



The Letter of Paul to

Titus

AS WITH 1 AND 2 TIMOTHY, many scholars question whether the Apostle Paul himself wrote the letter to Titus. Because Crete is never mentioned in Paul's other letters—according to Acts, he was taken there only as a prisoner en route to Rome (Acts 27:7-13)—and because of differences in style and message from Paul's unquestioned writings similar to those evident in 1 and 2 Timothy, these scholars consider Titus a deutero-Pauline letter and date it as late as the second century CE, attributing it to the same hand that authored those letters. Scholars who hold to Pauline authorship date Titus to a time after Paul was released from prison in Rome (that is, between 62 and 64—or perhaps as late as 67).

Titus first appears in the narrative of Acts in Antioch in Syria, accompanying Paul on a relief visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30; see 15:2-4; Gal 2:1-3). As Paul's coworker and partner, he helped arrange the relief collection for the poor in Judea and was urged to go to Corinth as Paul's representative (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6-7; 8:6, 16-17, 23; 12:18). At Corinth he functions as a peacemaker and as a representative of the Corinthians to Paul (2 Cor 7:6-7, 15).

As the letter now represents the situation, Paul left Titus behind in Crete to "put in order what remained to be done," which included appointing elders for every city (Titus 1:5). He commands Titus to act "with all authority" and allow no one to "look down on you" (2:15). And no wonder, because Titus is an uncircumcised Greek who has to silence "those of the circumcision" (Titus 1:10-11; see Gal 2:3)! Paul further encourages Titus by addressing him as "my loyal child in the faith we share" (1:4; 1 Tim 1:2).

The problems in the churches at Crete (Titus 1:5, 12) are similar to those in Ephesus (according to 1 Tim 1:3-7) but are more clearly tied here to apparently Jewish opponents (see 1:10, 14). They involve rebelliousness and idle and deceptive talk. Lack of wisdom, self-control, honesty, and courtesy also seem to be problems (Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5-6, 9, 12; 3:1-3), and thus the author pointedly names God as the God "who never lies" (1:2). There appears to be a play here on a common cultural stereotype concerning the people of Crete. The island was reputed to be the home of notorious pirates; perhaps it is because of their influence that "to Cretanize" meant to lie, as Epimenides may have said (Titus 1:12). But the letter also speaks antagonistically of "those of the circumcision," of the proliferation of "Jewish myths," of the commandments of people who "reject the truth," and of quarrels about the law (Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9). Some scholars question whether the letter has actual Jews in view (although Jews had been at Crete for many years: see 1 Macc 15:19-23, referring to Gortyna, which lies in Crete, and Acts 2:11, which names Jews from Crete as present at Pentecost) or instead attacks the Judaizing practices of Gentiles (a problem against which the second-century bishop Ignatius of Antioch also inveighed).