

TYNDALE



CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

1 Timothy

Linda Belleville

2 Timothy, Titus

Jon C. Laansma

Hebrews

J. Ramsey Michaels

GENERAL EDITOR

Philip W. Comfort



New Living
Translation.

CORNERSTONE
B I B L I C A L
COMMENTARY

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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC. CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Volume 17

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cornerstone biblical commentary.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8423-8345-5 (hc : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8423-8345-X (hc : alk. paper)

1. Bible—Commentaries. I. Belleville, Linda. II. Laansma, Jon C.
III. Michaels, J. Ramsey.

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* is based on the second edition of the New Living Translation (2007). Nearly 100 scholars from various church backgrounds and from several countries (United States, Canada, England, and Australia) participated in the creation of the NLT. Many of these same scholars are contributors to this commentary series. All the commentators, whether participants in the NLT or not, believe that the Bible is God's inspired word and have a desire to make God's word clear and accessible to his people.

This Bible commentary is the natural extension of our vision for the New Living Translation, which we believe is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful. The NLT attempts to communicate God's inspired word in a lucid English translation of the original languages so that English readers can understand and appreciate the thought of the original writers. In the same way, the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* aims at helping teachers, pastors, students, and laypeople understand every thought contained in the Bible. As such, the commentary focuses first on the words of Scripture, then on the theological truths of Scripture—inasmuch as the words express the truths.

The commentary itself has been structured in such a way as to help readers get at the meaning of Scripture, passage by passage, through the entire Bible. Each Bible book is prefaced by a substantial book introduction that gives general historical background important for understanding. Then the reader is taken through the Bible text, passage by passage, starting with the New Living Translation text printed in full. This is followed by a section called "Notes," wherein the commentator helps the reader understand the Hebrew or Greek behind the English of the NLT, interacts with other scholars on important interpretive issues, and points the reader to significant textual and contextual matters. The "Notes" are followed by the "Commentary," wherein each scholar presents a lucid interpretation of the passage, giving special attention to context and major theological themes.

The commentators represent a wide spectrum of theological positions within the evangelical community. We believe this is good because it reflects the rich variety in Christ's church. All the commentators uphold the authority of God's word and believe it is essential to heed the old adage: "Wholly apply yourself to the Scriptures and apply them wholly to you." May this commentary help you know the truths of Scripture, and may this knowledge help you "grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet 1:2, NLT).

PHILIP W. COMFORT
GENERAL EDITOR

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

b.	Babylonian Gemara	Heb.	Hebrew	NT	New Testament
bar.	baraita	ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place	OL	Old Latin
c.	<i>circa</i> , around, approximately	i.e.	<i>id est</i> , the same	OS	Old Syriac
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare	in loc.	<i>in loco</i> , in the place cited	OT	Old Testament
ch, chs	chapter, chapters	lit.	literally	p., pp.	page, pages
contra	in contrast to	LXX	Septuagint	pl.	plural
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls	ℳ	Majority Text	Q	Quelle ("Sayings" as Gospel source)
ed.	edition, editor	m.	Mishnah	rev.	revision
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example	masc.	masculine	sg.	singular
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others	mg	margin	t.	Tosefta
fem.	feminine	ms	manuscript	TR	Textus Receptus
ff	following (verses, pages)	mss	manuscripts	v., vv.	verse, verses
fl.	flourished	MT	Masoretic Text	vid.	<i>videtur</i> , it seems
Gr.	Greek	n.d.	no date	viz.	<i>videlicet</i> , namely
		neut.	neuter	vol.	volume
		no.	number	γ.	Jerusalem Gemara

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version	NCV	New Century Version	NKJV	New King James Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version	NEB	New English Bible	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
ESV	English Standard Version	NET	The NET Bible	NLT	New Living Translation
GW	God's Word	NIV	New International Version	REB	Revised English Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible	NIRV	New International Reader's Version	RSV	Revised Standard Version
JB	Jerusalem Bible	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	TEV	Today's English Version
KJV	King James Version	NJPS	The New Jewish Publication Society Translation	TLB	The Living Bible
NAB	New American Bible				
NASB	New American Standard Bible				

ABBREVIATIONS FOR DICTIONARIES, LEXICONS, COLLECTIONS OF TEXTS, ORIGINAL LANGUAGE EDITIONS

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols., Freedman) [1992]	BAGD	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 2nd ed. (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker) [1979]	BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Brown, Driver, Briggs) [1907]
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures</i> (Pritchard) [1965]	BDAG	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich) [2000]	BDF	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Blass, Debrunner, Funk) [1961]
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Pritchard) [1969]				

- BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph) [1983]
- CAD *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [1956]
- COS *The Context of Scripture* (3 vols., Hallo and Younger) [1997–2002]
- DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman) [1998]
- DBT *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd ed., Leon-Dufour) [1972]
- DCH *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (5 vols., D. Clines) [2000]
- DLNTD *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (R. Martin, P. Davids) [1997]
- DJD *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* [1955–]
- DJG *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Green, McKnight, Marshall) [1992]
- DOTP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (T. Alexander, D. W. Baker) [2003]
- DPL *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Hawthorne, Martin, Reid) [1993]
- DTIB *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Vanhoozer) [2005]
- EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (3 vols., H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET) [1990–1993]
- HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. Stamm; trans. M. Richardson) [1994–1999]
- IBD *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (3 vols., Douglas, Wiseman) [1980]
- IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols., Buttrick) [1962]
- ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Bromiley) [1979–1988]
- KBL *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Koehler, Baumgartner) [1958]
- LCL Loeb Classical Library
- L&N *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw and Nida) [1989]
- LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., Liddell, Scott, Jones) [1996]
- MM *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Moulton and Milligan) [1930; 1997]
- NA²⁶ *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1979]
- NA²⁷ *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1993]
- NBD *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed., Douglas, Hillyer) [1982]
- NIDB *New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Douglas, Tenney) [1987]
- NIDBA *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Blaiklock and Harrison) [1983]
- NIDNTT *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols., C. Brown) [1975–1985]
- NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols., W. A. VanGemeren) [1997]
- PGM *Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. (Preisendanz) [1928]
- PG *Patrologia Graecae* (J. P. Migne) [1857–1886]
- TBD *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, Comfort) [2001]
- TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols., Kittel, Friedrich; trans. Bromiley) [1964–1976]
- TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (8 vols., Botterweck, Ringgren, Willis, Bromiley, Green) [1974–]
- TLNT *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols., C. Spicq) [1994]
- TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols., E. Jenni) [1997]
- TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2 vols., Harris, Archer) [1980]
- UBS³ *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., Metzger et al.) [1975]
- UBS⁴ *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th corrected ed., Metzger et al.) [1993]
- WH *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Westcott and Hort) [1882]

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Sam	1 Samuel
Exod	Exodus	Josh	Joshua	2 Sam	2 Samuel
Lev	Leviticus	Judg	Judges	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Num	Numbers	Ruth	Ruth	2 Kgs	2 Kings

1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Song	Song of Songs	Obad	Obadiah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Isa	Isaiah	Jonah	Jonah
Ezra	Ezra	Jer	Jeremiah	Mic	Micah
Neh	Nehemiah	Lam	Lamentations	Nah	Nahum
Esth	Esther	Ezek	Ezekiel	Hab	Habakkuk
Job	Job	Dan	Daniel	Zeph	Zephaniah
Ps, Pss	Psalms, Psalms	Hos	Hosea	Hag	Haggai
Prov	Proverbs	Joel	Joel	Zech	Zechariah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Amos	Amos	Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Luke	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Phlm	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

Deuterocanonical

Bar	Baruch	1–2 Esdr	1–2 Esdras	Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel	Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Ps 151	Psalms 151
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah	Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah	Sir	Sirach
Bel	Bel and the Dragon	Jdt	Judith	Tob	Tobit
Sg Three	Song of the Three Children	1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Sus	Susanna	3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees		

MANUSCRIPTS AND LITERATURE FROM QUMRAN

Initial numerals followed by "Q" indicate particular caves at Qumran. For example, the notation 4Q267 indicates text 267 from cave 4 at Qumran. Further, 1QS 4:9-10 indicates column 4, lines 9-10 of the *Rule of the Community*; and 4Q166 1 ii 2 indicates fragment 1, column ii, line 2 of text 166 from cave 4. More examples of common abbreviations are listed below.

CD	Cairo Geniza copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>	1QIsa ^b	Isaiah copy ^b	4QLam ^a	Lamentations
		1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>	11QPs ^a	Psalms
1QH	<i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>	1QpHab	<i>Peshar Habakkuk</i>	11QTemple ^{a,b}	<i>Temple Scroll</i>
1QIsa ^a	Isaiah copy ^a	1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>	11QtgJob	<i>Targum of Job</i>

IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

(all dates given are AD; ordinal numbers refer to centuries)

Significant Papyri (P = Papyrus)

P1 Matt 1; early 3rd	P13 Heb 2–5, 10–12; early 3rd	P20 Jas 2–3; 3rd
P4+P64+P67 Matt 3, 5, 26; Luke 1–6; late 2nd	P15+P16 (probably part of same codex) 1 Cor 7–8, Phil 3–4; late 3rd	P22 John 15–16; mid 3rd
P5 John 1, 16, 20; early 3rd		P23 Jas 1; c. 200
		P27 Rom 8–9; 3rd

- P30 1 Thess 4–5; 2 Thess 1; early 3rd
 P32 Titus 1–2; late 2nd
 P37 Matt 26; late 3rd
 P39 John 8; first half of 3rd
 P40 Rom 1–4, 6, 9; 3rd
 P45 Gospels and Acts; early 3rd
 P46 Paul's Major Epistles (less Pastorals); late 2nd
 P47 Rev 9–17; 3rd
 P49+P65 Eph 4–5; 1 Thess 1–2; 3rd
 P52 John 18; c. 125
 P53 Matt 26, Acts 9–10; middle 3rd
 P66 John; late 2nd
 P70 Matt 2–3, 11–12, 24; 3rd
 P72 1–2 Peter, Jude; c. 300
 P74 Acts, General Epistles; 7th
 P75 Luke, John; c. 200
 P77+P103 (probably part of same codex) Matt 13–14, 23; late 2nd
 P87 Philemon; late 2nd
 P90 John 18–19; late 2nd
 P91 Acts 2–3; 3rd
 P92 Eph 1; 2 Thess 1; c. 300
 P98 Rev 1:13–20; late 2nd
 P100 Jas 3–5; c. 300
 P101 Matt 3–4; 3rd
 P104 Matt 21; 2nd
 P106 John 1; 3rd
 P115 Rev 2–3, 5–6, 8–15; 3rd

Significant Uncials

- Ⲙ (Sinaiticus) most of NT; 4th
 A (Alexandrinus) most of NT; 5th
 B (Vaticanus) most of NT; 4th
 C (Ephraemi Rescriptus) most of NT with many lacunae; 5th
 D (Bezae) Gospels, Acts; 5th
 D (Claromontanus), Paul's Epistles; 6th (different MS than Bezae)
 E (Laudianus 35) Acts; 6th
 F (Augensis) Paul's Epistles; 9th
 G (Boernerianus) Paul's Epistles; 9th
 H (Coislinianus) Paul's Epistles; 6th
 I (Freerianus or Washington) Paul's Epistles; 5th
 L (Regius) Gospels; 8th
 Q (Guelferbytanus B) Luke, John; 5th
 P (Porphyrianus) Acts—Revelation; 9th
 T (Borgianus) Luke, John; 5th
 W (Washingtonianus or the Freer Gospels) Gospels; 5th
 Z (Dublinensis) Matthew; 6th
 037 (Δ; Sangallensis) Gospels; 9th
 038 (Θ; Koridethi) Gospels; 9th
 040 (Ξ; Zacynthius) Luke; 6th
 043 (Φ; Beratinus) Matthew, Mark; 6th
 044 (Ψ; Athous Laurae) Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 9th
 048 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 5th
 0171 Matt 10, Luke 22; c. 300
 0189 Acts 5; c. 200

Significant Minuscules

- 1 Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 12th
 33 All NT except Revelation; 9th
 81 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 1044
 565 Gospels; 9th
 700 Gospels; 11th
 1424 (or Family 1424—a group of 29 manuscripts sharing nearly the same text) most of NT; 9th–10th
 1739 Acts, Paul's Epistles; 10th
 2053 Revelation; 13th
 2344 Revelation; 11th
 f¹ (a family of manuscripts including 1, 118, 131, 209) Gospels; 12th–14th
 f¹³ (a family of manuscripts including 13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709—known as the Ferrar group) Gospels; 11th–15th

Significant Ancient Versions

- SYRIAC (SYR)**
 syr^c (Syriac Curetonian) Gospels; 5th
 syr^s (Syriac Sinaiticus) Gospels; 4th
 syr^h (Syriac Harklensis) Entire NT; 616
OLD LATIN (IT)
 it^a (Vercellensis) Gospels; 4th
 it^b (Veronensis) Gospels; 5th
 it^d (Cantabrigiensis—the Latin text of Bezae) Gospels, Acts, 3 John; 5th
 it^e (Palantinus) Gospels; 5th
 it^k (Bobiensis) Matthew, Mark; c. 400
COPTIC (COP)
 cop^{bo} (Boharic—north Egypt)
 cop^{fay} (Fayyumic—central Egypt)
 cop^{sa} (Sahidic—southern Egypt)
OTHER VERSIONS
 arm (Armenian)
 eth (Ethiopic)
 geo (Georgian)

TRANSLITERATION AND NUMBERING SYSTEM

Note: For words and roots from non-biblical languages (e.g., Arabic, Ugaritic), only approximate transliterations are given.

HEBREW/ARAMAIC

Consonants

א	aleph	= '		מ, ם	mem	= m
ב, ן	beth	= b		נ, ן	nun	= n
ג, ן	gimel	= g		ס	samekh	= s
ד, ן	daleth	= d		ע	ayin	= '
ה	he	= h		פ, ן, ף	pe	= p
ו	waw	= w		צ, ץ	tsadhe	= ts
ז	zayin	= z		ק	qoph	= q
ח	heth	= kh		ר	resh	= r
ט	teth	= t		ש	shin	= sh
י	yodh	= y		שׁ	sin	= s
כ, ן, ך	kaph	= k		ת, ן	taw	= t, th (spirant)
ל	lamedh	= l				

Vowels

ַ	patakh	= a		ֿ	qamets khatuf	= o
ֿ	furtive patakh	= a		ֿ	holem	= o
ָ	qamets	= a		ֿ	full holem	= o
ֿ	final qamets he	= ah		ֿ	short qibbutz	= u
ֿ	segol	= e		ֿ	long qibbutz	= u
ֿ	tsere	= e		ֿ	shureq	= u
ֿ	tsere yod	= e		ֿ	khatuf patakh	= a
ֿ	short hireq	= i		ֿ	khatuf qamets	= o
ֿ	long hireq	= i		ֿ	vocalic shewa	= e
ֿ	hireq yod	= i		ֿ	patakh yodh	= a

Greek

α	alpha	= a		ε	epsilon	= e
β	beta	= b		ζ	zeta	= z
γ	gamma	= g, n (before γ, κ, ξ, χ)		η	eta	= ē
δ	delta	= d		θ	theta	= th
				ι	iota	= i

κ	<i>kappa</i>	= k	τ	<i>tau</i>	= t
λ	<i>lamda</i>	= l	υ	<i>upsilon</i>	= u
μ	<i>mu</i>	= m	φ	<i>phi</i>	= ph
ν	<i>nu</i>	= n	χ	<i>chi</i>	= ch
ξ	<i>ksi</i>	= x	ψ	<i>psi</i>	= ps
ο	<i>omicron</i>	= o	ω	<i>omega</i>	= ō
π	<i>pi</i>	= p	·	<i>rough</i>	= h (with
ρ	<i>rho</i>	= r (ῥ = rh)		<i>breathing</i>	vowel or
σ, ς	<i>sigma</i>	= s		<i>mark</i>	diphthong)

THE TYNDALE-STRONG'S NUMBERING SYSTEM

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series uses a word-study numbering system to give both newer and more advanced Bible students alike quicker, more convenient access to helpful original-language tools (e.g., concordances, lexicons, and theological dictionaries). Those who are unfamiliar with the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets can quickly find information on a given word by looking up the appropriate index number. Advanced students will find the system helpful because it allows them to quickly find the lexical form of obscure conjugations and inflections.

There are two main numbering systems used for biblical words today. The one familiar to most people is the Strong's numbering system (made popular by the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*). Although the original Strong's system is still quite useful, the most up-to-date research has shed new light on the biblical languages and allows for more precision than is found in the original Strong's system. The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series, therefore, features a newly revised version of the Strong's system, the Tyndale-Strong's numbering system. The Tyndale-Strong's system brings together the familiarity of the Strong's system and the best of modern scholarship. In most cases, the original Strong's numbers are preserved. In places where new research dictates, new or related numbers have been added.¹

The second major numbering system today is the Goodrick-Kohlenberger system used in a number of study tools published by Zondervan. In order to give students broad access to a number of helpful tools, the Commentary provides index numbers for the Zondervan system as well.

The different index systems are designated as follows:

TG	Tyndale-Strong's Greek number	ZH	Zondervan Hebrew number
ZG	Zondervan Greek number	TA	Tyndale-Strong's Aramaic number
TH	Tyndale-Strong's Hebrew number	ZA	Zondervan Aramaic number

So in the example, "love" *agapē* [T626, Z627], the first number is the one to use with Greek tools keyed to the Tyndale-Strong's system, and the second applies to tools that use the Zondervan system.

1. Generally, one may simply use the original four-digit Strong's number to identify words in tools using Strong's system. If a Tyndale-Strong's number is followed by a capital letter (e.g., T61692A), it generally indicates an added subdivision of meaning for the given term. Whenever a Tyndale-Strong's number has a number following a decimal point (e.g., T62013.1), it reflects an instance where new research has yielded a separate, new classification of use for a biblical word. Forthcoming tools from Tyndale House Publishers will include these entries, which were not part of the original Strong's system.



*The
Pastoral Epistles*

1 Timothy

LINDA BELLEVILLE

*2 Timothy
& Titus*

JON C. LAANSMA

INTRODUCTION TO

The Pastoral Epistles

FIRST TIMOTHY, Second Timothy, and Titus are commonly referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. There are good reasons for this. Paul addressed this cluster of letters to two former trainees and colleagues who were in need of pastoral advice on a wide range of issues. Timothy was pastoring a well-established church in the provincial capital of Ephesus. Titus was pastoring a recently planted church on the island of Crete (off the southern coast of Greece).

The issues addressed in these letters are not unlike those that the average pastor faces today. They include the choosing and training of church leaders, good stewardship of material resources, the way men and women are to relate in the church, the manner in which church discipline is to be carried out, support structures for widows, how to deal with false teaching, pastor-parishioner guidelines, the role of prayer in worship, the way the believer is to relate to government and society, and appropriate behaviors and activities for those in leadership roles.

AUTHOR

Paul has traditionally been ascribed the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. External support for Paul's authorship is impressive. The Muratorian Canon (c. 150), Irenaeus (c. 175) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 200) cite the Pastorals by book and author (*Stromata* 2.11). Irenaeus states, "The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy" (*Against Heresies* 3.3.3). The Muratorian Canon says, "Paul wrote out of affection and love, one [letter] to Philemon, one to Titus and two to Timothy" (59-60).

Internal support for Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is also striking. Autobiographical comments are numerous: "I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people." (1 Tim 1:13); "the worst [sinner] of them all" (1:15); "the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did" (2 Tim 1:3); "the time of my death is near" (2 Tim 4:6). The letters also contain numerous personal references: "Timothy, my son" (1 Tim 1:18); "do your best to meet me at Nicopolis" (Titus 3:12); "how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra" (2 Tim 3:11); "When you come, be sure to bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas. Also bring my books, and especially my papers" (2 Tim 4:13).

Typical Pauline expressions are found: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; cf. Titus 1:1); “Titus, my true son” (Titus 1:4); “Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers” (2 Tim 1:3); “So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don’t be ashamed of me, either, even though I’m in prison for him [Christ]” (2 Tim 1:8); and “Jesus Christ . . . was raised from the dead” (2 Tim 2:8). Familiar Pauline themes are also noticeable: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15); “he [God] saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5); “believe in him and receive eternal life” (1 Tim 1:16b).

In spite of these external and internal arguments, many scholars in recent years have contested Paul’s authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. The primary factors against Paul’s authorship are listed below, followed by a counterargument:

1. $\text{P}46$ (c. 200 AD) and Marcion’s *Apostolikon* (a second-century heretical work) omit this grouping of letters. $\text{P}46$ does not contain the Pastorals. But this is because the manuscript ends with 1 Thessalonians, thereby omitting the five canonical letters of Paul that follow (2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), including the Pastorals. It is hardly a matter of the Egyptian church not knowing these letters, since Clement of Alexandria, who predates $\text{P}46$, cites them by name and by author (*Stromata* 2.11). A reasonable explanation is that the papyrus lacked the space to include the Pastorals. The absence of the Pastorals from Marcion’s *Apostolikon* (c. 140) is also understandable. Their positive stance toward the Mosaic law (1 Tim 1:8-11), their rejection of asceticism (1 Tim 4:1-5), and the scriptural status they give to the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:16-17) are matters that Marcion would have found problematic.

2. *Luke’s account in Acts doesn’t include this stage of Paul’s ministry; therefore, it did not happen.* The ending of Acts is a notorious puzzle. A missionary tour through Greece and Asia in the early 60s is indeed absent from Luke’s record. The likely explanation, however, is that it had not yet occurred at the time Luke penned Acts. Later church writings confirm that Paul engaged in mission work after leaving Rome. *First Clement* 5:6-7 and the Muratorian Canon 37-38 state that Paul was released from prison and did pursue further missionary work. The early church historian Eusebius goes even further. “There is evidence,” he says, “that having been brought to trial, the apostle again set out on the ministry of preaching, and having appeared a second time in the same city [Rome], found fulfillment in his martyrdom” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.22).

It is sometimes argued that Acts 20:25 and 38 preclude Paul’s returning east. The NLT translation of Acts 20:25, “none of you . . . will ever see me again,” certainly points us in that direction. But the word “ever” is not in the Greek text. So a better translation would be, “you no longer (*ouketi* [^{IG3765, ZG4033}]) will see my face.” In this case, Paul would have been merely telling the Ephesian leaders that he was leaving the region.

More broadly speaking, it is important to keep in mind that Luke did not intend to write an exhaustive history of Paul’s life. One needs only compare 2 Corinthians

11:23–12:6 with Acts 9–20 to see that there was much that Luke left out. It would be presumptuous, therefore, to conclude that if something is not in Acts it couldn't have taken place.

3. *The ecclesiastical infrastructure in the Pastorals is too advanced for a mid-first-century congregation (i.e., overseers, elders, deacons, a widows' ministry team).* At the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, the Ephesian church had a well-developed leadership infrastructure. But is such an infrastructure really too complex for a Pauline church? Paul routinely appointed elders in the churches that he founded (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The church at Philippi certainly had overseers (NLT, "elders") and deacons (Phil 1:1). The church at Cenchrea had a woman deacon (Rom 16:1-2). And the Judean churches had something that approached a ministerial team of widows (Acts 9:39). Also the church in Ephesus was 10 years old at the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy. However, this is not the case with the recently planted church at Crete. Elders had not yet even been appointed by the time Paul wrote Titus (Titus 1:5).

What we do not find in the Pastorals is anything like the second-century monarchical episcopate, although this is often read into the roles of Timothy and Titus. Timothy and Titus merely serve as Paul's stand-ins. Paul states this very thing: "I am writing these things to you [Timothy] now . . . so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God" (1 Tim 3:14-15). Nor do we find anything like our modern concept of a bishop. The fluidity with which overseer and elder are mentioned in these letters speaks decisively against distinctive and official roles. *Episkopē* [TG1985, ZG2176] is an honorable task (lit., *ergon*, "work," rather than an office, 1 Tim 3:1) and is descriptive of what an elder does (*episkopos* = "one who watches over," "a shepherd"; see Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-2; Titus 1:6-7). For these reasons *episkopos* should not be translated "bishop."

4. *The Pastorals' emphasis on orthodoxy (e.g., "wholesome teaching," "trustworthy sayings," "the deposit," and "the faith") better fits the postapostolic period.* Is the concern for "wholesome teaching" (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9), "the faith" (1 Tim 1:19; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 2:18; 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:4, 13; 2:2), the Christological confessions (1 Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 2:11-13), and the transmission of "trustworthy sayings" (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8) too settled for the Pauline period? Those who are quick to say yes overlook several things. Christological confessions are found throughout Paul's writings (e.g., Rom 1:2-5; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20). The theme of receiving and passing on the faith is also constant in Paul's epistles. The ease with which Paul shifts between "my gospel" (e.g., Rom 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8, ESV), "the gospel" (e.g., Rom 1:1, 9, 16; 2 Tim 1:10, ESV) and "our gospel" (e.g., 2 Cor 4:3; 2 Thess 2:14, ESV) indicates a role of transmitter versus innovator. Paul's statements regarding passing on what he himself has received (technical language for the transmission of tradition) highlight his trustworthy role in this regard (Rom 6:15-18; 1 Cor 11:2, 23-26; 15:3-8; Phil 4:8-9; 2 Thess 2:15). Although the precise phraseology of "a trustworthy saying," "the faith," and "wholesome teaching" is lacking in Paul's other letters, comparable terminology can be easily found: "the norm of teaching" (Rom 6:17,

my translation), “the word of life” (Phil 2:16), “your faith” (Col 2:6-7), “the truth” (2 Thess 2:13), “the truth of the Good News” (Col 1:5), and “the faith, which is the Good News” (Phil 1:27).

Moreover, concern for faithful adherence to and transmission of the tradition in 2 Timothy 2:2 is exactly the same concern that surfaces in other Pauline letters (e.g., Phil 4:9; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). The only distinction is the number of times this concern surfaces in the Pastorals. But with the rise of heresy, the need for emphasizing wholesome teaching and reinforcing the content of Christian belief would increase as well.

5. *About 20 percent of the vocabulary is distinctive to these letters; characteristic Pauline phraseology is absent; customary Pauline concepts are lacking or are used in unfamiliar ways.* Are the vocabulary and the ideas of the Pastorals too different to be Paul’s? The Pastorals are certainly not lacking typical Pauline words and concepts. “Genuine faith” (1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 1:5), “Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:6), “because of his grace he declared us righteous” (Titus 3:7), and “the glorious Good News” (1 Tim 1:11) are about as Pauline as phrases can be.

Yet there is a religious vocabulary that is distinct to the Pastorals. There are frequently used words such as “godliness” (*eusebeia* [T⁶2150, Z⁶2354], 10/15), “sober-minded” (*nēphalios* [T⁶3524, Z⁶3767], 15/21, NKJV), “teaching” (*didaskalia* [T⁶1319, Z⁶1436], 10/24), and “Savior” (*sōtēr* [T⁶4990, Z⁶5400], 6/24) in addition to regularly occurring phrases that speak of “the appearing of our God” (Titus 2:13; 3:4, NIV), “God our Savior” (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:4; 2:10, 13; 3:4), “wholesome teaching” (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1), “sound in [the] faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2, NIV), “a trustworthy saying” (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8), “eagerly look forward to his appearing” (2 Tim 4:8), and “the washing of rebirth” (Titus 3:5, NIV).

What explains this state of affairs? Difference in subject matter is unquestionably a big factor. Language is dictated by the topic at hand and by the recipient(s). The wide-ranging pastoral advice that makes up these letters to two trusted colleagues is without parallel in the New Testament. This by itself should caution against drawing any hasty conclusions about non-Pauline authorship. Surely one would not expect Paul to address a trusted colleague in the ministry the same way he would address a congregation. Also, most of the unique vocabulary is found in contexts dealing with heresy, leadership qualifications, and widows—topics that are specific to these letters.

The real question is whether the language of these letters is foreign to a first-century religious milieu. And here one would have to say no. In fact about 85 percent of the language finds a parallel in Paul’s religious contemporary Philo, and roughly 80 percent appears in the Septuagint.

So what is a reasonable explanation? The use of an amanuensis would go a long way toward explaining the uniform and yet unique vocabulary and style of these letters. Paul’s regular use of such a person is well-attested in his letters (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 1:19). In fact, the amanuensis for Paul’s letter to the Romans pens his own personal greeting at the end: “I, Tertius, the one

writing this letter for Paul, send my greetings, too, as one of the Lord's followers" (Rom 16:22).

6. *Restrictive statements about women's roles are at odds with Paul's affirmations of women in ministry elsewhere.* In actuality there is only one restriction, which targets only younger widows and is phrased as advice, not as a command: "So I advise these younger widows to marry again, have children, and take care of their own homes" (1 Tim 5:14). At first glance Paul's counsel appears to conflict with his opinion elsewhere that women are better off to remain unmarried (1 Cor 7:34-35). Indeed, it is his judgment that a widow is happier if she does not remarry (1 Cor 7:40).

Did Paul change his mind over the course of a decade of ministry? Not at all. The broader context of the Pastorals shows that Paul's advice was prompted by the situation at Ephesus. Significant inroads were being made by false teachers. These teachers, Paul stated, "work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires" (2 Tim 3:6). These women readily followed "new teachings, but they [were] never able to understand the truth" (2 Tim 3:7).

Young widows seem to have been particularly prone to faulty beliefs. They heeded the aberrant teaching—"it is wrong to [get] married" (1 Tim 4:3)—and pledged themselves to a full-time, celibate ministry. But "their physical desires . . . overpower[ed] their devotion to Christ," and they broke their pledge (1 Tim 5:11). Some became eager evangelists, "going about from house to house. . . saying things they ought not to" (1 Tim 5:13, NIV—versus the NLT, "gossiping from house to house"). Others went farther: "For I am afraid that some of them have already gone astray and now follow Satan" (1 Tim 5:15). Given this scenario, Paul's counsel makes sense. It is far better for younger widows to remarry than to bring the gospel into disrepute through scandalous beliefs and behavior.

The false teachers' greed led them to focus their primary attention on wealthy widows (1 Tim 6:10; Titus 1:11), who were encouraged to redirect support of an elderly relative into the false teachers' collection plate (1 Tim 5:4, 16). In so doing they "denied the true faith" and became "worse than unbelievers" (1 Tim 5:8).

Are there other restrictive statements in the Pastorals? Many point to 1 Timothy 2:12 as the most gender-restrictive statement in the New Testament. This is only the case if one translates the text as the NLT does: "I do not let women . . . have authority over [men]." The NEB, on the other hand, has "I do not permit a woman to . . . domineer over man." The former categorically prohibits women from leading men. The latter restricts how women lead, that is, it forbids leading in an overbearing way. (See commentary on 1 Tim 2:12 for further discussion.)

In reality, some of the most affirmative statements regarding women's roles are found in the Pastorals. Paul affirms women deacons ("In the same way, the women deacons must be respected and must not speak evil of others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do," 1 Tim 3:11, my translation), ministering widows ("a widow who is put on the list for support must be a woman who is at least sixty years old and was faithful to her husband [lit., 'the wife of one

husband’]. . . well respected by everyone,” 1 Tim 5:9-10), and female prayer leaders (“[likewise] I want women [to pray who] behave with modesty,” 1 Tim 2:9-10, lit.; cf. NLT mg).

7. *The false teaching reflected in the Pastorals has more in common with second-century heresies (such as Gnosticism) than with first-century errors.* The false teaching reflected in the Pastorals actually has very little to do with the second-century heresy of Gnosticism and much to do with the first-century religious syncretism prevalent at Ephesus and among the Lycus Valley churches (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis). For example, it was two full years after the Ephesian church was planted that believers first confessed aberrant practices such as sorcery (Acts 19:17-19).

There really is nothing about the Ephesian heresy that requires a postapostolic date. The various elements fit quite well into a first-century religious milieu. At heart, the heresy was Jewish. Promoters came from the circumcision group (Titus 1:10), aimed to be teachers of the Mosaic law (1 Tim 1:7), and were devoted to Jewish legends (Titus 1:14), genealogies (1 Tim 1:4; Titus 3:9), and food taboos (1 Tim 4:3-4). The false teachers also borrowed different elements of Greek philosophy, including asceticism (to abstain from marriage, 1 Tim 4:3) and dualism (denial of a physical resurrection, 2 Tim 2:17-18). They also embraced certain tenets of the oriental cults such as the beliefs that knowledge saves (1 Tim 6:20) and that knowledge excludes (1 Tim 2:3-4). Disbelief in a material resurrection and a realized eschatology (2 Tim 2:18; see extensive note) were already present in Corinthian thinking a decade earlier (1 Cor 4:8; 15:12). Asceticism, Jewish ritualism, Greek dualism, and privileged knowledge were present in the Colossian church a couple of years earlier (Col 2:2-4, 16-18, 21-23).

The sum total of objections has led some to posit that the Pastorals are the work of a second-century (or later) follower, who used Paul’s name to encourage acceptance of these letters at a critical juncture for the Asian churches. The threat of heresy, the need for a more complex infrastructure, and misuse of the Old Testament drove this well-intentioned leader to take up Paul’s mantle in the name of orthodoxy and church order. Some go further and argue that “the opposing ideas (*antithesis* [T6477, Z6509]) of what is falsely called knowledge” in 1 Timothy 6:20 is specifically directed at the second-century heretic Marcion and his work *Antitheses*.

Some have sought a compromise by proposing the idea that a biographer of Paul was the author of the Pastoral Epistles. They are the work of a disciple(s) (such as Timothy, Titus, or Luke) who sought to preserve Paul’s unpublished works (personal memoranda, travelogues, intimate reflections, notes to colleagues, and the like) after his death—either for posterity’s sake or to effect change in the Asian churches. Yet, the idea of a biographer leaves much unexplained. How, for instance, would a colleague have come by such memorabilia, and how is it that these pieces were woven into three seamless letters? The presence of one letter might be plausible, but the presence of three letters—and lengthy ones too—is difficult to accept.

In conclusion, all the arguments against Paul’s authorship can be—and have been—countered. Paul wrote these three epistles to two different individuals, Timothy

and Titus, in order to help them be exemplary leaders in their respective local churches. While filled with gems of practical advice, they are also full of spiritual insights pertinent to the first-century church and the twenty-first-century church.

DATE

Paul's circumstances at the time of writing the Pastorals can be reconstructed from various statements in his previous letters. His plan had been to visit Rome and then engage in evangelistic work in western Europe (as far as Spain; Rom 15:23-24). But a two-year Roman imprisonment apparently led to a reevaluation. By the time Paul wrote Philippians, he anticipated a release from prison for further work in Greece (Phil 2:24). And when he wrote Philemon, he asked the Colossian church host to prepare a guest room for him (Phlm 1:22). It comes as no surprise, then, that on his release (about AD 62) Paul returned to Asia Minor and Greece and picked up where he left off in those regions. We find him visiting the old familiar places of Ephesus, Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3), Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Troas (2 Tim 4:13), Corinth, and Miletus (2 Tim 4:20-21)—as well as beginning a new work on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). By the time he wrote 2 Timothy, however, he was back in a Roman prison (2 Tim 1:8, 16) and facing a cold and lonely winter (2 Tim 1:4, 15-17; 4:12-13).

It is difficult to date the Pastoral Epistles with precision. Early church tradition places them between AD 62 and 67. First Timothy was written first, while Paul was in the province of Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). Titus was penned second, while Paul was wintering in the western Greece port city of Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Second Timothy was written last, while Paul was "in chains" in Rome for the second time and, according to church tradition, executed shortly thereafter (2 Tim 1:8, 16-17).

OCCASION OF WRITING

1 Timothy. Paul states that he left Timothy in charge of the Ephesian church and went on into Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). Why Timothy had been left behind is spelled out in the opening verses of the letter. Timothy's task at Ephesus was to command certain persons not to teach false doctrines any longer (1 Tim 1:3). Things apparently had not been going well, for Paul begins by urging Timothy to stay put in Ephesus and deal decisively with the false teachers (1 Tim 1:3-6). That this was Paul's primary reason for writing is clear from the fact that he bypassed the normal letter-writing convention of a thanksgiving section and instead got right down to business. It is also evident from how often the topic of false teaching surfaces in the letter. It consumes roughly 35 percent of Paul's direct attention and colors much of the rest.

Midway through the letter Paul spells out another related purpose for writing. Paul hoped to join Timothy soon (1 Tim 3:14). But in the event of a delay he wanted Timothy to know "how people must conduct themselves in the household of God" (1 Tim 3:14-15). Some have concluded from this that Paul's aim in 1 Timothy was to provide his stand-in with a manual on church order. There is some truth

OUTLINE OF 1 TIMOTHY

- I. Opening Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. Instructions concerning Various Pastoral Responsibilities (1:3-6:21)
 - A. Dealing with False Teaching (1:3-11)
 - B. Paul Recounts His Call to Ministry (1:12-17)
 - C. Timothy's Responsibility (1:18-20)
 - D. Public Prayers in Worship Corrected (2:1-7)
 - E. Public Demeanor in Worship Corrected (2:8-10)
 - F. Women Learners and Teachers (2:11-3:1a)
 - G. Leadership Credentials for Overseers (3:1b-7)
 - H. Leadership Credentials for Deacons (3:8-13)
 - I. The Truths of Our Faith (3:14-16)
 - J. Warnings against False Teachers (4:1-5)
 - K. A Good Servant of Christ Jesus (4:6-16)
 - L. Advice about the Old, the Young, and Widows (5:1-16)
 - M. The Selection and Discipline of Elders (5:17-25)
 - N. Advice to Slaves (6:1-2a)
 - O. Advice on False Teaching and True Riches (6:2b-10)
 - P. Paul's Final Instructions (6:11-21)

OUTLINE OF 2 TIMOTHY (*Commentary begins on p. 125*)

- I. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Paul's Charge Based on Timothy's Conversion and Commission (1:3-18)
 - A. Heritage, Empowerment, the Gospel, and the Apostle's Example (1:3-14)
 - B. Examples, Bad and Good (1:15-18)
- III. Call for Strength and Endurance in Suffering (2:1-13)
- IV. Dealing with the Opponents (2:14-26)
- V. Paul's Charge Based on the Character of the Last Days (3:1-4:8)
 - A. Understanding the Times (3:1-9)
 - B. Roots and Resources (3:10-17)
 - C. Knowing What to Do (4:1-8)
- VI. Appeal for Timothy to Come and Related Comments (4:9-18)
- VII. Final Greetings and Blessing (4:19-22)

OUTLINE OF TITUS (*Commentary begins on p. 221*)

- I. Opening Greetings (1:1-4)
- II. Leadership (1:5-16)
 - A. Criteria of Appointment (1:5-9)
 - B. Reason: The False Teachers (1:10-13a)
 - C. Charge: Reprove! (1:13b-16)

- III. Sound Teaching concerning Internal Relations (2:1-15)
 - A. Conduct Appropriate to Household Roles (2:1-10)
 - B. Reason: The Instruction of God's Grace (2:11-14)
 - C. Charge: Speak, Exhort, Reprove. Let No One Disregard You! (2:15)
- IV. Sound Teaching concerning External Relations (3:1-11)
 - A. Conduct Appropriate in Society (3:1-2)
 - B. Reason: The Exemplary Mercy of God (3:3-8a)
 - C. Charge: Insist, Avoid, Reject! (3:8b-11)
- V. Closing Directions, Greetings, Blessing (3:12-15)
 - A. Mission Arrangements and Final Instructions (3:12-14)
 - B. Final Greetings and Blessing (3:15)

COMMENTARY ON
1 Timothy

◆ I. Opening Greeting (1:1–2)

This letter is from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, appointed by the command of God our Savior and Christ Jesus, who gives us hope.

²I am writing to Timothy, my true son in the faith.

May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

NOTES

1:1 *apostle of Christ Jesus.* This probably means “an apostle sent by Christ Jesus.” (For a discussion of Paul’s apostolic authority, see my article, “Authority,” in DPL 54-59.)

appointed by the command of God. The Greek word *epitagē* [T62003, Z62198] denotes a divine command (see MM 246); cf. Esth 1:8, LXX, “for the king *had given orders* to all the officials of his palace.” “Appointed” is therefore extraneous. The genitive can denote source, “the command *from* God,” but it is more likely possessive, “*God’s* command.”

God our Savior. Since the noun “savior” (*sōtēros* [T64990, Z65400]) lacks an article, it should probably not be capitalized as though it were a title. The emphasis is on God’s saving activity. Something such as “our saving God” catches the nuance. God’s saving activity is set over against the imperial cult, which lifted up the Roman emperors as saviors. God alone is the one, true savior of the world. For an overview of the imperial cult in Asia from the first through the third centuries, see Kearsley 1986:183-192.

1:2 *to Timothy.* Although only one individual is addressed here, the intended audience is broader than Timothy. We know this from Paul’s final greeting, where he uses the second-person plural: “May God’s grace be with you all” (6:21; see note; cf. 2 Tim 4:22). Paul’s letters to Philemon (Phlm 1:25) and Titus (Titus 3:15) also have a plural greeting and hence a wider audience in view.

my true son in the faith. “True son” echoes the legal language of a legitimate heir (Keener 1993:608). The noun “faith” lacks an article (*en pistei* [T64102, Z64411]) and so the phrase should be translated as either (1) “through faith” (i.e., Timothy became Paul’s spiritual son through faith in Christ) or (2) “in the sphere of faith” (i.e., Timothy is Paul’s son in the household of faith).

COMMENTARY

Paul began his letter in the conventional way of his day by identifying the sender (“Paul”) and the recipient (“to Timothy”) followed by a greeting (“grace, mercy, and peace . . .”). His expansions of this stereotypical opening invariably provide some insight into his top concerns. First, Paul refers to himself as “an apostle of

Christ Jesus." That Paul would do this in a letter to a longtime friend and coworker such as Timothy is noteworthy. Yet, a look at Paul's parting greeting makes it clear that the Ephesian congregation, and not merely Timothy, was the intended audience of this missive (see note on 1:2). Paul may have started his letter by addressing it to Timothy, but he closed it with "may God's grace be with *you all*." Paul's mention of heretical inroads at Ephesus and the need for decisive action to stop them (1:3) puts the phrase "an apostle of Christ Jesus" in its proper light. His stand-in, Timothy, was in a position to speak out against unorthodox teaching. So Paul began in a way that would bolster Timothy's authority in the eyes of the Ephesian congregation (as well as encourage Timothy to act accordingly). The Ephesian church must understand that whatever Timothy did, he did so with the full force of apostolic authority.

Paul's up-front mention of his apostleship is strengthened by the phrase "appointed by the command of God . . . and Christ Jesus." A warning bell is sounded. Paul's orders come from God and not from the church. The theological point is a bit stronger than Paul's usual expression, "by the will of God" (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). Paul's orders come in the form of a royal command that can't be ignored (see note on 1:1). Apostleship and authority are closely linked. Paul's warrant to exercise authority stems from his status as an apostle. To be an apostle is to be personally chosen and commissioned by Christ to speak on his behalf (1:12; Acts 9:15). "We are Christ's ambassadors," Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:20; "God is making his appeal through us." Apostleship is what gave Paul (and his representatives) the right to call believers to account (e.g., 1 Thess 2:7).

Paul's apostleship also came by the command of "God our Savior" (1:1). The emphasis is on God's salvific activity: "our *saving* God." The phrase is quite rare in the New Testament. Outside of the Pastorals it appears only twice (Luke 1:47; Jude 1:25). Yet the idea of a God who saves is thoroughly Pauline. God initiates and Christ mediates salvation. It is effected "through Christ" (Gr., *dia* + the genitive; NLT, "by"). That's why Paul says, "by the command of God our Savior *and Christ Jesus*, who gives us hope." Salvation includes being delivered from God's wrath "by [Christ]" (Rom 5:9) and receiving God's salvation "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:9). The expression "God our Savior" is thoroughly Jewish. It finds its roots in God's act of delivering his people from bondage in Egypt (Exod 14–15). It then becomes a central theme of Jewish piety. God's acts of deliverance on Israel's behalf are recalled throughout the hymnody of the Old Testament (e.g., Pss 22:23; 72:18; 78:13, 49-50; 95:2; 106:12; 118:15-16; 119:123).

The title "Savior" was prominent in the religious piety of the day. It was the rare Greek letter that did not give thanks to some god or goddess for deliverance from peril on land or at sea (e.g., "I thank the lord Serapis that when I was in peril in the sea, he saved me immediately" [Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin 2.423]). The literary works of the oriental cults lauded the saving quality of a god or goddess. The highly popular Egyptian goddess Isis, in particular, was lifted up as the savior of human-

kind. She was the “holy and eternal guardian of the human race,” who watched over the human race “always on land and sea, driving away from them the tempests of life and stretching out over them [her] saving right hand” (*The Initiation of Lucius* 11.25). That the phrase “God our Savior” appears in a letter to a pastor and church located in a city that was temple-warden of the emperors is hardly surprising. The emperors were likewise deemed saviors of the world. Julius Caesar, for example, is referred to in an Ephesian inscription as “the God made manifest . . . and common savior of human life” (Deissmann 1978:344). While the Ephesian populace looked to the imperial cult for a savior, believers are reminded that true salvation is found in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Paul’s apostleship also comes, literally, “by the command . . . of Christ our hope.” The expression “Christ our hope” is unique to 1 Timothy. The closest parallel is in Colossians, where Paul was combating a very similar type of heresy: “Christ lives in you. . . . *the hope of glory*” (Col 1:27, my translation). “God our Savior” is a present reality that will find its completion solely in and through “Christ our hope.” The term “hope” (*elpis* [T⁶1680, Z⁶1828]) is not a matter of mere wishful thinking. When connected with God’s action through Christ, the term refers to that which is certain. In the context of 1 Timothy, Christ is our hope because he is the “one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity” (2:5), who “came into the world to save sinners” (1:15), who “gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone” (2:6), and whose “appearing” we await (6:14, RSV). Meanwhile, we “hold tightly to the eternal life” God has given us (6:12).

Paul addressed this letter “to Timothy, my true son in the faith.” Elsewhere he is called Paul’s “beloved” child (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 1:2). “True son,” however, is quite appropriate here (see Introduction under “Audience”). The Greek term *gnēsios* [T⁶1103, Z⁶1188] means “genuine,” “true born,” or “the real thing.” Though appearing only four times in the New Testament (1:2; 2 Cor 8:8; Phil 4:3; Titus 1:4), it is quite common in other first-century letters.

“Faith” is a key theological concept in the Pastorals. “The faith” is particularly important. It appears 19 times in 1 Timothy (1:2, 4, 5, 14, 19 [2x]; 2:7, 15; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 6, 12; 5:8, 12 [translated “pledge”]; 6:10-12, 21). Timothy was brought up in the truths of “the faith” (4:6) and is a “true son in the faith” (1:2). Leaders are required to hold to the deep truths of the faith (3:9). The false teachers, by contrast, had suffered shipwreck as to their faith (1:19), had turned away from the faith (4:1), and had wandered from the faith (6:10, 21). “The faith” has a decidedly ethical dimension. To refuse to provide financially for relatives and immediate family is to deny “the faith” and be worse than an unbeliever (5:8).

Paul rounds off his salutation with the greeting, “May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.” The typical Greek salutation closed with a simple “Greetings” followed by a wish for good health (e.g., “Before all I pray for your health”). Paul Christianized the greeting (“grace, mercy, and peace”) and combined it with a health wish of the greatest magnitude (“from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”). “Grace and peace” (or some variation thereof) was

Paul's consistent greeting. "Grace" (*charis* [T^G5485, Z^G5921]) is a favorite Pauline idea that appears nearly 100 times in his writings. Its usual sense has to do with God's unmerited favor. "Peace" (*shalom* [T^H7965, Z^H8934], translated by the Gr., *eirēnē* [T^G1515, Z^G1645]) was the typical way Jews greeted one another. It takes on added significance for the Christian in that justification by faith results in peace with God as an objective state (Rom 5:1). "Mercy" (*eleos* [T^G1656, Z^G1799]) is an atypical addition. Theologically it has to do with having pity on the needy and the helpless (whether they are friend, foe, or indifferent; cf. Matt 5:7). It finds an epistolary parallel only in 2 Timothy 1:2; Jude 1:2; and 2 John 1:3. Paul's greeting points to a sizable Jewish constituency in the Ephesian church. It may well reflect the unprecedented three months Paul spent in proclaiming the gospel at the local synagogue.

"God" as a source of peace was a typical Jewish thought. "The Father," however, brings Paul's greeting into the sphere of the familial—exactly the way Jesus taught his disciples to address God in prayer. Yet, while God is our father, Jesus is not described as our brother. He is, rather, "our Lord"—placed last for emphasis. God as "Father" of the church and Jesus as her "Lord" capture two distinctives of the Christian faith. That we find them placed side by side here points to an early perception of divine equality between God the Father and God the Son.

◆ II. Instructions concerning Various Pastoral Responsibilities (1:3–6:21)

A. Dealing with False Teaching (1:3–11)

³When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth.

⁴Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations,* which don't help people live a life of faith in God.*

⁵The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith. ⁶But some people have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time in meaningless discussions. ⁷They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don't know

what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently.

⁸We know that the law is good when used correctly. ⁹For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. ¹⁰The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders,* liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching ¹¹that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

1:4a Greek *in myths and endless genealogies, which cause speculation.* 1:4b Greek *a stewardship of God in faith.* 1:10 Or *kidnappers.*

NOTES

1:3 *When I left for Macedonia.* The present tense participle *poruomenos* [T^G4198, Z^G4513] (while, as) is circumstantial and can be translated, "as I was leaving for Macedonia."

COMMENTARY ON *2 Timothy*

◆ I. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus.

²I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

NOTES

1:1 *This letter is from.* These words are not present in the Greek but give the sense of the standard letter opening. It is the same with our style: On the envelope of a letter we would not write, "This letter is from Jane Smith," but merely (in the upper left corner) "Jane Smith."

Paul. As a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-39; 22:26-29; 23:27) Paul would have had three names, a forename (praenomen), a family name (nomen gentile), and a surname (cognomen); additionally it was common to possess an unofficial, informal name (signum or supernomen). Paul's Jewish name *Saul* was likely this informal appellation. *Paul* was most likely his Roman surname (Acts 13:9). It may be that he routinely used the Roman name during the years of his ministry to the Gentiles.

chosen by the will of God. The same Greek wording (the word "chosen" is supplied by the NLT) is also used in 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; and Col 1:1.

an apostle. The NT uses this word (*apostolos* [T⁶652, Z⁶693]) as a designation for authorized envoys, ambassadors, or missionaries, especially on behalf of Christ or the churches. Besides its application to Jesus himself (Heb 3:1; see NLT mg), it is used both in a wider sense for "missionaries" or "representatives" of the churches (e.g., 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25 [= "messenger"]; Rom 16:7) and in a special sense for the 12 apostles of Jesus and a larger group around them (1 Cor 9:5; 15:5-7; cf. Acts 1:21-22). Paul's claim to apostleship is based on his commissioning by the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:11-17), as well as on the suffering and the effects of his ministry (e.g., 2 Cor 3:1-3; 10:1-13:10). He emphatically identified himself with this title in most of his letters and defended it especially in his letters to the Corinthians. In 2 Timothy it represents his historic role in relation to the gospel he had faithfully proclaimed and for which he was presently suffering in prison (1:11-12).

I have been sent out to tell others. This renders for a second time the single Greek word for "apostle."

life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. The Greek behind the entire second sentence of 1:1 in the NLT is more compact and does not mention faith: Paul is an apostle, lit., "according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus." Grammatically, "in Christ Jesus" modifies "life." This life is brought into reality and made available by Christ to those who have a relationship with him. The fuller idea behind this is unpacked in this letter in 1:9-11 (cf. 4:17-18). That this life is gained through faith is consistent with 1:9 and 3:14-15 (cf. 1:5).

1:2 *Timothy*. Timothy's name means "one who honors God," but Paul nowhere plays on this in his writings.

dear son. The word "dear" can also be rendered as "beloved," i.e., "one who is dearly loved, prized, or valued." It is the same word used in the Father's address to Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:11) and transfiguration (Matt 17:5), and it is used often for fellow believers (e.g., Rom 1:7; 12:19). This is a warmer, more intimate greeting than was used in the formal context of 1 Tim 1:2. "Son" renders a Greek word for "child" (*teknon* [TG5043, ZG5451]) that can otherwise refer to either gender. Here the relationship is metaphorical: one with whom Paul had a father-child relationship in the faith (cf. 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phlm 1:10). Timothy appears to have already been a follower of Jesus when Paul first met him (cf. Acts 16:1-3).

COMMENTARY

As is typical of his letters, Paul's opening conforms to the standard form of ancient letters: "[Sender] to [Recipient], greetings" (e.g., Acts 15:23; 23:26). Yet whether the opening is brief, as here, or lengthy (Rom 1:1-7; Gal 1:1-5), Paul regularly breathes Christian faith through it. It is possible, of course, that the words used in such a context are more formal than sincere, just as we may start a letter with, "Dear . . ." and end it with "Yours truly. . . ." without granting the reader freedom to assume everything those words might mean. Yet the deep, mutual affection of Paul and Timothy, Paul's all-controlling sense of vocation in relation to his Lord, and the setting of this letter—Paul in prison, his death imminent, deserted by associates, longing for Timothy to come to him, and reflecting on his life—make it more likely that these words were more than formalities.

The use of the weighty title "apostle" is striking in an address to such a close friend but fitting in a letter that contains a solemn summons to the younger man, Timothy, to rise to the challenge of the ministry of the gospel. This gospel had been bound up with Paul's own identity and historic role (2:8; cf. Rom 2:16), a role that had now reached its goal as far as Paul's personal part in it. Moreover, much of the letter's contents will call Paul's apostolic life to mind by way of securing its hold on Timothy's own vision and emboldening him to obedience (e.g., 3:10-13). It is likely that Paul intended this letter to be overheard by the churches under Timothy's care (4:22); the use of the title has an authorizing and legitimating function on behalf of his delegate, Timothy.

That Paul was "chosen by the will of God" for his role suggests more than a commissioning for his task; it excludes any notion of human authorization and locates Paul's very life in the framework of the gospel's appearance within history according to God's plan. Paul's apostolic ministry itself was included in that plan. He was sent out as an apostle to tell others about the life God has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. "Life" is not only the fact and duration of existence but rather the whole state of affairs that holds creation in right relationship to its Maker and Savior. Just as death and sin are yoked together, so also life and righteousness go hand in hand. It encompasses both the present and future benefits of salvation (1 Tim 4:8) and expresses itself through "righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace" (2:22). This life was brought about through the Resurrection (1:10; 2:8), it was

under attack by the false teachers (2:18), and it finds strong expression as the answer to Paul's suffering and imminent death (4:6-8, 18). According to Titus 1:2, God promised this life before the world began. Likely the same idea is what is meant here. In view is the eternal, fixed, unchangeable character of the promise, founded exclusively in God's plan and grace; it is not ours by right or by merit (1:9; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), but only through faith. Paul's own apostleship was (more literally) "according to the promise," that is, the promise gave rise to his ministry, and his ministry worked for its fulfillment.

Paul was writing to Timothy, his long-time coworker and dear son in the faith. The expression of affection, beyond its doubtless spontaneous and genuine nature, would serve to encourage Timothy in a difficult situation. (It may well have encouraged Paul himself, virtually alone in prison, just to write these words!) It would also contribute to the emotional force of Paul's appeal for Timothy to come to Rome and authorize Timothy in the ears of those who heard the letter read.

Timothy appears in Acts 16:1 as already having become a disciple when Paul recruited him into his entourage. He was the son of a believing Jewish woman and a Greek father. In 1:5 (cf. 3:14-15) Paul traces Timothy's Christian faith to his mother, Eunice, and ultimately to his grandmother, Lois, which suggests that his father was not a believer. His training in the Jewish Scriptures, however, extended to infancy (3:15). Probably due to his Jewish ancestry and in contrast to Titus (cf. Gal 2:3), Paul immediately had Timothy circumcised "in deference to the Jews of the area" (Acts 16:3). Presumably it was at this point or soon thereafter that a spiritual gift was given Timothy (possibly a reference to the gift of the Spirit himself) accompanied by prophecies when the council of elders and Paul himself laid hands on him (1:6; 1 Tim 4:14; cf. 1 Tim 1:18). Timothy appears several times thereafter in Acts (Acts 17:14; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4) and was evidently with Paul during his original work in Ephesus (Acts 19:22). He also appears in several of Paul's letters (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon; cf. 1-2 Timothy) as a close companion and coworker of Paul. In several of these he is listed as a co-sender (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon), and possibly a coauthor, of the epistle. Timothy appears to have been a young man (2:22; 1 Tim 4:12; cf. 1 Tim 5:1-2); his age is usually estimated as about 30 at the time of 1-2 Timothy. It has also been inferred by many that he was of a timid and fearful temperament (1:6-7; 1 Cor 16:10-11; cf. 1 Tim 4:14) and prone to sickness (1 Tim 5:23). Paul's regard for Timothy was exceptional (Phil 2:19-24; cf. 1 Cor 4:17). He had a deep love for him, and he relied on him very heavily.

In keeping with his usual form of greeting, Paul wishes for "grace and peace" for Timothy; the less common element included here is "mercy" (otherwise in Paul's greetings only at 1 Tim 1:2; cf. Gal 6:16; 2 John 1:3; Jude 1:2). "Grace" (cf. 1:9; 2:1; 4:22) and "mercy" can virtually interchange (cf. 1:9; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), though "mercy" speaks especially of loving pity, action deriving from a concern for someone in need. In the Septuagint this Greek word for "mercy" (*eleos* [T61656, Z61799] and cognates) often translates the Hebrew *khesed* [TH2617, ZH2876], which refers to God's

loving-kindness (for the idea, see Exod 34:6-7). It will be invoked elsewhere in 2 Timothy at 1:16, 18 (cf. Heb 4:14-16). “Peace” encompasses the broad idea of the Hebrew *shalom* [TH7965, ZH8934] (cf. Num 6:26); this goes far beyond the mere absence of conflict and suffering to the total state of well-being and wholeness in a right relation with God and God’s creation. Just as is the case between Luke 2:14 and 12:51, there is a strong tension in 2 Timothy between this wish for peace and the repeated exhortations to suffer for the gospel (1:8; 2:3; 4:5; cf. 3:12). The way to resolve this tension, however, is not to speak of an “internal” or “spiritual” peace as opposed to an “external” peace. The gospel’s gift of peace and its summons to its realization in this world is as full as the definition of *shalom* just given, and this includes flesh and blood, bodily and social aspects (2:22; Rom 14:19; Eph 4:3; 1 Thess 5:13; Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 3:11). But during the present age, before the resolution of creation’s story itself, the peace of God—the gospel’s peace—is as hateful to this world as God himself is. Sadly, the very effort to extend peace on the gospel’s terms will provoke strong resistance and persecution. Paul’s prayer is that the gospel’s peace will be granted to and work through Timothy (and the rest of the church) in anticipation of the full measure yet to come.

The source of this threefold blessing is “God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” All three blessings—“grace, mercy, and peace”—are known from the Old Testament and are thoroughly Jewish in nature, as is the fatherhood of God (Exod 34:6-7; Num 6:24-26; Deut 1:31; Ps 89:26; Isa 63:16). But all this has been brought into a new focus by the revelation of Christ Jesus our Lord. Henceforth, God can be known as “Father” only as he is firstly the Father of Jesus. It will from now on be understood that all the blessings of God are contained in and mediated through Jesus. The very conception and worship of God will henceforth include both the Father and the Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. The church will struggle for centuries to understand and articulate what this means, a struggle that is important and necessary and yet fraught with dangers. The best attempts at “explaining the teaching of the Trinity” remain imperfect gropings, saying more about what the New Testament does not mean (that is, rejecting heresies, false and inimical ideas) than what it does. Yet even if the teachings are difficult and the attempts to explain them remain imperfect, there can be nothing more basic and controlling for all of life than the proper worship of the one true God. In this brief blessing Paul has drawn from the depths of a deep well. We would do well to drink deeply from the same.

◆ II. Paul’s Charge Based on Timothy’s Conversion and Commission (1:3-18)

A. Heritage, Empowerment, the Gospel, and the Apostle’s Example (1:3-14)

³Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴I long to see

you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

⁵I remember your genuine faith, for you

COMMENTARY ON

Titus

◆ I. Opening Greetings (1:1–4)

This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to* those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. ²This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began. ³And now at just the

1:1 Or *to strengthen the faith of.*

right time he has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for him.

⁴I am writing to Titus, my true son in the faith that we share.

May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace.

NOTES

1:1 *slave of God.* The precise phrasing, *doulos theou* [^{TG}1400/2316, ^{ZG}1528/2536], is unique among the letters of Paul. More usual is the phrase, *doulos Christou Iēsou* [^{TG}5547, ^{ZG}5986] (slave of Christ Jesus): Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1 (cf. Jas 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1). The phrase, “slave of God,” is used for believers several times outside of Paul’s writings (Acts 16:17; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 2:16; Rev 7:3; cf. Luke 2:29; Acts 2:18; 4:29; Rev 10:7; 11:18; 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6). On the theocentric tenor of Titus as a whole (that is, specifically God- more than Christ-centered), see note on 3:5.

apostle of Jesus Christ. See notes on 2 Tim 1:1-2.

those God has chosen. Lit., “chosen ones of God.” Neither the word for “chosen” (*eklektos* [^{TG}1588A, ^{ZG}1723]) nor its cognates occurs again in Titus, but the idea is strategically and emphatically utilized in 2:14 and 3:4-7 (cf. 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 1:9; 2:10). It is unlikely that the phrase as used here speaks of those who have not yet come to faith (Marshall 1999:121), although the NLT’s rendering might be taken to imply that (compare the rendering in NLT mg).

the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. Lit., “truth according to godliness.” The Greek phrasing makes clear that it is the truth that is according to godliness, as the NLT brings out. The term *eusebeia* [^{TG}2150, ^{ZG}2354] (godliness, piety) is an important one in the letters to Titus and Timothy (see 2 Tim 2:16; 3:5, 12).

1:2 *This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life.* The Greek continues to run thick with compact phrases that allow for different understandings and thus differing options for translation. More literally, “truth on/for [*epi*] hope of eternal life.” The force of the preposition *epi* [^{TG}1909, ^{ZG}2093], the meaning of hope (subjective posture or objective content?), the meaning of the phrase “of hope” (hope for eternal life; hope that is eternal life), and what the phrase “on/for hope of eternal life” modifies are all open to differing

interpretations. The NLT attaches this phrase to “truth” and so repeats that idea in its translation. Alternatively, it could modify faith and knowledge (Fee 1988:168-169). Accordingly, hope (either as subjective posture or objective content) is either the basis for or the goal of faith and knowledge. But most likely hope modifies “apostle” as a parallel thought to “according to [the] faith . . . and [the] knowledge” (1:1, lit.). Hope then signifies the idea of a subjective conviction versus the thing hoped for.

eternal life. See note on 2 Tim 1:1; cf. 1 Tim 1:1.

1:3 just the right time. Lit., “his own time.” The term *kairos* [T^G2540, Z^G2789] (time) can be used for either a particular point of time or a span of time; the plural (as here) can be used for a series, for a continuing time, or it can stand for a singular idea (cf. 1 Tim 6:15). The adjective *idios* [T^G2398, Z^G2625] can be either a simple possessive, “his,” or it can have the force of “his own” (belonging to him; as opposed to someone else’s). Its referent is “God.”

this message, which we announce. The message is revealed within the “preaching” (*kērugmati*). Paul almost always used this word and its cognates both for his divinely appointed heralding of the Good News (the activity) and for the Good News itself as that which was publicly proclaimed (the content). In two passages he identifies himself simply as a herald/preacher (*kērux* [T^G2783, Z^G3061]; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11).

the command. The same word for command (*epitagē* [T^G2003, Z^G2198]), which connotes a forceful order to a subordinate, is used in application to Titus at 2:15.

have been entrusted. See 1 Tim 1:11; cf. 1 Cor 9:17; Gal 2:7; 1 Thess 2:4.

with this work for him. This renders the single Greek word, *ho* [T^G3739, Z^G4005] (which), the relative pronoun whose antecedent is the preaching (*kērugma* [T^G2782, Z^G3060]; translated as “which we announce to everyone”) of the preceding clause.

1:4 the faith that we share. Lit., “according to common faith.” As in 1:1, “faith” could be the act of believing/trusting or the faith professed (objective content); the latter is more likely with this adjective. The adjective *koinos* [T^G2839, Z^G3123] (common) in this context designates a positive idea of something of mutual interest or something shared communally (cf. Acts 2:44; Jude 1:3). The idea is likely that it is shared by Paul and Titus, thus primarily reinforcing the sense in which Titus was a child and further endorsing Titus’s representative role on behalf of Paul. Alternatively *koinos* could be an indirect reference to the broader community of churches (Jude 1:3; cf. Eph 4:4-6). If the latter sense is correct, then the intended effect may be not only to reinforce Paul’s directives by appealing to common confession and practice (cf. 1 Cor 11:16; 14:33), but also to encourage the geographically isolated believers on the island of Crete.

COMMENTARY

This letter to Paul’s coworker Titus—brief, blunt, and thick with teaching and exhortation—opens with a richly packed greeting, teased out to a much greater degree than those in the letters to Timothy and infused with the teaching to come. As we read the letter through, we should picture an apostle energetically executing his mission of founding churches sometime following his release from the Roman imprisonment of Acts 28 and prior to his later arrest and imprisonment in Rome (see note on 2 Tim 1:8), where we find him writing 2 Timothy. Though Paul may have sensed that he was in the final phase of his life’s work—that perspective emerges more clearly from the letters to Timothy with which this one generally coincides—there is no particular air of emergency in this letter beyond what we see in Paul’s earlier letters. Undaunted by the suffering he had undergone and knew

would find him again, he was presently tramping north along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea toward Nicopolis, reflecting back down the road and across the Mediterranean to the island of Crete, where he had just engaged in a burst of church planting and where he left his long-time apprentice and coworker Titus temporarily in charge, awaiting a replacement. The church was new (leaders had not even been appointed yet), the converts were raw, and false teachings had already cross-pollinated with the native island culture. The churches of Crete (Titus) were not the churches of Ephesus (1 Timothy), so Titus's task, though it overlaps with Timothy's, faced a unique set of issues.

The voice we hear in this letter emanates from an apostle on the go, driving ahead with the mission, remaining thoroughly in touch with the world of his churches as much as with the truth he preached, and balancing equally the desires to move ahead and sustain what was behind, both to plant and to nurture. This is also an apostle whose vision for his churches always transcended the models of "hospital" (for the cure and care of souls, as if humanity were the center rather than the hope and glory of God) and "holding tank" (simply waiting for the Second Coming). Nor had the church, represented through the teaching of this letter, simply settled down in the world and made peace with societal norms. Rather Paul saw the churches, and sought for them to see themselves, as caught up in the same end-time mission that was his own. Not all Christians were apostles, of course, but the work in its larger sense was not the apostles'. It was the church's. Accordingly, the work of founding churches is the work of engendering within them the same animating, missionary vision that is God's own in relation to the world. This includes the cure and care of souls, and it locates itself between the appearances of Christ, looking forward to the imminent appearing of their great God and Savior.

Paul began this letter by calling himself "a slave [*doulos*] of God." Among Christians today, "servant" (*diakonos* [τῆ1249, ζῆ1356] = servant, minister, one filling the role of a deacon) and "service" are largely positive terms equivalent to "Christian work," while "slave," "slavery," and "servitude" are largely negative, often drawing their meaning from the distinctive character and evils of the racially based slavery of antebellum United States. In the Roman world, some slaves/servants filled diverse roles (e.g., physicians, artists, architects, philosophers), occupied various economic levels, were drawn from any race, were sometimes given power over freeborns, and were highly educated. However, the majority were ordinary laborers performing socially undesirable, difficult, and menial tasks. They were considered to be chattel, that is, property to be bought, used at will, and sold. They were mere instruments of their masters, on whom they were dependent, to whom they were expected to render total obedience, under whose total authority they served, and to whose household they belonged (Harrill 2000:1124-1127). All this forms the immediate, cultural background of the phrase. Yet another set of associations derive from the Old Testament and Judaism, where the expression had been used of Moses (Num 12:7; Ps 105:26), Israel (Isa 42:19; 49:3), and kings and prophets (e.g., 2 Sam 7:4-5; Ps 105:42; Jer 7:25). This religious usage draws on the culturally ingrained ideas of

total subservience, absence of independent rights, dependence on the master, and unquestioning loyalty, all of which fundamentally shape the nature of this slavery according to the character and will of the divine Master. But this Old Testament perspective of slavery also locates one in a particular history of salvation and confers privilege, representative authority, and a confident sense of destiny by virtue of the slave's association with this divine Lord and King. Central to this relationship was the fact that being a slave/servant of God meant that one was a slave of all, following the example of their Lord (Mark 10:41-45; John 13:1-17; Phil 2:1-11).

In common dealings, Paul may actually have preferred to refer to himself as a slave/servant (of Christ, or, as here, of God) rather than directly invoking his apostolic authority as he needed to do in his letter openings. His use of this phrase first in this greeting (rather than the immediate assertion of his apostleship) may be due to a relative lack of urgency in the life-setting of this epistle (Fee 1988:167). At the same time, the choice of God rather than Christ is consistent with the emphasis of the greeting in verses 1-4 as a whole (Marshall 1999:117-118). Indeed not only does the entire letter invoke the authority of God's representatives (1:3; 2:15), but it emphasizes the pattern of God's dealings with humanity in Christ as a model for Christian conduct. This is probably what Paul intended to signal with respect to the example of his own life.

The Greek phrasing that Paul used throughout verses 1-4 is very dense and needs some unpacking. As elsewhere, a "literal" rendering of the phrases can reveal something of the range of possible translations within which the NLT has settled, as well as assisting in getting more precisely at the meaning. After identifying Paul as author, the first line of the letter is literally "according to [the] faith of [the] elect of God." First in regards to "[the] faith," it is likely that Paul intended both the content of the faith and the response of human faith/faithfulness. He called himself an apostle according to the faith, that is, with the charge of acting as a steward of the faith confessed by the elect and with responsibilities for strengthening the faith and faithfulness of the elect (see NLT mg). Paul's charge and authority extended beyond proclamation to ongoing pastoral care for his churches (Acts 14:22; 15:36; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 13:10), which is precisely the burden of this letter.

Paul identified the believers as God's "chosen ones" (see note on 1:1). The phrase is in some places a simple stand-in for "Christians," but it can carry fuller implications. Potentially it signals merciful and sovereign initiative (this work is God's), Paul's subservience to God's will (Paul answers to the one whose people these are; cf. 2 Cor 1:21-24; 5:12-6:2), and the intended effect of God's choice in the conduct of those so marked out (those who are God's people are to be marked out from others in their lives; cf. 2:14; 2 Tim 1:9). In the Old Testament, Israel was God's chosen people (e.g., Ps 105:6; Isa 42:1), and this designation therefore also reinforces the identity of believers in the Good News within that larger history of God's salvation.

Further, Paul's apostleship carries the responsibility and authority "to teach them to know the truth." Literally, this reads, "an apostle . . . according to [the] faith of [the] chosen ones of God and knowledge of [the] truth." "Knowledge of the truth"

is also found in 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:3; and 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7. Surveying these passages makes clear that this phrase is another designation for the Good News itself. This word choice (knowledge of the truth) pertains to the struggle with the falsehoods of the opponents and their emphasis on knowledge (cf. 1:14; 1 Tim 6:20). Knowing the truth emphasizes the rational dimension of faith, including the rejection of alternative teachings, but finally entails the totality of a right response without which understanding cannot be said to exist. The truth is the message that coheres with God's revelation in Christ that brings salvation (for the relation of this to the Scriptures, cf. 2 Tim 3:15-17; 4:2), including the present effects in the transformation of one's life.

The revelation of the truth is what had been entrusted uniquely to the apostles, whose responsibility it was to teach, preserve, and defend the truth, and to identify counterfeits (cf. Eph 2:19-4:16; 1 John 1:1-4). Their teaching sets the standard for right belief. This is not to say that the apostles were over the truth or the sources of it (Gal 1:11-12), but it is to acknowledge their unique and authoritative role in the history of the Good News. In the present phrasing also, it is not the truth that is "according to" Paul's apostleship but Paul's apostleship that is "according to" the knowledge of the truth.

The message in relation to the false teachers is clear and uncompromising: They are upstarts, charlatans, pretenders. Paul's implicit argument is no mere trumping of reason with authority, but it does operate with the belief that, in what we like to call "the marketplace of ideas," not all ideas are of equal weight, and their weight is ultimately a matter of their source. The Good News is ultimately reason itself, but in the fog of half-truths and human perspectives, it is necessary to assert that here the transcendent God has spoken, precisely through the true apostles of Jesus Christ. Here is truth.

Specifically, this is the "truth that shows them how to live godly lives." As with the above phrases the connection of thought ("according to . . .") is open-ended: It is the truth that meets the criterion of godliness, instructs about it, gives rise to it, and empowers Christians for it. A decision between these is unnecessary because the phrase anticipates the developments of 2:11-14 and 3:4-7, where the appearance of God's grace in history will serve as both the model for the conduct of believers and the provision that makes the ideal of godliness possible. The letter will emphasize right conduct as being the fruit of the Good News and as being in the interest of the gospel's advancement on the island of Crete. Conversely, ungodly behavior goes hand in hand with the lies of the false teaching. "Lack of godliness disproves competing claims, while a positive expression of it is the visible emblem of one's genuine relationship to God" (Marshall 1999:123).

Accordingly, Paul's apostleship itself rests on the hope for eternal life (cf. 3:7; Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972:131; Knight 1992:284; Marshall 1999:124) and/or promotes that hope (Kelly 1963:227). Either way Paul was not speaking of his personal, animating confidence but rather the church's hope, which he shared and for which he bore a special responsibility in line with his commission. As a

result of Paul's discharging of this responsibility (that is, of his preaching of the truth), the church acquired confidence. As with faith, such a conviction (hope) can be said to be present only where it is directly reflected in the ordering and orientation of one's life (see 2:13). Hope, properly understood, makes a difference in how the church and her members conduct themselves in the present, and this hope and this difference were both under threat on Crete until Titus made more headway with the work. (For the kind of teaching that was likely at work here and the potentially destructive effects of it on the church's hope, see 2 Tim 2:18; cf. 2 Tim 2:11-13; 3:1; 4:1-2.)

The eternal life that is hoped for is a life that God (who does not lie) promised them before the world began. The perspective here, as in 3:7, is of eternal life as a future possession (hope of eternal life), made certain through what God has done in the past and brought to light in the present in the Good News (cf. Marshall 1999:124). Moreover, Paul had in mind particularly the life bound up in Jesus Christ, which was previously hidden in God's promise and is now being brought to light. Hope, as used in this context, has nothing to do with wishfulness. God's promise is its foundation; he is the God "who does not lie" (cf. Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Rom 3:3-4; 11:29; 2 Tim 2:13; Heb 6:18). The adjective *apseudēs* [ἄψευδής, 26950] (translated as "does not lie") denotes freedom from all deceit. This qualifier underscores the inviolability of God's salvation plan—begun and certain to be completed, though it is not yet completed—which now includes the readers by virtue of his choice (1:1). There is probably also an intended contrast with the lies of the false teaching (cf. 1:12) and possibly with the deceitful character of the pagan god, Zeus, whose story was integral to Cretan mythology (see further on 1:12; cf. Kidd 1999; see also the convenient summary of primary sources related to Crete in Towner 2006:659-662). This designation of God does at least three things for the churches on Crete: It sweeps aside the distortions and deceptions of the false teachings and asserts the truth and firmness of Christian hope; it develops the Cretans' knowledge of the God whom they have newly come to worship (whose story of faithfulness they will come to know more fully from the Scriptures), over against the pagan deities they had known; and it sets a pattern for their own conduct, which is to be patterned after this God's (2:11-3:7).

This eternal life is something that this unlying God "promised them before the world began" (1:2). Scripture does not refer to this promise either generally (cf. Rom 1:2; 9:4) or specifically, though the letter certainly assumes that what God has done in Christ fulfills the Old Testament (cf. 2:11-14; 3:3-8a). It was issued, literally, "before times eternal," which could mean either before the beginning of time or a long time ago. The former is likely correct (Marshall 1999:126), as in 2 Timothy 1:9. There is accordingly a bookending of creation's entire history between the future realization of eternal life and the past promise located before times eternal. The conviction that the origins of God's plan preceded time developed in the intertestamental period as a way of further grounding Israel's security in its election (2 *Baruch* 4:3; 57; 1QS 3-4; b. *Pesahim* 54a; cf. Marshall 1999:126). Not only is God

sovereign over all creation geographically, but he is also sovereign temporally and historically (2 Tim 1:1, 9). The Greek text refocuses on the fact of the promise as an act of God and therefore on its unchangeableness and the total certainty that this eternal life will become a reality for the beneficiaries of the promise. It is not only the veracity and constancy of God but his irresistible power that brings the promise to pass, and thus he displays his majestic sovereignty over the entire history of creation. Such an idea looks wholly to God and excludes any notion of human merit.

That which was made certain in the pre-Creation past, kept hidden in ages past, and will be realized in the future has been brought to light in the world uniquely in the final epoch of its history: “now at just the right time” (see note on 1:3). This places the initiative entirely with God and his plan, a plan that is executed on his own timetable purely according to his will. Certainly the present epoch is brought into focus as being of special significance in the span of history framed by eternity past and eternity future. There may also be contained in the expression a sense of continuing mystery as to the ways of God and yet a requirement of submission to his perfect decree (cf. Acts 14:14-18; 17:30; 2 Cor 6:1-2).

Precisely this epoch is the one in which God “revealed this message” (1:3). The verb for “revealed” (*phaneroō* [T65319, Z65746]) usually has to do with making something visible, but it can have the figurative sense of causing something to be known that was not previously known. The direct object, “his word,” favors the latter. Nevertheless, there is the element of bringing something into the open, making it visible and actual within history (cf. Rom 16:25-26), which stands in contrast with the former hiddenness of the promise in 1:2 and its association with Christ and the church.

In this way both Christ—in his own life and preaching—and the message about him as it is proclaimed and experienced in the church are included within what we can call the “Christ-event,” that is, the whole salvation that is being worked out in history (see 2 Tim 1:10). In short, the church has the profound privilege of sharing in the work that Christ came to do; our work in the present is an extension of his saving appearance in the past. God’s chosen means of revealing the fulfillment of the promise, namely through the true message (as opposed to that of the false teachers), was by entrusting the message to Paul. Along the way a subtle tension is introduced: Whereas the mention of eternal life in 1:2 seems to be future oriented (see above), there is here a clear note of fulfillment in the present. In some sense, which is only hinted at, we participate in eternal life now. This tension is, however, characteristic of the New Testament as a whole, with its concept of a single salvation event that is both *already* and *not yet* realized (see commentary on 2 Tim 3:1 and 4:1-3).

Paul then stated that the revelation of salvation is that which he proclaimed (see note on 1:3). The idea here is that the “revelation” takes place precisely in the missionary “announcement,” and that the announcement is divine property entrusted to stewards, in this case, to Paul. A solemn assertion underscores and expands on this: “It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this

work [of announcing the message] for him" (1:3). This assertion establishes Paul's legitimacy and authority in his mission (cf. 1 Tim 1:1; Rom 16:25-26). This warrants obedience from his delegate, Titus, and from the churches who would hear this letter read since Titus shared in this authority as his delegate. The phrase may also express Paul's personal feeling of the command under which he lived, and the accounting that would be required from him in relation to it. In part this would include a responsibility to instill the value of the same mission in his churches. It was on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) that God's command first confronted Paul, and that vision was an essential grounding of Paul's claim to being an apostle (1 Cor 9:1-2; 15:8-9). The one who issued the command is the one whom Paul served, the one who has chosen his people, the one who does not lie in promising eternal life, and the one who has revealed his word at his chosen time. It is the command of "God our Savior" (cf. 1 Tim 1:1).

In the next verse (1:4), Jesus will also be called "our Savior," thereby ascribing to Jesus divine identity. The same alternating pattern occurs in 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6. (For the significance of this, see note on 2:13.) The word *sōtēr* [¹⁶⁴⁹⁹⁰, ²⁶⁵⁴⁰⁰] (savior) is most common in the New Testament books that are usually considered to be the most influenced by Greek culture and chronologically later than others (that is, Luke-Acts, the letters to Timothy and Titus, and 2 Peter; outside of these books it is used only in John 4:42; Eph 5:23; Phil 3:20; 1 John 4:14; and Jude 1:25). Because of this trend, it has been argued that the title "Savior" was taken over by Christians from the Greek world where it commonly designated human and divine saviors, especially as givers of life or rulers of a time of salvation (Dibelius and Conzelmann 1972:100-103; Collins 2002:308-316). It is entirely likely that a contrast was intended and felt over against the pagan rulers and gods who went by this title. In that case the pronoun "our" may contrast this Savior with other claimants, possibly including Zeus (see commentary on 1:12). However, the word *sōtēr* and its cognates were well established in the Greek version of the Old Testament (LXX; see, e.g., Deut 32:15; Ps 23:5 [= English 24:5]), and the related group of cognates had been in common use in apostolic theology well before the writing of these letters (see, e.g., 1 Thess 2:16; Jas 4:12). This older and more widespread usage of *sōtēr* is most likely the leading set of associations in its usage in these letters (Marshall 1999:131-132). This then roots the Good News back into the history of this salvation and draws off the Old Testament's anticipation, as well as drawing from the broad use of the cognate terminology in the early church for its experience of the Good News. God is identified as the source of that salvation.

Looking ahead, we will see that this letter will stress the need for the community of faith to embody the saving will and character of God in their society (cf. 2:11-15). In this phrase, then, there is expressed a sense of identification with this God in his character and role as Savior and a sense of necessary cooperation with the saving purposes of this God, "who wants everyone to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4).

The final verse of this introduction (1:4) begins with the words, "I am writing to Titus." Titus appears in three of Paul's epistles besides this one (2 Corinthians,

Galatians, and 2 Timothy) though nowhere in Acts. He was a Gentile (Gal 2:3) of uncertain age at the time of the present epistle (see note and commentary on 2:6-7). Roughly 14 to 17 years after Paul's conversion (depending on how one reckons the figures given in Gal 1:18; 2:1), he appears for the first time alongside Paul on an important visit to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10). Whether this was the visit of Acts 11:27-30 or 15:1-29 depends on how one fits Galatians into Acts; both of these journeys set out from Antioch, which may have been Titus's home. Evidently, he was highly regarded by Paul at this early date; in Galatians Paul would hold him forth as a symbol of his gospel. It is possible that Paul took him on that trip specifically because he was a Gentile believer. Titus's journey to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30 (if this is the visit of Gal 2:1-10) was connected to an offering, which is also one of the main issues when he appears in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). More generally Titus was the carrier of the two epistles mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3-9 and 7:8-12 (now lost) and of our 2 Corinthians. He was almost certainly Paul's delegate in dealing with the larger, difficult, and extremely important issues troubling the church in Corinth at that time (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13-14). There is no evidence of his involvement with that church before this. His qualities—reflecting both the gentle love and firm severity of Paul himself—can be estimated from that assignment as well as from the present one.

Paul greeted Titus as "my true son," the same wording as in 1 Timothy 1:2. The language is metaphorical: Titus was a child in the sphere of trust in Christ; their bond consisted in their shared faith (see note on 1:4). It is unknown whether Titus was Paul's convert. This address (*true* or *genuine* child) is less warm than 2 Timothy 1:2 (beloved child), in keeping with the more businesslike tone and public nature of this epistle. Whatever personal sentiment is involved, the address serves to authenticate Titus publicly as Paul's delegate. It may also hint at the kind of obedience that might be expected from such a son (Marshall 1999:132).

The greeting itself ends the letter's opening: "May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace." At the least, the application of the title "our Savior" to Jesus (cf. 2:13; 3:6; 2 Tim 1:10) accentuates his role as the executor of God's salvation (Marshall 1999:131, 135), but it may assume a more complete inclusion of Jesus in the divine identity (see 2:13).

Taking verses 1-4 together, it is clear that the new believers on Crete could not have understood fully all that Paul was gesturing toward with the pregnant phrasing he used in this address. But Paul was a deep and subtle thinker. We here meet him toward the end of a long life of theological reflection and church building work, a life characterized by incessant struggle with opponents and errors. Furthermore, he was addressing a long-time and highly regarded coworker, a true son in the faith they shared. Titus would know what Paul was talking about and would mediate it to the churches.

In bold, quick strokes Paul meant to establish the nature and source of his authority and to signal the themes that are the foundation of the whole letter. Since there is no indication that Paul's apostolic office was being questioned, it is more

likely that the emphasis there is due to the need for authority to assert itself in dealing with these churches in particular (cf. 1:10-14; 2:15; 3:8). The teaching that comes later in this letter would be forceful and would reach right into the homes of the new believers.

◆ II. Leadership (1:5-16)

A. Criteria of Appointment (1:5-9)

⁵I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. ⁶An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife,* and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. ⁷An elder* is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a

heavy drinker,* violent, or dishonest with money.

⁸Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. ⁹He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.

1:6 Or *must have only one wife, or must be married only once*; Greek reads *must be the husband of one wife*.
1:7a Or *An overseer, or A bishop*. 1:7b Greek *must not drink too much wine*.

NOTES

1:5 *appoint*. The verb *kathistēmi* [T⁶2525, Z⁶2770] is used for an official appointment and authorization (cf. Luke 12:14; Heb 5:1; 8:3). Knight (1992:288) argues that this verb designates the final act (involving the laying on of hands) in an assumed process, but the verb itself gives no indication of what sort of proceeding would be followed.

elders. The terminology of leadership in the churches varies in the NT: *presbuteros* [T⁶4245A, Z⁶4565], meaning "elder" is found in 1:5; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:17, 19; cf. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1, 5; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1; Rev 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4; *episkopos* [T⁶1985, Z⁶2176], meaning "overseer" is found in 1:7; 1 Tim 3:1-2; cf. Acts 1:20; 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:2. The following are less titles than functions: *proistamai* [T⁶4291, Z⁶4613], used for "managing" (Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; cf. 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12); *hēgeomai* [T⁶2233, Z⁶2451], used for "leading" (Acts 15:22; Heb 13:7, 17, 24). Though popular as a modern title, "pastor" or "shepherd" (*poimēn* [T⁶4166, Z⁶4478] and cognates) was seemingly not much used as a title in the first century; it was, however, descriptive of the leadership function (used as a human role, Eph 4:11; as a role of Christ, Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; as descriptive of a function, Acts 20:28-29; 1 Cor 9:7; 1 Pet 5:2-3; cf. also Rev. 2:27; 7:17; 12:5; 19:15).

in each town. Lit., "according to city"; distributive sense of *kata* [T⁶2596, Z⁶2848] (according to).

1:6 *An elder must*. Lit., "If someone is." This clause is either an awkward addition to the preceding "appoint" or, more likely, leaves out the implied apodosis (e.g., "then appoint that person") at the end of v. 6.

live a blameless life. The Greek word translated by this phrase, *anekklētos* [T⁶410, Z⁶441], pertains "to one who cannot be accused of anything wrong" (L&N 33.433; cf. 1:7; 1 Cor 1:8; Col 1:22; 1 Tim 3:10). It is a synonym of *anepilēmptos* [T⁶423, Z⁶455] (1 Tim 3:2; 5:7; 6:14) and *akatagnōstos* [T⁶176, Z⁶183] (2:8), which pertain "to what cannot be criticized" (L&N 33.415).



Hebrews

J. RAMSEY MICHAELS

INTRODUCTION TO *Hebrews*

THE MAJOR WITNESSES of the New Testament are commonly said to be, first, the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), along with Luke's companion volume, the book of Acts; second, the Gospel of John with its distinctive witness to Jesus Christ; third, the letters of Paul; and finally, all the rest, the portion of the Canon too often neglected in contemporary Christian preaching and Bible study. These writings, assumed (often incorrectly) to be later than the rest of the New Testament, consist of seven rather short so-called "Catholic" or "General" Letters framed by two giants, the book of Hebrews (the last of the letters traditionally attributed to Paul) and the book of Revelation. The latter always has and always will gain its share of attention from those who are curious about the end of the world, but Hebrews remains something of a sleeping giant, a neglected tour de force within the New Testament canon. It is undeniably one of the most difficult New Testament books and, whether in spite of that or because of it, one of the most rewarding.

CANONICITY AND TEXTUAL HISTORY

That Christians in the East (especially Egypt) regarded Hebrews as one of Paul's writings, and therefore as canonical, is clear from our earliest papyrus manuscripts. This is evident in the Chester Beatty papyrus, P46, where Hebrews immediately follows Romans and precedes 1 Corinthians. The copyist of another papyrus manuscript, P13, seems to have used an exemplar formatted like P46, because the pagination in P13 indicates that another book (roughly the length of Romans) preceded Hebrews in the Pauline collection (see Comfort 2005:37-38). Later manuscripts, whether from the East or the West, placed Hebrews at or near the end of the Pauline corpus, but none associated the book with anyone other than Paul. In addition to the two early papyri, the text of the book of Hebrews is best represented by the two well-known fourth-century parchment manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus (S) and Codex Vaticanus (B; extant up through Hebrews 9:14). Other fairly reliable witnesses to the text of Hebrews are A, C, I, H, 33, 104, and 1739. In short, despite all doubts about Pauline authorship, the textual history of Hebrews is much the same as that of the other epistles attributed to Paul.

AUTHOR

The "Epistle to the Hebrews" has always been something of a mystery within the New Testament and remains so today. To the reader of the King James Version of

1611, it was “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,” the last of 14 letters attributed to him in the New Testament canon. The last few verses of the book, where the author’s personality and circumstances came to the fore, confirmed the impression that it was indeed the work of Paul. “Pray for us,” the author wrote, “for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner” (13:18-19, KJV). This sounds like the Paul of other epistles, with his customary requests for prayer (see Rom 15:30; Eph 6:19; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25) and his often-expressed desires to be reunited with the believers to whom he was writing (Rom 15:32; Phil 2:24; 1 Thess 3:11; Phlm 1:22). The text of Hebrews continues three verses later, “And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; withwhom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen” (13:22-25, KJV).

Here was a voice easily read as Paul’s. The reference to Paul’s helper Timothy and the verb “set at liberty” suggest that Timothy, at least, and perhaps the author as well, had been in prison. Such circumstances evoke the world of Paul, his imprisonments, and his missionary travels. The alert reader of the King James Version might have remembered as well the author’s earlier comment that “ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods” (10:34, KJV). Again, here is the voice of Paul, or so it seems (see, for example, Phil 4:14-15; 2 Tim 1:16-17). From all this a rather clear picture emerges: Paul, recently released from prison, is writing “a letter” (13:22b) from “Italy” (13:24), perhaps from Rome, to a group of “Hebrews” (that is, Jewish Christians, in contrast to his usual audience of Gentiles). The final salutation, “May God’s grace be with you all. Amen” (13:25), confirms the impression that this is Paul’s letter, concluded in Paul’s customary way. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that for centuries it was widely accepted as one of Paul’s letters and therefore as canonical.

Still, there are things about Hebrews that give the traditional reader pause. While Paul’s literary style can vary from letter to letter, the style of Hebrews is so different from them all that it is difficult to imagine Paul writing it. Also, Paul’s letters as arranged in order within the New Testament seem to get shorter and shorter: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, then a series of shorter letters (all of about the same length) to various congregations to which Paul had ministered, then four letters to individuals (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) which similarly decrease in size from six chapters, to four, to three, and down to one. Finally, and unexpectedly, comes Hebrews, written to a congregation and not an individual, a letter roughly equal in length to 2 Corinthians and exceeded only by 1 Corinthians and Romans. Why is this rather long letter deferred to the end of the collection? The placement of Hebrews reflects certain doubts in the ancient church about its authorship. To be sure, our earliest witness to its text, the Chester Beatty papyrus, P46 (c. 200), placed it well within the Pauline corpus—right after Romans. But later

Greek manuscripts tended to move it closer to the end of the collection, either just before the four letters to individuals (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon) or at the very end, the precedent which English versions have consistently followed. Consequently, it stands in our New Testament as a kind of gate, leading from Paul's collected letters to letters ascribed to other first-century Christian leaders: James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude; and the Revelation.

A casual reader of the King James Version might not have noticed all this but would surely have noticed that Hebrews does not begin like Paul's other letters, or indeed like any other New Testament letter at all. It does not open with any formal words of greeting, such as "Paul to the Hebrews: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," but more abruptly, like a sermon or theological tract: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (1:1-2, KJV). The author did not claim to be Paul, as Paul did in all other letters attributed to him, nor did he imply that he was either an apostle or an eyewitness. Such roles he assigned to others (see 2:3; 13:7), while he remained anonymous. This impression of anonymity is heightened when the reader turns from the King James to more modern English versions, such as the New Living Translation, where the book is titled simply "Hebrews," and the reader has no reason to suspect—at least until the personal references near the end of the last chapter—that it might possibly be Paul's. The mention of the author's imprisonment in chapter 10 has disappeared altogether, giving way to a more general statement that "you suffered along with those who were thrown into jail" (10:34). It is much the same with other modern translations, and the reasons for it lie with additional ancient Greek manuscripts now available to scholars and students.

These manuscripts have either the simple heading "To the Hebrews" (P46 D) or no superscription at all. However, most of them do have a subscription or colophon of some kind at the end: "To the Hebrews" (X C I 044 33); "Written to the Hebrews from Rome" (A; [or "Italy," P]); "Written to the Hebrews from Italy through Timothy" (the majority of later manuscripts); more elaborately, "Written to the Hebrews from Rome by Paul to those in Jerusalem" (81); or "Written to the Hebrews in Hebrew from Italy anonymously through Timothy" (104). The most important manuscripts have "To the Hebrews" in some form, either at the beginning or at the end, and either by itself or with added words. Only a few later witnesses have nothing at all. (It can probably be safely assumed that the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, one of our most important ancient manuscripts, also had the subscription "To the Hebrews" at the end, but we cannot know because this manuscript breaks off after Hebrews 9:14.)

The phrase "To the Hebrews" still implies Paul as the author, by default as it were. Paul was the letter writer *par excellence* in the New Testament so that letters by individuals other than Paul were identified by the author's name (Peter, James, Jude, etc.), while letters attributed to Paul were identified instead by their intended

recipients. So while the author of Hebrews never identifies himself by name, the work is not exactly anonymous so far as the manuscript tradition is concerned.

Yet the closer we study the book, the more anonymous it sounds. The author's personality rarely comes through, and when it does appear, it does not sound like Paul (at least not until the very end) or like anyone else in particular. In 10:34, for example, modern translations have consistently followed manuscripts which speak either of "prisoners" or of "imprisonments" (lit., "chains") rather than specifically of "my chains," leaving the author's personal experience out of the picture. The author comes through simply as an experienced preacher or teacher, skilled in rhetoric and impatient with slow learners. For example, in the New Living Translation: "There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen" (5:11); "Here is the main point" (8:1); "But we cannot explain these things in detail now" (9:5); "How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets" (11:32). In the last instance, a masculine participle in the Greek suggests that the author is male, but otherwise there is no clue as to who he might be.

Only at the very end does the author emerge as a specific individual with needs and plans of his own. Just after a section urging the readers to "obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say" (13:17), he continues, "Pray for us, for our conscience is clear and we want to live honorably in everything we do" (13:18). Clearly, the author writes as a colleague of those "spiritual leaders" but adds, in a more personal vein, "And especially pray that I will be able to come back to you soon" (13:19). After a formal benediction (13:20-21), the more intimate tone continues: "I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to pay attention to what I have written in this brief exhortation. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released from jail. If he comes here soon, I will bring him with me to see you. Greet all your leaders and all the believers there. The believers from Italy send you their greetings. May God's grace be with you all" (13:22-25).

This is not so very different from the King James Version and does begin to sound rather like Paul. Yet it could just as easily be one of his disciples or coworkers, someone from Paul's circle of followers. The phrase "our brother Timothy"—in contrast to "Timothy, my true son in the faith" (1 Tim 1:2), or "Timothy, my dear son" (2 Tim 1:2)—is something Paul *could* have written (for he does call Timothy "brother" in 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1; Phlm 1:1), but it is also consistent with the notion that the author was Timothy's contemporary, and more or less his equal in authority, at a time not long after Paul's death.

The scanty evidence provided by Hebrews has called forth many possible candidates for authorship. For example, Luke, the physician who accompanied Paul on missionary journeys, had the literary skills to write a Gospel and the book of Acts. Clement of Alexandria proposed in the early third century that Hebrews "is Paul's, but that it was written for Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue, and that Luke, having carefully translated it, published it for the Greeks" (see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History*

6.14.2). Mark, another companion of Paul who also wrote a Gospel, is rarely suggested, but other names are frequently proposed: for example, Barnabas, Paul's companion on his first missionary journey; Silas, or Silvanus, who traveled with Paul on his second journey and who (along with Timothy) joined with him in sending two letters to the church at Thessalonica (Acts 15:40–18:5; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1); Apollos, his charismatic coworker (and inadvertent rival) at Ephesus and Corinth (Acts 18:24–28; 1 Cor 3:5–6); Priscilla and/or Aquila, his partners in tentmaking and in ministry at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus (Acts 18:2–3; Rom 16:3–4; 1 Cor 16:19); Titus, who helped him with the collection for the church at Jerusalem and who carried out a mission to Crete on Paul's behalf (2 Cor 8:16–24; Titus 1:5). As the author himself might have said, "it would take too long" (11:32) to list them all.

None of the proposed identifications are impossible, yet all remain unproven. The third-century verdict of Origen still stands, that "who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows" (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.14). The notion of an anonymous book in the New Testament is not so strange as it may appear to the casual reader. When we remember that the titles attached to New Testament books are not part of the actual texts that the authors wrote but were added later, it becomes clear that all four Gospels are anonymous, as well as the book of Acts and the "First Epistle of John." Nowhere in any of the Gospels does the author say, "I, Matthew," "I, Mark," "I, Luke," or "I, John." Only twice in the Gospels does the author use "I" or "me" as a self-reference (Luke 1:3; John 21:25; cf. Acts 1:1). The author of 1 John uses "I" and "we" frequently but never gives out a name (in 2 and 3 John he is "the Elder" but still unnamed). The same is true of Hebrews. Only because the church later attached titles to these works do we identify them as the work of specific individuals, always either apostles or followers of the apostles. These identifications by the later church should be taken seriously—just as Clement and Origen took seriously the already traditional identification of Paul as author of Hebrews—but they are not conclusive. The Christian doctrine of inspiration has to do with the text of Holy Scripture, not with the titles attached to biblical books after the fact.

Today, even devout believers in the inspiration of the New Testament agree that the work entitled "To the Hebrews" and handed down among the letters of Paul is actually an anonymous work. Yet just as no one has ever successfully attached a different name to "Matthew," or to "Mark," "Luke," or "John," so there is no reason to believe that any of the varied efforts to assign a specific name other than Paul's to the book of Hebrews will be successful. Modern readers and scholars continue to speak of "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," and "John" regardless of their views of authorship. Would it be so strange, then, or naive, to continue to speak of "Paul's letter to the Hebrews," even while acknowledging that the real author is unknown to us? Hebrews was, after all, handed down and preserved in the church among the letters of Paul, in contrast to being one of the so-called "Catholic" or "General" Epistles (James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude); and Pauline authorship has had its defenders even into the past few centuries (see, for example, Stuart 1833:77–253 and Leonard 1939). No one knows enough to rule out Pauline authorship with

absolute certainty, and it is arguable in light of the ending that Paul could be the “implied author” (that is, that the author is writing as if he were the apostle Paul). The likelihood is that the real author was in fact one of Paul’s followers or associates.

Modern scholars have given the label “Deutero-Pauline” to letters attributed to Paul which they believe he did not actually write, such as those to Timothy and Titus, or to the Ephesians or the Colossians. But few try to give names to the real authors of these disputed letters. They are still regarded loosely as “Pauline.” Whatever its applicability to those books, the term “Deutero-Pauline” is applicable to Hebrews. Some conservative scholars may want to argue that Hebrews is the only truly “Deutero-Pauline” work in the Canon. In any event, it is undeniably an impressive document, strong enough to stand on its own within the New Testament. Over the centuries, the church has been content to let it do just that.

A Modest Proposal: Timothy? The author’s rhetorical boldness in celebrating God’s spoken word even while inscribing it to make it speak again prompts a second look at the question of who this author could have been (see “Genre” on literary style). In one sense, perhaps, this preacher’s boldness makes us more satisfied with anonymity, for he wanted us to understand that the words he wrote—or spoke—are not his but God’s. Yet we have already moved a step away from anonymity with the label “Deutero-Pauline.” Is it possible to be more specific as to which of Paul’s associates may have preached and/or written this most ancient of Christian sermons?

Many biblical figures are named in Hebrews (see chapter 11), but aside from Jesus, the only New Testament person named anywhere in the text is Paul’s associate, Timothy (see 13:23). This seems to eliminate Timothy from consideration as the author, for he would hardly have referred to himself by name. But does it? Some have suggested that 13:22-25 is a kind of brief appendix or postscript to the letter proper, which ends with a long benediction invoking “the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep” (13:20). In that case, the “voice” speaking in those last four verses may not be that of the author but of someone else forwarding a colleague’s sermon on to its intended audience—or even a different audience, for which it was not at first intended. Possibly the reason this second voice at the end of the letter sounds like Paul (see above) is that it was Paul (so Trobisch 1993:320-323, though without hazarding a guess as to the identity of Paul’s colleague). Whoever it was, he mentioned that “our brother Timothy has been released from jail” (13:23). Why is Timothy mentioned? The author of the letter had just asked for prayer “that I will be able to come back to you soon” (13:19), suggesting that he was hindered in some way from coming. The author of the last four verses, by contrast, was not hindered. He was apparently free to come at any time, offering the good news that because Timothy was now free, he and Timothy would come just as soon as Timothy joined him. One possible explanation is that Timothy was the author of the sermon now being sent as a letter “to the Hebrews” (so Legg 1968: 220-223). Timothy, more than anyone else, is named as coauthor (or at least co-sender) of several of Paul’s letters (see 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Phlm 1:1), and it is conceivable that here, too, we

the author followed any kind of an outline at all, we have no way of knowing what it was. Consequently, there are as many different ways to outline the letter to the Hebrews as there are readers. Moreover, constructing such an outline is a literary endeavor. I have argued that the original “readers” were actually hearers, and as such they would not have been conscious of structure in quite the same way as we are today. At most, they would have noticed some of the rhetorical devices used by the author to highlight the main ideas of the book’s message. Any outline provided in a commentary, therefore, is at best one person’s reading of Hebrews, a reading which might be of help to others but can never be final or determinative, even for the one who made it. The careful student will always keep going back to the text to correct and revise outlines previously made and used. With these cautions, the following outline is suggested:

OUTLINE

- I. Introducing the Son (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus, Angels, and Humanity (1:5-2:18)
 - A. Jesus, Superior to Angels (1:5-14)
 - B. Warning (2:1-4)
 - C. Jesus the Man (2:5-18)
- III. Exhortation to Faithfulness (3:1-4:13)
 - A. Jesus as Faithful Son and High Priest (3:1-6)
 - B. Entering into Rest: An Exposition of Psalm 95 (3:7-4:11)
 - C. Conclusion: The Living Word of God (4:12-13)
- IV. Jesus as High Priest (4:14-7:28)
 - A. Jesus as Merciful Son and High Priest (4:14-5:10)
 - B. Jesus and the Priesthood of Melchizedek (5:11-7:28)
 1. Call to spiritual growth (5:11-6:12)
 2. From Abraham to Melchizedek (6:13-20)
 3. A new priesthood (7:1-28)
- V. Sanctuary and Sacrifice (8:1-10:18)
 - A. The Heavenly Tabernacle (8:1-6)
 - B. The New Covenant (8:7-13)
 - C. The First Tabernacle: A Guided Tour (9:1-10)
 - D. The Blood of Two Covenants (9:11-22)
 - E. The Final Sacrifice (9:23-10:18)
- VI. Exhortations to Faithfulness (10:19-13:21)
 - A. A Call to Persevere (10:19-39)
 - B. Faith and the Faithful (11:1-40)
 - C. Disciplined for Combat (12:1-17)
 - D. True Worship (12:18-29)
 - E. Unshakable Things (13:1-21)
- VII. Epistolary Conclusion (13:22-25)

COMMENTARY ON *Hebrews*

◆ I. Introducing the Son (1:1-4)

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. ²And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. ³The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of

God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. ⁴This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

NOTES

1:1 *our ancestors.* Lit., “the fathers.” The NLT displays inclusive language because the author of Hebrews clearly believed that God had spoken to women as well as men in earlier times, whether through prophets or directly. Women are included among the “heroes” of faith in Heb 11: Sarah (11:11), Rahab (11:31), as well as the unidentified women who “received their loved ones back again from death” (11:35). The NLT has also supplied “our,” in keeping with the notice that God has now spoken “to us” (1:2).

1:2 *And now in these final days.* Lit., “at the last of these days” (cf. 9:26, “at the end of the age”). Hebrews shares with the rest of the NT a conviction that the end of the present world is coming very soon (see 1:11-12; 10:26-27).

the universe. Lit., either “the ages” or “the worlds.” The preceding references to “long ago” (1:1) and “these final days” (1:2a) suggest a temporal as well as spatial aspect to creation, as if to imply “past, present, and future” (see 13:8).

1:3 *radiates.* The Greek word *apaugasma* [T⁶541, Z⁶575] (“reflection” or “mirror image”) occurs only here in the NT and in the LXX only in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, where Divine Wisdom, personified as a woman, is called “a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness” (Wis 7:26, NRSV). But the writer of Hebrews was not literally identifying Jesus with Divine Wisdom as presented in this passage or in Proverbs (cf. Prov 8). Although Hebrews, like other Christian writings, borrows wisdom language to describe the Son, the Son is not Wisdom. Divine Wisdom in biblical and postbiblical tradition is consistently feminine—a daughter, or even a consort, of God, not a son. Jesus was sometimes called “wisdom” in early Christianity, but only in conjunction with other divine attributes or activities.

expresses the very character of God. The Greek word is *charaktēr* [T⁶5481, Z⁶5917] (representation), which along with another Greek word, *hupostasis* [T⁶5287, Z⁶5712] (“substance” or “being”), yields the English translation “the very character of God” (see 1 Clement 33.4, written near the end of the first century, citing Gen 1:26-27 in connection with the creation

of humans, whom God formed “in the likeness [*charaktēr*] of his own image”; LCL 1.65). The first-century Jewish philosopher Philo called the human soul “a coin as it were of sterling metal, stamped and impressed with the seal of God, the impression [*charaktēr*] of which is the eternal word” (*Planting* 18; Yonge 1993:192). While *charaktēr* occurs nowhere else in the NT, the idea is present in 2 Cor 4:4, where *eikōn* [τῆ1504, ζῆ1635] refers to Christ as “the exact *likeness* of God,” and in Col 1:15, “the visible *image* of the invisible God” (italics mine).

by the mighty power of his command. Lit., “by the word of his power.” The Greek is unclear as to whether the “mighty power” is the power of God or of the Son, but the very ambiguity demonstrates that the two are interchangeable in the work they perform.

When he had cleansed us from our sins. This is the first hint of Jesus’ priesthood, although the title “High Priest” will not appear until 2:17. The NLT introduces “us” into the equation (as in the TR), but the earliest and best Greek mss refer only to “sins,” not “our sins.” The accent is on the Son’s priestly work, not on “our” experience of cleansing. Some mss add “through him” (so Ƴ46 D* 0278) or “through himself” (D² H^c 0243 1739 it^a, b syr cop), but to say that he did it “through himself” sounds redundant and may represent simply a scribe’s effort to express the middle voice of the Greek verb (that is, neither active nor passive), focusing on the person performing the action (see Trotter 1997:98).

in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. Lit., “at the right hand of the majesty on high.” The NLT underscores the fact, first, that God’s “right hand” was a metaphor for the place of honor and, second, that “the majesty” (like the modern expression, “His Majesty”) was a way of referring to God himself as King. “In heaven” is literally “in heights.” To the author of Hebrews, heaven is on high where God dwells, far beyond the visible skies (see 7:26).

1:4 This shows. The NLT makes the verse a new sentence, introducing the series of texts in vv. 5-14 that demonstrate the Son’s superiority to angels. This is entirely legitimate as a help to the reader. In Greek, however, v. 4 is a continuation of the sentence comprising v. 3, suggesting that v. 4 actually belongs with vv. 1-3.

COMMENTARY

Hebrews, like the Gospel of John, begins with the speech of God. But in Hebrews, God’s speech is not a noun but a verb: “God spoke” (1:1). It is not a matter of “in the beginning the Word already existed” (John 1:1) but more like the refrain of the first chapter of Genesis: “Then God said. . . . Then God said. . . . Then God said. . . . Then God said. . . . Then God said. . . .” (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, etc.). The author of Hebrews knew that the speech of God did not stop with the six days of creation but continued through the whole Bible. Hebrews, unlike John, is not interested in the creation story (at least not here, but see 1:10). The setting of its opening verses is not “in the beginning” but “long ago” and “many times and in many ways” (1:1). The focus of attention is on the continuing revelation of God through the Hebrew prophets.

There are a number of contrasts in these first two verses, specifically between “long ago” and “in these final days,” between “our ancestors” and “us,” and between “the prophets” and “his Son.” Yet there is nothing that explicitly stands in contrast to the words, “many times and in many ways.” It is tempting to assume that such a contrast is implied, as if the author were saying that God’s final revelation through the Son is somehow simpler or more unified than the diverse ways in which God revealed himself earlier through the prophets. That is not the case. On

the contrary, the author will make it clear a chapter later that God's revelation through the Son also came many times and in many ways, being confirmed with "signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (2:4).

While Hebrews will go on to show how Jesus is "greater" or "better" than the angels, greater than Moses, and greater than the Jewish priesthood and all that goes with it, there is no corresponding insistence here that revelation through the Son is "greater" or "better" than the earlier revelations through the prophets. Clearly, that revelation is final and unique, the fulfillment of all that the prophets have said before, but not so as to render those ancient prophecies irrelevant or obsolete. Quite the contrary: God's final word through the Son makes the words of the biblical prophets come alive! This is what unifies chapter one of Hebrews, for the Scriptures quoted in verses 5-13 are seven prime examples of precisely *how* "God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets," testifying to the supremacy of his Son. Such multiple and varied testimonies, in fact, permeate the entire book. Sometimes the Son himself speaks through the words of the prophets (2:11-13; 10:5-9). Hebrews is commonly identified as the most "priestly" book in the New Testament because it sets forth so fully the priesthood of Jesus Christ in relation to the Jewish priesthood and sacrificial system. But appearances are deceptive, for Hebrews is, as we will see, above all a prophetic book, and here at the outset Jesus is introduced first as supreme prophet (1:2) and only then as priest and king (1:3).

Such designations have to do with Jesus' role in the plan of God. As to his nature, he is God's Son, and as soon as the word "Son" is used (1:2a), the author sketches for us what is involved in that title. The language leaves no doubt that the Christology of Hebrews is of the very highest order. Like any human son, the Son of God stands to inherit all that belongs to the Father (1:2), and like a human son (we will find out later), he "learned obedience from the things he suffered" (5:8). But unlike any other son, he is the perfect mirror image of God the Father and is himself God. What God does, the Son does. Through him the world was made in the beginning, and now he "sustains everything by the mighty power of his command" (1:3). Later in the chapter, God the Father will explicitly address him as "God," not once but twice (1:8-9), and will publicly acknowledge that the Son is the Creator, who "in the beginning . . . laid the foundation of the earth" (1:10).

Because of the term "reflection" or "mirror image," some have proposed that Hebrews intends to identify Jesus with Divine Wisdom as presented, for example, in Proverbs 8 or in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (see note on 1:3). But although Hebrews, like other Christian writings, borrows wisdom language to describe the Son, he is not Wisdom. Divine Wisdom in biblical and postbiblical tradition is consistently feminine—a daughter, or even a consort, of God, not a son. Jesus is sometimes called "wisdom" in early Christianity, but only in conjunction with other divine attributes or activities. He is, for example, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24), who "has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30, NIV). In

Hebrews, the term “wisdom” never occurs. Rather, the biblical references that follow the introduction (above all 2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 110:1) demonstrate that Hebrews is building on the Jewish expectation of a Messiah, or anointed king, from the line of David, a king whom God owns and embraces as “son.” In keeping with early Christian theology as expressed in such varied witnesses as Matthew, John, Romans, and Revelation, this messianic Son of God (who in Jewish tradition was normally understood as a human king) is transformed into the divine Son, a transcendent figure reigning both *with* God and *as* God on a divine throne in heaven. He is the same figure who comes to be called in later Christian theology the Second Person of the Trinity.

If the Son’s nature is the nature of God, what is his work? Quite clearly, his is the work of God. The Son does what God has always done: He creates the world, he sustains the world’s existence, and above all he speaks. He is the source of all revelation. A purist might object that more precisely God speaks *through* him, God creates the world *through* him, God sustains the world’s existence *through* him. The reply of Hebrews is that it makes no difference; the two ways of saying it amount to the same thing. And yet Father and Son are not simply interchangeable. The Son does one thing that God the Father never did and never will do: He functions as a priest to deal with our sins and reconcile us to God, or, as the NLT puts it, he “cleansed us from our sins” (1:3). The Son of God can create and sustain the universe without becoming human. He can act as *prophet*, that is, as the source of revelation, without becoming human. But he cannot be a *priest* without becoming human. A priest’s job is to make purification for human sin from the human side by offering a sacrifice to God on humanity’s behalf. The only way God can do this is by becoming a human being, and this is the mission of God the Son (see 10:5-7).

What about the Son’s role as king? In one sense, the Son has always ruled as king “in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven” (1:3) just as he created and has always sustained the universe. But in another sense, he was made king at a specific point in time, after he had fulfilled his priestly mission of offering sacrifice for sin. When his job was done, he “sat down” at God’s right hand (1:3). The Son’s kingship is eternal in that he ruled the world with the Father from the beginning of time, yet Hebrews speaks here of a kingship which begins only “now in these final days” (1:2), after his priestly work of reconciliation is done, as a kind of reward for that work. This redemptive kingship is the main focus of interest in Hebrews, just as the focus in the Gospels is not on God’s eternal and unchanging sovereignty over the whole universe but on the explicit Good News that “the time promised by God has come at last! . . . The Kingdom of God is near!” (Mark 1:15). The notion that Jesus, by virtue of his resurrection from the dead, is now “at the right hand of . . . God” was common in early Christianity. In some texts he is seated there (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Mark 12:36; 14:62; and parallels; Acts 2:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1); in others he is simply there (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Rom 8:34, ESV; 1 Pet 3:22, ESV); in one instance he is standing (Acts 7:55-56). The likely source of the

imagery is Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet,'" a text quoted (in full or in part) six times in the New Testament (1:13; Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; 1 Cor 15:25). While the text is not quoted here, it was in the author's mind, for he will quote it explicitly in 1:13 as the last of a series of biblical citations reinforcing the Son's credentials and demonstrating his superiority to angels.

The Son's superiority to angels consists in the "name" he inherited. But what is the name? Is it the human name "Jesus," which the Son received at his birth into the world? Or is it the designation "Lord" (see 1:10), used in Greek as the translation of YHWH, the Hebrew name for God? Paul seems to regard "Lord" as the "name above all other names" given to Jesus at his resurrection (Phil 2:9). Here it is more likely the designation "Son" itself, which has been the focus of attention all along. "Son," like "Lord," is a title, not a name, strictly speaking; but the author, avoiding (or rather postponing) the use of the human name "Jesus," implies that "Son" is literally a name, completing the thought that "God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance" (1:2).

Why was it so important to show that the Son was superior to angels? Christian readers today might be inclined to respond to such a demonstration by saying, "Of course the Son of God is greater than the angels! Who would ever have thought otherwise?" But first-century Christians took angels more seriously than most of us do today. Paul warned the Colossians, "Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on . . . the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things" (Col 2:18). Twice in the book of Revelation an angel warns John, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God" (Rev 19:10; cf. 22:9). At the same time, it was important to have respect for the angels (1 Cor 11:10) and to not utter blasphemies against them (2 Pet 2:10-11; Jude 1:8-9). In Hebrews there is no disparagement of angels. They are not the "enemies" whom God will humble under the Son's feet (Ps 110:1). On the contrary, near the end of the book "countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering" are joined with "the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven" (12:22-23). If there was a danger of worshiping angels in the community to which Hebrews was written, it was a danger on which the author did not dwell, for there is not one reference to angels between chapter 2 and chapter 12. All he was saying in these opening verses is that "in these final days" God has spoken to us only through the Son—not through angels—and that only through the Son are we cleansed from our sins. Later, he will sum all this up under the heading of "salvation" (1:14; 2:3) and attempt to define what role, if any, the angels play in our salvation. It should not be forgotten, however, that the following section (1:5-14) has a dual purpose: not only to show that the Son is greater than the angels but to demonstrate the supremacy of the Son for its own sake, regardless of what our views about angels might be.

◆ II. Jesus, Angels, and Humanity (1:5–2:18)

A. Jesus, Superior to Angels (1:5–14)

⁵For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus:

“You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.”*

God also said,

“I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son.”**

⁶And when he brought his supreme* Son into the world, God said,*

“Let all of God’s angels worship him.”*

⁷Regarding the angels, he says,

“He sends his angels like the winds,
his servants like flames of fire.”*

⁸But to the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, endures forever
and ever.

You rule with a scepter of justice.

⁹You love justice and hate evil.

Therefore, O God, your God has
anointed you,
pouring out the oil of joy on you
more than on anyone else.”*

¹⁰He also says to the Son,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid
the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your
hands.

¹¹They will perish, but you remain
forever.

They will wear out like old
clothing.

¹²You will fold them up like a cloak
and discard them like old
clothing.

But you are always the same;
you will live forever.”*

¹³And God never said to any of the angels,

“Sit in the place of honor at my right
hand

until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under
your feet.”*

¹⁴Therefore, angels are only servants—
spirits sent to care for people who will
inherit salvation.

1:5a Or *Today I reveal you as my Son*. Ps 2:7. 1:5b 2 Sam 7:14. 1:6a Or *firstborn*. 1:6b Or *when he again brings his supreme Son [or firstborn Son] into the world, God will say*. 1:6c Deut 32:43. 1:7 Ps 104:4 (Greek version). 1:8–9 Ps 45:6–7. 1:10–12 Ps 102:25–27. 1:13 Ps 110:1.

NOTES

1:5 *what he said to Jesus*. The name “Jesus” is not in the original text, although the author and readers alike are well aware that Jesus is the Son. For the sake of clarity, the NLT inserts the name “Jesus” here and in 2:3, but in the Greek text it is carefully withheld until 2:9, “What we do see is Jesus.” The rather belated use of the human name signals that then and only then is it time to discuss the Son’s humanity.

Today. The time called “today” (*sēmeron* [TG4594, ZG4958]) is not fixed. It is the time when God becomes Father to the Son, but it could be eternity past before the world was created, the time when Jesus was born, when he was baptized, when he rose from the dead, or even the moment as the author writes. It has no fixed reference point because it is eternally true. The NLT marginal note, “Or *Today I reveal you as my Son*,” assumes rather that “today” is a fixed point in time and tries (unnecessarily) to protect the notion that God was already Jesus’ Father before time began. But it is not what the text says. Later, the author of Hebrews will repeatedly play upon the word “today” in 3:7–4:11, in an extended meditation on Ps 95:7–11 (see 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7). There, too, the time is not fixed, shifting from Moses’s generation to David’s time, when the Psalm was written (4:7), to the open-ended present in which the author and his readers live (“You must warn each other every day, while it is still ‘today,’” 3:13).