Paul's Epistle to Titus

Introduction

Historical Evidence[1]

This Epistle, with the two to Timothy, were regarded as being by Paul, without reservation, by the early Church. Clement of Rome (late first century), first of the Apostolic Fathers, knew of it, as did Pothinus of Lyons (late 1st C. - 3rd quarter of 2nd C.) and his successor, Irenaeus (c 120 – 200). Tertullian (c. 160 – 220+) was in no doubt that it was a Pauline epistle, and Polycarp (69-155 Bishop of Smyrna) showed knowledge of these Pastoral Epistles. The 2nd century Muratorian Canon states – *For the Epistles of Paul. . . . He wrote besides these one to Philemon, one to Titus and two to Timothy. These were written in personal affection, but they have been hallowed by being held in honour by the Catholic Church for the regulation of Church discipline.* Eusebius, (c 260 – 340) Father of Church History, records that these 'Pastoral Epistles' were among the Books of the Bible that had always been recognized by the Church. The early Church was in no doubt that this Epistle was by St. Paul, contrasting to 'Hebrews', where, from an early date, doubt was expressed concerning the authorship.

Nevertheless, in spite of this powerful historical and traditional evidence certain German theologians (and others) chose to doubt Paul's authorship on the grounds of internal evidence.

Firstly they considered that the absence of certain favourite Pauline words from the Pastorals indicated another author, but:-

Numbers of Verses Containing these so called Pauline 'Favourite Words'[2]

Grk	Rom	1 Cr	2 Cr	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tm	2 Tm	Tit	Phm
ἄδικος	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ἀκαθασία	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
υἱοθεσια	3	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
διαθήκη	2	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ἀποκαλύπτω	2	3	0	2	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
ἐλεύθερος	2	6	0	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ἐνεργέω	1	2	2	3	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
κατεργάζομαι	11	1	8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
καυχάομαι	5	4	17	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
μωρία	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ἄρα	11	5	3	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
διό	6	1	6	0	5	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	1
διότι	4	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
ἔπειτι	0	5	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ἔτι	10	4	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

It can be seen that many of the established Pauline Epistles do not contain an abundance of 'favourite words' – Colossians has only 4 verses with any of these words in them! If we reverse this spurious argument then the really exceptional epistle is Romans! Does this mean that Paul did not write Romans? Certainly not!

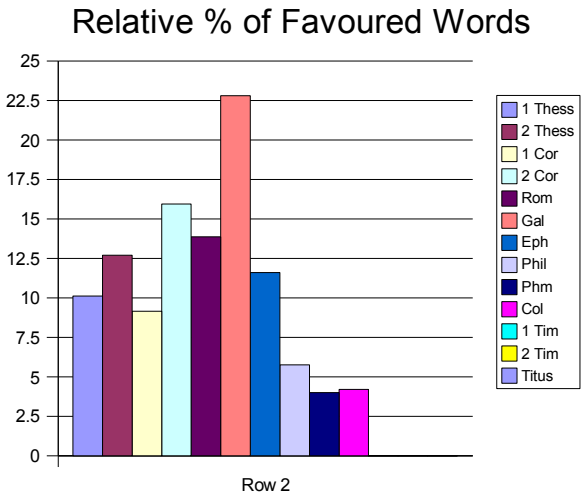
1 See The Catholic Encyclopedia and Bettenson 'Documents of the Christian Church'.

2 Drawn from Explan's 'Holy Bible' software based on Strong's numbers and the Textus Receptus

Now if we compare the percentages of the verses in each epistle containing favoured words with the total number of verses respectively we obtain an entirely different picture with Galations appearing to be the exceptional epistle.

	Rom	1 Cr	2 Cr	Gal	Eph	Phil	Col	1 Th	2 Th	1 Tm	2 Tm	Tit	Phm
No. Verses	433	437	257	149	155	104	95	89	47	113	83	46	25
N. w. words	60	40	41	34	18	6	4	9	6	0	0	0	1
%	13.86	9.15	15.95	22.81	11.61	5.76	4.21	10.12	12.7	0	0	0	4.00
Approx Date	57	55	56	57[3]	62	62	62	52	53	67	68	67	62

Set graphically in approximate chronological order



These data certainly show that the Pastoral Epistles are lacking in the favoured words, but they also show a trend in their use. This trend appears to be related to date (ie time of writing), Paul's own circumstances, the affairs of the addressees and the addressees relationships with Paul. The absence of these words is not, in itself, any proof that Paul did not write these Epistles.

Secondly Those sceptical of Paul's authorship of these Epistles point to the very large numbers of words which appear nowhere else in the NT. It is puzzling that the use of these unusual words should be regarded as non -Pauline – there are at least fifteen in the first chapter of 'Romans' alone! It has been calculated in the past[4] that Romans contains 113 of these once only words, and 1 Cor. 110, 2 Cor. 99, Gal. 34, Eph. 43, Phil. 41, Col.38, 1 Thess. 23, 2 Thess. 11, Philem. 5, 1 Tim. 110, 2 Tim. 53, Titus 33.

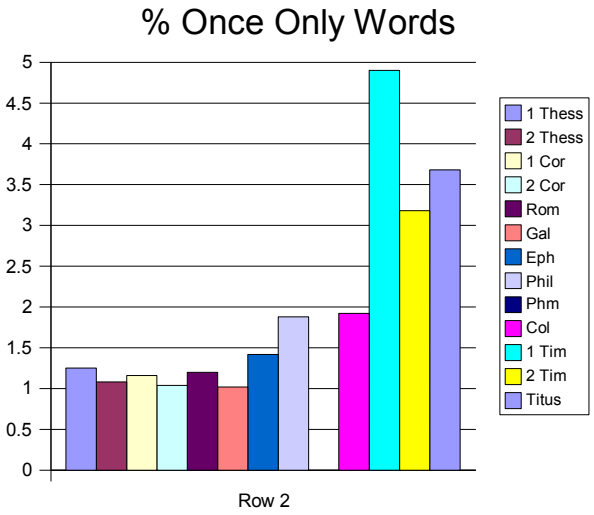
Reset in Chronological Order:-

	1 Ths	2 Ths	1 Cr	2Cr	Rm	Gal	Eph	Phl	Phm	Col	1 Tm	2 Tm	Titus
1 Wds	23	11	110	99	113	34	43	41	5	38	110	53	33
T Wds[5]	1837	1022	9462	6046	9422	3084	3022	2183		1979	2244	1666	896
%	1.25	1.08	1.16	1.04	1.20	1.02	1.42	1.88		1.92	4.90	3.18	3.68

3 But some commentators think as early as 53.
4 Workman, Expository Times, VII,418.
5 Can only be approximate but gives the relative sizes of the Epistles and so proportions of once only words

Paul's Epistle to Titus

Represented Graphically



Once again a trend appears – Paul used more of these unusual words as he aged and when he wrote to dear friends, but he had always had a partiality for rare words. I have appended possible sources[6] of some of these words in 'Titus', and it can be seen that most are in the OT Apocrypha and LXX – sources that would have been well known to Paul, one, ἐπιδιορθώση, has been found in a Cretan document of the 2nd century BC, many of the others in Classical Greek literature, which was generally known, and some in the works of Philo. Paul may not have known about Philo's philosophy, but I suggest a common origin here in Stoicism – Tarsus was a centre for Stoic philosophers, whom Paul would, most probably, have heard. A few are untraceable but it is reasonable to suppose that the vast majority were within Paul's experience.

Thirdly There are objections on the grounds of style. There are many difference but many similarities in style between the Pastoral Epistles and the rest. It would be highly suspicious if there were none. The seven Churches, to whom Paul wrote, were in various degrees of disorganization which required severe correction, the Epistles to Timothy and Titus were to dear and trusted friends requiring support and encouragement, but not any form of an admonishment. The objection to style reminds me of the difference in style between Beethoven's Opus 130 string quartets and those of Opus 18. If we did not know these vastly different quartets were written by the same person would we be tempted to attribute the Opus 130 to another author? This objection is based on a fallacious assumption that a person's style never changes during his lifetime.

Where and when written

The Epistle to Titus was written either in Nicopolis, in Epirus, or on the way to that city, and about 66 or 67 AD. One of the problems concerning this epistle is to fit a visit to Crete into the known history of Paul in Acts and the other epistles. Paul visited Crete, as a prisoner, and that visit is referred to in Acts 27:7, but that cannot be the occasion on which he left Titus there (Titus is not mentioned in Acts). After his journey to Rome Paul spent two years as a prisoner, and after his release, it is conjectured, he continued travelling and perhaps went on to Spain and then called at Crete on his return eastwards. Within the variants of the Epistle there is some contradiction as to how long Paul was in Crete. In the Codex Vaticanus verse 5 ' I left you' – 'left' is ἀπέλειπον – imperfect, indicating that the process of leaving took some time; in other MSS 'left' is ἀπέλιπόν – aorist, suggesting that Paul's stop over in Crete was short. Paul showed that he was familiar with a legend of Crete when he quoted from Cleanthes/Epimenides in Acts 17:28.

6 Using Arndt & Gingrich.

Paul's Epistle to Titus

From 'Hymn to Zeus' by Epimenides 6th c, BC.

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one—
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies! (Titus 1:12)
But thou art not dead: thou livest and abidest forever,
For in thee we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:27)

Further, Epimenides is credited with persuading the Athenians to erect the altar ' To an Unknown God' described by Paul in Acts 17:23. All evidence pointing to Paul's extensive knowledge and wide reading.