

9. Titus and Philemon:

a. An overview:

Titus and I and II Timothy are referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles" because they are Paul's exhortations to two young pastors about their ministries. Articles and books discussing issues of introduction (authorship, date, destination, etc.) on any of them usually include all three as parts of a unit. Titus, therefore, is discussed in conjunction with the Timothy Letters and the highly personal letter of Philemon.

Polycarp quoted or alluded to all three of the pastorals (c. AD 95); although these references (to 1 Tim 1:1; 6:7, 10; II Tim. 2:21; 3:17; 4:10, Titus 3:1) are often dismissed, there seems to be no intrinsic reason to deny that he knew and used these letters.

Internal evidence of three kinds is used to deny their authenticity: arguments from vocabulary, style, and circumstances. Many of the words in I and II Timothy and Titus are not in any other Pauline letter. The style in these letters is more like that of Luke, Hebrews, and I Peter than of Paul's other letters--no emotional outbursts, no dialogues or imaginary opponents, and a heavy and repetitive style all contrast with his other writings. Finally, nothing in Acts or the other Pauling epistles fits the apparent circumstances of the Pastorals. (II Timothy 4:17 implies a prior release, and I Timothy 1:3 with II Timothy 4:13-19, 20 imply further travels not otherwise recorded in the New Testament.) Since no release and second imprisonment are recorded in the New Testament they must not have happened. It seems, therefore, according to these scholars, that the author of these epistles wrote in the early second century, using Paul's name to lend authority to his views.

None of these arguments are decisive, however. The argument from vocabulary count is the most often used, probably because of our culture's trust in statistics, but this fails to consider that different topics require different words. Paul's style in writing to his firends is of course different than in his letters to various churches. While it is true that nothing in Acts hints at a release from prison and renewed missions work for Paul, such is precisely the unanimous testimony of the early church; there is no a priori reason for rejecting it--indeed, it makes the best sense of the contents of these letters.

The similarity of contents between I Timothy and Titus suggests that both were probably written before AD 67, the traditional date of Paul's martyrdom, and after 61, the approximate date of his Roman imprisonment.