
Chapter One

HERMENEUTICAL AND EXEGETICAL CHALLENGES IN INTERPRETING THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen the publication of several major commentaries and monographs on the Pastoral Epistles.¹ This is a sign of the reinvigorated study of this body of writings that is of great practical significance for the church today. Interpreters of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are faced with several important hermeneutical and exegetical challenges. Hermeneutical challenges include the Pastors' authorship, genre, and matters related to their historical background. Relevant exegetical issues pertain to the question of proper church leadership and other matters related to the two major ecclesiastical offices of elder or overseer and deacon, respectively. The following treatment is intended as a survey of recent scholarship on these significant issues.²

HERMENEUTICAL CHALLENGES

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PASTORALS

PATRISTIC EVIDENCE

The authorship of the Pastoral Epistles continues to be a major topic of scholarly debate. The authenticity of Paul's correspondence with Timothy and Titus went

¹ See esp. I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); W. D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000); J. D. Quinn and W. C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); and the reviews of these works in *JETS* 44 (2001): 550–53; 45 (2002): 365–66; 44 (2001): 549–50; and 51 (2008): 656–59.

² The following treatment draws on relevant portions of A. J. Köstenberger, "Pastoral Epistles," in *Ephesians–Philemon* (rev. ed.; vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 487–625.

largely unchallenged until the nineteenth century.³ In all probability, Paul's letters to Timothy were known to Polycarp (c. AD 117; 1 Tim 6:7,10 is cited in *Philippians* 4.1).⁴ The first unmistakable attestation is found in the second-century writers Athenagoras (c. AD 180; *Supplication* 37.1) and Theophilus (later 2nd cent. AD; *To Autolycus* 3.14). Both of these writers cite 1 Tim 2:1–2 and allude to other passages in the Pastorals. Irenaeus (c. AD 130–c. 200), likewise, in several passages in his work *Against Heresies* (e.g., 1.pref.; 1.23.4; 2.14.7; 3.1.1), cited each of the letters and identified their author as the apostle Paul. Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–c. AD 215; *Stromateis* 2.11) noted that some Gnostics who perceived themselves to be the targets of the denunciation of 1 Tim 6:20–21 rejected Paul's letters to Timothy. The Muratorian Canon (later 2nd cent. AD) included all three letters in the Pauline corpus.

Marshall's overall assessment of the patristic evidence regarding the Pastorals is noteworthy especially since, as will be further discussed below, he himself does not hold to Pauline authorship: "It can be concluded that the PE [Pastoral Epistles] were known to Christian writers from early in the second century and that there is no evidence of rejection of them by any writers except for Marcion [a mid-second-century AD heretic who excised most of the Old Testament and the New Testament from his truncated version of the canon]."⁵ Consequently, the Pastorals became part of the established New Testament canon of the church, and the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals was not seriously questioned for a millennium and a half.

RECENT CHALLENGES

It was only in the nineteenth century that an increasing number of scholars have claimed that the Pastorals are an instance of pseudonymous writing in which a later follower attributed a given piece of writing to his revered teacher in order to perpetuate that person's teachings and influence.⁶ At first, this view may seem surprising, since all three Pastoral Epistles open with the unequivocal attribution, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus," or a similar phrase (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1). It seems hard to fathom how someone other than the apostle Paul could have written those letters, attributed them to the apostle, and these letters could have been accepted

³ For brief surveys, see R. F. Collins, *Letters That Paul Did Not Write* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 89–90, who names as the earliest challengers of the Pastorals' authenticity Schmidt (1804), Schleiermacher (1807), Eichhorn (1812), Baur (1835), and later Holtzmann (1885); and E. E. Ellis, "Pastoral Letters," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 659.

⁴ See the discussion in Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 3–8 (including the tables on pp. 4–5).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8. See also G. W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 14, citing Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 19–20, and W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. H. C. Kee; 2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 370, to the effect that from the end of the second century, the Pastorals are regarded without question as Pauline and are attested as strongly as most of the other Pauline letters.

⁶ See the thorough survey and adjudication in T. L. Wilder, "Pseudonymity and the New Testament," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (ed. D. A. Black and D. S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 296–335. See also D. A. Carson, "Pseudonymity and Pseudepigraphy," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (ed. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 856–64.

into the New Testament canon as Pauline while in fact having been the product of someone else, with all of this having taken place without any intent to deceive or any error on the church's part.

Indeed, as will be seen, the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is by far the best conclusion on the basis of all the available evidence, and several major problems attach to any alternative proposals. While important *doctrinal* issues are at stake, the first important matter requiring adjudication is a *historical* matter. The following set of questions needs to be addressed:

- (1) Is pseudonymous letter-writing attested in the first century AD?
- (2) If so, was such a practice ethically unobjectionable and devoid of deceptive intent?⁷
- (3) Could letters known to be pseudonymous have been accepted by the early church?
- (4) If so, is the Pastors' pseudonymity more plausible than their authenticity?⁸

I. HOWARD MARSHALL'S "ALLONYMITY" PROPOSAL

I. Howard Marshall recently addressed these issues and came to the conclusion that "the way in which the thought [in the Pastors] is expressed, both linguistically and theologically, poses great problems . . . which seems to make it unlikely that he [Paul] himself wrote in these terms to trusted colleagues."⁹ For this reason he rejected the Pauline authorship of the Pastors. At the same time, however, Marshall found the theory of pseudonymity wanting due to the deceptive intent inevitably involved in such a practice.¹⁰

In an effort to find a *via media* between the (for him) Scylla of Pauline authorship and the Charybdis of pseudonymity, Marshall posited a view he called "allonymity" or "alleigraphy," according to which "somebody close to a dead person continued to write as (they thought that) he would have done."¹¹ According to Marshall, Timothy and Titus were only the purported, but not the real, recipients of the Pastoral Epistles, which were instead addressed to leaders of congregations in Ephesus/Asia Minor and Crete, respectively.¹² Moreover, Marshall proposed that 2 Timothy was substantially

⁷ For a forceful argument against this contention, see E. E. Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents," *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church* (ed. M. J. Wilkins and T. Page; JSNTSup 87; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 212–24.

⁸ For a thorough discussion of these issues, see esp. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 607–49, 1011–28.

⁹ Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 79. See Marshall's entire discussion on pp. 57–92.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80–83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹² *Ibid.*, 85.

the work of Paul and formed the basis for the “allonymous” writing of 1 Timothy and Titus.¹³ This, of course, turns the traditional (and canonical) sequence on its head, since it would make 2 Timothy—not 1 Timothy or Titus—the first of the Pastoral Epistles to be written.

How plausible is this theory? Perhaps an example will help to illustrate the nature of Marshall’s proposal. If Marshall’s line of reasoning is applied to his own commentary (which Marshall acknowledges to have been written “in collaboration with” Philip Towner), perhaps several hundred years from now, some might claim that the commentary was actually not written by Marshall himself but compiled subsequent to his death by Towner based on Marshall’s notes and perhaps also based on some of his previous publications—not to mention oral interchanges and conversations or informal notes, such as e-mail messages, and so on, during Marshall’s lifetime. With the passing of time, doubtless a plausible case could be construed along those lines. While plausible, however, such a theory would obviously not square with the facts, since Howard Marshall is demonstrably still alive and did publish his commentary during his lifetime and is the person responsible for his work (the degree of collaboration by Towner is another issue). Marshall would therefore rightfully protest any such attribution of his work to a posthumous author. One wonders whether Marshall’s attribution of the Pastorals’ authorship to an “allonymous” writer similarly gives short shrift to the apostle and his role in writing these letters.

ARGUMENTS ADVANCED AGAINST PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

Differences in Style and Vocabulary What, then, is the evidence set forth for the pseudonymity of the Pastorals, and how should one assess it? First, attention has frequently been drawn to the *differences in style and vocabulary* between the Pastorals and the undisputed Pauline Epistles.¹⁴ The Pastorals feature words not used elsewhere in Paul, such as the terms “godliness” (εὐσέβεια), “self-controlled” (σώφρων), or the expression ἐπιφάνεια rather than παρουσία to refer to Christ’s return (but see 2 Thess 2:8 where ἐπιφάνεια is used). At the same time, characteristic Pauline terminology is omitted: “freedom” (ἐλευθερία), “flesh” (versus Spirit; σάρξ), “cross” (σταυρός), and “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ).

As scholars have increasingly recognized, however, conclusions regarding authorship based on stylistic differences are highly precarious, not the least because the sample size of the writings in question is too small for definitive conclusions on the basis of word statistics alone.¹⁵ Moreover, the difference between public letters sent

¹³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴ See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, xcix–cxviii. Other common objections to the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals are the difficulty of harmonizing Paul’s movements mentioned in the Pastorals with those recorded in Acts and the alleged late church structures reflected in the Pastorals (see discussion below).

¹⁵ For an incisive treatment, see B. M. Metzger, “A Reconsideration of Certain Arguments against the Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles,” *ExpTim* 70 (1958–59): 91–94 (see esp. the four questions listed on p. 93).

to congregations (the 10 letters traditionally attributed to Paul, with the possible exception of Philemon) and personal correspondence such as the Pastoral Epistles must be taken into account.¹⁶ The fact that Paul, in the case of the Pastorals, sensed that he was nearing the end of his life and that there was an urgent need to ensure the preservation of sound doctrine for the postapostolic period would appear to account adequately for the Pastorals' emphasis on qualifications for leadership, church organization, and the faithful passing on of apostolic tradition.

Ancient Pseudonymous Epistles But what about the claim, second, that pseudonymous writing was a common and commonly accepted ancient literary device? A careful screening of the relevant evidence yields the conclusion that while pseudonymity was not uncommon for apocalyptic writings, Gospels, or even Acts, pseudonymous *letters* were exceedingly rare.¹⁷ The following observations can be made.

(1) Of the two extant Jewish sources, the “Epistle” of Jeremiah and the “*Letter*” of Aristeas are really misnomers, for neither can properly be classified as epistle: the former is a homily; the latter represents an account of the circumstances of the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.¹⁸

(2) In the apostolic era, far from an *acceptance* of pseudonymous epistles, there was actually considerable *concern* that letters be forged; thus Paul referred to the “distinguishing mark” in all his letters (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19) and makes perturbed reference to the circulation of “a letter as if from us” (2 Thess 2:2).

(3) In the second century, Tertullian reports that an Asian presbyter was removed from office for forging a letter in Paul’s name (*On Baptism* 17); both *3 Corinthians* and the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* are transparent attempts, in customary apocryphal fashion, to fill in a perceived gap in canonical revelation (cf. 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:4; 7:8; Col 4:16);¹⁹ and the end-of-second-century bishop of Antioch, Serapion (died AD 211), sharply distinguished between apostolic writings and those that “falsely bear their names” (ψευδεπίγραφα; cited in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.12.3).

¹⁶ See esp. M. P. Prior, *Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy* (JSNTSup 23; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), and P. H. Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 34–35.

¹⁷ R. Bauckham, “Pseudo-Apostolic Letters,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 487, observes the rarity of apocryphal or pseudepigraphal apostolic letters in relation to other genres and conjectures that the reason for this “may well have been the sheer difficulty of using a pseudepigraphal letter to perform the same functions as an authentic letter.” He concludes that “among the letters surveyed there is no really good example of a pseudepigraphal letter that achieves didactic relevance by the generality of its contents.”

¹⁸ Bauckham considers it “misclassified” and a “dedicated treatise” (*ibid.*, 478). Bauckham also discusses several didactic letters (*1 En.* 92–105; Epistle of Jeremiah; *1 Baruch*; *2 Bar.* 78–87).

¹⁹ Bauckham calls *Laodiceans* “a remarkably incompetent attempt to fill the gap . . . nothing but a patchwork of Pauline sentences and phrases from other letters, mainly *Philippians*” (*ibid.*, 485). *Third Corinthians* is part of the late second-century *Acts of Paul*.

On the basis of this evidence it seems doubtful that the early church would have been prepared knowingly to accept pseudonymous letters into the Christian canon.²⁰

Church Structure and the Alleged “Early Catholicism” of the Pastorals A third common argument presented in favor of the pseudonymity of the Pastorals is that the *church structure* found in these letters reflects, not the first-, but the second-century church. This pattern can most clearly be seen in Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 35–107), who advocated a monarchical episcopate and a three-tiered ecclesiastical hierarchy (e.g., *Eph.* 2.2; *Magn.* 3.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1).²¹ However, it can be shown that in the Pastorals the terms “overseer” (ἐπίσκοπος) and “elder” (πρεσβύτερος) refer to one and the same office (Titus 1:5,7; cf. Acts 20:17,28), so that they attest to a two- rather than three-tiered structure and thus reflect an earlier rather than later time of composition.²²

What is more, it is manifestly not the case that it was only in the second century that the church developed an interest in proper church leadership. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they established already prior to AD 50 (Acts 14:23; cf. 11:30; 15:2; 20:28–31; 21:18). There is therefore nothing novel about Paul’s instruction to Titus to “appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). Paul’s letter to the Philippians, in all likelihood written prior to the Pastorals, is addressed to the “overseers and deacons” at Philippi (Phil 1:1), which perfectly coheres with the two-tiered structure presupposed in the Pastorals (see 1 Tim 3:1–13). The emphasis on proper qualifications for overseers and deacons in the Pastorals also supports a first-century date because a second-century writer would likely have expected his readers to be already familiar with this type of information.²³

Alleged Fictive Historical References An important fourth issue that is often not given adequate weight in the discussion is the significant number of *historical particularities* featured in the Pastorals. While it is just possible that a later imitator of Paul fabricated these pieces of information to lend greater verisimilitude to his epistle, it seems much more credible to see these references as authentic instances in Paul’s life

²⁰ This is true despite B. Metzger’s conclusion that “since the use of the literary form of pseudepigraphy need not be regarded as necessarily involving fraudulent intent, it cannot be argued that the character of inspiration excludes the possibility of pseudepigraphy among the canonical writings” (“Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha,” *JBL* 91 [1972]: 22). See especially J. Duff, “A Reconsideration of Pseudepigraphy in Early Christianity” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis; Oxford Univ., 1998), who concludes that the value of a text was closely linked to its true authorship; that pseudonymity was generally viewed as a deceitful practice; and that texts thought to be pseudonymous were marginalized.

²¹ See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, lxxxvi–lxxxviii, 186–92, who cites Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus as referring to a two-tiered structure, using *episkopos* and *presbyteros* interchangeably.

²² F. M. Young, “On *Episkopos* and *Presbyteros*,” *JTS* 45 (1994): 142–48, ventures the “admittedly tentative” hypothesis that the origins of the ἐπίσκοπος and the πρεσβύτερος are distinct. However, Young’s interpretation of the Pastorals in light of Ignatius (rather than vice versa) seems precarious (if not methodologically fallacious).

²³ D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 564.

and ministry.²⁴ Why would a later pseudonymous writer go through the trouble of inventing numerous details such as the following for no other reason than to add verisimilitude to his writing?

Make every effort to come to me soon, for Demas has deserted me, because he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you, for he is useful to me in the ministry. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his works. Watch out for him yourself, because he strongly opposed our words.

At my first defense, no one came to my assistance, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the proclamation might be fully made through me, and all the Gentiles might hear. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. . . . Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus has remained at Corinth; Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers. (2 Tim 4:9–21)

Within the framework of a theory of pseudonymity, all of the above details would of necessity need to be viewed as fictional. However, there is little (if any) extant instance of this kind of “fictive epistolary” genre in the first or second century AD. Moreover, an entirely different kind of hermeneutic would be required to decode such a letter. All incidental details would need to be discarded, and only the didactic portions, once separated from the nondidactic ones, would be exegetically significant.

In light of the virtual impossibility of separating between the incidental and the didactic material and in view of the negative ethical implications of a procedure that involves the invention of large sections of an epistolary writing, the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals seems considerably more plausible than pseudonymous (or al-lonymous) alternatives.

CONCLUSION

The Pauline authorship of the Pastorals continues to enjoy the support of the preponderance of the evidence. As the discussion above has shown, none of the

²⁴ Contra Bauckham who believes that the author of the Pastorals “has thought himself into situations in Paul’s ministry and . . . has filled out whatever historical information was available to him with historical fiction” (p. 492; echoing Holtzmann). Bauckham even ventures the conjecture that Timothy might have written the Pastorals himself (p. 494)! Also contra the “mediating position” of J. D. G. Dunn, *The Living Word* (London: SCM, 1987), 82, who believes that Paul is “the fountainhead of the Pastorals tradition” and that the Pastorals reexpress for a later situation “the voice of the Pauline tradition for a new day”; and N. Brox, “Zu den persönlichen Notizen der Pastoralbriefe,” *BZ* 13 (1969): 76–94, who considers the personal references to represent “typical situations in the ecclesiastical office, which are historicized and attributed to Paul.”

arguments advanced against the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals require their pseudonymity or allonymity. For this reason the conclusion by Carson and Moo is apt: “The Pastorals are much more akin to the accepted letters of Paul than they are to the known pseudonymous documents that circulated in the early church.”²⁵

The above-mentioned factors receive additional weight through the recent survey of the relevant ancient evidence conducted by Terry Wilder, who arrived at the following three conclusions:

- (1) The early church used both the authorship and the content of a given writing as criteria for authenticity; hence it would not knowingly have allowed pseudo-apostolic works to be read publicly in the churches alongside apostolic ones.
- (2) There is no evidence for pseudonymity as a convention among orthodox Christians.
- (3) The early church did not regard with indifference the fictive use of an apostle’s name.²⁶

As Wilder notes, both the external and the internal evidence clearly favor the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. Many of the Fathers—Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Eusebius, and the Muratorian Canon—accepted Pauline authorship, and arguments against the Pauline authorship from the internal evidence consistently fail to convince.²⁷

To sum up: the internal evidence strongly suggests the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, and all views positing pseudonymity or allonymity face considerable difficulties.²⁸ Contrary to widespread assertions or insinuations, it is not true that it is more scholarly and “enlightened” to attribute the Pastorals to someone other than Paul, nor is such a position backed up by the best historical or literary evidence.

²⁵ Carson and Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 563. Similarly, D. Guthrie, “The Development of the Idea of Canonical Pseudepigrapha in New Testament Criticism,” *VE* 1 (1962): 43–59. This, of course, in no way precludes the possibility that Paul may have employed an amanuensis, as he frequently did in other instances. See R. N. Longenecker, “Ancient Amanuenses and the Pauline Epistles,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 281–97; E. R. Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2/42; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); and Ellis, “Pastoral Letters,” 663–64.

²⁶ Wilder, “Pseudonymity and the New Testament,” 307. Wilder provides a very thorough review of biblical scholarship on the issue of pseudonymity, including the above-mentioned contribution of Marshall. Wilder’s primary problem with Marshall’s theory is the difficulty of determining which parts of the Pastorals rely on authentic Pauline material and which ones do not on the basis of the existing form of these epistles (319).

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 324–27.

²⁸ The viability of the apostolic authorship of the Pastorals is underscored by W. Mounce’s advocacy of this view in his Word Biblical Commentary contribution. Quinn and Wacker, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, on the other hand, contend in the introduction to their work that the Pastorals were written in the post-Pauline period (AD 70–100) in order to counter the tendency of disparaging the apostle owing to his shameful end as a purported criminal (p. 20). Regarding the recipients, Quinn and Wacker conjecture that “not only Titus and Timothy but also the places to which the letters are addressed may have a typical or representative function” (p. 22). Quinn and Wacker believe that Titus was the first of the Pastorals to be written.

THE GENRE OF THE PASTORALS AND THE ROLE OF BACKGROUND

If Paul wrote the Pastorals, then, what kinds of letters did he write, and what is their relevance for today? The Pastorals' genre and the role of background in interpreting specific passages are two other critical broader issues. At the outset, it is worth noting that while the common label for these letters is "Pastoral Epistles," the role of Timothy and Titus was not actually that of permanent, resident pastor of a church. Rather, these two men served as Paul's apostolic delegates who were temporarily assigned to their present locations in order to deal with particular problems. For this reason the Pastorals are not so much advice to younger ministers or generic manuals of church order as they are Paul's instructions to his special delegates, issued toward the closing of the apostolic era at a time when the aging apostle would have felt a keen responsibility to ensure the orderly transition from the apostolic to the postapostolic period.

If the Pastorals are occasional documents, therefore, to what extent does this require an ad hoc hermeneutic that methodically limits their scope of reference to the original situation at hand? This approach was taken, among others, by Gordon Fee, who viewed all of 1 Timothy, for example, as narrowly constrained by the injunction in 1:3, claiming that "the whole of 1 Timothy . . . is dominated by this singular concern" and that "the whole of chs. 2–3 is best understood as instruction vis-à-vis the behavior and attitudes of the FT [false teachers]."²⁹ William Mounce, too, consistently interpreted virtually every detail in the Pastorals narrowly in light of Paul's original context. Thus 1 Timothy 3 was viewed in light of a "leadership crisis" in the Ephesian church, in the conviction that "almost every quality Paul specifies here has its negative counterpart in the Ephesian opponents."³⁰

Overall, it appears that Fee's contention that the entire letter constitutes an ad hoc argument narrowly constrained by the situation at Ephesus arguably represents an unduly sharp reaction against the traditional "church manual" approach that views the letter as containing timeless instructions for church leadership. Two main lines of critique may be raised. First, Fee unduly diminished the structural markers in 1 Tim 2:1 and 3:15–16 that set off chaps. 2–3 from chaps. 4–6 respectively. As especially 1 Tim 3:15 makes clear (see also 1 Tim 2:8), Paul's injunctions in chaps. 2–3 are not confined to the Ephesian situation but stipulate "how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household" (NIV) in general.

What is more, the solemn descriptive terms for the church in 1 Tim 3:15, "the church of the living God, the pillar and the foundation of the truth," speak decisively against the contention that these instructions are of value merely for

²⁹ G. D. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents," *JETS* 28 (1985): 142–43.

³⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 153.

first-century AD Ephesus. In a previous interchange with Kevin Giles, a proponent of a culturally relative approach to the interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles, several specific passages in Paul's first letter to Timothy were discussed that Giles claimed were limited to their original context.³¹ According to Giles, the following passages in Paul's first letter to Timothy ought to be interpreted in culturally relative terms:

- (1) Paul's injunctions on the care of widows in 1 Tim 5:3–16: since in our culture widows are "not necessarily destitute, or in need of male protection," this passage does not apply today.
- (2) Men today do not pray "with lifted hands" (1 Tim 2:8), and women do not "literally obey" Paul's instructions in 1 Tim 2:9–10; hence 1 Tim 2:12 should likewise not be considered normative.
- (3) In chap. 3, Paul "insists" that overseers and deacons be married, while today unmarried men are ordained; hence, again, 1 Timothy 3 does not apply.
- (4) While Paul in 1 Tim 5:17 urges that church leaders be treated with "double honor," "church teachers are not necessarily paid double to other ministers" today; this passage, too, no longer applies.
- (5) Slavery, "endorsed" in 1 Tim 6:1–2, has clearly been found unacceptable by subsequent history; hence this passage is outdated as well.

As pointed out, however, apart from faulty or doubtful exegesis, the difficulty with such proposals is their failure to distinguish between general norms and specific applications. In the case of widows, for example, the general norm is that the church should care for widows who have no other means of support. This applied in Paul's day as well as in ours. In Paul's day, the specific application was for widows over 60 years of age to be put on a list. While the church's outworking of the general scriptural norm may be different today, the norm still applies. The other points listed above can likewise be answered by a consistent application of this general norm/specific application distinction.³²

Another problem with an ad hoc approach to the interpretation of the Pastoral Epistles is the manifest implausibility of an extreme application of this mirror-reading hermeneutic to every single injunction contained in the Pastorals. To be consistent, the proponents of such an approach would seem to have to argue that the false teachers taught all of the following, and were in every instance corrected by Paul:

³¹ See A. J. Köstenberger, "Women in the Church: A Response to Kevin Giles," *EvQ* 73 (2001): 205–24, esp. 207–12.

³² See also T. D. Gordon, "A Certain Kind of Letter: The Genre of 1 Timothy," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, and H. S. Baldwin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 53–63.

- (1) The church ought not to pray for those in authority.
- (2) God wants only some people to be saved.
- (3) Church leaders ought not to be above reproach, or at least the false teachers were not.
- (4) They ought not to be faithful to their wives, or at least the false teachers were not.
- (5) They ought not to be hospitable or able to teach, or at least the false teachers were not.
- (6) They ought to be given to drunkenness, or at least the false teachers were.
- (7) They ought to be violent and quarrelsome, or at least the false teachers were.
- (8) They ought to be lovers of money, or at least the false teachers were, and so on.

Perhaps some of the above may be true, but *all* of the above? Were the false teachers truly not able to teach but overseers in Paul's churches should be? Was Paul's point truly the false teachers' lack of hospitality, which he sought to offset with his injunction that overseers in his churches must open their homes to others? Hermeneutical consistency on the part of those advocating an ad hoc hermeneutic would seem to require this (or else require an inevitably arbitrary adjudication of which of Paul's statements were constrained by the false teachers), but, as shown, this approach leads to rather extreme results.

In the end, it seems, this kind of hermeneutic denies Paul, the author, the ability to make any pronouncements in a Pastoral or any letter that transcend his immediate circumstances. However, not only does this seem to impose an unreasonable constraint on authorial intention; this approach is also not logically compelling. The presence of an injunction to hospitality does not require the absence of this trait in the current leadership or false teaching regarding the need for hospitality on the part of church leaders. Hence a warrant for this type of ad hoc hermeneutic is lacking. At the very least, one ought not to make one's conjectured reconstruction of the Ephesian context the paradigm or absolute premise on the basis of which abiding implications for the church today are precluded or rendered presumptively unlikely from the very outset.

Especially in conjunction with the structural markers of 1 Tim 2:1 and 3:15–16, it is at least equally plausible that the reference to the false teachers in 1 Tim 1:3 informs Paul's comments in the remainder of chap. 1 and then again in chaps. 4–6, while the comments in 1 Tim 2:1–3:16 are more positive in orientation. Perhaps Johnson is correct that Timothy needed support and counsel on how to deal with the false teachers in Ephesus, which led Paul to interweave personal instructions with those on community life. Johnson called this the *mandata principis* (“commandments

of the ruler") letter and cited several ancient parallels.³³ One final hermeneutical issue regarding the interpretation of the Pastorals needs to be addressed: their literary integrity and likely structure.

LITERARY INTEGRITY AND STRUCTURE

"Until recently," Ray Van Neste summarizes the state of scholarship on the topic, "one of the widely accepted tenets of modern scholarship regarding the Pastoral Epistles was that they lacked any significant, careful order or structure."³⁴ This was not confined to liberal critics; even an otherwise conservative commentator such as Donald Guthrie wrote, "There is a lack of studied order, some subjects being treated more than once in the same letter without apparent premeditation. . . . These letters are, therefore, far removed from literary exercises."³⁵ And A. T. Hanson, an opponent of the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, maintained, "The Pastorals are made up of a miscellaneous collection of material. They have no unifying theme; there is no development of thought."³⁶

Yet, in the last decade, the pendulum has swung away from such assessments. Over against those who have argued against the literary unity and integrity of the Pastoral Epistles, Van Neste has demonstrated, in the most careful study of the topic to date, that there is "evidence of a high level of cohesion in each of the Pastoral Epistles" and that "all three letters show evidence of care in their design."³⁷ I. Howard Marshall, likewise, noted that "there is a growing body of evidence that the Pastoral Epistles are not a conglomerate of miscellaneous ideas roughly thrown together with no clear plan, purpose or structure. On the contrary, they demonstrate signs of a coherent structure and of theological competence."³⁸

In light of assessments such as these, it appears that the literary integrity and coherence of the Pastoral Epistles has been amply rehabilitated against charges of incoherence by their critics. It remains to provide brief discussions of the literary plan of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

1 TIMOTHY

William D. Mounce divides the structure of 1 Timothy as follows: I. Salutation (1:1–2); II. The Ephesian problem (1:3–20); III. Correction of improper conduct

³³ See L. T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (The New Testament in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 106–7, 168.

³⁴ R. Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 280; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 1.

³⁵ D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (2nd ed.; TNTC; Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1990), 18.

³⁶ A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1982), 42.

³⁷ Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 285. Contra J. D. Miller, *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents* (SNTSMS 93; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997).

³⁸ I. H. Marshall, "The Christology of Luke-Acts and the Pastoral Epistles," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. S. E. Porter, P. Joyce, and D. E. Orton; Biblical Interpretation 8; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 171.

in the Ephesian church (2:1–4:5); IV. Personal notes to Timothy (4:6–16); V. How Timothy is to relate to different groups in the church (5:1–6:2a); and VI. Final instructions (6:2b–21).³⁹ On the whole, this outline is sound, especially in drawing a line of demarcation between 1:20 and 2:1⁴⁰ and in identifying 5:1–6:2a as a separate literary unit. However, it seems preferable to see 3:16 as concluding Paul’s instructions that began in 2:⁴¹ and to see him as starting a new major unit in 4:1 with reference to the last days.⁴² If so, the discussion of the literary plan of 1 Timothy may proceed as follows.⁴³

Overview of Structural Proposals (1 Timothy)		
Mounce	Towner	Kostenberger
1:1–2 Salutation	1:1–2 Opening	1:1–2 Opening
1:3–20 Ephesian Problem	1:3–6:21a Body	1:3–20 Personal Charge
2:1–4:5 Correction	1:3–3:16 Part 1	2:1–3:16 Congregational Matters
4:6–16 Personal Notes	4:1–6:21a Part 2	4:1–6:2a Further Charges
5:1–6:2a Different Groups	6:21b Benediction	6:2b–19 Final Exhortation
6:2b–21 Final Instructions		6:20–21 Closing

Paul’s first letter to Timothy immediately turns to the subject at hand: the need for Timothy to “command certain people not to teach other doctrine” in the church at Ephesus (1:3–4). Paul’s customary thanksgiving follows after his initial comments regarding these false teachers and is, in fact, a thanksgiving to God for Paul’s own conversion, since Paul himself at one point persecuted the church of God (1:12–17). At the end of the first chapter, Paul even mentions two of these false teachers by name: Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20).

After this, Paul transitions (“First of all, then”; 2:1) to a section where he sets forth instructions for the church, in keeping with his purpose cited in 3:14–15: “I write these things to you, hoping to come to you soon. But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to act in God’s household,

³⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, cxxxv (note that the numbering is off in that Mounce has two II. and two IV.). Similarly, Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 63–64, whose major divisions are I. 1:1–20; II. 2:1–4:16; III. 5:1–6:2; and IV. 6:3–21. Even less structure is discerned by T. D. Lea and H. P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NAC 34; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 17, who divide the letter into I. 1:1–2; II. 1:3–20; and III. 2:1–6:21.

⁴⁰ Contra P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), ix, who keeps 1:3–3:16 as a single unit and gives insufficient attention to the markers “first of all” and “then” at 2:1. However, Towner, unlike Mounce, rightly discerns a break between 3:16 and 4:1 (*ibid.*, x).

⁴¹ See the interaction with Fee, “Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles,” 145, in Kostenberger, “1–2 Timothy, Titus,” 504, 509–10.

⁴² This critique pertains to Mounce as well as Guthrie and Lea/Griffin.

⁴³ See Kostenberger, “1–2 Timothy, Titus,” 497. See also the proposed structure by Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 30, who divides the letter between 1:3–3:16 and 4:1–6:21a.

which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” This makes clear that 2:1–3:16 constitutes a section apart from chap. 1 on the one hand and chaps. 4–6 on the other, both of which are dominated by Paul’s concern with the false teachers. While such concerns are not completely absent from chaps. 2–3, these chapters are taken up with Paul’s more positive instructions to Timothy on how to govern the church. This includes instructions on prayer (2:1–8), women’s roles in the congregation (2:9–15), and qualifications for church leadership, both overseers (3:1–7) and deacons (3:8–13). The section concludes with a presentation of the “mystery of godliness,” possibly drawing on a piece of liturgy (3:16).

Chapter 4, then, opens with the dramatic phrase “Now the Spirit explicitly says” (4:1), setting the work of the false teachers squarely in the context of the end times, during which things would go from bad to worse. In this context, Timothy is to set himself apart by giving close attention both to his personal life and to his doctrine, thus preserving both himself and his hearers (4:11–16). Additional instructions are given regarding the care of widows (5:3–16); dealing with elders, including those who had sinned (5:17–25); the proper conduct of Christian slaves (6:1–2); and the rich (6:3–10,17–19). Timothy, on the other hand, is to guard what has been entrusted to him, as Paul’s final charge makes clear (6:11–16,20–21).

2 TIMOTHY

Philip H. Towner presents the structure of 2 Timothy as follows: I. Opening Greeting (1:1–2); II. Body of the Letter (1:3–4:18); A. Call to Personal Commitment (1:3–18); B. Call to Dedication and Faithfulness (2:1–13); C. The Challenge of Opposition (2:14–26); D. Prophecy, Commitment, and Call (3:1–4:8); III. Final Instructions (4:9–18); and IV. Closing Greetings (4:19–22).⁴⁴ This structure is much to be preferred over Mounce, who rather idiosyncratically provides the following breakdown: I. Salutation (1:1–2); II. Thanksgiving (1:3–5); III. Encouragement to Timothy (1:6–2:13); IV. Instructions for Timothy and Opponents (2:14–4:8); and V. Final Words to Timothy (4:9–22).⁴⁵ The following discussion of the literary plan underlying 2 Timothy will proceed with a slightly modified version of Towner’s outline.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, xi. Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 38, whose proposal is identical.

⁴⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, cxxxvi.

⁴⁶ See Köstenberger, “1–2 Timothy, Titus,” 566, and the following commentary for justification of this outline. The only difference between Towner and Köstenberger is that the latter keeps 2:1–26 together as a major unit (similarly, Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 132) and breaks it up into the subunits of 2:1–7,8–13, and 14–26, while Towner divides 2:1–26 into two major subunits, 2:1–13 and 2:14–26.

Overview of Structural Proposals (2 Timothy)		
<i>Mounce</i>	<i>Towner</i>	<i>Kostenberger</i>
1:1–2 Salutation	1:1–2 Opening	1:1–2 Opening
1:3–5 Thanksgiving	1:3–18 Call to Commitment	1:3–18 Thanksgiving, Exhortation
1:6–2:13 Encouragement	2:1–13 Call to Dedication	2:1–26 Ministry Metaphors
2:14–4:8 Opposition	2:14–26 Opposition	
	3:1–4:8 Prophecy, Call	3:1–4:8 Further Charges
4:9–22 Final Words	4:9–18 Final Instructions	4:9–18 Recent News
	4:19–22 Closing Greetings	4:19–22 Closing Greetings

Paul's second letter to Timothy opens with the customary greeting and thanksgiving (1:1–7), followed by an exhortation for Timothy not to be ashamed of Paul, who is now in prison (1:8–12). After contrasting various co-workers, Paul instructs Timothy on the nature of Christian ministry by way of three metaphors, those of the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer, each of which has important lessons to teach regarding the proper disposition of the Lord's servant (2:1–7). After stating one of the "faithful sayings" featured in the Pastorals, Paul uses three additional metaphors for Christian ministry: the workman, various instruments, and the servant (2:14–26). Additional charges, recent news, and a concluding greeting round out the letter (chaps. 3–4).

TITUS

The various proposals regarding the structure of Titus, once again, reveal a certain amount of consensus as well as differences in the details. Towner proposes the following outline: I. Opening Greeting (1:1–4); II. Body of Letter (1:5–3:11); A. Instructions to Titus (1:5–16); B. Instructions for the Church (2:1–3:11); IV. Personal Notes and Instructions (3:12–14); and V. Final Greetings and Benediction (3:15).⁴⁷ Towner's outline is similar to that of Mounce, who breaks down 1:5–16 further into 1:5–9 and 1:6–16 but keeps 3:12–15 together as a unit.⁴⁸ The structural proposal set forth below differs only slightly from these two major commentators.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, xii.

⁴⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, cxxxvi.

⁴⁹ Kostenberger, "1–2 Timothy, Titus," 603. Cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 24, whose proposed outline is virtually identical with that of Kostenberger.

Overview of Structural Proposals (Titus)		
<i>Mounce</i>	<i>Towner</i>	<i>Köstenberger</i>
1:1–4 Salutation	1:1–4 Opening	1:1–4 Opening
1:5–9 Qualifications	1:5–3:11 Body of Letter	1:5–16 Occasion for Writing
1:10–16 Problems in Crete	1:5–16 To Titus	2:1–15 Different Groups
2:1–3:11 Godly Living	2:1–3:11 To the Church	3:1–11 Doing What Is Good
3:12–15 Final Greeting	3:12–14 Personal Notes	3:12–15 Closing Comments
	3:15 Greetings	

Similar to 1 Timothy, Titus shows Paul getting straight to the point, reminding Titus why Paul left him in Crete: “to set right what was left undone and . . . to appoint elders in every town” (1:5). Also similar to Paul’s first letter to Timothy, Titus is given various instructions on how to correct the enemies of the gospel while himself staying above the fray. Christians are to “adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything” (2:10) and to devote themselves to “good work” (3:1). In keeping with the personal nature of the letter, Paul concludes with some final instructions and a closing greeting (3:12–15).

Having surveyed hermeneutical issues in the interpretation of the Pastorals, the following discussion will turn to a treatment of significant exegetical matters.

EXEGETICAL CHALLENGES

If Paul was the author of the Pastoral Epistles and his letters transcended mere ad hoc argumentation, what are some of the abiding apostolic teachings pertaining to the church in these letters? Quite clearly, Paul’s pronouncements regarding church government and qualifications for church leaders must be at the top of the list. An adjudication of Paul’s teaching on these issues in the Pastorals is needed all the more as the relevant passages present several major exegetical challenges, which is part of the reason why issues related to church government continue to be hotly debated and disputed today.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ See the representative discussions in C. O. Brand and R. S. Norman, eds., *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004); and S. B. Cowan, ed., *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government* (Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

ELDERS/OVERSEERS

ONE AUTHORITATIVE OFFICE

The area of church leadership is one area where the Pastorals quite clearly set forth paradigms for the church that reach beyond their original Ephesian or Cretan context.⁵¹ As mentioned, it has been claimed by some that the church structure found in the Pastorals reflects the second-century AD pattern of a three-tiered ecclesiastical hierarchy involving a monarchical episcopate (e.g., Ignatius of Antioch). Yet closer scrutiny reveals that the Pastorals do not in fact conform to this model but rather display a synonymous usage of the terms “overseer” (ἐπίσκοπος) and “elder” (πρεσβύτερος) as referring to one and the same office (Titus 1:5,7; cf. Acts 20:17,28; *1 Clem.* 44:1,5; Jerome, *Letter* 59).⁵²

With regard to specific terminology, 1 Tim 3:1 uses the word ἐπίσκοπή (cf. Acts 1:20), denoting the “office of overseer” (cf. Luke 19:44; Acts 1:20; 1 Pet 2:12), while in 3:2 ἐπίσκοπος is used, referring to the person holding such an office.⁵³ In the LXX, the term designates one in charge of an operation (Num 4:16); in Josephus, it denotes an “overseer” (*Ant.* 10.53; 12.254). The Qumran equivalent was the **נִזְבָּן**. (1QS 6.12,20; CD 9.18–19,22; 13.6–7). Generally, πρεσβύτερος is Jewish in origin, signifying seniority, while ἐπίσκοπος is Greek, indicating a person’s superintending role. Presumably overseers constituted the “board of elders” (πρεσβυτέριον) mentioned in 1 Tim 4:14.⁵⁴

THE OFFICE OF ELDER LIMITED TO MEN

The overseer (equivalent to pastor/elder) bears ultimate responsibility for the church before God (see 1 Tim 3:15; 5:17). According to the instructions on the role of women in the previous chapter (esp. 2:12), only men are eligible for this office. In the book *Women and the Church*, edited by Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner, the contributors have made a strong case that Paul did not permit women to serve in roles of ultimate authority and responsibility in the church on the basis of his pronouncement, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man in the church” (1 Tim 2:12).⁵⁵ This is shown to be the most plausible understanding

⁵¹ For a discussion of the different major systems of church governance, see A. J. Köstenberger, “Church Government,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* (ed. G. T. Kurian; Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming).

⁵² See the discussion under Authorship above.

⁵³ See Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25. For πρεσβύτερος, see esp. 1 Tim 5:1,17,19; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1,5; Jas 5:14; and the book of Acts.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Letters to Paul’s Delegates*, 145.

⁵⁵ A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

of this pivotal verse in keeping with the Ephesian background, the lexical and syntactical makeup of the verse, and exegetical and hermeneutical considerations.⁵⁶

At the same time, it should be noted that a complementarian understanding of gender roles in the church does not depend on 1 Tim 2:12 but is based on the biblical theology of this subject throughout all of Scripture.⁵⁷ Both Jesus and Paul confirmed the husband's headship in the home, and both affirmed male leadership, Jesus by appointing twelve men as his apostles and Paul by grounding his teaching on the subject in the foundational creation narrative in the book of Genesis and by stating that elders in the church ought to be "faithful husbands," implying that only males were eligible for such a position. It is also demonstrable that the New Testament does not refer to any women serving in the position of pastor or elder in the churches planted by Paul or those under his apostolic jurisdiction.⁵⁸

In a recent article, Philip Payne has reiterated his earlier contention that Paul in 1 Tim 2:12 forbids women only from assuming *improper* authority over men in the church.⁵⁹ Payne claims that Paul (or his amanuensis, or a pseudopigrapher) used the expression οὐδέ ("nor") in this verse essentially as a subordinating conjunction, subsuming the Greek verb αὐθεντέιν under the head word διδάσκειν, with the resultant meaning "to teach men *by assuming* independent authority."⁶⁰ At the beginning of his article, Payne promises that he will identify "many instances" where οὐδέ "joins an *infinitive* with positive connotations to an infinitive with negative connotations."⁶¹ However, strikingly, in none of the examples he cites on the following pages does οὐδέ link infinitives!⁶² At the very end of his article, Payne claims that 9 of the 102 extrabiblical parallels to 1 Tim 2:12 that I cited in a previous publication involve the use of one word with a positive and another with a negative connotation (which, if true, might allow one to construe 1 Tim 2:12 as a positive word, διδάσκειν, being

⁵⁶ The first 1995 edition included essays by S. Baugh, S. Baldwin, A. Köstenberger, D. Gordon, T. Schreiner, R. Yarbrough, H. O. J. Brown, and an appendix by D. Doriani. The second edition featured revised essays by Baugh, Baldwin, Köstenberger, Schreiner, and Yarbrough and a new essay by D. Patterson. See also the summary of the first edition by A. J. Köstenberger, "The Crux of the Matter: Paul's Pastoral Pronouncements Regarding Women's Roles in 1 Timothy 2:9–15," *Faith & Mission* 14/1 (Fall 1996): 24–48.

⁵⁷ See A. J. Köstenberger, "Women in the Pauline Mission," in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission. In Honour of Peter T. O'Brien* (ed. P. Bolt and M. Thompson; Leicester, UK/Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 235–37. Contr. P. B. Payne, "1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of *oude* to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," *NTS* 54 (2008): 235, who seems to suggest otherwise.

⁵⁸ See Köstenberger, "Women in the Pauline Mission," 221–47.

⁵⁹ P. B. Payne, "Oude in 1 Timothy 2:12" (unpublished paper presented at the 1988 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society). See the critique of Payne in *Women in the Church*, 55–56 (retained from the first edition). Payne originally argued that the two infinitives form a hendiadys, though he no longer uses this term in his later article because of unspecified "disputes over its definition" (p. 235, n. 2).

⁶⁰ See Payne, "1 Tim 2.12," 243–44. Note in this regard that Payne proposed that Paul used οὐδέ differently from Luke (see *ibid.*, 241–42). However, it is hard to see how it is meaningful to speak of "Paul's use of *oude*" (see, e.g., p. 244: "Paul's typical use of *oude*") if the *Pastorals* were written by someone other than Paul (especially a pseudopigrapher), as Payne suggests as a possibility.

⁶¹ Payne, "1 Tim 2.12," 236 (emphasis added). Payne's argument in *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 356–58, proceeds along similar lines.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 236–41.

modified by a negative one, $\omega\dot{\nu}\theta\epsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\bar{\iota}\nu$, though still not necessarily with the second word subordinated to the first by way of hendiadys). Even if true, of course, this would still mean that the pattern of usage (positive-positive or negative-negative) I proposed would obtain over 91 percent of the time in the entire New Testament and extrabiblical Greek sources. What is more, however, even in these nine cases Payne's arguments demonstrably fall short.

- (1) In 2 Cor 7:12, in the phrase neither “on account of the one who did the wrong *nor* on account of the one who was wronged,” both perpetrating wrong and being victimized are viewed negatively by Paul as part of a wrong committed (two corresponding aspects of the “one single idea” Payne is affirming).
- (2) In 2 Thess 3:7–8, both idleness and eating someone else’s bread without paying for it are viewed negatively (Payne’s discussion of this on pp. 242–43 is inadequate; clearly, in context, Paul implied that it would have been wrong for him and his associates to eat anyone’s bread free of charge because doing so would have made them a “burden” to others, which clearly has a negative connotation).
- (3) In Sir 18:6 (LXX), neither diminishing nor increasing God’s mercies is viewed as possible or desirable; while “diminish” and “increase” are conceptual opposites, from the writer’s perspective the only proper approach is to represent God’s mercies accurately; hence both diminishing or increasing them is discouraged.
- (4) In Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. Hist.* 3.30.2.8, both surprise and distrust express skepticism over against outright acceptance (note the escalation from surprise to distrust here).
- (5) In Josephus, *Ant.* 15.165.3–4, in context, both “meddling in state affairs” and “starting a revolution” are viewed negatively. While the first term, depending on the context, is capable of having both positive and negative connotations, a negative connotation is more likely in light of the clear and consistent pattern of usage of $\omega\dot{\nu}\delta\epsilon$ elsewhere as well as other considerations.
- (6) In Plutarch, *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 185.A.1, both sleeping and being indolent are viewed negatively (again, there is an escalation from sleep to indolence). In the present context, the trophy of Miltiades calls for a positive response; by comparison, both sleep and indolence fall short. To adduce a passage from another of Plutarch’s work which evinces a “positive view of sleep” completely misses the point, because verbal meaning is contextual rather than merely a function of lexis.

- (7) In Plutarch, *Aetia Romana et Graeca* 269.D, both exact and approximate reckoning are viewed negatively in the present context (the limited skill of mathematicians).
- (8) In Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 711.E.3, “harming” and “getting the best of us” are both viewed negatively; both are virtual synonyms, and, certainly, wine “getting the best” of someone is not viewed positively by the writer as Payne suggests!
- (9) In Plutarch, *Bruta animalia ratione uti* 990.A.11, touching is viewed negatively because it results in pain; thus both actions are viewed negatively and related to each other in terms of one action (touching) resulting in the experience of another (experiencing pain).

The difficulty with Payne’s analysis of these references is his categorization of verbs as “positive” or “negative.” Contrary to Payne’s understanding, however, it is not the case that verbs are “positive” or “negative” by themselves.⁶³ Rather, verbs convey a positive or negative connotation *in context*. Thus lexical meaning by itself is inadequate to discern a given term’s connotation in context. A writer’s use of a given verb is to a significant extent a matter of aspect or perception and thus subjective. As shown, therefore, properly understood none of the alleged nine “problem cases” of the pattern of the usage of οὐδέ that I identified are problematic. To the contrary, they conform perfectly to this pattern, as do the other 93 of 102 instances not disputed by Payne. The pattern is always positive/positive or negative/negative, never positive/negative or vice versa.

Another difficulty pertains to Payne’s contention that οὐδέ joins two expressions conveying a “single idea.” This may indeed be the case (though this is an entirely different matter than whether οὐδέ joins concepts viewed positively and negatively by the writer), and I, for one, have never denied this possibility. It is important to keep in mind, however, that οὐδέ, as a coordinating conjunction, does not necessarily join two concepts to such an extent that the two actions completely merge and become indistinguishable from one another. Instead, while there may be an overlap, a certain amount of distinctness may be retained. For example, one action may result in the experience of another (e.g., touching an object leading to the experience of pain).

Therefore, to posit the presence of “one single idea” or two completely separate concepts as the only two possible alternatives is unduly disjunctive and fails to do justice to the way οὐδέ functions in Koine Greek.⁶⁴ Applied to the present case, the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12, then, the overarching “single idea” is that women ought not to serve in authoritative church positions, whether by teaching men or by ruling

⁶³ Ibid., 251–52.

⁶⁴ Sometimes Payne’s language is less precise than might be desirable, such as when he speaks of οὐδέ joining “expressions that reinforce or make more specific a single idea” (p. 236). What Payne fails to note here is that in those cases this may involve the introduction of a second, related (yet nonetheless distinct) idea. See further the discussion below.

(both functions are reserved for male elders)—two functions that are distinct yet closely related. In other words, “exercising authority” is a larger term than “teaching,” since a person may exercise authority in other ways besides teaching (such as by making decisions binding on the entire church or by exercising church discipline; see also 1 Tim 5:17). Conversely, teaching is one major way in which authority is exercised in the church.

Apart from these linguistic and syntactical difficulties, Payne fails also on the level of exegesis and background.⁶⁵ With regard to background, Payne mounts an unconvincing argument that Paul sought to forbid women perpetrating false teaching in the Ephesian context. Yet this does not follow from a reading of 1 Tim 2:12 in the context of the immediately following verses. Specifically, Paul states that Adam was created first (1 Tim 2:13) and that it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman (1 Tim 2:14). This makes clear that Paul’s concern is with the woman as the *victim of deception*, not as the *perpetrator of false teaching*. Nowhere in the context of 1 Tim 2:12 is Paul’s point regarding Eve that she *taught Adam falsely*.

Instead, in Timothy’s Ephesus there seem to have been those who told women that true spirituality consisted in refraining from engaging in their natural functions of marriage and childbearing (see, e.g., 1 Tim 2:15; 4:3; 5:14).⁶⁶ Paul’s concern for women in this context was for them not to fall prey to such deception by engaging in teaching or assuming a ruling function, or by aspiring to the pastoral office (see 1 Tim 3:1–2). Instead, he wanted them to be devoted to fulfilling their domestic and familial roles. Also, if Paul’s injunction in 1 Tim 2:12 was merely for women not to “assert independent authority over men,” as Payne claims, why would it be the case, as he also asserts, that the present tense form of “I do not permit” in 1 Tim 2:12 “fits a *current* prohibition better than a *permanent* one”?⁶⁷ Is there ever a time when it is biblically appropriate for women to “assume independent authority over men”? It is hard to conceive of such a circumstance.

⁶⁵ See especially Payne’s discussion on p. 247, which contains a large number of questionable assertions and logical non sequiturs, such as that Paul’s statement in 1 Tim 2:13 that “Adam was formed first” “implies that woman should respect man as her source” when the verse clearly refers to Adam’s prior creation, not Adam being the woman’s source. Payne’s discussion of affirmations of women teaching elsewhere in the Pastors (ibid., p. 248) likewise contains assertions that fail to prove Payne’s point. For example, Payne adduces the pronoun “anyone” in 1 Tim 3:1 as support for the claim that women as well as men should be allowed to serve as elders while failing to note the “faithful husband” requirement in the following verse. He proceeds to cite Timothy’s instruction by his mother and grandmother (hardly relevant here, since no one disputes that mothers and grandmothers may instruct their sons or grandsons in the faith). Finally, Payne notes the injunction for older women to teach younger women in Titus 2 (likewise not relevant in a discussion of women teaching men). None of this can properly be regarded as legitimate support for the notion that women should be appointed as elders or overseers in the local church.

⁶⁶ See A. J. Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 104–11. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 417–41, maintains that according to 1 Tim 2:15 women will be saved by “the Childbirth,” that is, Messiah Jesus’ birth by Mary. While this is possible (though somewhat foreign to the Pauline context), a careful study of the history of interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15 reveals that this is only one of at least a half dozen common interpretations of this vexing passage, so that Payne’s chosen interpretation is not nearly as compelling as he seems to suppose.

⁶⁷ Payne, “1 Tim 2.12,” 243, n. 23 (emphasis added). Payne does not give support for this assertion.

For these reasons, there continues to be every reason to believe that Scripture teaches that men should serve as heads of households (e.g., Eph 5:23–24; 1 Tim 3:4–5) and as elders in the churches (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2; see also 5:17). In this way, the Bible links the authority structure in the natural family and the authority structure in the spiritual family, “God’s household” (1 Tim 3:15), the church. This does not mean that women are denied significant participation in the ministry of the church. Nor is their role as wives and mothers to be disparaged or diminished in any way (see, e.g., 1 Tim 2:15). In this life, God so chose to order male-female relations in the family and the church that wives submit to husbands and the church to male elders. This neither reflects any merit on the man’s part or demerit on the woman’s part; such is the will of God according to Scripture.

THE “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” REQUIREMENT

As mentioned, the Pauline pronouncement that the role of elder or overseer is limited to men is confirmed by the qualification μάς γυναικός ἄνδρα in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6.⁶⁸ The exact nature of this qualification, in turn, has been subject to considerable debate. The following possibilities have been suggested: (1) disqualification of single men; (2) disqualification of divorced men; (3) disqualification of remarried widowers; (4) disqualification of polygamists; (5) disqualification of those lacking marital fidelity.⁶⁹ The first proposal is unlikely, if for no other reason that in this case Paul himself, and probably Timothy and possibly Titus as well, would have been disqualified. The second proposal, likewise, is unlikely; if so, Paul would have simply said, “not divorced.”

The third view, while the most common view in patristic times, is also unlikely, because there is no good reason why widowers who remarried would have been disqualified from church leadership. Fourth, renderings such as the NIV’s “husband of *but one wife*” (though note the commendable change in the TNIV to “faithful to his wife”) suggest that the requirement is aimed at excluding polygamists.⁷⁰ However, polygamy was not widely practiced in the Greco-Roman world of the time.⁷¹ S. M.

⁶⁸ Contra Payne (*ibid.*, 248), who claims that the word “anyone” (τις) in 1 Tim 3:1 “encompasses men and women” but gives insufficient consideration to the fact that this can hardly be said about the phrase “faithful husband” (μάς γυναικός ἄνδρα) in the following verse. In *Man and Woman*, 459, Payne contends that the qualification for overseers to be “faithful husbands” does not presuppose that such office-holders be men, or else unmarried men would be excluded as well. But this hardly follows. More likely, Paul presupposes that overseers be male and, assuming that they were typically married, stipulates that they be faithful in their marriage relationship (see also Paul’s prohibition of women teaching or having authority over men in 1 Tim 2:12). Payne (*ibid.*, 450) also claims that nearly identical terminology used of women and overseers in 1 Timothy proves that Paul included women among those eligible to serve as elders. However, all this proves is that some of the same qualifications (such as good works, blameless character, marital faithfulness, or self-control) are applicable to both elders and women, and care should be taken not to confuse sense and reference.

⁶⁹ For a discussion and adjudication of these alternatives, see A. J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 259–64.

⁷⁰ Cf. John Calvin, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus* (Wheaton/Nottingham: Crossway, 1998 [1549, 1556]), 54.

⁷¹ See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 171.

Baugh, in particular, has made a convincing case for interpreting the phrase as barring men who have one or several concubines.⁷² This widespread practice conflicted with biblical morals, since sexual union with a concubine constituted adultery and amounted to polygamy. Moreover, the word “but” is not in the original. For these reasons the phrase μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα most likely represents an idiom referring to marital faithfulness.⁷³

That this is the case is further confirmed by the parallel passage 1 Tim 5:9, where a widow eligible for church support is required to have been “faithful to her husband” (so even the NIV = TNIV) and where the equivalent phrase “wife of one husband” is used (cf. 1 Cor 7:2–5). In the latter instance, the phrase cannot indicate a prohibition of polyandry (being married to more than one husband at a time), since it is made of a woman bereft of her husband. Moreover, it is hardly conceivable that Paul first encouraged younger widows to get remarried and then disqualified them later on the grounds that they had, literally, been wives of more than one husband.⁷⁴

The requirement of being, literally, an “of-one-wife-husband” may be patterned after the Roman concept of a *univira* (i.e., a “one husband”-type of wife).⁷⁵ This term denoting marital fidelity was initially applied to living women in relation to their husbands and later became an epithet given by husbands to their deceased wives (as is attested by numerous extant tombstone inscriptions).⁷⁶ The requirement of marital faithfulness for church leaders (including deacons; 1 Tim 3:12) is also consistent with the prohibition of adultery in the Decalogue (Exod 20:14 = Deut 5:18).⁷⁷

If this interpretation is correct, divorced (and remarried) men would not necessarily be excluded from serving as overseers or deacons, especially if the divorce was biblically legitimate.⁷⁸ This would be true also if the divorce has taken place in the distant past (especially if the person was not a believer at the time) and if the man’s present

⁷² S. M. Baugh, “Titus,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (ed. C. E. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 3:501–2.

⁷³ See esp. S. Page, “Marital Expectations of Church Leaders in the Pastoral Epistles,” *JSNT* 50 (1993): 105–20, esp. 108–9 and 114, n. 27.

⁷⁴ Cf. P. Trummer, “Einehe nach den Pastoralbriefen,” *Bib* 51 (1970): 480; apparently independently, Page, “Marital Expectations,” 112; contra Fee, “Reflections on Church Order,” 150, who contends that the present passage “probably prohibits remarriage of widows/widowers.”

⁷⁵ Cf. M. Lightman and W. Zeisel, “Univira: An Example of Continuity and Change in Roman Society,” *Church History* 46 (1977): 19–32.

⁷⁶ As the poet Catullus (first century BC) wrote, “To live content with one man is for wives an honor of honors” (111). A Roman imperial inscription reads, “She lived fifty years and was satisfied with one husband” (*CIL* 6.5162). The late-first-century BC *Laudatio Turiae* records a husband saying about his wife, “Rare are marriages, so long lasting, and ended by death, not interrupted by divorce. . . .”

⁷⁷ The present requirement contrasts with the Gnostic extremes of asceticism and sexual licentiousness. Marital fidelity was also held in high regard in the Greco-Roman world, so that this quality would commend a Christian office-holder to his pagan surroundings (cf. Page, “Marital Expectations,” 117–18).

⁷⁸ Regarding the wife’s marital unfaithfulness, see Matt 19:9; regarding desertion by an unbelieving wife, see 1 Cor 7:15–16; regarding remarriage subsequent to the death of one’s spouse, see Rom 7:2–3. See A. J. Köstenberger, “Marriage and Family in the New Testament,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. K. M. Campbell; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 256–64. See also chap. 12 in Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*.

pattern (and proven track record) is that of marital faithfulness.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, when coupled with the requirement that an overseer be “above reproach” (which includes community reputation), it may be best not to appoint divorcees to the role of overseer, especially when qualified candidates are available that did not undergo a divorce.

DEACONS

The second church office addressed in 1 Timothy 3 besides that of overseer/elder is that of deacon. Structurally, the presence of the phrase “likewise” or “in the same way” (ὡσαύτως) in 1 Tim 3:8 and 11 may suggest that qualifications are given for two other types of officeholders besides that of overseer (3:1–7). The flow of thought in 3:8–13 may indicate that one large category, that of deacon, is discussed, with Paul first addressing qualifications for male and then female office-holders, with a final verse being devoted to a concluding comment regarding male deacons and a general statement pertaining to deacons in general.

When comparing the qualifications for deacons with those for overseers, one notes the absence of terms related to teaching or ruling (most notably “able to teach,” 3:2; see also 3:5b). This suggests that, in keeping with the designation “deacon” (from Gk. διάκονος, “servant”) as over against “overseer,” deacons are not part of that group that bears ultimate responsibility for the church.⁸⁰ At the same time, they, too, occupy a formal church office, for which they must meet certain requirements. While not part of the teaching or ruling body of the church, deacons hold important leadership roles. This is indicated by the similarity between the qualifications for overseers and deacons.⁸¹ Although Paul does not spell out the precise realm of service for the office of deacon, one may surmise that this includes various kinds of practical helps and administration, such as benevolence, finances, or physical maintenance.⁸²

According to 1 Tim 3:8, these “servants” (cf. Phil 1:1; not mentioned in Titus) “likewise” (cf. 2:9; 3:11; Titus 2:3,6) are to meet certain qualifications, whereby 1 Tim 3:8–10 and 12 relates to male and 3:11 to female “servants.” The expression “their wives” in the NIV translates the Greek γυναῖκας,⁸³ which could also be translated “women deacons” or “deaconesses” (NIV footnote; the NASB and HCSB simply have “women,” preserving the ambiguity in the original Greek). Both meanings for γυνή, “woman” (2:9,10,11,12,14) and “wife” (3:2,12; 5:9; cf. Titus 1:6),

⁷⁹ See Page, “Marital Expectations,” 109–13.

⁸⁰ Cf. Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 167; contra Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 485.

⁸¹ Towner, *1–2 Timothy & Titus*, 90–91.

⁸² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 207, contends that “Paul does not teach that the deacon is under the overseer . . . both overseer and deacon serve the church in different capacities.” Yet overseers are in charge of the entire congregation (e.g., 5:17), which would seem to include deacons.

⁸³ Note that “their” is not in the original; but see the change in the NIV to “wives” and in the TNIV to “the women” (TNIV footnote: “Probably women who are deacons”).

are found in 1 Timothy; context must decide.⁸⁴ The following arguments have been advanced in favor of “women servants.”⁸⁵

- (1) The absence of qualifications for overseers’ wives in 1 Tim 3:1–7: all things being equal, on the assumption that 1 Tim 3:11 refers to deacons’ wives, one would expect for there also to be a listing of qualifications for elders’ wives earlier in the chapter, but such are not given.
- (2) The phrase “in the same way” in 1 Tim 3:11 indicating an office similar to the one previously mentioned (cf. 3:8), as well as the parallel sentence structure: in 1 Tim 3:8, the phrase “in the same way” marks a transition from one office (that of elder) to another (that of deacon); by analogy, it is argued that the same phrase in 1 Tim 3:11, likewise, marks the transition from one office (male deacon) to another (female deacon).
- (3) The lack of an article before “women” (γυναῖκας) in 1 Tim 3:11: without any further qualification, γυνή usually refers to “women”; if someone’s “woman” (i.e., wife) is in view, this is indicated by a possessive article (“his”) or in some other way (“his own,” etc.); in 1 Tim 3:11, no such further qualifier is found, suggesting women servants rather than wives of deacons.

If Paul had women “servants” in mind, why did he not call them “deaconesses”? The reason may be that in his day the word διάκονος was still used for males and females alike (plus the respective article to indicate gender); it was only later that the term διακόνισσα was coined (*Apost. Const.* 8.19,20,28).⁸⁶ Thus Phoebe is identified as a διάκονος of the church at Cenchrea in Rom 16:1. Paul’s mention of female “servants” coheres well with his earlier prohibition of women serving in teaching or ruling functions over men (1 Tim 2:12) and his lack of mention of women elders in 1 Tim 3:1–7.⁸⁷ Since being a “servant” (deacon) does not involve teaching or ruling, there would not seem to be a compelling theological reason why women should be kept from serving in this capacity, as long as it is kept in mind that deacon is a nonauthoritative, nonruling ecclesiastical role.

A survey of major new translations and commentaries seems to suggest that in recent years, the tide of opinion has slightly shifted toward the presence of women

⁸⁴ A third possibility is favored by R. M. Lewis, “The ‘Women’ of 1 Timothy 3:11,” *BibSac* 136 (1979): 167–75, that of unmarried [single or widowed] female deacons’ assistants. W. L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 134, conjectures that “at first the women who served as deacons were the wives of deacons.”

⁸⁵ Cf. J. H. Stiefel, “Women Deacons in 1 Timothy: A Linguistic and Literary Look at ‘Women Likewise . . .’ [1 Tim 3:11],” *NTS* 41 (1995): 442–57.

⁸⁶ See also the reference in Pliny the Younger, who refers to two women “called deaconesses” (*ministrae*) in Bithynia under Trajan (*Epist.* 10.96.8; c. AD 115).

⁸⁷ See the discussion above.

“servants” (deacons) in the early church. Traditionally, most major translations took the reference in 1 Tim 3:11 to be to deacons’ wives, as the following list illustrates:

- KJV = NKJV: “*their* wives”
- NASB: “women”
- NIV: “*their* wives” (footnote: or “deaconesses”)
- NRSV: “*women*” (footnote: or “*their* wives” or “*women* deacons”)
- NLT: “*their* wives” (footnote: or “*the* women deacons”)

Conversely, no major translation unequivocally affirmed in the main text a reference to women deacons in 1 Tim 3:11. In recent years, however, both the TNIV and the HCSB opted for the wording “*women*,” perhaps marking a cautious departure from the KJV traditional rendering “*their* wives.”

Also, several major recent commentaries—written by complementarian scholars, no less—affirm that the reference to Phoebe as a διάκονος in Rom 16:1 should probably be interpreted in terms of her having served in the office of deaconess.⁸⁸ The implication for church practice today is that churches could allow women to serve in the role of deaconess as long as it is kept in mind that the biblical definition of “deacon” involves serving in a nonteaching, nonruling function.

CONCLUSION

This essay has sought to provide a brief survey of major hermeneutical and exegetical challenges in interpreting the Pastoral Epistles. Major hermeneutical issues included authorship, genre and the role of background, and the Pastorals’ literary integrity and structure. With regard to authorship, it was concluded that Pauline authorship continues to be preferred to alternative proposals, whether pseudonymity or allonymity.

With regard to genre and the role of background, it was argued that an ad hoc hermeneutic is too constraining and that an approach consistently distinguishing between general principle and specific application is to be favored. With regard to literary integrity, the cohesion of each of the Pastorals was noted and defended. Alternate structural proposals were noted and brief surveys of the literary plan of Paul’s two letters to Timothy and his letter to Titus were provided.

Exegetically, the Pastorals were shown to reflect a two-tiered structure of church government, with a plurality of pastors/elders/overseers in charge and with deacons (most likely both male and female) fulfilling servant roles in the church. The

⁸⁸ See esp. T. R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 786–87; and D. J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 913–14. But see BDAG, 230, which calls Phoebe a “courier” (διάκονος), and the unpublished paper of T. L. Wilder, “Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2” (ETS annual meeting, 2005), who argues that Phoebe is the “letter-carrier” (διάκονος) of Romans.

“husband of one wife” requirement was shown to refer most likely to the stipulation that church leaders be faithful to their wives, stipulating marital fidelity as a core requirement for all men serving in ecclesiastical office.

While these conclusions are not the only ones possible from the New Testament data, there can be little disagreement that the Pastorals are among the most important New Testament writings for the practice of the contemporary church. The church must continue to wrestle with what Scripture teaches regarding church governance and qualifications for leadership and commit itself to abide by what it understands Scripture to teach rather operating primarily on the basis of personal preference or church tradition.⁸⁹

What is more, it is vital for interpreters to be aware of their presuppositions and to be willing to revisit (or visit for the first time) the biblical data rather than following in the paths of one’s denominational forebears. It is with the commitment to *sola Scriptura*, with the scholarly spirit of *ad fontes*, and with the dictum “In essentials, unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things, charity” that this modest contribution to our study and practice of the Pastoral Epistles is offered.

⁸⁹ See the unpublished paper by R. L. Adkisson, “Women Serving in the Church? A Biblical and Historical Look at Women Serving in the Church with Particular Attention Given to the History and Interpretation of Southern Baptists.”