
Personalities in the Pastorals

STUDIES IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES (12)

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Apart from Paul himself and his two friends to whom these three letters were sent, more than twenty persons are mentioned by name in the Pastoral Epistles. We cannot be more precise about their number, because some are certainly named more than once and others may possibly be mentioned more than once—for example, when we read of ‘Hymenaeus and Alexander’ in *1 Tim. 1:20*, it is difficult to be sure if the former is the same man as is named along with Philetus in *2 Tim. 2:17*.

The majority of the people named were friends of Paul; a few were opponents, either theological or personal opponents. Some of his friends who are mentioned are quite well known to us from other letters of his or from the record of Acts. Such are Luke, Mark, Prisca and Aquila, Apollos, Tychicus and Trophimus. Since they all figured in the series on ‘The Pauline Circle’ which appeared in *HARVESTER* during 1983 (and was published in book form in 1985), it is unnecessary to repeat here what was said then.

Paul’s opponents

As for his theological opponents, we looked at some of them in the article on ‘Warnings against False Teaching’ which appeared in this year’s August number. Hymenaeus and Alexander, rejecting conscience, ‘made shipwreck of their faith’ (*1 Tim. 1:19, 20*). Hymenaeus and Philetus upset the faith of others by teaching an over-realized eschatology, saying that the resurrection was already past (*2 Tim. 2:17*). Phygelus and Hermogenes, who are not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, were among those who promoted the landslide away from Paul in the churches of Asia (*2 Tim. 1:15*). Whether they moved away from Paul’s teaching in a judaistic or in a gnostic direction is uncertain—they may, indeed, have moved in the direction of Jewish gnosticism, as the leaders of the ‘Colossian heresy’ appear to have done.

It is probable that ‘Alexander the coppersmith’ (*2 Tim. 4:14, 15*) was a

more personal opponent. His opposition may have been theologically motivated (he set himself against Paul’s teaching), but it took a personal form. It has been conjectured that he was identical with that Alexander who attempted to get a hearing for himself in the theatre of Ephesus as spokesman for the local Jews (*Acts 19:33, 34*), but this can be no more than a conjecture.

Friends known by name only

Like Alexander’s hostility, Onesiphorus’s kindness (*2 Tim. 1:16–18*) may have been theologically motivated—at least in the sense that he had learned the mind of Christ—but he certainly showed it in the most personal and practical ways, both in Ephesus and in Rome.

Other friends of Paul mentioned in these letters are but names to us. Carpus, with whom he left his cloak at Troas (*2 Tim. 4:13*) should probably be added to the list of his hosts. Erastus, who stayed on at Corinth (*2 Tim. 4:20*), may be the treasurer of that city (*Rom. 16:23*) or Paul’s helper who had earlier been sent from Ephesus to Macedonia with Timothy (*Acts 19:22*). Of Crescens, who went to Galatia, or Gaul (*2 Tim. 4:10*), we know nothing more, any more than we do about Artemas (*Tit. 3:12*) or Zenas the lawyer, a fellow-traveller with Apollos (*Tit. 3:13*). The same must be said of the four Christians, evidently resident in Rome, whose greetings are sent to Timothy—Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia (*2 Tim. 4:21*)—unless Linus is the man of that name who is known to have been a leader in the Roman church in the second half of the first century. (In the traditional lists of bishops of Rome, Linus comes first after the two apostolic founders, Peter and Paul. In fact, however, the monarchical bishop did not emerge in the Roman church until well into the second century.)

A romantic theory

But an attempt has been made to put

flesh on to two others of the four—Pudens and Claudia. The Latin poet Martial (c. A.D. 40–100) composed an epigram to celebrate the marriage of a Roman friend of his, Pudens by name. The bride, who was evidently of non-Roman birth, was called Claudia. The poet foresees great happiness for them because of their similar disposition and love one for the other. In another epigram he congratulates a lady called Claudia Rufina, British by birth but truly Roman in character, on the birth of a first child to herself and her husband. In this second epigram the husband’s name is not given, but the reference is almost certainly to the Pudens and Claudia whose marriage he celebrated in the earlier epigram. What of it? Pudens and Claudia were common enough names at Rome.

Perhaps no one has argued more elaborately for the identification of Martial’s couple with the Pudens and Claudia of *2 Tim. 4:21* than Archdeacon J. Williams in a monograph entitled *Claudia and Pudens* (1848). Not only did he identify them, but he threw more light on Claudia in particular. If a British lady bore the name Claudia, she must have belonged to a family that had been granted Roman citizenship, probably when Claudius was emperor (A.D. 41–54). Tacitus tells us of a British king named Cogidumnus who was given domains in south-east Britain, as a reward for his loyalty to Rome, in the later part of Claudius’s principate. That he was given Roman citizenship as well appears from a contemporary inscription where he bears the name Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus (this being a variant spelling of Cogidumnus). On the same inscription (found at Chichester) the name of one Pudens is mentioned. All this probably does throw light on the Pudens and Claudia of Martial, but there is no particular reason to think that it has any bearing on Paul’s Pudens and Claudia. For one thing, if Paul’s Pudens and Claudia were husband and wife, would they not have been mentioned together (like Prisca and Aquila) instead of having their names separ-

ated by that of Linus? (Perhaps, it might be answered, Paul's Pudens and Claudia were not yet married; but that would simply render even more remote the likelihood of their having anything to do with Martial's couple.) Archdeacon Williams' 'ingenious essay' was summarized with non-committal respect by Conybeare and Howson in their *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, but Dean Farrar, in his *Life and Work of St. Paul*, dismissed his argument as 'an elaborate rope of sand'.

Other conjectures

Legend associates Paul's Pudens with the Church of S. Pudenziana, claiming that it was built over the house where Peter lived in Rome for seven years with Pudens. But this church, while certainly one of the oldest churches in Rome, is shown by archaeology to have been given the form of a church late in the 4th century A.D.; before that it was part of some baths which were built in the second century A.D. Another conjecture may be referred to—one hazarded by Walter Lock in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* at the beginning of this century—that since Pudens is frequently attested as a name borne by military men, Paul's Pudens may have been one of the soldiers who had charge of him during his period of house-arrest in Rome and was won by him for the Christian faith. Like some other conjectures, the best that can be said for this one is that it cannot be disproved.

Recorded in heaven and on earth

The important thing is that people's names should be written in heaven. But those whose names, in addition, are written in the New Testament, even when nothing more is known of them, have this advantage—that they are still remembered on earth.

The Pastoral Epistles show us, then, as do his other letters and the narrative of Acts, that Paul was the sort of person to attract friends wherever he went. Whatever differences may be detected between these epistles and the others in the Pauline collection, there is no difference on this point.

For Group Study

1. One school of thought (commoner formerly than today) has held that, where lists of names and nothing more appear in scripture, edification can be derived from them by discovering the meaning or etymology of each and then spiritualizing it. Is this a valid form of exposition?
2. Consider those people whose character has been summed up by Paul for all time in one short sentence, appreciative or dismissive. How would he have summed any one of us up?