

22.17

Genre of the Pastoral Letters

What sort of letters are these? New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson has challenged traditional notions.

1 Timothy and Titus

These two letters often have been viewed as representing a literary form in between that of a traditional personal letter and a more formal handbook on church order (such as the *Didache*, which appeared around the end of the first century). Johnson suggests, rather, that their form is adapted from a type of royal correspondence called *mandata principis*—a public document from a ruler to an appointed official spelling out the office’s responsibilities and authorizing the occupant to fulfill them.

2 Timothy

This letter often has been thought to embody the popular format of a “last testament” or “farewell speech,” in which inspiring words, along with various exhortations and warnings, were pseudonymously attributed to some revered figure from the past (see Gen. 49; Deut. 33; Josh. 23–24; 2 Sam. 23:1–7; 1 Chron. 28–29; John 14–17; Acts 20:17–38). Johnson suggests that 2 Timothy has the form of a “personal parenetic letter,” an actual letter that seeks to exhort the

recipient by pointing out good and bad examples of what is to be commended.

See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB 35A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 137–42, 320–24.