself rude in speech, that is, in style, but that the epistle is better Greek in the framing of its diction, will be admitted by everyone who is able to discern differences of style. But again, on the other hand, that the thoughts of the epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged writings of the apostle, to this also everyone will consent as true who has given attention to reading the apostle.... But as for myself, if I were to state my own opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle's, but that the style and composition belonged to one who called to mind the apostle's teachings and, as it were, made short notes of what his master said. If any church, therefore, holds this epistle as Paul's, let it be commended for this also. For not without reason have the men of old handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows. Yet the account which has reached us [is twofold], some saying that Clement, who was bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, others, that it was Luke, he who wrote the Gospel and the Acts."

In general, the evidence against Pauline authorship is too solid for scholarly dispute. Donald Guthrie, in his *New Testament Introduction* (1976), commented that "most modern writers find more difficulty in imagining how this Epistle was ever attributed to Paul than in disposing of the theory". Harold Attridge tells us that "it is certainly not a work of the apostle"; Daniel Wallace simply states, "the arguments against Pauline authorship, however, are conclusive". As a result, few supporters of Pauline authorship remain. As Richard Heard notes, in his *Introduction To The New Testament*, "modern critics have confirmed that the epistle cannot be attributed to Paul and have for the most part agreed with Origen's judgment, 'But as to who wrote the epistle, God knows the truth'".

History of the Pauline canon

There are no preserved lists of a Christian canon from the first century and early second century. Small portions of Ignatius's writings, who wrote before his martyrdom in c. 110, appear to be quoted from Romans, I Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and I Thessalonians, suggesting that these works, at least, existed by the time Ignatius wrote his works. Ignatius does not appear to have quoted from II Thessalonians whereas Polycarp (c. 80 to 167) disciple of John the Evangelist (born ? died c. 110) not only quoted from II Thessalonians but also the Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Luke, Acts of the Apostles, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Epistle to the Hebrews, I Peter, I John, III John, in his *The Letter to the Philippians*. Scholar Bruce Metzger stated "One finds in Clement's work citations of all the books of the New Testament with the exception of Philemon, James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John."

The two earliest extant lists of canons containing Paul's letters are from the second century. One of them does not contain all of the Pauline letters. Some early canons are:

A canon written by Marcion, the founder of Marcionism (similar to gnosticism), heretical sect. Marcion did not include any of the Gospels except a version of the Gospel of Luke, which according to his enemies he had edited, whereas he claimed that it was their version which was edited. He includes ten epistles by Paul, but does not include the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus). Neither does he include the Epistle to the Hebrews.

A canon written by someone unknown in Italy, usually named the Muratorian Canon. This includes all thirteen of the letters containing Paul's name, although he does not include the Epistle to the Hebrews as canon, and includes other texts now viewed as non-canonical.

Papyrus 46, one of the oldest New Testament manuscripts (c. 200), contains the last eight chapters of Romans; all of Hebrews; virtually all of 1–2 Corinthians; all of Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians; and two chapters of 1 Thessalonians. Because it is damaged there is no scholarly consensus on whether to consider the omission of a text definitive. Scholar Young Kyu Kim dated Papyrus 46 to the first century before the reign of Domitian (pre 81), however other scholars have disputed this early dating.