

STUDIEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT UND SEINER UMWELT (SNTU)

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The Christology of the Pastoral Epistles

In his inaugural lecture to the Chair of Hebrew in the University of Aberdeen Professor W. Johnstone discussed the problem of understanding the OT and suggested that it needed to be tackled not just in terms of its origins but also in terms of its final stages and the finished product; the practical effect of this for him was a particular interest in the work of the Chronicler, coming as it does at the end of the OT period, as well as in the Book of Exodus which describes the beginnings of the nation of Israel.¹ It is arguable that a similar two-pronged approach is needed in tackling the problem of NT theology. The attention of scholars writing books on christology has tended to concentrate on its origins, although study of the developed christology of the NT writers has never been altogether absent. More attention to its latest manifestations so that one can then extrapolate backwards appears to be needed.

We shall attempt here to make a preliminary survey of one of these later areas, the christology of the Pastorals. A survey of the history of scholarship on the topic, which is rather more extensive than one might have expected,² reveals that there is a

¹ W. Johnstone, *Chronicles, Canons and Contexts*, in: *Aberdeen University Review* 50 (1983) 1–16.

² A. Klöpffer, *Zur Christologie der Pastoralbriefe*, in: *ZwTh* 45 (1902) 339–361; W. Windisch, *Zur Christologie der Pastoralbriefe*, in: *ZNW* 34 (1935) 213–238; N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (RNT, 7/2), Regensburg 1969, 161–166; C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, I, Paris 1969, 245–254; St. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastorals*, London 1979, 69–89; R. Schnackenburg, *Christologie des Neuen Testaments*, in: *MySal* III/1 (1970), 227–388, here 355–360; V. Hasler, *Epiphanie und Christologie in den Pastoralbriefen*, in: *TZ* 33 (1977) 193–209; L. Oberlümmer, *Die «Epiphaneia» des Heilswillens Gottes*, in: *ZNW* 71 (1980) 192–213; H. Simonsen, *Christologische Traditionselemente in den Pastoralbriefen*, in: S. Pedersen (ed), *Die Paulinische Literatur und Theologie* (Teologiske Studier, 7), Århus-Göttingen 1980, 51–62; H. Merkel, *Christologische Traditionen in den Pastoralbriefen*, unpublished paper given at the SNTS conference, Canterbury 1983; A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NCB), London 1982, 38–42; P. Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe* (BET, 8), Frankfurt 1978, 193–208; see also the literature on 1 Tim 3,16 especially R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit* (StUNT, 5), Göttingen 1967; R. H. Gundry, *The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in 1 Timothy 3,16*, in: W. W. Gasque - R. P. Martin (ed), *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, Exeter 1970, 203–222; K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (StNT, 7), Gütersloh 1973; W. Metzger, *Der Christushymnus 1. Timotheus 3,16* (AzTh, 62), Stuttgart 1979; W. Stenger, *Der Christushymnus 1 Tim 3,16* (RStTh, 6), Frank-

considerable amount of divergence among scholars regarding the evaluation of the evidence, and also that there does not appear to have been much discussion of the significance of the material for the earlier development of christology. A further area of interest that arises is the significance of the kind of approach taken to christology in the Pastoral Epistles in relation to modern understanding of the faith; here is a further topic that does not seem to have received much attention.

I. Modern study of the problem

We begin accordingly with a brief survey of modern discussions of the problem. We can discern four main types of approach.

1. The traditional approach

First we have the kind of approach which does not recognise the existence of a problem. Scholars who argued for the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals tended to treat their theology as part of the theology of Paul and to spend their efforts in explaining, or perhaps explaining away, any differences that might be detected. This type of approach can be found in the NT theology of D. Guthrie and the Pauline theology of H. Ridderbos.³ The effect of it is that any distinctive contribution of the Pastorals to christology is ignored.

2. The post-Pauline understanding

Scholars who denied the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals tended to make the most of the differences from Paul and to regard the christology as something of a declension from that of Paul, hardly an entity worthy of study for its own sake. H. Windisch identified the general consensus among critical scholars in the 1930s as being that the Pastorals showed a deuteropauline christology in that they picked up the Pauline concepts of pre-existence and exaltation, added to them some Johannine insights, and expressed the result with the aid of new terminology drawn from the imperial cult and the syncretistic epiphany theology of the time. He cited the

furt-Bern 1977; J. Murphy-O'Connor, Redactional Angels in 1 Tim 3,16, in: RB 91 (1984) 178–187.

³ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, Leicester 1981; H. Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of His Theology*, London 1977.

example of E. Barnikol who stressed the living character of the concept of pre-existence in the Pastorals.⁴

3. The pre-Pauline hypothesis

An important attempt to break new ground was offered by Windisch. He argued over against this prevailing opinion that the concept of pre-existence is not to be found in the Pastorals. Instead of it he detected, first, the presence of a *Son of man/Messianic* type of christology which speaks of two stages of existence (2 Tim 2,8; 1 Tim 2,5 [cf. 1 Tim 5,21; 2 Tim 4,1]; 1 Tim 6,11–16). Here Jesus is thoroughly subordinate to God. He is a man who is exalted and placed alongside God.

Second, side by side with these statements there are others in which something more like an *incarnation-christology* is to be found. The texts in question are 1 Tim 1,15; 3,16 and Tit 2,13f. They speak of the «coming» of Christ and his manifestation in the flesh, but there is no reference to pre-existence. The vocabulary of epiphany is used in this connection, but only in 2 Tim 1,9f does Windisch find it used specifically of the historical appearing of Christ, and the emphasis there is on the resurrection rather than the incarnation. In fact the epiphany really takes place in the proclamation of the gospel. When we hear of the appearance of our great God in Tit 2,13 the reference, according to Windisch, is to God the Father and not to Christ. Thus it is only with considerable qualification that we can speak of an epiphany-christology in the Pastorals.

It emerges, then, that Christ is never spoken of as divine, and Windisch notes that the phrase Son of God is not used. When Jesus is called Saviour, this occurs in the context of epiphany-theology and here (and here only) we can observe a taking-over of Hellenistic language. Only in the use of *κύριος* do the Pastorals stand near Paul.

Finally, Windisch asks whether a similar christology can be found elsewhere in the NT. In addition to the Synoptic Gospels, he examines Acts and 1 Peter and finds similar thinking, and he also detects it behind the Apostles' Creed. These writings do not develop wisdom, logos and incarnation christologies.

From all this Windisch concludes that the christology of the Pastorals is basically *pre-Pauline* and draws little from Paul. It is a combination of some Pauline and

⁴ E. Barnikol, *Mensch und Messias*, Kiel 1932, as summarised by Windisch, *Christologie*, 213f.

synoptic/early Christian motifs, with a notable absence of some central Pauline christological concepts. The post-Pauline element lies in the use of the epiphany and saviour terminology. There is no indication that the author is developing his views over against a false, Gnostic christology. He is *not a systematic theologian* but a purveyor of tradition. The christology of the Pastorals thus forms an important part of the argument against Pauline authorship, since it represents a throwback to an earlier period.

Windisch's position was broadly accepted by subsequent writers who do not add a great deal to what he said. Here I am thinking of the comments offered by C. Spicq, N. Brox, R. Schnackenburg, P. Trummer and S. Wilson.⁵

Let it suffice to mention only two of the most recent contributions. A. T. Hanson holds that the author has no christology of his own but makes use of whatever

⁵ Thus, for example, the brief remarks of *Spicq* in his commentary do not take us much further. He accepts much of what Windisch says, but finds no incompatibility with Pauline authorship. With his sharp eye for Hellenistic influence he argues for deliberate polemic against the imperial cult.

Probably the most influential modern commentary is that of *Brox*, which is a detailed examination from the Roman Catholic side of the consequences of taking seriously the pseudonymous, late character of the Pastorals. He follows Windisch, but rightly argues against his attempt to find subordinationism in the Pastorals. Brox appears to be ready to assert that an «exaltation» christology expressed in «epiphany» sayings is dominant. However, the key feature remains the archaic character of the christology, but there is a possibility that pre-existence is expressed; Brox discusses 2 Tim 1,9f in this connection and concludes that pre-existence is part of the thought. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression which the Pastorals make on him is of an archaic christology which had already been superseded in other parts of the church.

Schnackenburg agrees with the substance of Windisch's position, although he insists that there was no conscious combination of two separate traditions. He notes the increasing theocentricity of the Pastorals, but argues against the presence of a subordinationist christology. He claims that if the writer sees Christ as the epiphany of God, then inevitably he takes on divine characteristics and even the name of God (Tit 2,13). While the fact of the cross is not denied, the accent seems to lie on the glory of the figure of Christ as the representative of the majestic and glorious God.

Trummer is particularly concerned to trace the use of Pauline traditions in the Pastorals. He suggests that what we have is largely a «title-christology», and he follows Windisch in stressing the presence of pre-Pauline elements, but he argues that there is no deliberate attempt to get behind Paul.

Wilson's monograph is expressly concerned to find common ground between Acts and the Pastorals. He finds a «hotchpotch of evidence» which suggests that the author is not a systematic theologian with a clear picture. A number of concepts stand in tension with one another. Like Acts the Pastorals basically have an exaltation christology with some possible allusions to pre-existence, and much use is made of traditional materials of various kinds.

comes to him in his sources. There is thus no consistent doctrine to be found. The author does not go back behind Paul but simply picks up titles and uses them; the use of saviour is borrowed from the imperial cult. The author is a binitarian and is in danger of becoming a ditheist. He has no doctrine of the cross.

Finally, H. Merkel makes a fresh examination of the christological texts which appear to incorporate traditional materials, and concludes that their sources lie partly in a Greek-speaking Jewish-Christian church, and partly in Pauline Christianity. The texts have a certain unity in that they show no indication of pre-existence. Nevertheless, the author has taken over a large number of terms from Hellenistic religion and has used these to interpret the salvation event. The author has thus tried to use modern expressions to interpret the content of the old formulae. He is modern in expression, but conservative in content.

4. The theory of an «epiphany» christology

The contribution by Merkel which we have just summarised is distinguishable from that of the other scholars who follow Windisch in that it pays some attention to another approach which has been most fully developed by V. Hasler. Previous scholars had, of course, been struck by the use of the concept of epiphany in the Pastorals, but Hasler appears to be the first to see in it the key to the author's christology. He claims that the author lays aside salvation-historical or apocalyptic ways of thinking and offers a new presentation of christology in the language and, more importantly, in the thought-forms of the Hellenistic world. Traditional statements are translated into this new set of categories which are associated with the concept of epiphany.

The starting point is the transcendence of God, who is described as the only and the invisible God, the great Creator. He is the source of eternal life and his will is to bestow it on mankind. His gracious will to this end is manifested in Christ who will at a future time appear as the manifestation of the grace of God. He will bestow eternal life on those who, thanks to the grace already revealed in him, have persevered in the faith and in good works, and consequently qualify for it. The hope of salvation is not guaranteed, therefore, by belonging to the church or by being baptised but only by the Holy Spirit who enables believers to do good works that will please the judge. Thus the doctrine of Christ is swallowed up in the doctrine of God. Even the cross has no saving significance of its own but is simply the evidence of the saving will of God. Traditional phraseology loses its original meaning and is made to serve this new conception. The witness of the church now functions as the evidence of eternal life in the future. The practice of Christian virtues will provide the members of the

church with integrity at the last judgment; in this way they can be said to be justified by grace. There is thus a unified development of a new christology in the Pastorals.

Similarly, L. Oberlinner asks whether there is a unified christological conception in the Pastorals, and he answers the question positively. The framework is provided by the Hellenistic categories of Saviour and epiphany; into this framework are integrated traditional sayings as well as Pauline material, and the whole has an anti-Gnostic tendency. Oberlinner corrects the picture given by Hasler by insisting that the epiphany of Jesus Christ makes the present time the time of salvation.

From this survey of the four main types of approach taken in modern scholarship we can see that numerous questions arise, not all of which can be addressed in this paper. It may be helpful, however, to list some of these problems at the outset.

1. How far does the author of the Pastorals actually have a christology of his own? Does he simply reproduce a mish-mash of traditions and catchphrases taken from a variety of sources? How important is christology for his thinking in the letters as a whole?
2. How can the nature of his christology best be summed up? Is it indeed a «title» christology, as P. Trummer claims?
3. What elements does he take over from early, non-specifically-Pauline sources, and in what ways, if any, does he modify and use them?
4. To what extent does he take over Pauline christological concepts?
5. How far does he make use of «new» Hellenistic concepts, and in what ways?
6. What kind of christology emerges from this analysis? Is it a christology of exaltation, incarnation, pre-existence, epiphany, or some combination of these, or what?
7. Do the Pastorals thus shed any light on the early development of christology?
8. Can we say anything about the way in which the author uses christology in his situation? Does he think in new ways or does he call his readers back to the faith once-and-for-all delivered to the saints?
9. What are the implications of what we have discovered for formulating a New Testament christology? Have we, for example, uncovered fresh diversity in the NT?
10. Does the author's method have anything to say to us about how we should «do theology» today?

II. The place of Christology in the Pastorals

First, let me make some general remarks on the character and place of christology in the Pastorals.

1. It has been argued particularly by Hanson⁶ that the Pastorals contain a rather haphazard and inconsistent collection of materials drawn from a variety of sources and put together in a somewhat untidy manner. This view fails to do justice to *the very clear signs of a definite literary structure* that can be found in all three letters, and especially in 1 Tim and Tit. It is true that the author can be obscure and ambiguous on occasion, and that there are places where his line of thought is anything but straight; nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence of a definite structure in the letters, and this suggests that he has thought out carefully what he wants to say. We should, therefore, expect to find that he has a reasonably coherent christology, just as he has decided opinions on other matters. Here therefore at the outset I have problems with the statement of Windisch: «[The author] has no theological christology, but only teaching about Christ in the form of statements, formulas, and hymns which spring from various circles of teaching and teaching material»,⁷ to which Hanson has given his approval.

2. This point is further demonstrated by *the careful way in which theology and ethical and ecclesiastical teaching are tied in together* in the letters. In his Aberdeen thesis P. Towner demonstrates convincingly to my mind that the theological statements are related to their contexts and serve as the basis or motivation for the ethical teaching which is so prominent in the letters.⁸ The author is not simply sprinkling christological statements indiscriminately throughout his letters as from a salt cellar, but he is making the effort to root his practical teaching in theology. We shall expect, therefore, that he has indeed made his doctrine his own.

3. This point may be further confirmed by the way in which *the language and style of the theological statements is the author's own*. Attempts to separate off tradition from redaction on linguistic and stylistic grounds are not in my opinion successful. Even the so-called «personal notes», where the author stands closest to Paul (whatever may be the relationship) are couched in the same vocabulary and style as the rest of the letters.⁹ The same is true of the theological statements which he makes.

Our provisional conclusion, then, is that there are grounds for believing that *the christology of the Pastorals is the author's own*, and that he has thought it out with some care so that it forms an integral part of the teaching which he wants to give.

⁶ Hanson, *Epistles*, 38f.

⁷ Windisch, *Christologie*, 213f, as translated by Hanson, *Epistles*, 38.

⁸ P. Towner, *The Structure of the Theology and the Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (Unpublished Ph.D thesis), Aberdeen 1984.

⁹ D. Cook, *The Pastoral Fragments Reconsidered*, in: *JThS* 35 (1984) 120–131.

III. *The use of tradition and new concepts*

Next, we must attempt to characterise the christology of the Pastorals, and it will be helpful to do so by examining the kinds of material which the Pastor uses.

1. The use of early traditions

The author's use of traditional material can be demonstrated beyond any doubt from three texts.

a) In *1 Tim 1,15* the author declares that «Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners». This language quite clearly echoes Lk 19,10, «The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost», and the phrase about coming «into the world» may suggest some Johannine influence. But in any case we have a text which appears to be based on synoptic material.¹⁰

b) In *1 Tim 2,6* we read that Christ Jesus is «the one who gave himself as a ransom for all». The similarity of this text to Mk 10,45 is obvious, and the case that it is in fact based on this saying seems to me to be fully proved. Nevertheless, we should take note of the possibility argued by Merkel that v. 5 was already joined to v. 6 before being taken over by the author, and that the linking of the ransom saying with the «one God and one mediator» formula took place in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity.

c) In *Tit 2,14* we read that Jesus Christ «gave himself for us that he might ransom us from all iniquity». Here again we have a clear echo of Mk 10,45, but again there is the possibility that the text had been extended before being used by the author of the Pastorals.

1.1 It is interesting that these traditions are not derived from Pauline material but rather from *synoptic sayings material* which is not directly echoed in Paul. Thus we are genuinely dealing with specific early church traditions which were not used by Paul, at least so far as an argument from silence can prove anything. When Paul develops the «ransom»-theme, he does so in a somewhat different manner (Rom 3,24). Naturally, this does not prove that the traditions used by the Pastorals are older than Paul but merely that he does not use them — or at least these two specific logia in his earlier letters. However, I believe that it is possible to show that in terms

¹⁰ It is true that some would ascribe the saying to Lucan creation, but this seems unlikely to me, and the point is well defended by *Merkel*, Traditionen.

of tradition history the concept of redemption reflected in Mk 10,45 is the earliest form known to us and that a direct line can be drawn from it to the texts in the Pastorals.¹¹ It may also be significant that the material comes from the Mk and L traditions, and that elsewhere (1 Tim 5,18) he also uses a Q tradition in its Lucan form (Lk 10,7; cf. Mt 10,10, cited in its Matthaean form in Did 13,1f). To this extent, then, the argument of Windisch is corroborated.

1.2 It is also significant that the author feels himself *to be tied at this point, as at others, to the traditions which he has inherited*, and to which he continually calls Tim and Tit to adhere in their personal faith and in their teaching. The author is a professed preserver of tradition, and he regards tradition as setting the norms, both doctrinal and practical, for the church of his own day.

2. The non-use of Pauline material

I want now to confirm this point by asking to what extent the writer uses Pauline materials in his christology. Scholars have drawn attention to two possible instances, a creedal-type statement and a formula, to which must be added an argument from silence.

2.1 First there is the link between 2 Tim 2,8 and Rom 1,3f where we have similar creedal-type statements. Trummer and Oberlinner argue that 2 Tim is dependent on Rom 1,3f here. Trummer holds that the author is dependent on Rom in 2 Tim 1,3–5 (cf. Rom 1,8–11), and that «according to my gospel» in 2 Tim 2,8 comes from Rom 2,16. These parallels strengthen the case that the Pastor is dependent on Rom in 2 Tim 2,8. But in fact the actual formulations are not all that close:

2 Tim 2,8: ... Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐγγεγενημένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ...

Rom 1,3f: ... τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ κατα σάρκα, τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγίωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

It is clear that the texts may well be related in that there are three structural elements in common: a) the name Jesus Christ; b) reference to his resurrection; and c) the reference to his being of the seed of David. However, there the likeness ends.

1. There is verbal agreement only in the first and third of these elements to any extent. The wording of the second element is so different that dependence on Rom is not obvious, and it is not so likely that the simpler form in 2 Tim is derived from the fuller form in Rom.

2. Further, the purpose of the formulae is different. In Rom the purpose is to define the character of the Son who is the content of the Gospel and the emphasis lies on the divine sonship associated with the resurrection. In 2 Tim the emphasis is again on the resurrection, but this time on its association with the power and victory of the gospel, so that those who suffer for the gospel's sake will share in Christ's resurrection and reign.

3. The reference to «the seed of David» is apparently unnecessary and its position is extraordinary. Trummer sees in it a reference to the human origin of Jesus. The thought is almost «Remember that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, although he was just a man descended from David». But this will not do, for Son of David must be a title of some dignity, and for Christians by this time surely it was precisely because Jesus was the Messiah, that therefore he must rise from the dead (Lk 24,46). So this argument doesn't really work. The line of thought must be rather: «Remember that Jesus rose from the dead and that he is the Messiah — who is going to reign — therefore we share his resurrection and his reign». (The allusion to his messiahship is necessary because the name «Christ» has by this time become so empty of significance). Then the order fits that of 2 Tim 2,11f, and we can see why, if it is traditional, it has been reversed.¹¹

4. The participle ἐγγεγεμμένος is not found elsewhere in this connection, but Paul uses the perf. indic. in 1 Cor 15,4.12.13.14.16.17.20. It seems probable that the use here is based on tradition, related to 1 Cor 15,4. The word is not used in Rom 1,3f. I suspect that in 2 Tim it is a dim recollection of the formula. The phrase ἐκ [ἀπὸ] σπέρματος is found in Rom 11,1 (I am an Israelite, [descended from / belonging to] the seed of Abraham), and is applied to Jesus in Jn 7,42 (Does not the Scripture say that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from Bethlehem?); Acts 13,23 (From this man's seed God brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus); and Rom 1,3 (who came into existence/ was born from the seed of David). (The participle «descended» can be supplied in 2 Tim. Jesus is descended from David; he is the descendant *par excellence*, namely the Messiah). Again, it can be argued that we have a traditional formulation, not necessarily based on Rom 1,3f. Thus the language does not support dependence.

5. What is the force of «according to my gospel»? The verse has an interesting parallel with what Luke presents as a summary of Paul's preaching in Acts 17,3: The Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead, and Jesus is the Messiah; here we have

¹¹ V. Hasler's comments in his commentary, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (ZBK NT, 12), Zürich 1978, 64f suggest that Messiahship is of no significance to the Pastor; this is improbable.

the same two elements and in the same order. So it is Paul's gospel that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Messiah must rise from the dead (or that since the Messiah must suffer and rise, [and since Jesus suffered and rose] therefore he is the Messiah). The phrase «according to my gospel» thus designates material known to be characteristic of Paul, but nothing shows that the material is derived from Rom 1,3f. We may conclude that the Pastor was using traditional phrases or perhaps a traditional formula which was known to Paul rather than that he was dependent on Rom for it.

2.2 The other Pauline tradition is the *in Christ formula*. It occurs 9x in the Past but always (except 2 Tim 3,12) with nouns, a usage which is to be found in Paul (Rom 3,24; 8,39; 1 Cor 4,17; Gal 1,22). The significance of the formula is that it appears to stamp the present time as the time of salvation and to indicate that the effects of the saving event, the death and resurrection of Christ, continue to be operative. Thus the formula puts a christological stamp on the gift of salvation and the Christian qualities which must be found in believers. The phrase is certainly Pauline and is broadly significant for christology but does not take us very far. It shows that the theology of the Past belongs at least to the Pauline tradition, but it must be remembered that the same usage is also found in 1 Pet. The developed Pauline use is not to be seen, and this weakens the case for a strong Pauline influence on christology.

2.3 As has been observed by several scholars, the term «*Son of God*» does not appear in the Past, although there may be other reasons for its absence. This argument from silence confirms the point which I am making.

I conclude that the Pastor is not making use of the Pauline epistles in his christology, although he does use traditions which were also used by Paul and he can be said himself to stand close to Paul in his general outlook.

3. The use of Hellenistic language and concepts

If we may revert for a moment to the traditional material which we have already discussed, it is noteworthy that in each case the wording of the text appears in a more Hellenistic and a more universal form than in the synoptic material. This confirms, on the one hand, the relative age of the synoptic texts. It also shows, on the other hand, that the author of the Past uses material in a Hellenised form. It is difficult to be certain whether the Hellenisation of the material is his own work or whether he took over the texts in this form, but the way in which the saying attested in Mk 10,45

is woven into his argument in Tit 2 rather than merely cited, as in 1 Tim 2,6, suggests that the wording is at least in part his own.

The fact that the author expresses himself in a more Hellenistic and less Semitic manner might, of course, be merely the result of his rewriting his materials in better Greek, such as anybody might do in a Greek-speaking milieu, but, for what it is worth, it does seem to be indicative of a trend in his thinking to express the message in terms that were more comprehensible to his readers. Here we have a strong hint that the author does not merely repeat traditions but attempts to reformulate them in new ways and to show some creativity in his theology.

We must now consider the other evidence of Hellenisation in his theology. Oberlinner in particular has drawn attention to the two elements which are significant in this regard.

3.1 The first is the use of σωτήρ which the author applies to God 6x and to Christ 4x. It is significant that the term is used right at the outset of 1 Tim (1,1) and of Tit (1,3f) in such a way that the character of God as Saviour is established as the basis of all that follows. The term tends to appear in the later strata of the NT — Lk 1,47; 2,11; Jn 4,42; Acts 5,31; 13,23; 1 Jn 4,14 and Jude 25 — but it would be wrong to assume that all these texts are necessarily late. It also appears quite firmly in Paul (Phil 3,20; also Eph 5,23). Given that the vocabulary of saving and salvation was in use from an early date and was prepared for by the usage of Jesus himself, it can only have been a matter of time until the noun «Saviour» came into use to designate the one who saves.¹² In view of the OT and Jewish background to the use of the term one cannot say that its presence is necessarily a sign of Hellenisation. For example, the description of God as Saviour by Mary in Lk 1,47 can be fully accounted for in terms of the use of OT terminology in a set of hymns which are soaked in the OT, and similarly the language in Acts 13,23, where «Saviour» is applied to Jesus is very obviously an echo of Jdg 3,9.15. Nevertheless, one would have to ask whether the way in which the Pastorals use the term and the company which it keeps point in any way to Hellenisation, and the answer to this question is provided by consideration of the second term.¹³

3.2 We come secondly, therefore, to the word ἐπιφανεῖα which refers to the manifestation or appearance of a god in this world, usually to help his people in time

¹² Similarly, Jesus is said to redeem long before the title «Redeemer» is applied to him.

¹³ So *Oberlinner*, *Epiphaneia*, 198.

of need. This noun and the associated verb appear in 1 Tim 6,14; 2 Tim 1,10; 4,1.8; Tit 2,11.13; 3,4; and elsewhere in the NT only in 2 Thes 2,8; Lk 1,79 (cf. Acts 27,20 of the stars; and the adj. in Acts 2,20 = Joel 2,31 LXX). The background of the noun is said to be found not in the LXX but in the Hellenistic world. This is probably an overstatement. The corresponding verb is in fact already at home in the LXX where it translates a variety of Hebrew terms, and the noun appears in 2 and 3 Macc. Similar ideas appear in Jewish apocalyptic. Nevertheless, there is a good case that here a term expressive of Hellenistic religion makes its appearance, and that the author has picked it up because it would speak to his readers.

Granted, then, that the language is Hellenistic, is the Hellenistic concept of epiphany here pressed into Christian service, and is it the controlling factor in the christology of the Pastorals, as Hasler argues? The case seems to me to be a good one, even if Hasler does not always get the significance correctly. In Tit we find that the grace of God has appeared already, teaching us to live in an appropriate way in this world as we await the future manifestation of the glory of God and Christ. God's kindness and goodness were revealed when he saved us by baptism and the gift of the Spirit so that we might be justified and become heirs of eternal life. Although the term *ἐπιφανεῖα* is not used in 1 Tim until 6,14, where it might appear to be no more than a synonym for *παρουσία*, the Hellenistic sense is present, as appears from the accompanying mention of God in his transcendence as the One who will reveal Christ, and we note that the same concept of God which is part of this scheme already appears in 1 Tim 1,17.

IV. The character of the «epiphany» christology

If our case so far is sound, then we have a new use of epiphany language to convey the essence of the gospel. Does this mean that the nature and content of the message have undergone subtle shifts? Has the «translation» into Hellenistic language changed the character of the gospel?

1. The present/future tension

Although at first sight one might gain the impression that salvation is purely a future possession which we gain as a result of the good works which we do in the power of grace, nevertheless the Past teach that God has saved us; the past tense in Tit 3,5 should be given its full value. It is supported by 2 Tim 1,9. It would also be

odd to take 1 Tim 1,15 in any other sense. The word-order in 1 Tim 2,5 points in the same direction. Of course a future sense is present in 1 Tim 4,16 and also in 2,15, and in 2 Tim 4,18, as well as in 2 Tim 2,10. But the future use is not uncommon in the NT and the combination of past and future reflects the already/not yet tension characteristic of NT teaching in general. The point is that there is no reason to weaken the past statements. The time of salvation is already present.

A similar tension can be seen in the concept of life or eternal life. It is clearly both present and future in 1 Tim 4,8. But in 6,19, and hence in 6,12 the reference could be future. Furthermore, some kind of saving effect must be assigned to baptism and regeneration. The gift of the Spirit is already possessed by believers and by those called to be ministers of the gospel. The effect of Christ's death was to ransom us from iniquity and to purify a special people for himself. Here the church already exists. The Lord knows who are his.

It thus becomes apparent that the decisive factor is the epiphany of God's grace in the past rather than in the future, and in this way the structure of thought is similar to that of the NT generally.¹⁴

2. The problem of subordinationism

The effect of epiphany thinking is to stress that the appearance of Christ is a manifestation of God or of his gracious qualities. Thus Christ is seen as reflecting God and is understood in relation to God who thus occupies the central position. This may be seen in his designation as Saviour, so that he is as much, if not more, the Saviour than Jesus is. But the close relation of Jesus to God in salvation is nothing new, and it is false to say with Hasler that soterio-logy is swallowed up in theology.¹⁵ Paul makes the same point by emphasising that Jesus is God's Son when he wants to emphasise how much God himself was involved in salvation.

3. The character of God

Granted that there is a stress on the majesty and transcendence of God, which incidentally is not all that far removed from the kind of description found in Rom

¹⁴ P. Towner, *The Present Age in the Eschatology of the Pastoral Epistles*, in: NTS 32 (1986) 427–448 claims that Oberlinner in effect does away with the future dimension. This is perhaps too harsh a judgment.

¹⁵ V. Hasler, *Epiphanie und Christologie in den Pastoralbriefen*, in: TZ 33 (1977) 193–209, here 202.

11,33—36, the question arises whether the concept of God is entirely that of a remote and almost impersonal deity. It has been observed that the thought of God as Father is found only in the heavily traditional material of the epistolary greetings and nowhere else. However, it may be suggested that the use of Saviour with reference to God is a Hellenistic equivalent to the concept of God as Father in other Christian texts, especially those with a more strongly Semitic background. The language of the Pastorals suggest that there is a replacement of the one idea by the other.

4. Incarnation and preexistence

The major question that arises, however, is the relation of this «epiphany» christology to the more traditional «incarnation» christology. Here I am assuming, *pace* J. D. G. Dunn, that the concept of incarnation is earlier than the Gospel of John and is present in the acknowledged Pauline writings.¹⁶ Now parallel with the disappearance of the Father concept in the Pastorals is the disappearance of the Son concept in relation to Jesus, and the absence of the latter should not now surprise us. Instead we have: a) the common use of Saviour which ties Jesus closely to God, and b) the use of the epiphany concept. But the epiphany concept is not far removed from the thought of Christ as the image or reflection of the glory of God. Further, the concept of «once hidden but now revealed» is a common formula; it is used of the saving plan of God, the mystery of his purpose (cf. 1 Jn 1,2). Do we then have a concept here equivalent to that of incarnation? Let us now look at the material from this point of view.

It is true that in Tit 2,11 and 3,4 it is the grace of God which appears, and it appears to be the whole saving event inaugurated by the coming of Jesus and continuing in the witness of the church to individuals which is meant. However, other texts suggest that this grace of God is regarded in concrete, personal terms.

Thus in 2 Tim 1,9f God's purpose and grace were given to us in Christ before eternal ages, but have been revealed now through the epiphany of our Saviour Jesus who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The apparent implication here is that the Christ who existed before all ages and in whom God's grace was given to us has now been made manifest in the world and through this manifestation grace is revealed. This would appear to indicate preexistence, that Christ is not simply the historical person in and through whom God has chosen to display his grace but rather he has come into the world to save.

¹⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, London 1980.

Seen in this context 1 Tim 1,15 should be given its full weight; «Christ Jesus came into the world» cannot well be understood in any other way than as the language of incarnation. Similarly, 1 Tim 3,16 points in the same direction: the One who was revealed in flesh had previously been hidden.

That is to say, epiphany means the appearance of the previously hidden divine figure who already existed rather than that some characteristic of God, namely his grace, is manifested in Jesus. Thus the logic of the thinking points to preexistence, now expressed in terms of epiphany, and the language of in-carn-ation fits in with this, and it is in fact used in 1 Tim 3,16 (the only use of *σάρξ* in the Past).

However, we must take into account Dunn's brief but important treatment.¹⁷ On 1 Tim 3,16 he comments that the contrast in lines 1 and 2 «is between pre-Easter earthly existence and the Easter exaltation to heaven. As in the parallel formulae in Rom 1,3f and 2 Tim 2,8, there is no indication that the thought was intended to include a third stage of existence prior to appearance on earth. So *φανεροῦσθαι* may well be used here simply in the sense of 'appear', without any particular intention of implying a previous (pre-existent) hiddenness . . . perhaps the thought is once again simply of the appearance of Christ as the unveiling of the divine mystery as in Colossians and Ephesians».¹⁸ With regard to 2 Tim 1,9f he comments «that it is the grace which was previously hidden and is now revealed; it 'was given us ages ago', given us 'in Christ Jesus' (as in Eph 1), but that must mean that the gift was *purposed* 'ages ago', unless we are to take it that the actual giving and receiving, 'us' and 'Christ Jesus' were all alike pre-existent. In other words, we still seem at this point to be in the circle of thought which understands Christ as the manifestation of the pre-determined grace of God (rather than as the manifestation of the pre-existent Christ)».¹⁹ And he takes 1 Tim 1,15 in the same way by arguing that «came into the world» in 1 Tim 1,15 can be used of ordinary men in Rabbinic usage.

Dunn admittedly does not get beyond saying that there may be no implication of pre-existence rather than claiming to prove that it is excluded. His point about 1 Tim 1,15 is not conclusive. Rabbinic usage may be relevant in Jn 1,9, but is less likely to be determinative here. His discussion of 2 Tim 1,9f demands closer attention. It could be replied that «us» in 2 Tim 1,9 is indeterminate, and that it refers to «the church» which was certainly in God's mind in his pre-mundane planning of salvation. The thought of a pre-mundane choice of God's people is clearly attested in Eph

¹⁷ Dunn, *Christology*, 237–239.

¹⁸ Dunn, *Christology*, 237.

¹⁹ Dunn, *Christology*, 238.

1,4, and it is probably present in 1 Cor 2,7 which indicates that God had planned in the past what he would do for his people in due time. Can we distinguish between the intended recipients of salvation in God's mind and the agent through whom he made and laid his plans? Or should we translate «which he graciously purposed before eternal ages to give us in Christ and which he has now revealed . . .»? We must conclude that, however we take the sentence, the writer's expression is untidy and therefore should not be pressed too hard. There is an imprecision, and the question is whether it points to an understanding of pre-existence which has not been happily wedded to other ideas or whether it points in a different direction.

We have not yet looked at 1 Tim 2,5. As Merkel notes, it is related to 1 Cor 8,6, «For us there is one God the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ». In this text the Father and Christ are placed alongside each other and over against mankind. But in 1 Tim «there is one God, [and] there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus». In context the writer is stressing that there is one God who is the Saviour and who wants all men to be saved, and there is one mediator, who gave himself for all mankind. It is thus the universality of the offer of salvation which is at issue. To emphasise this the writer uses formulaic language referring to the One God. But why does he talk of the oneness or uniqueness of God? And why does he stress the One mediator? Does he want to say, just as we [all] believe in one God, so of course there is only one mediator and not a plurality, and he is a man? This would then be polemical against any who suggested a plurality of mediators, such as Moses or angels (Judaism rather than Gnosticism), and the reference to a man may suggest that others thought of angelic mediators.²⁰ Why then is man stressed rather than, say, Son of God? H. Simonsen suggests that the word «man» is an echo of «son of man» in Mk 10,45.²¹ But, whatever the origin of the phrase, it seems probable that the writer wants to stress that Jesus died on behalf of mankind. Here he is tied by his traditional soteriology. This is important, for it shows that the epiphany christology is held alongside the view that the death of a man is necessary for our salvation, and not just the appearance of a divine figure. Had this thought not been important, there was no need for the writer to include it. Thus his epiphany christology is in no way docetic; he means a real manifestation of the Saviour in human form.²²

²⁰ Hence the need for «he appeared to angels»; cf. also 5,21 where God and Christ appear before «the elect angels» as the upholders of what is right; it does look as though angels play some part in the thought of the readers, and the author puts them in their place.

²¹ *Simonsen*, Traditionselemente, 58.

²² He may also be suggesting that the Saviour is indeed divine.

1 Tim 3,16 is the most obscure verse in the Past. The writer is not concerned with chronological order, although he refers to the beginning and the end of the epiphany. But it seems to me impossible to understand it in any other way than as a description of incarnation. The subject is Jesus or Jesus Christ, not God or an attribute of God, and it is said of Jesus Christ that he was revealed or appeared in flesh, in a human body. This is surely to be understood in the same way as Phil 2,6f of the manifestation of a being who is superhuman in a human form.

1 Tim 6,13f speaks of Jesus Christ who gave witness in a good confession before Pontius Pilate. He will appear at the right time. Merkel sees here an expression of a two-existence christology, the earthly and the heavenly modes of existence of Jesus, and argues that there is not an antidocetic emphasis. I find this most improbable. The writer is simply trying to say to Timothy: See that you fight the good fight, just like Jesus did, and you will receive your reward at the epiphany when Jesus appears in glory. He thinks of Jesus as exalted to be the judge, and so he can command Timothy as though he were standing in the presence of God and of Jesus — as one day he will stand. There is no suggestion that two modes of existence are in mind here. Rather the thought is that the one who is judge is the one who successfully bore his witness himself. The stress lies on the exalted position of Jesus and on his faithful witness. Presumably the writer would agree that it is important that Jesus bore it as a man.

As for 2 Tim 2,8 we have already shown that it is not an expression of a two-stage christology.

Finally, there is Tit 2,11–14. The Pastor looks forward to a future epiphany of the glory of either a) «the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ», or b) «our great God and saviour Jesus Christ».²³

When the arguments for these two interpretations are weighed, there seems to be a clear balance in favour of seeing a reference to Jesus as God. If this is the correct interpretation, it reinforces the view that what we have is not an epiphany of a quality of God but of one who is identified in some way with God. This placing of Jesus alongside God should not surprise us when we now bring in some other evidence:

1. Jesus holds the status of lord, in virtue of which he is to be the judge, so that what is normally the prerogative of God is assigned to him (2 Tim 4,8).

²³ See *M. J. Harris*, Titus 2,13 and the deity of Christ, in: *D. A. Hagner - M. J. Harris* (ed), *Pauline Studies* (= *Fs. F. F. Bruce*), Exeter 1980, 262–277.

2. Jesus is placed alongside God, just as he is in other NT writings. Examples of such pairing are to be seen in 1 Tim 1,1.2; 5,21; 6,13; 2 Tim 4,1; Tit 1,1; 2,13 (or Jesus as God).
3. God and Jesus are both described as Saviour. In addition to the use of the noun see also 1 Tim 1,15 (Jesus); 2 Tim 1,9 (God); and 2 Tim 4,18 (Jesus) for the use of the verb of both figures.
4. The writer can give thanks for spiritual blessings to God (2 Tim 1,3) and to Jesus (1 Tim 1,12). God and Jesus stand together as the sources of spiritual blessings (1 Tim 1,14; 2 Tim 1,6.18).
5. Both God and Jesus are the objects of the writer's service (God: 2 Tim 1,3; 2,15; Tit 1,7; Jesus: 2 Tim 2,3 [cf. 1 Tim 5,11 — Jesus]; 2 Tim 2,24).

The evidence thus shows that for the writer Jesus can (probably) be called God and that he has the position and functions of God. He is of course second to God and is the epiphany of his grace, glory and judgment. The high position accorded to him is consonant with the understanding that he is a divine figure who has appeared in this world to be the epiphany of the unseen God. I would claim, therefore, that the author has an epiphany-christology which is equivalent to an incarnation christology.

A possible objection is that this makes him a ditheist or binitarian or something of the kind. This does not seem to me to be a valid objection, since the position assigned to Jesus alongside the Father in 1 Cor 8,6 and elsewhere demonstrates that this was the common early Christian understanding. Somehow the early Christians had to find language which indicated that they placed Jesus as close to God the Father as possible, sharing his nature, functions and status.

Is this christology the Pastor's own creation, or has he taken it over? This depends upon whether the epiphany texts reflect traditional material or are the author's own work. My impression is that he is using epiphany-language already current in the church but using it in his own way so that it is equivalent to the incarnation language which is perceptible in the more traditional formulations which he also picks up and uses.

V. The hermeneutical implications

1. We can now sum up what we have discovered:

a) The author uses traditional material which is of a pre-Pauline character but which is still alive in the church. He takes it over deliberately, and he is in some ways tied to it, although he uses it in a more creative manner than is generally recognised.

b) He also uses a Hellenistic epiphany scheme into which he has fitted his traditional material. The essential feature of this is to speak in terms of the saving manifestation of God's grace concretely in Jesus which has already taken place and which will be repeated when Jesus comes as Judge and Saviour at the end of the world.

c) The resulting christology expresses in terms of epiphany what is expressed in Paul and in John in terms of incarnation, although the writer does not appear to be significantly indebted to either for his christology. As a result of his new expression, he can (probably) refer to Christ as God, while fully recognising that Christ is not God the Father.

All this suggests to me that the Pastor has accomplished a translation of christological terms and concepts into a Hellenistic milieu in which the essential teaching of the older material has been retained. He himself is probably responsible for the creative union of it with other traditional language to produce a fresh statement of christology. It thus emerges that the Pastor is more of a theologian than he is often given credit for being.

2. The significant hermeneutical points which emerge are:

a) It is possible to take up an new vocabulary and conceptuality and use them to express existing older ideas. The problems with such an approach are always that (a). significant assertions in the older idiom are downplayed or ignored, and (b). that fresh assertions are made in the new idiom that may go beyond what was said in the old. There are the two possibilities that the Hellenistic language is christianised, or that the gospel is paganised. Thus, when we attempt similar exercises today, we must ask whether the same thing is really being said, or something different.

b) The existence of different modes of expression raises the question whether we have a set of mutually inconsistent conceptions in the NT, such that there is no clear teaching. Have we genuine, organic development or are we on a dangerous bypath?

It will be clear that, as I see the position, here we have the use of new terms coupled with traditional formulae to express ideas that are equivalent to the traditional ones.

c) So we must ask, finally, whether there is a pattern here for modern christology. Merkel distinguishes between saying the old things in new ways and saying new things, and one suspects that he does not regard the Pastor as being sufficiently radical. But is the Pastor not our guide here? Is he not saying that the traditions must be preserved, but they can be expressed in new ways? The Pastor reminds us that doctrine is «fixed» by the early traditions of the church, and he is not slow to make use of them and to warn us that we must be careful how we go beyond them. But at the same time his own example encourages us not to be afraid to find new ways of expressing the old truths that will speak to the modern world.