1. The Critical Consensus

I start with the critical consensus: there are seven genuine Pauline epistles (Handout 1). We next ask: (1) Have the genuine epistles come down to us intact, and (2) How did the spurious ones come into being? I believe the answers to these questions are connected, and that they have to do, not with an abstract process, but with specific persons. Texts happen because people write them, and if we know who wrote them, and if possible when, we might be able to read them more understandingly.

2. Interpolations in the Genuine Epistles

In recent years, William O Walker Jr has shown that the genuine epistles undoubtedly contain interpolations, sometimes long ones (one example is the “love” chapter, 1 Cor 13). They do not show up as manuscript variants. To a philologist, that means that they are either authorial or editorial; that is, they were added before the texts were handed to the copyists for wider distribution. Since Paul is unlikely to have added contradictory material to these one-time letters, that leaves Paul’s editors. The nature of the interpolations supports that suggestion. Some are obviously meant to correct doctrine, or heal divisions in the churches, or lessen tensions between them and the world outside them, even at the cost of reversing Paul’s own positions. As a sample of division within the churches, note that Paul in Romans insists on the importance of faith. He denigrates works of the law, and holds that they are worthless for salvation. His example is Abraham, whose trust in God was counted as virtue. Paul’s is a soteriology of faith – faith in the proposition that Christ’s death ransoms you from sin. This is ridiculed by the Epistle of James (Handout 2). Then Paul is here feuding openly with another Christian faction, on faith vs works. As for 1 Cor 13, is it likely that Paul would interrupt himself in the middle of a diatribe on spiritual gifts to deliver any message, and then resume his previous topic as though nothing had happened? Is it likely that anything he said would reduce the importance of faith, and rank it second to love? In a word, No. Then, as the text evidence suggests, the love chapter is from another hand. The wish of Paul’s editors to reduce the impact of divisive Paul, and replace him with an irenic Paul, a Paul who puts harmony (love) above any one doctrine (faith), is a perfectly intelligible motive for this addition to 1 Corinthians. A motive that works for the editors.
Then we have the Haustafeln: the codes of civic and domestic conduct. These are designed, not to reduce tension within the Jesus movement, but to reduce friction between it and the secular world. On the civic side, they urge acceptance of Imperial authority; on the social side, conformity with the low position of women in contemporary society. For the position of women, we may contrast Paul’s recognition of women as coworkers in spreading the Gospel, and his encouraging all to prophesy, that is, to speak, in church. Winsome Munro, who first called attention to the spurious nature of these codes, called them the “pastoral” layer, noting that they are at home in the spurious Pastoral epistles, but intrusive and thus secondary in the genuine ones. I disagree with her inclusion of Colossians and Ephesians as genuine. But her basic point is sound: these codes are at home in the post-Pauline writings, and not in the genuine writings. But note that they occur in both groups (Handout 3). This shows close agreement between whoever edited Paul’s letters, and whoever later wrote the Pastorals and other deutero-Pauline texts. This continuity between the two is the beginning of my hypothesis.

3. The Window of Opportunity

The window is narrow. Goodspeed thought that Paul was rescued from obscurity at the end of the century, when someone gathered his forgotten letters, and made him famous by publishing them. Nothing could be less likely. The time when interest in a public figure is highest, and when someone would be most motivated to gather his writings, is at his death, while he still is a public figure. This puts the editorial interpolations not long after Paul’s death in c60. Is there any other evidence? Consider the interpolation in 1 Thess 2:13-16 (Handout 4), where “Paul” alludes to the destruction of the Temple in 70 as God’s judgement on the Jews. Then the editing process included the year 71, a decade after Paul’s death. That implies delay on the editors’ part, but the tumultuous times will perhaps excuse them. In what follows, I assume an editorial process ending in 71.

4. Paul’s Editors

Who were they? Most likely, Paul’s resident manager in Ephesus, as the organizer, plus his chief lieutenants. Following Knox, I see Onesimus as the Ephesus manager. Timothy and Silvanus cosign one or more of Paul’s letters. Timothy and Titus are praised in the letters (not the closing greetings) as faithful delegates of Paul himself. As far as Paul’s own evidence goes, these are his chief helpers. They add another detail to my hypothesis (Handout 5).
5. Grouping the Deutero-Paulines

There are also four groups of deutero-Pauline letters. Ignoring Hebrews, which is not a letter at all, we have the following. (1) Ephesians and Colossians are linked by a distinctive heavy Greek style, and by a conspicuous parallel structure; Ephesians is easily seen as an update of Colossians. (2) Among the Pastorals, Easton has convincingly argued for the sequence 2 Tim > Titus > 1 Tim, and Murphy O’Connor has further argued for Titus and 1 Tim as distinct in message from 2 Tim. This gives us 2 Tim as separate from Titus and 1 Tim, making two separate groups. (3) 2 Thess stands alone, and is our fourth group (Handout 6). It remains to confirm these groupings, and to suggest links between these groups and the four people I have suggested were Paul’s editors.

As one confirmation, we look up Atonement, #33 in the Ware Synopsis. Omitting the many references in Romans and I Corinthians, the Atonement passages in the deutero-Paulines are listed in Handout 7. Note that they touch only two of our groups: Ephesians/Colossians and 1 Tim/Titus. Then two of the four implied authors held that doctrine, and the other two did not. Now, it’s easy to imagine Paul’s editors, whatever they personally believed, adding Alpha (pre-Resurrection) passages to Paul, to calm the Atonement controversy noted above. But it is easier to imagine if two of the four editors were not themselves terribly sold on that doctrine. This does not give us names, but it suggests that the editors were themselves theologically eclectic.

6. Linking Editors and Deutero-Paulines

Obviously, no one was better positioned to supplement the edited letters by new ones than Paul’s editors. Given our hypothesis as to those editors, is there a reasonable first guess as to their connection with the Deutero-Paulines?

(1) Ephesians is mapped on Colossians, and Colossians is strangely similar to Philemon, which makes no sense since Philemon isn’t even a church letter. This might be explained if Philemon somehow meant a great deal to the author of Colossians. The only person likely to have felt that way is Onesimus, the beneficiary of Philemon, and the only member of the committee who is likely to have known of its existence. There is support in the long digression in Colossians 3:18-4:1, which alone of the deutero-Paulines has something to say about slavery as such. Our picture for Onesimus is then a root in a genuine letter, plus two spurious letters (for this and following, see Handout 8):

Philemon [genuine] > Colossians > Ephesians (Onesimus)
(2). It is widely agreed that Philippians is a conflation of three letters, not all of them from prison. But there is a fragment of a fourth at Php 4:2-3. (“I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the Gospel”). I am sorry, but not in a million years can this intimate request have been broadcast to the masses at Philippi. It can only have been a private communication to Paul’s agent on the scene. Given Paul’s intention to send Timothy to Philippi (Php 2:19, “But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state”), odds are that Timothy was that agent. Only he can have provided the fragment of that private note, still in his possession, to the editorial process. We then have:

**Philippians** [genuine] > 2 Timothy (Timothy)

(3). If Timothy wrote 2 Timothy, and if Titus is the next Pastoral in sequence, then the first presumption is that Titus wrote that Epistle, and then went on to write the very similar 1 Timothy.

[no genuine original] > Titus > 1 Timothy (Titus)

(4). Silvanus was the cosigner of the genuine 1 Thess. If he wrote anything later, the best guess is that it was 2 Thess, which mechanically parallels 1 Thess the way Ephesians parallels Colossians, and whose point is to correct positions taken in 1 Thess. Then our sequence would be:

**1 Thess** (genuine) > 2 Thess (Silvanus).

If we trust Acts for a moment, Silvanus was one of the party sent to bear news of the Jerusalem Decision revoking the Jewish food laws for mixed congregations. He may then have been trusted by the Jerusalem leadership of that time, who preserved Jesus’ original position on those Pharisaic rules. Since the Ware Synopsis shows that the author of 2 Thess did not hold the later Atonement view, he is to that extent plausible, since 2 Thess is absolutely free of any reference to the Atonement.

All this is old hat and obvious. Now comes something slightly different.
7. Stylometrics

Since its first use under Mendenhall, stylometric measures have been used as authorship tests. The results are often absurd, such as those on the Pauline Epistles, none of which matches the best results of conventional scholarship. The flaw is that there is no stylistic test of authorship as such, for the simple reason that the style of an author is not a constant. It varies with genre, authorial mood, or the presence in the author’s mind of a text he is imitating (as was the case with one of Madison’s Federalist Papers), or degree of intoxication (as with one of Jonathan Swift’s anonymous pieces for the government newspaper Examiner, which was written under the influence of opium). The use of style measures to track such moods and influences in an author’s work is a project of the highest potential fruitfulness for literary study. Unfortunately, this is still virgin territory.

Among our BIRD complex of style measures, here are the parameters for the D or Difference measure (Handout 9). A reading of 0.5 or less implies a strong similarity of style between two passages, as though the author is on a roll, and has in mind chiefly his own preceding paragraph. Between 0.5 and 1.0 is the normal range of variation, and counts as similarity. A reading above 1.0 suggests significant difference, and above 1.5, very significant difference. If we are comparing two different texts, all we can say about D readings is that below 0.5 a hypothesis of same authorship is indicated, while above 1.0, a hypothesis of different authorship may be equally or more plausible. These are only suggestions, to be referred to the literary judgement of the human investigator.

The entire NT corpus, including many of its separate interpolated passages, has been subjected to the D or Difference test. Some results are given at Handout 10. There is much in these, which I can take up later if desired, but for our purpose, the chief points are the following.

First, Ephesians and Colossians have only each other as probably by the same author; no other NT text comes close. Someone will say, We already knew that. But that is exactly the point. The first thing to do with any statistical measure is to calibrate it; to test it on material of known authorship. It is only a test which gives the right answer when the answer is known, that we can properly trust when it gives us answers in less certain areas.

Next we have the stylistic closeness of Titus and 1 Timothy, as distinct from 2 Timothy. This agrees with Murphy-O’Connor’s finding, that these two stand out from the other Pastoral Epistle. Again, we have welcome confirmation of a previously well-argued position.
Now we ask a new question: were the interpolations in 1 Corinthians all written by the same person? The crosstable suggests that they were not. Of the eight interpolations here included, five are close enough stylistically to be plausible as from the same hand. (They are grouped together in the crosstable, to make their relations a little clearer). The other three are more distant, they react neither with the five nor with each other. They suggest the input of three different persons. Now, one major contributor plus three minor ones makes a total of four, and again we get the sense of four hands engaged in the work of editing Paul. This result is compatible with the present hypothesis.

Of the three rogue 1 Cor additions, one has significant relations outside 1 Cor, namely the short passage 1 Cor 7:17-24. Its contact is with Titus and 1 Timothy, but with no other deuto-Pauline. If Titus contributed that one interpolation to 1 Cor, then his chart may be amended to show that he too had a sort of anchor, if not in the genuine Paulines, then, like Timothy, in the work of editing them. That revision to Handout 8 is given at Handout 11. It completes what I have to suggest today, about Paul’s editors as possible authors of the deuto-Paulines.

8. Personalia

Except for this final comment. Everyone in the field of religious studies will recall how, on the death of Mencius in 0303, his disciples immediately broke loose with their conflicting ideas of where the thought of Mencius ought to go, and how it ought to be perceived by later generations. They gathered the transcripts of Mencius’ genuine interviews with rulers, which is why we still have them. They also made interpolations in those genuine transcripts, changing the sense of the original text. And they went on to create wholly spurious transcripts, further developing those rival positions. This will surprise no one who has watched the heirs squabble, when the head of a family business dies.

Perhaps then it should not surprise students of the Pauline literature, when exactly the same thing happens shortly after the death of Paul. The sense of human motives, including motives of competition, is either refreshing or disturbing, depending on personal taste, but it is very lifelike.
If Knox and I are right, that Onesimus was Paul’s Ephesus manager, and de facto head of the editorial team, how did Paul’s coworkers, who had labored in the field, feel about working under a mere deskman, a former slave and thief at that? I think the evidence is now at hand to say, they resented it. 2 Timothy (and it is Timothy himself speaking, though with the voice of Paul) praises himself inordinately; he gives himself a genealogy within Christianity going back two generations to his pious grandmother Lois. (Paul’s own impression is that he himself converted Timothy). And as the recipient of Paul’s last eloquent testament from Rome, which is contained in 2 Timothy, and thus in effect Paul’s designated heir, Timothy vastly outranks Onesimus in the post-Pauline world. It is Timothy who is, or deserves to be, the future Paul.

Silvanus was the other old-timer who differed from Onesimus theologically, and showed that difference byblanking out, from his remake of 1 Thess, every hint of the Atonement doctrine.

As for Titus, who agreed with Onesimus theologically, what about 1 Cor 7:17-24, which he probably wrote? It tells slaves not to seek freedom (unlike Onesimus, who gained his freedom). In his own composition, the Epistle to Titus 2:9-10, he exhorts slaves “to be in subjection to their own masters, and to be well-pleasing to them in all things (we recall that Onesimus was on bad terms with his master Philemon), not gainsaying, not purloining” (Onesimus had taken money, which Paul in requesting his freedom promises to repay).

More generally, there is a tone of steadiness in 1 Cor 7:17-24, a disinclination to provoke social or other change despite the transition to local bishops, that pervades both Titus and 1 Timothy. The specific advice of those Epistles has been well observed, but less attention has been paid to this general quality. I submit, as one result of this investigation, that the relations here asserted, between Paul’s editors and his pseudepigraphers, help us to read Titus and 1 Tim from a slightly new angle, sensitive to elements which are not at once apparent. They help us see not just the theology, but the human personality which these texts reflect. They take us, I believe, a little deeper.

Such is my case, and I respectfully offer it for your consideration.

Thank you.