

# **TITUS**

**The Letter of Paul  
to Titus**



### Introducing the Pastoral Epistles

There is unanimous agreement that this and the two letters to Timothy form a special sub-group of the Pauline letters. Like the letter to Philemon, they are addressed to individuals, to Titus and Timothy, two of Paul's collaborators. All Paul's other letters are addressed to communities. However, not too much should be made of this, for there are indications in the letters that they are meant to be read by the communities. They purport to be letters of advice and instruction sent to Titus and Timothy in their role as church leaders. Paul is just as interested in the communities knowing that he expects them to accept the leadership of Titus and Timothy as guaranteed by Paul's own authority. Because of their pastoral nature they are commonly referred to as 'Pastoral Epistles'.

The author introduces himself as Paul and there is no evidence from the early church or, indeed, for the first eighteen hundred years of the church's life, of any dispute about the identity of the author. However, modern critical scholarship has brought us to the situation today in which the majority of scholars (but not all) either argue or assume that someone other than Paul composed these letters in his name. We refer the reader to the Introductory chapter (pages 6-8) where we saw that there is nothing inherently problematic about this suggestion provided it is understood that this was the way which a faithful disciple of Paul chose to convey what he understood to be Paul's authentic thoughts about church organisation and government and about what was important in the life of the communities of Crete and Asia to whom these letters are addressed. In keeping with the practice of the times, it is possible that a disciple of Paul wrote in Paul's name in order to remind people that the martyred Paul was still present among them, inspiring them by his teaching and active in the life of the church. At the same time, after two hundred years of scholarly debate, some scholars continue to argue that Paul is, in fact, the author. This encourages us to explore the question: 'Could Paul have composed the Pastoral Epistles?'

Our first question is: Could what is written in these letters fit the situation of Crete and Ephesus in the sixties? First, nothing in what is written requires a situation significantly different in time from the period just before Paul's death. Secondly, a number of considerations favour this time rather than late in the century. The stress placed on the authority of Paul's representatives indicates a less developed stage of local leadership than we find, for example, in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, composed in the early years of the second century. More significantly, the pastoral letters envisage a situation in which there is still an expectation of growth and development in Jewish Christian communities. This was not the case in the latter decades of the first century. Furthermore, the various problematic situations mentioned in these letters can be paralleled from Paul's other correspondence.

In response to the first question we can say that the content of the letters could have been written in the mid-sixties and could have been written to Crete and Ephesus as the letters themselves claim. If it can be established by other criteria that someone else composed them, the above considerations point to his writing soon after Paul's death.

Still focusing on the content, we ask a second question: Could what is said have been said by Paul, or does it reveal an author with different ideas, different values, different concerns? The fact that these letters were accepted for so long as being written by Paul is itself an indication that they not only do not contradict Paul's thought, but that they have been read as being consistent with it. As already noted, they form a special subgroup among the Pauline letters. They have a special and limited focus and aim. They are unique among his letters in that they are written to church leaders precisely in their role as pastors. They contain advice and instruction about the responsibility of Paul's representatives in their guiding of the communities in living a Christian life. Ministry and ethics are central. This unique focus is adequate explanation for the special content and vocabulary.

Some find it strange that Paul would write to intimate co-workers in such a relatively impersonal and formal way. We should note, however, that the author is not dropping them a friendly line. He clearly intends the letters to be read ('overheard') by the congregations. The letters function more as a guarantee that Paul stands behind the authority of the leaders. They are written to support Titus and Timothy and as instruction for those for whom they are exercising care. Ignatius of Loyola writes differently when he is sending a personal letter of encouragement to a fellow Jesuit, and when he is writing a rule of life to be followed. We might assume that most of what Paul writes in these letters was already known by Titus and Timothy after years working closely with Paul. He might sound as though he is instructing them, but he is rather instructing the communities to expect this kind of instruction and leadership from them. In his excellent introduction to the Anchor Bible commentary on Titus (1990), Jerome Quinn writes:

They (Titus and Timothy) are models of Paul and models for believers as they are designated to carry on the apostle's work, carry out his commands, imitate his sufferings, teach his gospel and practise it themselves, preside at the liturgy, receive material support for their ministerial work, and choose other men who in their turn will share their apostolic ministry.

– *The Letter to Titus*, page 15

This brings us to a further question: If the content of the Pastoral Epistles could have been written by Paul, what about the style? Could Paul have written in this way? As already noted, the special vocabulary is not a problem. It is adequately explained by the focus and unique content of the letters. We hope to show in the commentary that Paul's use of certain technical words that are not in his usual vocabulary can be adequately explained without having recourse to the hypothesis of another author. Authors note the lack of many of the connecting particles that we are accustomed to find in Paul's writing. However, this, too, can be explained sufficiently by the focus of the letters. In his other letters which are written to communities, Paul is often arguing certain points. This is not the case here. He feels no need to persuade Titus or Timothy. They know why he is insisting on certain things. His purpose is rather to state what is to be done in acting decisively to strengthen their communities against divisive ideas that are undermining the gospel. There is no need for the many particles that would have been needed in the cut and thrust of argument.

This also helps explain the relative lack of the kinds of spontaneous and energetic outbursts that we associate with Paul. He is not writing to communities about their problems or questions or about his personal relationship with them, nor is he writing a friendly letter to a co-worker. He is laying down policy concerning government to ensure a continuance of the kind of authority that is needed when he himself is no longer around. One would expect a certain impersonality, a certain formality, a certain lack of spontaneity as he expresses principles to which he has given much thought. It is unusual for Paul to put so much stress on tradition, rather than on his own divine commission. Perhaps, knowing that he will not be with them much longer (for reasons of age, health, danger), he purposely stresses tradition which will still be there when he is gone, and which is not dependent on his personal presence.

Some of those who judge that these letters are the work of a disciple suggest that the author may have drawn on material actually written by Paul (this is especially likely for Titus and 2Timothy). Timothy and Titus may even have been party to the composing of the letters. If this is what happened, the aim was to express Paul's teaching in such a way as to retain the feel of his continued presence among them, guiding and caring for them.

Jerome Quinn favours the idea that the pastoral letters were composed after Paul's death. He sees Crete and the letter to Titus as being typical of small Jewish-Christian house-churches, while Ephesus and 1Timothy are typical of larger and predominantly Gentile house-churches. The following is I. Howard Marshall's conclusion to his lengthy and balanced treatment of this subject in the 1999 International Critical Commentary:

Our hypothesis is that the indications are that the Pastoral Epistles belong to the period shortly after the death of Paul. They, especially 2Timothy, are based on authentic Pauline materials whose extent cannot now be traced precisely, and they may well have been produced in a group which included Timothy and Titus themselves. The stimulus came from the existence of an authentic letter behind 2Timothy, which was already beginning to face up to the problems of the opposition, and led to the composition of 1Timothy and Titus to deal more explicitly and fully with the problems caused by opposition and heresy in Ephesus and Crete. The letters were intended to give Pauline backing to Timothy and Titus and associated church leaders in their work of calling the congregations back from false teaching and practices. Their composition was in no sense deceptive, in that it was known that these were fresh formulations of Pauline teaching to take account of the changing situation. Nevertheless, with the passage of time the origins of the letters were forgotten and they were assumed to be from Paul himself.

– The Pastoral Epistles, page 92

If Quinn and Marshall and many other scholars are correct in assigning the letters to a disciple rather than to Paul, we must not forget that it was the author's intention that those reading the letters would do so as though they were listening to Paul himself. The intention was to reproduce what Paul himself would have said were he still alive. We should remember that this is how these letters were read, and why they were preserved, treasured, copied and distributed. This is how they have been read down through the centuries.

We would be wrong to so highlight their pseudonymity as to fall into the temptation of thinking that their value is thereby lessened. We, too, would do well to focus on the content and to listen to Paul as we read, for we hear in these letters a number of Paul's concerns. We hear his concern that Christians in the various communities, Jewish and Gentile, remain in communion by being faithful to the tradition which they have received. We hear his concern that they remain in communion with other Christians by their love and by maintaining unity in the church. We hear his concern that they remain in communion as they hold firm to the gospel in the hope of sharing Jesus' eternal communion with God in the glory that awaits them. Perhaps the strongest call that we hear ringing out in these letters is Paul's concern that Christians continue the mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world, for Paul is passionately convinced that God wills every person to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is for this reason that he seeks to support the authority of the leaders against false teaching that could undermine this mission.

Finally, since the onus is on those who deny Pauline authorship to establish their case, and since, in my opinion, they have not done so, I will be commenting on the Pastoral Epistles on the assumption that they were composed by Paul himself. I have no trouble hearing Paul in these writings. It is an older Paul (he may be about seventy years old at the time of writing). It is a Paul who is very concerned that erroneous teaching, if not checked, could wreck the church. It is also a Paul who loves Christ and in whose heart the fires of a missionary still burn strongly.

Some suggest ways in which these letters can be fitted in to what we know of Paul's life from the *Acts*. It seems more likely that they belong to the period between Paul's release from his Roman prison in 62 and his martyrdom there, traditionally dated in 67. It would seem best to place his Letter to Titus and his First Letter to Timothy during his sojourn in the east, perhaps in 65. Eusebius tells us that his Second Letter to Timothy was composed during his second imprisonment in Rome, just prior to his martyrdom.

We are working on the assumption that Paul was, indeed, released from detention in Rome and that he returned to his mission fields in the east. Though we have no conclusive proof that he was released, it is not at all unlikely. Two years was the maximum time in which a person could be held awaiting conviction. We know that Festus, the Roman procurator in Palestine, recognised Paul's innocence (Acts 26:31-32; 28:16), and sent him to Rome only because Paul had insisted on his right to go there. Presumably the covering letter sent by Festus would have conveyed his opinion to the Roman authorities. If the accusers failed to pursue the matter, Paul would have been released after the statutory two years. When Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans in Corinth in the early months of 57AD, he was thinking that his time in the east had come to an end. He kept experiencing in prayer a call to go to Rome and he was already planning to go west to Spain (Romans 15:24,28). However, since those plans were formed, Paul has spent two years in custody in Caesarea and a further two in Rome. If his letter to the Philippians was written from prison in Rome, it is clear that he is now planning to return to the east (see Phil 2:24). We assume that he did so, that he composed Titus and 1 Timothy while in the east, that he was recaptured, imprisoned in Rome and composed 2 Timothy in Rome before his execution in 67AD.

Introduction to the Letter to Titus

Jews from Crete were among those who were present in Jerusalem on the occasion of the first Pentecost (see Acts 2:11). Paul spent a brief time in Crete on his journey to Rome in the late autumn of 59AD (see Acts 27:8-12). Whether it was because of what he saw there or for some other reason, on his return east from imprisonment in Rome, this letter indicates that Paul spent some time in Crete and on his departure left Titus in charge. He tells Titus that he intends sending replacements and asks Titus to meet him in Nicopolis, on the Adriatic coast of Greece, north of the Gulf of Corinth (see map page 343).

Our information concerning Titus comes only from Paul's letters, as he is not mentioned in the Acts. He was a convert of Paul's (see 1:4), of non-Jewish parents (see Galatians 2:3). We first encounter him accompanying Paul to Jerusalem for the assembly in 49AD (see Galatians 2:1). From Second Corinthians, written in late 55AD from Macedonia, we learn that Titus has been in Corinth and that he has reported back to Paul concerning the situation there (2:13; 7:6ff). We learn also of his role in organizing the collection for Jerusalem (8:6ff; 12:18).

From sources outside the New Testament we know that there were many Jews on Crete, so it is also likely that the Christians there were mainly converts from Judaism (1:10,14). This fits with the content of this letter. Paul is concerned, as we will see, with ideas that are being urged by a certain party of Jewish Christians, ideas which are contrary to the gospel and which are disrupting the community. Paul is instructing Titus to appoint leaders who can teach sound doctrine, as that is the best way to counter error.

Titus, along with the other Pastoral Epistles, is absent from P<sup>46</sup>. This could be explained by the loss of the final pages. More surprisingly, the Pastoral Epistles are absent from the Codex Vaticanus and are not included by Marcion in his canon (c.150AD). They are found intact in the other major codexes, including the Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century and the Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century. P<sup>32</sup>, a parchment codex from c.200AD, has Titus 1:11-15 and 2:3-8.

### The Structure of Titus

Paul's greeting	1:1-4
Part One. 'Knowledge of the truth'	
1. Instructions concerning the appointment of leaders	1:5-9
2. Instructions on how to deal with teachers of error	1:10-16
Part Two. 'In accordance with godliness'	
1. Sound teaching for different groups in the household	2:1-10
2. God is manifested in Jesus for the salvation of all	2:11-14
Part Three. How believers are to live in society and how Titus is to deal with heterodox teachers	
1. Living in society: Part One	2:15 - 3:2
2. Baptismal rebirth	3:3-8a
3. Living in society: Part Two	3:8b
4. Dealing with heterodox teachers	3:9-11
Some personal matters and conclusion	3:12-15

## Lectionary

### **The liturgical readings**

1:1-9	32nd Monday of Ordinary Time Year II
1:10-16	not in the Sunday or weekday lectionary
2:1-8,11-14	32nd Tuesday of Ordinary Time Year II
2:9-10,15	not in the Sunday or weekday lectionary
2:11-14	Christmas Midnight
2:11-14; 3:4-7	Baptism of Jesus Year C
3:1-7	32nd Wednesday of Ordinary Time Year II
3:4-7	Christmas Dawn and Baptism of Jesus Year C
3:8-15	not in the Sunday or weekday lectionary



Paul introduces himself, as always, by his Roman family name (see page 11). He calls himself a ‘slave (Greek: *doulos*) of God’ (compare Acts 16:17). In his letter to the community in Rome he calls himself a ‘slave of Christ’ (Romans 1:1; see the commentary) and speaks of the Roman Christians as having been ‘freed from sin and *enslaved* to God’ (Romans 6:22). Likewise, the Thessalonians have been converted ‘to serve (*douleuō*, ‘serve as slaves’) a living and true God’ (1Thessalonians 1:9). In speaking in these ways he has before his eyes Jesus, who in humility and obedience ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a slave’ (Philippians 2:17). Paul identifies with Jesus, the suffering servant (‘slave’) of the Lord (see the commentary on Galatians 1:10). He is also highlighting the fact that he is writing in obedience to his Lord. His words, therefore, are to be taken as the word of the Lord. This is further underlined by his use of the title ‘apostle of Jesus Christ’.

As is his custom, Paul uses the address to focus the attention of his readers on what are to be the main themes of his letter. In speaking of ‘God’s elect’ (see Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12), he is accenting the truth that God is the one who initiates communion, not us. He therefore speaks first of ‘faith’, which is the welcome which we give to grace. For Paul, faith is always ‘in Christ’, for it is his communion with God that is offered to us, and it is his Spirit who draws us to welcome the communion we are offered and to live out of this communion (for a reflection on faith see the commentary on Galatians 2:16).

In Crete faith is endangered by false teaching. Paul’s focus, therefore, is on what it is that people believe, and so on the importance of discernment and of teaching that is consistent with the gospel. We must know who it is in whom we believe as well as how faith is to be expressed in our Christian life. We find this idea in Paul’s earlier letters. He instructs the Corinthians: ‘Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith’ (2Corinthians 13:5). He stresses with the Colossians the importance of being ‘established in the faith, just as you were taught’ (Colossians 2:7). Living ‘in the faith’ is the same as living ‘in Christ’. We recall his words to the Philippians:

Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

– Philippians 1:27

**‘Paul,  
a slave [NRSV  
‘servant’] of God  
and an apostle  
of Jesus Christ,  
for the sake  
of the faith of  
God’s elect**

**<sup>1b</sup>and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness [‘religion’]**

We know the ‘truth’ (Greek: *alētheia*) when reality is not obscured by falsehood and allowed to fall into oblivion (*lēthē*). When Paul speaks of ‘truth’ he is speaking within the context of the ultimate truth of who God really is as revealed in Jesus. Hence the close link here between ‘faith’ and ‘knowledge of the truth’. For Paul ‘truth’ is also a matter of the way we live. Hence the close link with ‘godliness’. In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of the ‘ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth’ (Romans 1:18). We find the same link between truth, faith and Christian living in his letter to the Colossians in which he speaks of the ‘gospel’ as ‘the word of truth’, and speaks of it ‘bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God’ (Colossians 1:5-6). We recall his prayer for the Colossians:

We have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

– Colossians 1:9-10

Paul speaks of human behaviour in terms of ‘godliness’ (Greek: *eusebeia*). Though he speaks of ‘ungodliness’ (*asebeia*) in his Letter to the Romans (see 1:18, 4:5, 5:6, 11:26), he does not speak of ‘godliness’ in his earlier correspondence, perhaps because of its connection with pagan religious cult and its political overtones demonstrated by the use of *Sebastos* to translate the Latin ‘Augustus’ (see Acts 25:21, 25; 27:1). However *eusebeia* (Latin: *pietas*) was considered of the utmost importance in the Roman world, as it consists in an attitude of reverence for the gods shown in religious worship and in respect for the order that is sanctioned by the gods. It is close to our concept of ‘religion’.

Though the Hebrew ‘fear of the Lord’ is normally translated literally in the Septuagint, in three texts it is translated by *eusebeia* (Proverbs 1:7; Isaiah 11:2; 33:6). The spirit given to the Davidic king includes ‘the spirit of knowledge and *eusebeia* (fear of the Lord)’ (Isaiah 11:2). King Josiah is praised because he ‘kept his heart fixed on the Lord; in lawless times he made godliness (*eusebeia*) prevail’ (Sirach 49:3). The Jewish authors were attempting to build a bridge between the Jewish faith and the surrounding culture. We might surmise that Paul is doing the same and that it became part of Paul’s missionary vocabulary during his time in Rome. Always the missionary, he saw the importance of ‘baptising’ the Roman ‘*pietas*’, by directing it to the true, living God as revealed in Christ. Luke makes the same connection in his account of the healing of the cripple at the temple gate (see Acts 3:12), as well as in his account of the conversion of the Roman centurion (see Acts 10:2,7).

An essential aspect of ‘the truth’ revealed by Jesus is that we are invited to share with him in the life of God. In the final analysis it is this sharing in the life of ‘the living God’ (1Thessalonians 1:9; Romans 9:26) which alone deserves the name ‘life’. All other so-called life is passing. This divine life is ‘eternal’ (Greek: *zōē aiōnios*), since whatever pertains to the divine is ‘immortal’ (Romans 1:23), beyond the power of death. We read concerning the mother of the seven boys martyred at the time of the Maccabean revolt: ‘She loved religion (*eusebeia*) more, the religion that preserves (*sōzō*, ‘saves’) them for *eternal life* according to God’s promise’ (4Maccabees 15:3). We are invited to live this life of love-communion now. As Paul says: ‘it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I *now* live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’ (Galatians 2:20). However, because of our capacity for sin, we are capable of separating ourselves from this participation in the life of Christ. We will live it in its fullness and in complete security only ‘in the age to come’ (Mark 10:30), when we are taken beyond physical death into the glory of God .

Paul, therefore, speaks of God’s ‘promise’ and of ‘hope’ (Greek: *elpis*, see the commentary on Galatians 5:5). God’s promise is not bound to the fluctuations which we experience in the ‘ages’ (Greek: *chronos*) of human history. God’s will is ‘before’ the events of history, not, of course, in a temporal sense, but in the sense that what God decides is ontologically prior to the vagaries of our human obedience or disobedience. To underline this, he qualifies the word ‘ages’ with the same adjective (*aiōnios*) that he has just used to qualify life (see also Romans 16:25). It is the ‘eternal’ God who creates the ages. As we look at history, he wants us to look at the presence of the eternal in time.

God’s promise stands, indestructible. Nothing anyone can do or fail to do can change it. Hence the security of our hope. We can be confident that God will carry out his plan and keep his promises, for he ‘never lies’. He kept his promise in Christ, in whom ‘every one of God’s promises is a Yes’ (2Corinthians 1:20). Part of God’s carrying out his promise is precisely through the apostolic commission given to Paul, including this letter. However, as Paul has already noted, it matters that we welcome in ‘faith’ what God has promised. It matters how we live (see Romans 2:7). It matters, therefore, that we live in ‘godliness’. ‘Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God’ (2Cor 7:1).

**in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the eternal ages**

**[NRSV ‘before the ages began’]**

**<sup>3</sup>in due time  
he revealed  
his word  
through the  
proclamation  
with which  
I have been  
entrusted by  
the command  
of God  
our Saviour**

Paul has just been speaking of history, of the generations that pass in the flux of time (Greek: *chronos*), and of the importance of living our lives in the light of God's promises. He now contemplates history as the arena within which God's grace is constantly active. This 'due time' (Greek: *kairos*) is entirely beyond our control or calculation. We can only remain open to the surprise of grace and respond to God's love with the welcome of faith. In God's time, Paul was 'approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel' (1 Thessalonians 2:4). We are reminded of the concluding words of the Letter to the Romans:

To God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed ... according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

— Romans 16:25-27

The word proclaimed by Paul is 'the power of God to us who are being saved' (1 Corinthians 1:18); it is the 'word of truth', the 'gospel of salvation' (Ephesians 1:13). In the light of the Jewish practice of speaking of God as 'Saviour' (see the Septuagint version of Psalms 65:5; 79:9; 95:1), and of the Greek and Roman practice of addressing their gods in the same way, it is no surprise that Paul speaks here of 'God our Saviour'. What does need explaining is that he speaks so frequently in this way in the Pastoral Epistles and that we do not find him calling God 'Saviour' in his earlier letters (though he does speak of Jesus as Saviour in Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20). Perhaps the answer is to be found in the years of reflection and missionary outreach that he spent in Rome, where he would have heard people speaking of Nero, as well as of the Roman gods, as 'Saviour'. Just as 'for us there is one God' (1 Corinthians 8:6), so there is only one Saviour. We are reminded of his words to the church in Thessalonica:

God chose you as the first fruits for *salvation* through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

— 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

God in his wisdom has chosen the perfect time (compare Galatians 4:4; Romans 5:6; Ephesians 1:10) to enlighten the world with his word. That time is now, and it is through the gospel which Paul has been commissioned to proclaim, and which is the subject of this letter.

In his correspondence with the Corinthian church, Paul speaks of Titus as his ‘brother’ (2Corinthians 2:13), and as his ‘partner and co-worker’ (2Corinthians 8:23). He speaks of Timothy as his ‘beloved and faithful child in the Lord’ (1Corinthians 4:17). We find him speaking in the same way in his letter to the Philippians, where he says of Timothy that ‘like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel’ (Philippians 2:22). This is more than an expression of affection between an older and a younger man. It is a recognition of the fact that, in the providence of God, the life of faith came to Timothy through Paul, and that Timothy, like a true son, has learned from Paul the ‘trade’ of proclaiming the gospel. It was a customary way of a master speaking to and about his disciples. In addressing Titus in this way, Paul is assuring the Christians in Crete that the gospel that Titus proclaims can be reliably taken as the gospel proclaimed by Paul who is giving his own personal guarantee that he and Titus share a common faith.

The blessing with which Paul concludes the address is typical. We refer the reader to the commentary on Galatians 1:1-3 for a reflection of ‘grace’ and ‘peace’, as well as the significance of calling God ‘Father’ and of referring to Jesus as ‘Christ’. There are two elements in the blessing, however, that are unusual. In all his other letters he writes: ‘Grace *to you* and peace’. Here the ‘to you’ is absent. The reason that suggests itself is that he could be expected to use the singular ‘you’, since he is writing to Titus. However, as the farewell at the end of the letter makes clear, he really intends the letter to be read by the community. At the beginning of the letter he chose to leave the blessing open.

The second unusual feature is that he refers to Christ Jesus as ‘our Saviour’ instead of the expected ‘our Lord’. There is nothing surprising in his using this title of Jesus. The Septuagint often speaks in this way of those through whom God has exercised his power to save. Paul speaks of Jesus as the ‘Saviour’ of his body the church in his letter to the Ephesians 5:23, and speaks to the Philippians of ‘expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Philippians 3:20). He regularly speaks of how he and the others have been saved by Jesus’ life-giving love. The only thing that needs explaining is why he would change his customary greeting and use this title in the address. I suspect that it is for the same reason that he has just spoken of ‘our God and Saviour’. It will soon emerge that salvation is a key theme of the letter, and Paul wishes to insist from the beginning that it comes from God through Christ.

**‘To Titus, my true [NRSV ‘loyal’] child in the faith we share:**

**Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.**

**<sup>5</sup>I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you**

In his address Paul has already signalled the main focus of this letter. He is concerned about ‘the faith of God’s elect’ which is intimately related to ‘knowledge of the truth’ and which demands ‘godliness’, both for the internal life of the Christian community and for its mission. He is writing as part of his apostolic commission and in obedience to God who has entrusted him to proclaim ‘his word’. If these central values are to be encouraged, protected and maintained, the various Christian communities in each town will need leaders whose responsibility it will be to organise, support and encourage whatever is needed in this regard. Expecting from Titus the same obedience to which he himself is committed, Paul immediately focuses on the responsibility which Titus has of appointing such leaders.

Luke tells us that on their first missionary outreach from Antioch (48AD), Barnabas and Paul ‘appointed elders (*presbuteroi*) in each church’ (Acts 14:23). The young Christian communities in southern Galatia had close relationships with the synagogue, in their origin and probably in their on-going life. It is understandable that they would pattern their leadership on that of the synagogue. The communities in Crete are in much the same situation and so we find the leaders here, too, called elders.

When Paul began proclaiming the gospel in Thessalonica in 49AD and began to gather converts, leadership would have naturally fallen to him. At the same time, some form of organisation, however minimal, would have been needed for the coherence of the community. He speaks of their leaders in his letter to them, written the following year from Corinth:

We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you (*proïstamenoï* ‘those standing in front’) in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

– 1Thessalonians 5:12-13

Different people would have been ‘in charge of’ different aspects of church life. Leadership can be exercised in many ways, including teaching, but presumably Paul also had in mind those whose function it was to supervise the organisation of the community. The communities founded by Paul continued to look to him for leadership. When the church in Corinth was having trouble it was to Paul that the community wrote, and when he responded in writing he did not address himself to a single authority in Corinth, but to the whole community.



One of the main problems in Corinth was that the church was dividing into factions, each, no doubt, with its own leaders. In his first letter to the Corinthians (53AD), Paul likens the church to a body in which each part needs the other to function properly. He speaks of the three foundational ministries given to the body by God: the ministries through which the gospel is preached, through which the Spirit reveals God's will and through which the revelation of God is explained to the community: 'God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers' (1Corinthians 12:28). He goes on to mention other ministries exercised in the community including 'forms of leadership' (*kubernēsis*, 'governing'). Those exercising this ministry had a gift for organisation, and were responsible for directing the community according to God's will.

Similarly, in his letter to the Romans (57AD), Paul speaks (as he did to the Thessalonians) of those who have the ministry of being a 'leader' (*proïstamenos*, 'the one standing in front'). He exhorts them to carry out their ministry 'efficiently and conscientiously' (*en spoudē*, Romans 12:8). Luke tells us that on his way to Jerusalem in 57AD, Paul summoned to Miletus the leaders of the church in Ephesus, called 'elders' (*presbuteroi*, 'presbyters'). In his speech he exhorts them:

Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopoi*, 'bishops'), to shepherd (*poimainō*) the church of God.

– Acts 20:28

This text includes many of the titles by which leaders in the church have been known ever since. We have 'elder' ('presbyter', 'priest'), 'overseer' ('episkopos', 'bishop') and 'shepherd' ('pastor').

In his letter to the Gentile churches of the east (Ephesians, 59AD), Paul is particularly concerned for the unity of the church. He highlights those ministries which Christ gives to the church to form it as his body, listing 'apostles, prophets and evangelists'. He goes on to add those ministries which Christ gives to the church for its maintenance, listing 'pastors and teachers' (4:11). Each of these ministries makes its special contribution to 'equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ' (4:12).

He addresses his letter to the Philippians (62AD) to 'all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the bishops (*episkopoi*, 'overseers', 'supervisors') and deacons (*diakonoi*)' (Philippians 1:1). There were a number of them in what must have been a rather small community. It would seem that different people supervised different aspects of the community life, or else the overall leadership was exercised by a group.

The title and functions of those responsible for organisational leadership in the communities founded by Paul would presumably have varied according to the composition, size and situation of each community. The larger the church became in a particular area, and the longer Paul was absent, the more need there would have been for each local community to devise appropriate forms of leadership, and the more need there would have been for organising ways of ensuring some cooperation and coordination between local communities, and also for representing the community in the society at large. It is important to recall that in the Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures at the time positions of leadership in public life were open only to men.

**<sup>6</sup>someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.**

**<sup>7</sup>For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless**

Documents like this letter which aim to lay down policy tend to state the obvious for the record. They tend also to state the minimum requirements. The presbyters are to be 'blameless'. Since they are responsible for teaching and since they represent the community to outsiders, it is clearly important that their public behaviour be such as not to cause scandal. They must be seen to practise what they preach.

An insight into why the community expected its leaders to be 'married only once' is perhaps provided by Paul when he writes to the Corinthians: 'I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2Corinthians 11:2). The Christian communities saw marriage as a visible witness of the faithful love of Christ for the church. It was important that their leaders exemplify this.

The Christian community saw itself as a family, and could hardly be expected to accept teaching from a leader who could not even manage his own family according to the principles of Christ. The community should not have as a leader someone whose children have rejected the faith (and with it their father's teaching). The logic seems to be that if he has failed to persuade his own children, he can hardly be expected to persuade others. Likewise, if his children's public behaviour is so bad that they have been 'accused of debauchery' (*asōtia*, literally 'unsaved behaviour'), or are 'rebellious'. We are reminded of Paul's advice in his Letter to the Ephesians: 'Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18).

Verse seven shows the same fluidity in titles as we saw in Paul's speech to the elders of Ephesus whom he addresses as 'overseers ('bishops') to shepherd the church of God' (Acts 20:28). The elders exercise a supervisory role in organising the affairs of God's household and so can be called 'bishops'. They are responsible for managing the household of the faith and so can be called 'stewards'. Speaking of himself and Apollos in their relationship with the Christian community at Corinth, Paul asked them: 'Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy' (1Corinthians 4:1-2). The 'steward' (*oikonomos*), usually a slave, was responsible for the management of the house. This brings to mind again God's providential plan (*oikonomia*) for the world (see Colossians 1:25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2,9), and the role played by the overseer in bringing about this plan by his unifying ministry in the community. Paul is a 'slave of God' (1:1) and a trustworthy 'steward' (1Corinthians 4:1). The Christian community has a right to find the same qualities in its leaders.



There are some vices which obviously disqualify a person from this ministry of leadership. He must not be ‘arrogant’ (authadēs), that is to say, he must not be so satisfied with his own opinion that he is stubborn and unwilling to take suggestions from others or to cooperate with them. Nor is he to be ‘quick-tempered’. Furthermore, because the presbyter was responsible for hospitality, there would be a special danger if he were ‘addicted to wine’ or ‘violent’. Because he is also responsible for the community’s finances, it is important that he not be ‘greedy for gain’.

There follows a list of virtues that are important in view of the role carried out by the elder/bishop. The constant movement of Christian missionaries added an extra reason for considering hospitality important. It sounds basic, but Paul considers it important to mention that the elder/bishop is to be a person who has a feel for what is good and the ability to discern it. This is followed by a virtue, being ‘prudent’ (*sōphrōn*), for which the Greek world had the highest respect. Literally, it refers to having good judgment – a wholesome (*sōzō*, ‘saved’, ‘healed’), mind (*phrēn*). It involves avoidance of all excess, and a balance that preserves harmony and proportion. This is another word, along with *eusebeia*, that Paul has made part of his vocabulary since his Roman imprisonment, though he has already spoken of its importance in his Letter to the Romans:

By the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment (*sōphroneō*), each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

– Romans 12:3

Behind Paul’s use of this word stands the memory of Jesus’ healing activity, in which physical healing was a visible manifestation of a deeper, inner healing. One thinks especially of the tormented man from Gerasa whom the crowd found ‘sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind (*sōphroneō*)’ (Luke 8:35; see 2 Corinthians 5:13). ‘Christ Jesus our Saviour’ (1:4) has touched and healed our hearts and minds, and it is this inner healing that is manifested in the virtues prized by Hellenistic society. Jesus’ very name means ‘Saviour’, and, as Luke says; ‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12).

<sup>7b</sup>he must not be arrogant  
or quick-tempered  
or addicted to wine  
or violent  
or greedy for gain;  
<sup>8</sup>but he must be hospitable,  
a lover of goodness,  
with good judgment [NRSV  
‘prudent’]

<sup>sb</sup>**upright,  
devout,  
and self-controlled.**

**9He must have  
a firm grasp of  
the word that is  
trustworthy in ac-  
cordance with the  
teaching, so that he  
may be able both  
to appeal [NRSV  
'preach'] with  
sound instruction  
[NRSV 'doctrine']  
and to refute those  
who contradict it.**

The elder/bishop is to be 'upright' (Greek: *dikaios*). He is to do the will of God according to the grace that is given to him to carry out his responsibilities in the community. He is to be 'devout' (*hosios*); that is to say, he is to be a person who respects the sacred. Paul could say of himself to the Thessalonians; 'You are witnesses, and God also, how pure (*hosiōs*), upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers' (1 Thessalonians 2:10). He reminds the Ephesians: 'you were taught to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (*hosiōtēs*)' (Ephesians 4:24).

Because of the power that goes with leadership, Paul insists on another virtue that was highly regarded among Greek moralists. The elder/bishop is to be 'self-controlled' (*egkratēs*). This virtue, too, has been 'baptised', for Paul is not speaking of control of one's behaviour based on a determination coming from one's own will. He lists this virtue among the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:23), for he is speaking of a strength that comes through reliance on the power of the Spirit of Christ.

Having listed the vices that preclude a person from exercising leadership and the basic virtues required for such an important role in the community, Paul comes to the point which he wishes to stress in this letter. If the members of the community are to be nourished on 'the truth', and if they are to live lives of 'godliness', they will need to be taught 'sound doctrine' by leaders who are able to 'refute those who contradict it'. In his address, Paul has already said that God has chosen to 'reveal his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour' (1:3). Those who are appointed to the position of elder/bishop must be attached to this same 'word' so that their 'appeal' (*parakaleō*, see 1 Thessalonians 2:12) and their 'teaching' (*didachē*) nourishes faith, and their 'instruction' (*didaskalia*) is healthy and life-giving. The community needs such teachers if they are to 'become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted' (Romans 6:17). Those who are appointed as leaders in the local communities are to be able to 'keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offences, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned' (Romans 16:17). Otherwise there is a danger that we will be like 'children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming' (Ephesians 4:14).

Paul's description of the problems that are disrupting the Christian congregations of Crete explains the central focus of this letter. It also explains a number of the qualities that he has underlined as necessary for the leaders that Titus is to appoint. The problems are coming from false teaching emanating from among the Jewish Christians. The elders/bishops, therefore, need to 'be able to appeal with sound doctrine'(1:9). Those propagating idle and deceptive ideas are doing so 'for sordid gain'. It must be obvious to all that the elders/bishops are not 'greedy for gain'(1:7). The troublemakers are 'upsetting whole families'. The home life of the elders/bishops must be noted for its good order (see 1:6).

Paul describes the people propagating this false teaching as 'rebellious' (*anupotaktoi*), a word he has already used to describe the kind of behaviour that the children of an elder should not display (1:6). Just as these children refuse to take their proper place in the family by respecting their parents, so the false teachers, in refusing to accept the teaching of those who are authorised to proclaim sound doctrine in the household of the church, are thereby refusing to submit to Christ and to God.

In referring to them as 'idle talkers' and 'deceivers' Paul is drawing on the kind of rhetoric that was frequently employed at this time when travelling 'philosophers' were a common spectacle in the market squares. The niceties of polite conversation were not part of the cut and thrust of rhetorical debate. A good orator was expected to win over his audience at the expense of the opposition. More importantly, concern for the truth made it more imperative that error be exposed than that the feelings of those propounding the error be nursed. Our not liking the directness and the apparent lack of courtesy in Paul's language may not all be virtuous. It may come from the poverty of our passion for truth.

According to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 1.59.1-2), Paul is quoting from Epimenides, a Cretan 'prophet' from the sixth century BC. The Cretans were accustomed to being the butt of Greek proverbs. It is not easy to determine how they would have taken to Paul's joining the chorus. Presumably they took it in good part, since it is clear that he is pointing the finger at a particular group and saying that in *their* case the proverb is correct. Epimenides was known as a prophet. Paul may be underlining this because of the claims to prophecy made by the troublemakers.

**<sup>10</sup>Indeed there are many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision;**

**<sup>11</sup>they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach.**

**<sup>12</sup>It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, 'Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.'**

**<sup>13</sup>That testimony is true.**

**<sup>13b</sup>For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith,**

**<sup>14</sup>not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth.**

Titus must not allow the word of God revealed through the proclamation of the gospel to be compromised. He must rebuke those who contradict it. His rebuke, however, has as its aim ‘that they may become sound in the faith’. Recall his stress on ‘sound (life-giving) doctrine’ in verse nine.

In the Jewish tradition, God’s word as found in their sacred writings was a living word through which a living God continued to speak to his people. The interpreters of the Torah expressed their attempts to explore this ongoing revelation in developing the narrative sections of the sacred writings in what they called the *haggadah*. They sought to apply the legal sections through what they called the *halakah*. Paul was trained in this practice and is not objecting to it in principle. We find examples of both in his letters (for *haggadah*, see his interpretation of the story of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31; for *halakah*, see 1Corinthians 14:37). However, not all attempts to interpret and apply the scriptures were valid, as can be seen by reading some of the inter-testamental writings that have come down to us. Paul refers to the more fantastic stories as ‘myths’, using this term in the narrow sense which it had taken on among the philosophers of his day. Many of the commands, too, that had been developed, had no connection with revealed truth.

We are reminded of Jesus’ own critique when he quotes Isaiah 29:13: ‘in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines’, and adds: ‘You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition’ (Mark 7:7-8). Paul has already referred to this in his Letter to the Colossians where he writes: ‘All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings’ (Colossians 2:22).

Paul’s objection is simple and direct: all these stories and all these injunctions ‘reject the truth’. For Paul this means that they contradict what God has revealed in the mystery of Jesus’ self-giving love as demonstrated on the cross. Paul is saying that teaching that claims to be Christian must be checked against the ‘proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour’ (1:3).

On the previous page we quoted Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees for demanding obedience to their own laws while neglecting God's will. This criticism was made in the context of what is pure and what defiles. What matters to Jesus is the heart. As he goes on to say: 'There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile ... For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions arise'(Mark 7:15,21). In describing the same scene, Luke has Jesus say: 'give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you'(Luke 11:41). We are reminded of the scene in *Acts* where Peter resists an inspiration coming from God to eat foods that are forbidden by Jewish law: 'I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean'. Three times he is told: 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane'(Acts 10:14-16).

Paul's words to Titus are to be read in this context. A powerful clique of Jewish Christians in Crete is insisting that people must obey God's will and refrain from eating food that has been declared unclean. Paul insists, as he stated in his Letter to the Romans, that 'everything is clean'(Romans 14:20). He goes further and turns the argument against those who are urging it. It is they who are not only unclean, but 'corrupt'. They may eat all the 'right' foods, but they are 'unbelieving'. It is unbelief that corrupts the mind and it is wrong thinking that leads to immoral behaviour and a corruption of conscience. Paul is reinforcing the connection which he made in his opening address between faith, knowledge of the truth, and godliness.

In the tradition of the prophets and of Jesus himself, Paul looks to behaviour as the test of the reality of one's communion with God. The Jewish Christians who are insisting on the necessity of following various Jewish practices are claiming that it is they who 'know God'. For Paul, knowing God is something that can happen only 'in Christ'. These people are failing to welcome the freedom given them by Christ. We recall Paul's words: 'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery'(Galatians 5:10). Furthermore, they are denying the value of the Gentile Christians living their Christian life as Gentiles. They do not know the one in whom God has chosen to reveal himself in this 'time'(1:3). They do not know the living God. Paul's conclusion is devastating. They who 'detest' idols (see Romans 2:22) are themselves 'detestable'. They who claim to be doing God's will are 'disobedient'. They who claim to be teachers of what is good are themselves 'unfit for any good work' – an accusation they level at Gentiles (see Romans 1:28).

**<sup>15</sup>To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted.**

**<sup>16</sup>They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions.**

**They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.**

**<sup>1</sup>But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine.**

To this point Paul has been focusing on those whose teaching is undermining the faith, and on the need for good leaders to counter their influence. He now instructs Titus on the kind of teaching that ‘is consistent with sound doctrine’ (see 1:9). It is here especially that scholars fail to hear the kind of things we have come to expect from Paul and they argue for another, less passionate, less spontaneous, and less Christ-centred author. I suggest that they are expecting too much of this passage. Paul’s aim is quite specific. He is not reminding Titus of the foundations of the Christian life, nor is he undertaking to debate with the false teachers in an attempt to persuade the others to resist them. This he leaves to Titus. His aim is a limited one. The false teaching is ‘upsetting whole families’ (1:11). The consequent disorder that is spreading within the Christian communities is undermining faith and jeopardising the church’s mission. Paul’s aim is to support Titus by putting his apostolic authority behind some basic principles of order within the community. The matter is for the most part new because in earlier letters these were not the problems that needed attention. Furthermore, we should keep in mind that it is understood that this basic list of virtues that help sustain good order in a Christian household is an expression of faith in Christ as proclaimed in the gospel. Paul’s aim here is to list the virtues, not to point out the motivation which Titus already knows well.

Rather than be disappointed with what Paul does not say, we should thank God for his other letters, and search this one for Paul’s insights into the implications of faith for the order which is the fruit of love and which in turn provides the environment in which love and missionary outreach can flourish. Having said that, we must avoid the temptation to absolutise what Paul has to say here. He is writing within a specific social context. Another context may well require a letter with different nuances, since order is necessarily linked not only to gospel values but also to the cultural situation within which these values are to be realised.

For the Stoics ‘sound doctrine’, wholesome, life-giving, teaching, is based primarily on an intelligent understanding of nature. Paul’s basic criterion is different. It is not human nature but the gospel. Reason has its place as a supplementary guide, but it cannot replace the gospel, and Paul wishes Titus to ensure that it is the gospel that is being taught. As we listen to Paul’s teaching, it is up to us to connect what Paul has to say with what we know of the attachment to Christ which fires all his writing.

Paul begins by laying down basic principles that are to govern the behaviour of the grandfathers who are responsible for order in the extended family of a Christian household. Over indulgence in strong drink was obviously a social issue on Crete, as Paul has already included among the qualities required for the person responsible for supervising the life of the Christian community that he not be ‘addicted to wine’ (1:7).

The older men are to be ‘serious’ (Greek: *semnos*). Paul listed this quality in his letter to the Philippians’ (Philippians 4:8). It speaks of reverence and respect and is related to the virtue of religion (*eusebeia*, ‘godliness’, 1:1).

They are to exercise good judgment (*sōphrōn*). Management of a household requires the exercise of ‘sober judgment’ (*sōphroneō*, Romans 12:3). Paul has already called for this quality in those to be appointed as elders (1:8, see the commentary there), and he expects it of the older women (2:4), the younger women (2:5), and the younger men (2:6). This is in keeping with the accent in this letter on the importance of wholesome thinking that is based upon sound teaching. In effect they are to have ‘the same mind that was in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 2:5).

Good judgment based on the healing of mind that comes through faith leads in turn to a ‘sound’ living of the Christian life (*hugiainō*, ‘hygiene’). Paul has already spoken of ‘sound teaching’ (1:9; 2:1) and of the importance of being ‘sound in the faith’ (1:13).

In typically Pauline perspective he speaks here of the basic Christian virtues of ‘faith’ (see the commentary on Galatians 2:6), ‘love’ (see the commentary on Galatians 5:6), and ‘endurance’. This last refers to what Paul calls, in his correspondence with the Thessalonians, the ‘steadfastness of hope’ (1 Thessalonians 1:3), the ‘steadfastness of Christ’ (2 Thessalonians 3:5). The ‘love’ of which he speaks is that which ‘bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things’ (1 Corinthians 13:7) – the love which is Jesus’ gift to us of a sharing in his communion with his Father.

**<sup>2</sup>Tell the older men  
to be temperate,  
serious,  
prudent [‘of good  
judgment’],  
and sound  
in faith,  
in love, and  
in endurance.**



<sup>3</sup>Likewise,  
tell the older  
women to be  
reverent in  
behaviour,  
not to be slan-  
derers  
or slaves to  
drink;  
they are to  
teach what  
is good, <sup>4</sup>so  
that they may  
encourage the  
young women  
to love their  
husbands,  
to love their  
children,  
<sup>5</sup>to have sound  
judgment  
(NRSV 'be self-  
controlled'),  
chaste,  
good workers  
in the home  
[NRSV 'man-  
agers of the  
household']  
kind,  
being submis-  
sive to their  
husbands,  
so that the  
word of God  
may not be  
discredited.

Christian grandmothers, too, have a special authority in the home. The first quality asked of them is striking and is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The word translated here 'reverent' (*hieropropēs*) refers to behaviour that is expected of a priest (*hiereus*) in the carrying out of his sacred functions in the temple. Paul refers to the Christian community as a temple and obviously looks especially to the older women to nurture the home as a sacred place, so that 'the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord' (Ephesians 2:21).

They are not to be slanderers (Greek: *diabolos*). In the Jewish tradition this is one of the words chosen for the evil spiritual powers. English 'devil' derives from it. Like Paul, they are to be slaves of God (see 1:1), not of drink (compare 1:7; 2:2). Paul moves immediately to the role which the older women have in the household of training the younger women. Since they cannot teach what they have not learned, the qualities which he lists as appropriate for younger women obviously also apply to the grandmothers. The word translated here as 'encourage' is the Greek *sōphronizō*. They are to inculcate in the daughters-in-law and generally among the younger women ways of thinking that are consistent with sound teaching which is based on the gospel.

Seven qualities are mentioned as important for the young women. It is assumed that they are married. The first and last of these qualities refer to their relationship to their husbands. Paul begins with affection (*philandros*) and ends by reminding them of the proper order of authority which is to prevail in the home. As in all his letters, Paul assumes that authority in the making of decisions lies with the husband (see the commentaries on 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:22-33).

They are to love their children (*philotechnos*). They are to show good judgment (*sōphrōn*, see 1:8; 2:2,4). They are to be 'chaste' (*hagnos*). Paul speaks of this virtue in his Letter to the Philippians 4:8, where it refers to whatever evokes in others a sense of the holy. He speaks of it also in his letter to the Corinthians: 'I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Corinthians 11:2). The younger women are to be trained by the older women to be devoted to their duties in the home and to be kind. Paul's eye is on the mission entrusted to the church. Good order in a loving home is the best argument against those who are 'upsetting families' (1:11) and are speaking ill of the word which is revealed by God 'through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour' (1:3).



One of the qualities required of an elder as a leader of the community is that he be able to communicate to the congregation the appeal of the risen Christ (*parakaleō*, 1:9; see the commentary on 1Thessalonians 2:12). Paul asks Titus, therefore, to urge (*parakaleō*) the young men to be sane in their thinking (*sōphroneō*). Like the older men and the women, the young men are to have ‘the mind of Christ’. Since they are to model themselves on their elders, the list of virtues required of the older men is for the education of the younger men as well.

Since Titus himself is one of these younger men, he is to be a model for them. His ‘works’ (deeds) are to be ‘good’ in the sense of beautiful and attractive (*kalos*). Paul’s concern in this letter with ‘knowledge of the truth’ and with ‘godliness’ (see 1:1) is again apparent as he focuses, once again, on ‘teaching’ (see 1:9; 2:1). The ‘truth’ proclaimed in the gospel is about God. It is therefore to have the quality of ‘imperishability’ (*aphthoria*), not like the teaching of those who are disrupting the community. Their teaching is corrupt because they teach ‘for sordid gain’ (1:11).

Titus’s teaching is to have another quality considered especially important in the Roman world, and expected of the older men (see 2:2). It is to show a sense of reverence for the sacred (*semnotēs*). As a Christian teacher this will involve a profound respect for what the risen Christ is doing in the lives of those whom Titus is graced to teach. His speech is to be ‘sound’ (*hugiēs*) – another virtue required of the older men (see 2:2; see also 1:9,13). Those criticising the church should find no grounds for their criticism in Titus’s teaching.

Paul would have been pleased if Titus and those whom he was to appoint as teachers would have caused the kind of admiration that is expressed by the famous pagan philosopher-physician, Galen, writing in the latter part of the second century:

We now see the people called Christians ... sometimes acting like the philosophers. For their contempt of death is patent to us every day and likewise their restraint in cohabitation ... and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a height not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.

– from his summary of Plato’s Republic

**<sup>6</sup>Likewise, urge the younger men to have sound judgment [NRSV ‘be self-controlled’]**

**<sup>7</sup>Show yourself in all respects a model of good works,**

**and in your teaching let there be nothing corrupt [NRSV ‘show integrity’], showing a reverence for the sacred [NRSV ‘gravity’],**

**<sup>8</sup>and sound speech that cannot be censured;**

**then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.**

**<sup>9</sup>Tell slaves to be  
submissive to their  
masters and to give  
satisfaction in every  
respect;**

**they are not to talk  
back,**

**<sup>10</sup>not to pilfer,**

**but to show complete  
and perfect faith  
[NRSV 'fidelity'],**

**so that in everything  
they may be an orna-  
ment to the doctrine  
of God our Saviour.**

Domestic slavery was part of social life in the Roman, Greek and Jewish world. We have had occasion to reflect upon Paul's attitude towards it in commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:1, in introducing his Letter to Philemon, and in the commentary on Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:5-9.

Paul speaks here of the kind of behaviour expected of Christian slaves. He does not address the behaviour of Christian owners of slaves. Presumably he judges that what he has already written concerning the qualities expected of the older men and women adequately covers their relationship to any slaves that may be in a Christian household.

When Paul insists on slaves respecting their proper place in the home, he is assuming what he has declared elsewhere concerning the freedom which they have been given in Christ. They are to 'give satisfaction' – to their masters, but also to Christ and to God – by the way in which they carry out what is expected of them. Paul is speaking here on the assumption that their masters are treating them justly. He is not speaking in the context of cruelty, or of their carrying out commands which contradict their faith. The history of the martyrdom inflicted on 'disobedient' Christian slaves is sufficient proof of this.

They are to be examples of Christian virtue in their manner of speech and in the honesty of their conduct. They are to demonstrate to all, but especially to their masters 'good faith' in all senses of the word. They are to be trustworthy. They are also to witness to the Christian faith (see 1:1). Paul began this letter by speaking of himself as a 'slave of God'. His model and the model for a Christian slave is Christ himself who chose 'the form of a slave' (Philippians 2:7) in his complete obedience to the will of his Father and in the way in which he made of his life a gift of love to others.

Paul recognises the important place which Christian slaves have in the missionary outreach of the church. Their lives are an 'ornament' adding lustre (Greek: *kosmeō*) to the Christian community as they demonstrate to the world the beauty of Christian teaching. In his address Paul highlighted the saving activity of God (1:3) and of Christ (1:4). It is significant that in speaking of slaves he once again refers to 'God our Saviour'. God, who liberated the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, has given to the slaves of Crete a freedom that transcends their social position.

Titus can urge the older and younger men and women in the Christian community to live the kind of life that Paul has been describing, not because of a special capacity which they have for virtue, but because of something that God has done. Like the sun shedding its rays upon a previously dark world, God's grace has appeared (Greek: *epiphainō*) in the person of Jesus 'bringing salvation to all'. Paul is expressing here a conviction that lies at the centre of thirty years of missionary commitment. No one is excluded from God's offer of salvation (see especially the reflection on Paul's Letter to the Romans, pages 519-520). Paul's use of *epiphainō* here is echoed by Luke:

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light (*epiphainō*) to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

– Luke 1:78-79

Both Paul and Luke may be quoting from early liturgical texts which were themselves influenced by the following psalms which speak of God's face shining upon his people and bringing them salvation. All the following texts use *epiphainō*:

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

– Psalm 31:16

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

– Psalm 67:1

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

– Psalm 80:3,7,19 (refrain)

Similarly in the priestly blessing:

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

– Numbers 6:25

The 'grace of God' that has appeared is described by Paul as 'bringing salvation' (*sōtērios*). We see now why Paul speaks of both God and Christ as 'our Saviour' (1:3,4; 2:10). We are reminded of the scene where Luke has Simeon take the child Jesus into his arms and say: 'my eyes have seen your bringing of salvation' (Luke 2:30). As we listen to this hymnlike acclamation, our eyes, too, are to be upon Jesus, and, like Simeon, we are being asked to welcome him in faith, for it is Jesus who is God's gracious gift to us and it is through Jesus that salvation is offered to everyone.

**<sup>11</sup>For the  
grace of God  
has appeared,  
bringing salva-  
tion to all**

**<sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are of sound judgment [NRSV 'self-controlled'] upright, and godly**

Paul refers here to the experience of conversion that comes with embracing Christ. It is Christ who makes it possible for us to say No to a life of 'impiety' (*asebeia*, 'ungodly'; the opposite of *eusebeia*, see 1:1), a life that lacks respect for God, and is spent in all kinds of self-indulgence which have no reference beyond this world (see Paul's extensive treatment of this in Romans 1:18-32). Because of the schooling methods that prevailed at the time, the word 'training' (*paideuō*) includes the idea of discipline and suffering. As Paul uses it, he is thinking not only of the discipline required to renounce 'worldly passions', but also of our sharing in the suffering of Jesus as we share his cross. The terminology echoes that of the suffering servant of the Lord who 'was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment (*paideia*) that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5).

Christ our light had dispelled the night of darkness and given us a share in his own 'eternal life' (1:2). 'In this present age', this new life shows itself in certain qualities. Paul takes three of the qualities that he has been listing and uses them adverbially as a summary of the moral life of one who walks in the light of Christ. The first (*sōphronōs*) speaks of thinking that is wholesome because it is based on the truth that has been received in faith (see 1:8; 2:2,4,5,6). As we have noted previously, we are to have the mind of Christ. The second (*dikaiōs*) speaks of obedience to the will of God (see 1:8), which is a sharing in the obedience of Christ who is 'our righteousness' (1 Corinthians 1:30). The third (*eusebōs*) speaks of living in the presence of God, contemplating God's face as revealed in Jesus and being sensitive to the presence of God in the events, the things and especially the people around us (see 1:1; compare *semnos*, 2:2,7).

These three virtues were highly regarded among Greek and Roman moralists. Paul the missionary is forging links between a Christian way of life and what was best in the surrounding culture.

Having described the kind of life Christians are able to live ‘in this present age’ because of the appearance of Christ, Paul speaks of another appearance, a ‘manifestation’ (*epiphaneia* which we await. This is ‘the manifestation of the coming’ (*parousia* of the Lord Jesus’ (2Thessalonians 2:8). We live in the hope of being with Christ in the ‘eternal life’ (1:2) that transcends ‘this present age’. This hope is ‘blessed’ (*makarios*), because, unlike other hopes that are deceptive, this hope rests in a person, Jesus, and is founded on God’s word.

We are awaiting the manifestation of Jesus Christ ‘the Lord of glory’ (1Corinthians 2:8). It is he who is ‘the glory of our great God and Saviour’, for it is he who reveals the radiant beauty of God. Now we know in faith that he lives in the radiant glory of God. We look forward to the day when he will be revealed in glory. For the third time Paul speaks of ‘God our Saviour’ (see 1:3; 2:10). The glory that will be revealed when the risen Christ is manifest for all to see is the glory of God. The final salvation that will be enjoyed by all who wait for him in hope is the gift of ‘our great God and Saviour’, for God has chosen to offer ‘salvation to all’ through ‘Christ Jesus our Saviour’ (1:4). On ‘the day of Christ’ (Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16), we hope that ‘we will be with the Lord forever’ (1Thessalonians 4:17). Our hope is to ‘belong to him at his coming’ (1Corinthians 15:23). The goal of Paul’s proclamation of the word is ‘to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2Corinthians 4:6). On that day we will see him as he is, and in seeing him we will see manifested the glory of our great God and Saviour.

He who will one day appear in glory is he who ‘gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father’ (Galatians 1:4). As Jesus himself declared, he came ‘to give his life as a ransom’ for us (Mark 10:45): ‘This is my body which is given for you’ (Luke 22:19). He ‘died for us, so that we may live with him’ (1Thessalonians 5:10). Paul is echoing the psalm: ‘O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will *redeem* Israel from all its *iniquities*’ (Psalm 130:7-8).

In this present age we are to be ‘zealous for attractive (*kalos*) deeds’ (see 2:3,7). Such deeds have their source in God who, through Jesus, has purified us, making us his own ‘treasured possession’ (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6). Christian excellence transcends anything dreamed of in the pagan world, for it is the life of Christ in us – Christ, the graciousness of God, the radiant splendour of God’s beauty, and the manifestation of God as Saviour.

**<sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

**<sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.**

**<sup>15</sup>Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you.**

**<sup>3:1</sup>Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup>to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone.**

Verse fifteen introduces a new section in which Paul's focus is directed to instructing Titus on how he is to 'exhort' believers to live in the world, and how he should 'reprove' the Jewish Christians who are disrupting the community. These were the same two verbs which he used earlier in describing what an elder/bishop needed to do (see 1:9). They provide a nice balance. To 'exhort' (*parakaleō*) is to be an instrument of Christ calling (*kaleō*) people to repentance and to communion. To 'reprove' (*elegchō*) is to correct people's wrong thinking and wrong behaviour. Paul is once again letting the community know that he is behind Titus's exercise of authority.

If we are correct in attributing this letter to Paul, he would be writing about the time of the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman war in 66AD. This would add an urgency to his instruction. The Christian communities are not to be used as forums for whipping up anti-Roman sentiment. In his earlier description of the troublemakers Paul called them 'rebellious' (1:10). Titus is to remind the believers that, in principle and where possible, they are to be 'subject' to the civil authorities. He is again stressing good order (see the commentary on Romans 13:1-7). In his earlier description of the troublemakers he called them 'disobedient' (1:16). Titus is to remind the believers that, in principle and where possible, they are to be obedient. In his earlier description of the troublemakers he said that they were 'unfit for any good work' (1:16). Titus is to remind the believers that they are to be 'ready for every good work'.

Divisive and disruptive talk and behaviour must stop. When Paul himself was attempting to deal with the troublemakers in Corinth, he wrote: 'I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness (*praitēs*) and gentleness (*epieikeia*) of Christ' (2Corinthians 10:1). He instructs Titus to try to inculcate these same virtues of being gentle (*epieikēs*) and courteous (*praitēs*), in the communities under his charge.

Paul himself is a Jewish Christian. He lists the kinds of vices from which people have been freed through baptism into the Christian church. They stand in stark contrast with the virtues which Titus is to try to inculcate. In effect Paul is saying to his Christian compatriots: if any of you is still behaving in any of these ways, you should not be. If Paul is writing about the time of the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman war of 66AD, his words here would have a special relevance.

In view of the accent in this letter on ‘knowledge of the truth’(1:1), we are not surprised that Paul would begin his list with ‘foolish’ (*anoētos*). Paul’s use of this term in his Letter to the Galatians is instructive. The foolishness of the Galatian Christians is that they have failed to recognise God’s wisdom in the crucified Jesus:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! ... Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?

– Galatians 3:1,3

Paul has already described the troublemakers as ‘disobedient’ (1:16), and instructed Titus to call them to obedience (3:1). Their foolishness and their failure to obey is because they are ‘led astray’. We think of the false prophecies that abounded at the time of the outbreak of the anti-Roman uprising. We think, too, of the words of Jesus:

Many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.

– Matthew 24:10-12

Instead of being ‘slaves of God’(1:1) like Jesus, they were once enslaved by their own impulses, ‘sold into slavery under sin’ (Romans 7:15). They failed to experience true life because the seed of life was choked by their giving themselves up to ‘pleasures’(see Luke 8:14). ‘Envy’(*phthonos*) has a special power to destroy trust and communion. The final vice, mutual hatred, is the opposite of Christian love (*agapē*). We recall Jesus’ solemn words:

I say to you that listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

– Luke 6:27

**<sup>3</sup>For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, enslaved [NRSV ‘slaves’] to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.**



**<sup>4</sup>But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared,  
<sup>5</sup>he saved us,  
not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy,  
through the washing [NRSV 'water'] of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit  
<sup>6</sup>which [NRSV 'This Spirit'] he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,  
<sup>7</sup>so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.  
<sup>8</sup>The saying is sure.**

The solemn statement from verse four to verse seven forms one single sentence in Greek. Paul seems to be quoting with approval (verse eight) from a liturgical or catechetical source, perhaps a baptismal liturgy. Perhaps the vocabulary of this quotation accounts for some of the language which Paul has used earlier in the letter. We have already seen his accent on God as 'Saviour' (see 1:3; 2:10,13) as well as his earlier use of *epiphainō* ('For the grace of God has *appeared*, bringing salvation to all', 2:11) and *epiphaneia* ('We wait for the *manifestation* of the glory of our great God and Saviour', 2:14).

God's saving action is not something which we can earn by our own righteous behaviour. It is a sheer gift of grace. We reflected on the meaning of 'righteousness' when commenting on Galatians 2:16 and Romans 1:17, where what Paul says here in verse five is a major theme.

In speaking of God's saving action, Paul highlights three attributes of God. The first is 'goodness' (*chrēstotēs*), echoing his words to the Ephesians about God's will which is to 'show the immeasurable riches of his grace in *kindness* (*chrēstotēs*) toward us in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:7). The second is 'loving kindness' (*philanthrōpia* 'loving human beings'), a quality not used elsewhere in the New Testament to describe God. We find it, however, in Jewish writings of the time as a counter to Greek criticism. Because the Jews held themselves aloof from a lot of public life, they and their religion were accused of hating their fellow human beings. Paul's accent in this letter on the appearance of God's grace, 'bringing salvation to all' (2:11) helps explain his describing God in this way. The third quality is 'mercy' (*eleos*). We reflected on the richness of 'mercy' in commenting on Ephesians 2:4.

Paul is speaking about the new way of life into which they were introduced through Christian baptism. There are echoes here of his words in the Letter to the Ephesians in which he speaks of 'the washing of water by the word' (Ephesians 5:26). The effect of this 'washing/bath' (Greek: *loutron*) is described in a word that had wide currency in Paul's world, 'rebirth' (*paliggenesia*), the meaning of which is clarified here as a 'renewal' (*anakainōsis*) that is brought about by the Holy Spirit: 'You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God' (1Corinthians 6:11).



The waters of baptism cleansed us from the kind of behaviour described in verse three, because ‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us’(Romans 5:5). Through the prophet Joel, God promised: ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh’(Joel 2:28), a text quoted by Peter at the first Pentecost (Acts 2:17).

This experience of the Spirit is called a ‘rebirth’, because when we receive the Spirit of love which binds Christ and God in a communion of eternal life we enter into this same life. We are ‘born of water and Spirit’(John 3:5). The Christian community is ‘a new humanity’(Ephesians 2:15). We are clothed ‘with the new self, created according to the likeness of God’(Ephesians 4:24). This ‘rebirth’ is called a ‘renewal’, for ‘we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life’(Romans 6:4). Once we were ‘slaves to various passions and pleasures’(3:3). Now ‘we are slaves in the new life of the Spirit’(Romans 7:6).

If any one is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.

– 2Corinthians 5:17

It is a progressive, organic, renewal which occurs daily as we are ‘transformed’(Romans 12:2), ‘into the same image from one degree of glory to another’(2Corinthians 3:18).

God, who is ‘generous to all who call on him’(Romans 10:12) has poured out his Spirit upon us ‘richly’. This is reminiscent of Paul’s description of God in Ephesians as one who is ‘rich in mercy’ and of the ‘great love with which he loved us’(Ephesians 2:4). All of this is manifested and realised ‘through Jesus Christ our Saviour’(see 1:4).

We have been ‘justified’(see 1:8; 2:12; 3:5) by his ‘grace’(see 1:4; 2:11); that is to say, we have been welcomed into divine communion by God’s generous gift of the Spirit. United to Christ and living by his life we have become children of God and so ‘heirs according to the hope of eternal life’(see 1:2), ‘joint heirs with Christ’(Romans 8:17).

Paul has been insisting throughout the letter on the importance of ‘sound doctrine’(1:9; 2:1). Having quoted from basic baptismal catechesis Paul insists that ‘this word’(logos) is ‘sure’(pistos, ‘to be believed’). This is ‘the word that God revealed through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour’(1:3). This is ‘the word that is trustworthy (pistos) in accordance with the teaching’(1:9). For ‘the Lord is faithful in all his words’(Psalm 145:13). We are reminded of the emphatic way in which Jesus himself used to underline important teaching with ‘Truly (*Amēn*), I say to you’. The *Amēn* offers the ultimate reassurance that his words are founded on the fidelity of God.

<sup>8b</sup>**It is my will [NRSV 'I desire'] that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone.**

<sup>9</sup>**But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.**

Paul is expressing more than a desire. This is an executive command (Greek: *boulomai*). Those who have come to believe in God must 'be careful' (*phrontizō*), that is to say, they are to think carefully about what Paul has said and take care to do something about it. They are to 'devote themselves (*proistēmi*) to good works' (see 2:7,14). Good works are to be their priority. Such good works are 'excellent' (*kalos*) for they are attractive and attract people to the faith of which they are the fruit. They are also 'profitable' because they connect with people's real lives. Notice again the accent on universality; they are profitable to 'everyone' (see 2:11).

Early in the letter Paul stated that one of the requirements for those appointed as elders is that they be able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine (see 1:9). He went on to speak about certain Christian Jews who must be silenced, describing them as 'idle talkers and deceivers' (1:10). The only hint he gives about their teaching is that it has to do with 'Jewish myths' and 'commandments' (1:14). Here in verse nine he is more explicit. The key word is 'about the law' (*nomikos*). The 'controversies', which Paul qualifies as 'stupid', concern interpretation of Scripture. Paul's thought here is best understood in the light of his discussion of wisdom and foolishness in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. To argue about the meaning of the sacred scriptures without grasping the mystery of the cross is to argue foolishly. One example of this is the focus on 'genealogies'. The Torah has a lot to say about genealogies for they establish who is and who is not part of the people of the promise. The universal scope of God's saving love as shown in Jesus has put an end to all such speculation, for 'the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all' (2:11).

The controversies fomented by the troublesome group of Jewish Christians are causing 'dissensions and quarrels about the law'. This is the opposite of the kind of behaviour that is the fruit of faith. It is 'unprofitable', rather than profitable; it is empty and valueless (compare 1:10), rather than excellent and attractive. As Paul, quoting Psalm 94, wrote to the Corinthians: 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile' (1 Corinthians 3:20).

One of Paul's abiding concerns is for the unity of the church. Factions break communion, disturb love and obscure the gospel. In itself, the Greek *hairetikos*, translated here as 'divisions', refers simply to the making of choices, selecting among alternatives. Paul's use of it here is one of the reasons why, in early Christian writings, it came to stand for selecting some aspects of the truth while neglecting others; whence the connotations of the English 'heretical'. Titus is to encourage in the community an openness to the whole truth as revealed in Jesus. Those who believe are to avoid fastening on to those aspects of the gospel that suit their prejudices or that favour their faction. It is not easy to be open to the whole wisdom of God's revelation. It is clear, however, that sectarian behaviour comes from a lack of docility, a failure to recognise the Spirit in others, and a failure to keep in touch with the whole body of the church.

We have to listen to those whom the whole community recognises as having from the Spirit the gift of teaching, and to those, too, who are acknowledged as having the gift of directing the community in accordance with the teaching of the gospel. Sectarian behaviour, which threatens the unity of the body of Christ, must be exposed.

Earlier in the letter, Paul spoke of 'refuting those who contradict sound doctrine'(1:9). Besides protection of the community, the purpose of such refutation was that those in error 'may become sound in faith'(1:13). Paul's directions here to Titus are not intended to contradict his earlier statements. However, one cannot forever continue to debate with someone who shows no indication of wanting to listen and learn. Paul is advising Titus on what to do when, after continued efforts on his part to point out the errors in their teaching, those responsible continue to engage in 'stupid controversies'. There comes a point where Titus must use his energy in teaching and supporting the community. He should leave off debate till those in error show signs of wanting to learn. We are reminded of Paul's advice to the Romans:

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offences, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them.

– Romans 16:17

**<sup>10</sup>After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions,**

**<sup>11</sup>since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.**

**<sup>12</sup>When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.**

**<sup>13</sup>Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing.**

**<sup>14</sup>And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.**

**<sup>15</sup>All who are with me send greetings to you.**

**Greet those who love us in the faith.**

**Grace be with all of you.**

Paul wants Titus to take all the practical measures needed to join him at Nicopolis where he intends to spend the winter. Nicopolis ('victory-city') is probably the Roman colony on the Adriatic coast of Epirus, established after the victory of Octavian over Mark Antony at Actium (31BC). He has not yet decided whether to send Artemas as Titus's replacement, or Tychicus, who is probably the same Tychicus who was the bearer of the letter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:7) and of Paul's general letter to Gentile Christians (Ephesians 6:21).

In the meantime, Paul has met up with Zenas and Apollos. They are travelling via Crete (to Alexandria?) and Paul asks Titus to give them every hospitality and to see that they are provided with whatever they need for the next stage of their journey. He tells Titus that Zenas is a 'lawyer', possibly indicating that he has a special expertise in regard to the Jewish Scriptures. Since he does not feel the need to introduce Apollos, he is probably the Apollos whom Titus already knows (see 1 Corinthians and Acts 18:24; 19:1). Luke describes him as 'an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures' (Acts 18:24). The presence of two such men on Crete would be very welcome to Titus in his dealings with the troublesome Jewish Christians.

Helping the travelling missionaries is an example of what Paul meant earlier when he said that it was important that 'those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works' (3:8). It is to bear such fruit that they have been graced with 'the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit' (3:5).

One fruit of the Spirit is the affection of friendship that arises between those who share the same faith. Paul sends greetings to those 'who love us in the faith'. He wants the grace of which he has been speaking in this letter (see 2:11-14; 3:4-7) to be with all the Christians in Crete.