

THE GENETIC HISTORY OF TITUS.

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Did Paul write Titus? If so, when, where and how? Did he write it as a private letter to Titus, or as an epistle for the Christian public over the shoulders of Titus? Did he write it at what may be called a single sitting, or is it the resultant of previous writings epistolized into its present form? How is this epistle related to the life of Paul, of Titus, of the then Christian world-life? Can we find a sufficient setting for it in the known, or supposed, relations of Paul and Titus? Or must we see the epistle in the perspective of Christian life generally to give adequate place to all of its representations and implications? Are there no contributions from the Christian life of the times to this epistle? and if so, what are they and whence came they? These are research questions, asked to incite to study and research; and whether we can answer them or not will depend on our efforts and ability to survey the field of data involved, and it is for this end that we are now asking them.

THE LITERARY STRATA OF TITUS.

Any structure of every kind which may be said to have a genetic history and to have come into being by varied processes extending over a perceptible period of time will be stratified thereby; and these several strata will be monuments of the processes by which they came into being, a principle of science everywhere acknowledged, but especially in Geology and kindred studies.

Now if there is a genetic history involved in the writing of Titus; if more than two have contributed to its contents; if it is at all the product of the Christian life of the times; if it was written from previous sources, which root it in the life of the times; if it is not a private

letter of a single man at a single sitting to a single man in a single situation, but rather an epistle of a Christian functionary to another Christian functionary to promote the functioning of the gospel in cultivating the Messianic life in Jesus; then we may expect to find marks of all this in the several strata of the epistle. Now viewing Titus to see if it be composite or a single writing we must ever keep in mind the criteria of literary identity, homogeneity of style, of perspective physical and psychical, of subject, of didactic purpose, etc. To my own mind every time I thus approach the epistle it seems to be composed of the following strata; (1) three credal passages, 1:1-3, and 2:11-14, and 3:3-7, which appear as quotations in the text; (2) a letter of instruction, 1:5, 6, 10-16; 3:1, 2, 3-7, 8-11, 14, 15, to Titus working in Crete to "set in order the things that are wanting"; (3) another letter of instructions, 1:7-9; 2:1-10 (11-14) 15, 3:12, 13, to Titus working probably in Corinth. The application of the criteria or canons for testing literary identity shows the homogeneity of the passages assigned to the several sources above; but exposes the heterogeneity of the several sources themselves sufficient to attest their separate and distinct genesis. Hence we have termed them the strata of the epistle.

THE GENESIS OF THE STRATA OF THE EPISTLE.

It will be noticed in the three credal or confessional passages the first person plural is used; and it is nowhere else used in the epistle. The context also shows that it is "the confessional *we*" which we have here. Also it will be noticed in each case that there appears in the immediate context a title for the passages quoted, referring to it by name as it were; and this attests their separate and distinct existence and functioning before they were taken over. The first one, 1:1b-3, is titled in 1:4, "The Common Faith," used here to designate the relations of Paul

and Titus and to voice their fellowship; the second one is titled "The Doctrine of God Our Saviour," which it is the privilege of slaves to adorn in all things, 2:10; the third is expressly called "A Faithful Saying" to be taught that believers may be careful to profess honest occupations, 3:8. Clearly we have in each of these a symbolical asset of the church already formulated and in use before it found its present place and functioning in this epistle, or even in the letter-sources of it.

Also these passages are capable of being arranged in metrical form, such as characterized the folk-lore of the times and have been preserved more or less in early credal documents; as may be seen from the following:

"Christ, according to the faith of God's elect,

And the knowledge of the truth which is according to
godliness,

In hope of eternal life, which God promised long ages ago;

But in its own seasons manifested in his word,

According to the commandment of God our Saviour."

I:1b-3.

In taking over this quotation the Apostle has annotated it to better adapt it to express his purpose; and hence the following phrases crept in, somewhat disturbing the meter, "who cannot lie," and "in the message wherewith I was entrusted."

"There has appeared the grace of God saving to all men,

Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust,

Soberly righteously and godly we should live in this age,

Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory

Of our great Saviour-God; Jesus Christ,

Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from
all sin,

And purify to himself a people of his own, zealous of good
works," 2:11-14.

This "Doctrine of our Saviour-God" sounds the very heart of the Pauline gospel of universal salvation by grace as an effective way of attaining righteousness of life and realizing on the Messianic hope as it

is presented in Jesus Messiah; and I doubt whether a more adequate confession of the Way Messianic is to be found anywhere else in the creeds of Christendom. It presents salvation as of grace, as the way to holy living, as the warrant for the hope of glory, as an experience of the Messianic mission of Jesus in redeeming a people for Himself. We ought to use it in our worship; which I think the early Christians did.

“For we also once were foolish, disobedient,

Deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,
Living in malice and envy,

Hateful, hating one another.

But when the kindness of our Saviour-God,

And His love toward man appeared,

Not by works in righteousness which we did ourselves,

But according to His mercy He saved us,

Through the washing of regeneration and renewing

Of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us richly

Through Jesus Christ, our Saviour;

That, being justified by His grace we might be made
heirs,

According to the hope of eternal life.” 3:3-7.

This confession is clearly that of a sect within Christendom; for its opening words “we also” imply others than themselves, and they are describing themselves in the characteristics of these others. A comparison of verse 3 with the passages in Romans 1:18-32, where the Gentile world is described from the point of view of characteristic sinfulness as here, will show that these others are the Gentiles; and hence the confession is that of Jews, and ought to be read from the perspective of Jewish-Christian life. Also the point of view and the terminology of the creed is Jewish-Christian, very similar to the quotation in Gal. 2:15, 16 (also from a Jewish-Christian creed as evidenced by the confessional “we” in the passage); and both passages throw light on each other. This Jewish-Christian creed is specially appropriate to the

letter dealing with Titus' work in Crete, where Jewish life was so pronounced and influential, 1:10-16.

Since all three of these creeds were already current when this epistle was composed, it is clear that we must look for their origin before that time; and since two of them, 2:11-14 and 3:3-7, are quoted in the two letter-sources, it is clear that they must antedate the times of their writing. So we must first fix on the dates of these letter-sources, before we can further discuss the confessions quoted in them. The letter-source in 1:5-6, 10-16; 3:1, 2 (3-7) 8-11, 14, 15 is written on an occasion when Paul had left Titus in Crete to "set in order the things that were wanting." There are two points in the known life of Paul and Titus respectively when they may have been together in Crete, one when they were working together from Ephesus in 53-55, the other when Paul was in Crete on his way to Rome in 59, Acts 27:7-12. If the former occasion be chosen Paul may very well have been in Crete with Titus when he made the visit to Corinth mentioned in I Cor. 11:34, having stopped over in the island either in going or coming for a ministry; and this would date the letter soon after, in the year 54 or 55. If the latter be chosen, it would date the visit in 59 and the letter in 60 from Rome. If we hold that Paul was released from the Roman imprisonment, we might date the letter anywhere in this period of release; for we know nothing about where he was during that time, or whether he had such a ministry at all; and where we know nothing we may affirm anything without being proven in error. But the point I am wishing to make here is that, according to the theory here assumed of the genesis of the epistle, its authenticity is not dependent on the proof of a release of Paul from his Roman imprisonment. When we consider the meager data which may be presented in favor of each of these three possible dates in the light of our working hypothesis, the probabilities seem decidedly in favor of the first; wherein the gospel would be intro-

duced into Crete at the same time that "all Asia heard the word."

The letter-source in 1:7-9; 2:1-10 (11-14) 15; 3:12, 13 is very distinct from the one above, though treating of the same subjects largely. Clearly the situation of Titus and of Paul is very different in the perspectives of the two letter-sources. The community in Crete is very Jewish, and the Judaism prevailing is of a degenerate type, having been Cretanized by the proverbial Bohemianism of the island; but in the second letter-source he is working among Gentiles of a rather high type and capable of receiving teaching of a high order. This difference comes out not only in the coloring of the materials generally in the two, but especially in the name given to the officials he was to appoint in every city; for in Crete they are called "elders," as would be appropriate in a Jewish community, but in the other letter-source they are called by the Greek title of "bishops." The confessions quoted in the first, 3:3-7, is a Jewish-Christian symbol; but that quoted in the second, 2:11-14, is Gentilic and Catholic, as befits a Gentile community. In the second letter-source he represents himself as about to "winter in Nicopolis"; and there is no place in his known life where the Apostle could have well entertained such a purpose, except in the summer of 56, when he was taking the collection for the saints in Macedonia. He may very well have entertained the purpose at that time to visit Nicopolis for a ministry before making the visit to Corinth he had long had in mind. So the letter may be dated from Macedonia to Titus in Corinth late in the summer of that year.

But were there no bishops in the church at Corinth before this year 56? None are mentioned in either epistle to the Corinthians; and the situations therein treated would certainly have called for some mention, if there had been any. May not the disorder in the Corinthian church have been made possible for the lack of such functionaries? And may not Titus have been at the time not only finishing the collection for the saints but also setting

in order the things which were wanting in the way of appointing for that city bishops? The Apostle may have been gathering some co-workers for the purposed winter ministry in Nicopolis; and so he instructs Titus to set forward Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, and to come himself so soon as he is relieved by Artemas or by Tychicus, 3:12, 13.

If we accept these dates for the two letter-sources respectively, the confessions quoted in them must have been already formulated and gotten into circulation and wide recognition; and we must allow sufficient time for this process to have taken place, for which five or six years at the least must be allowed. This would put the year 50 as the latest for the dating of these confessions; and it would throw the genesis of the confessions back into the ferment that went on at Antioch in Syria during the decade preceding as the probable time and situation for their genesis. Have we here in the confessions quoted in this Epistle monuments of the life-struggle which went on in Antioch during the period 40-50? It seems to me that we have; and they throw much light on the life of that critical era in the development and progress of Messianic life the while. Before the year 40 there was a Jewish-Christian community at Antioch due to the coming hither of certain scattered abroad by the persecution that arose about Stephen and who preached to none save to Jews only; but when certain Cypriotes and Cyrenians came they preached the word to the Gentiles also, and the Jewish church came soon to be decidedly Gentile. This called for an investigation by the church at Jerusalem; and Barnabas was sent hither to look into the situation and report. He saw that this Gentile work was an achievement of the grace of God and encouraged it, himself taking the leadership; but finding the work too much for him alone, and knowing Paul as called to be a missionary to the Gentiles, he fetched him hither from Tarsus about the year 41 to be his associate. For a whole year

they labored prosperously, preaching a gospel for the Gentiles; and during this year Paul received the apocalypse mentioned in II Cor. 12:1ff; Gal. 2:2; Eph. 3:3-8, wherein he heard the "words not lawful for a man to utter," I Cor. 12:4, which words were "The Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members-of-the-body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," Eph. 3:6. This great apocalypse, which made such lasting and convincing impression on the Apostle as is shown in his treatments of it in the passages above, is said in Gal. 2:2 to have been the occasion of a visit to the "Pillars" in Jerusalem to lay before them *the gospel preached among the Gentiles at Antioch*, which visit must have been in the year 43. What was this "gospel which I preached among the Gentiles" thus laid before those who were "somewhat" in Jerusalem and the "Pillars," Peter, James and John? Does this language imply that it had been formulated, or attained to fixed expression? Probably it is sufficient to say, that at this time it was only in process of taking on fixedness of formulæ and expression; but was sufficiently well defined and marked to differentiate it from other forms and formularies of the gospel current among the Jewish-Christian propagandists. But the important point in this connection is that the Pauline "gospel among the Gentiles" was already this early taking on confessional form; and that it was being done in close fellowship and co-operation with Titus, as appears in this passage, Gal. 2:1-10. This process of formulating the gospel for the Gentiles must have gone on with ever-increasing definiteness and fixedness of expression through the years following, the process becoming but the more pronounced and accelerated by the controversy which raged over it. I think the passage in Gal. 2:15, 16 is an extract from such a confession, and ought to be in quotation marks in our Bibles; and is clearly a Jewish-Christian confession of justification by faith in Jesus Messiah on the part of the Jews, without forfeit-

ing thereby their prerogatives as Jews. That it is a quotation from a creed is shown by its use of "the confessional *we*"; that it is from Antioch and in connection with this controversy is shown by the context and the logical use the Apostle makes of it in the context. Out of this same nest were probably hatched the confessions quoted in these letter-sources of this Epistle, as formulæ for the gospel of Paul and Titus from the viewpoint of work among the Jews and Gentiles respectively. Early Christianity, I am persuaded, was much more prolific in confessional and credal statements than we are accustomed to think, especially in connection with its missionary propaganda; and we have excerpts from them in many passages in the New Testament and early Christian writings, which ought to be more fully studied from this point of view. Suffice it now to point out that we have here in Antioch, where Paul and Titus were allied and active during the years 40-50, just the situation needed to furnish the requisites for the genesis of these confessions.

THE STRUCTURE OF TITUS.

But how did these strata of Titus come to be put together into the present structure as it is presented in the epistle? The confessions in 2:11-14 and 3:3-7 were quoted in the respective letter-sources; and thus came into the epistle along with these two components. The confession in 1:1b-3, if 1-4 be the dedication of the book, composed when it was epistolized and published, would have been quoted at that time to show the reader what were the relations between Paul and Titus; but if it was taken over from the salutation of one of the letter-sources, it would have come in just as the other two. The closing sentence, "Grace be with you all," which is probably an authenticating conclusion to the completed epistle, added for that purpose in the Apostle's own hand, seems to have in view future readers; and it is therefore in the plural number,

and evidences the fact that the epistle is intended to be read to a congregation as a church document. All the evidence we have shows that the Apostle not only wrote the letter-sources, but also epistolized them as we now have them; but if this last be not the fact, it would not materially affect the genuineness and authenticity of the epistle. If the dates above preferred be accepted for the letter-sources, the epistolization and publication of the completed epistle may have been while Paul was in Corinth after a winter in Nicopolis in the spring of 57 just before his departure for Jerusalem; when he also epistolized his Corinthian correspondence into the present Epistles. If, however, the date 60 is preferred for the Cretan letter-source, we must put the date for the epistolization and publication of the epistle in its present form at Rome after that time. Of course both the dates of the letter-sources and the epistolization may be put in the period of his release, if it were proven that he was released, and if any evidence could be found for properly explaining the implications and references in the epistle.

THE CHEEK OF A CRITIC.

To term the above feeling out in the dark "the genetic history of Titus" would be presumptuous; for its historical representations are conspicuously vague and meagerly attested. At best it can only be said that it is an hypothesis with a view to helping to solve the mystery of the genetic history of the epistle. It may be true; or, it may not. Its competency to account for the facts must decide this. The author believes that it does this better than any other theory with which he is acquainted; and therefore he is impressed to give it to others with the hope that it may help on to a more adequate research in the matter.