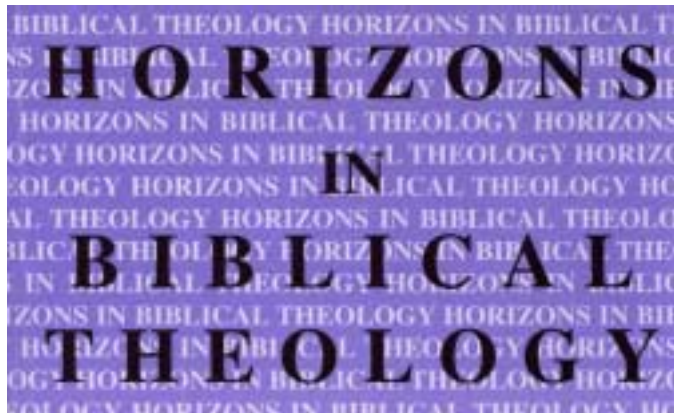


Titus as *Apologia*: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies

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From antiquity, asserts the 1st century BCE Roman historian Diodorus Siculus, Greeks have thought about the gods in two ways. Certain gods are eternal in genesis and imperishable in duration. Others are “earthly gods (*epigeioi theoi*) who have attained undying honor and fame because of benefactions bestowed upon humankind” (Diodorus 6.2). Frances Young’s shibboleth, “theology is always earthed in a context,” takes on particular piquancy when a community’s approach to the divine is “earth-based” to begin with.¹ In common perception, the epicenter for the latter way of imagining divinity was the island of Crete — for in Cretan accounts of the origins of the gods, even the father of the gods, Zeus himself, had been born as a human, raised, and indeed, killed and buried as well. I propose that it is in the interest of countering assumptions about the earthly origins of the “deity” long associated with Crete that the theology of the letter to Titus, written to a Pauline delegate ministering on Crete in the latter half of the first century, is formulated. Moreover, I suggest that the lifestyle this letter commends as being congruent with this God’s nature is itself intended to be a bold apologetic for Christianity as a better, indeed the only, way to attain an ideal of humanity long resident in Greek ethical thinking.

Two striking features of the letter suggest my thesis. The first is the frequently noted appeal at 2:12 to the traditional triad of Hellenistic virtues — to wit, it is to provide instruction on how “to live soberly and justly and piously” (*hina ... sōphronōs kai dikaiōs kai eusebōs zēsōmen*) that God’s grace has been manifest in Christ. All by itself this bow in the direction of Hellenism in a letter bearing Paul’s name is fascinating. But what makes it especially arresting is its juxtaposition with a second feature of the letter: the citing at 1:12 of a Cretan “prophet’s”

¹ Frances Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 1.

threefold critique of his countryfolk — that Cretans are perpetual liars, vicious beasts, and idle bellies (*Krētes aei pseustai, kaka thēria, gasteres argai*). The first member of this saying, I contend, has in view a specific lie regarding an “earth-bound” deity; the result is that in combination the three members of the Cretan prophet’s dictum express the opposite of the Hellenistic triad of virtues. The correspondences may perhaps best be seen when laid out in chiasmic fashion:

A. Always liars (1:12),

B. vicious beasts (1:12),

C. idle bellies (1:12).

C1. To live sensibly (2:12)

B1. and justly (2:12)

A1. and piously (2:12).

In the context of the letter to Titus these two clusters are mutually defining: the whole saying at 1:12 about Cretans being “liars, beasts, and bellies” sets up the sweeping theological statement at 2:12 about grace coming to teach us to live “soberly” (i.e., not as bellies), “justly” (i.e., not as beasts), and “piously” (i.e., not as liars). Moreover, the convergence of these two threefold statements gives the letter to Titus an apologetic thrust, and accounts in large part for Titus’ distinctive voice in the New Testament canon.

The Triad of Hellenistic Virtues

It is a commonplace among students of the Pastorals to recognize a broad reference to “the ideal of Greek ethics” in Titus 2:12’s phrase, “to live soberly and justly and piously.”² S. C. Mott explores Titus’ use of this language in the light of a longstanding conversation within Greek ethics.³ Over the history of Greek moral discourse, a fourfold canon of virtue emerges to indicate both the discrete elements and the overall unity of virtue; its elements are: understanding (or piety), justice, self-control, and courage.⁴ From Plato on, the base for ethics may be expressed alternatively in religious terms (*eusebeia*, “piety”) or in intellectual terms (*phronēsis*,

² Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) 142; actually, they take the language from Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* (3 vols.; Stuttgart: 1924-25) 3.396.

³ Stephen C. Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus 2:10-14 and 3:3-7,” *NovT* 20 (1978) 22-48; “The Greek Benefactor and Deliverance from Moral Distress” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1971).

⁴ Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 26,27.

“understanding”).⁵ At Titus 2:12, says Mott, “*eusebeia* has replaced *phronēsis* since it functions somewhat as a religious form of the latter in providing the intellectual basis for ethics.”⁶ Moreover, as the soldier-citizen becomes less a social reality in the Greek world following Plato’s era, courage (*andreios*) appears less frequently, and the situation in ethical texts becomes quite fluid. Occasionally the full fourfold canon comes to expression.⁷ Sometimes the canon remains fourfold in form but becomes threefold in content, with a synonym of one of the other three cardinal virtues taking the place of the fourth. As in our passage, the canon may be threefold in both form and content. Examples of a threefold expression similar to and at least roughly contemporary to Titus 2:12 may be found in Philo, Dio Chrysostom, and Lucian.⁸ As Jerome Quinn observes: “The triad as a whole ... would designate qualities that were appreciated and distinguished from one another by Greeks. Schematically, each would refer to giving what was due: *sōphronōs*, to one’s self; *dikaiōs*, to fellow human beings; *eusebōs*, to the gods.”⁹ And as Mott contends, “Functioning in Titus 2:12 as the canon of cardinal virtues, these three virtues are a code for virtue in the full sense.”¹⁰

Hymn or not, the statement of grace’s educative purpose in Titus 2:12 is the nub of the theology of this epistle, and its Hellenism is therefore remarkable — especially, parenthetically, in view of the straightforwardly biblical worldview of 2:14, with its echoes of Exodus and Deuteronomy and Ezekiel. In large measure, the letter to Titus claims that grace has appeared in history to make attainable a life already aspired to by Greek ethicists.

The Cretan Prophet’s Critique: “Beasts & Bellies”

Among all New Testament figures only the canonical Paul quotes classical Greek writers directly — once in the undisputed letters (1 Corinthians 15:33), once in the book of Acts (17:28), and

⁵ Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 24.

⁶ Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 28.

⁷ Dio Chrysostom, for example, describes the virtuous person as “understanding and just and holy and courageous” (*phronimos kai dikaios kai hosios kai andreios* — *Or.* 23.8). Mott (“Greek Ethics” 27-28) illustrates the fluidity of the canon by noting that in the same sentence Dio expresses the converse in threefold form: the evil person is “unjust and unholy and cowardly” (*adikos kai anosios kai deilos*).

⁸ Philo, *Prot.* 329c; “Virtue (*hē aretē*) is something that is one (*hen*); and its parts are justice (*dikaio sunē*) and sensibility (*sōphrosunē*) and holiness (*hosiotēs*.” Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 23.7: “... to live justly and wisely and sensibly” (*dikaiōs zēn kai phronimōs kai sōphronōs*). In *Somnium* 10, Lucian uses *sōphrosunē* (“sensibility”), *dikaio sunē* (“righteousness”), and *eusebeia* (“piety”).

⁹ Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 167, noting Xenophon’s final sketch of the virtues of Socrates in *Memorabilia* 4.8.11: “so religious [*eusebēs*] that he did nothing without counsel from the gods; so just [*dikaios*] that he did no injury, however small, to any man ...; self-controlled [*egkratēs*] ... wise [*phronimos*]”.

¹⁰ Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 29.

once here in a representative of the disputed letters (Titus 1:12).¹¹ One thing these citations have in common is their proverbial nature, their use thus suggesting a level of literary culture widely in circulation via handbooks, anthologies, and summaries; there is nothing in the citations themselves, however, to indicate firsthand knowledge of the works from which they are taken.¹² Since at least Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 CE, *Stromateis* 1.59.2), the saying at Titus 1:12 has been attributed to Epimenides, the ca. 6th century BCE Cretan seer and poet who is often likened to the Greek mainland's Hesiod. Mathematicians refer to the liar's paradox ("How can a Cretan's statement, 'Cretans always lie,' be either true or false?") as the Epimenides paradox or the Epimenidean conundrum.¹³ Unfortunately, none of Epimenides' works is extant, his sayings appearing in scattered fragments or literary allusions. His version of Cretan accounts of the gods comes to us chiefly through Diodorus Siculus. For now it may simply be observed that the original context and intent of the Cretan prophet's saying is unavailable to us.¹⁴ What is notable is the context Titus' Paul gives it and the use to which he puts it.

At first blush, the appeal at Titus 1:12 to a Cretan's charge that Cretans are prevaricators, predators, and profligates seems off-putting and at odds with the apparent winsomeness we have observed in the use of the Hellenistic ethical triad. Indeed, the history of exegesis is preoccupied with excuse-making for or charge-leveling against Paul (or his spokesperson, depending on the commentator's perspective). Understandably, A. C. Thiselton is frustrated enough with the search for a way to spin the use of the Cretan self-critique that he abandons it altogether.¹⁵ Taking as his sole focus the famously self-contradictory nature of a Cretan calling Cretans liars, Thiselton contends that the passage actually says nothing about Cretans; it simply asserts that truth-statements unsupported by lifestyle are self-defeating: when a people's verbiage does not affect their lifestyle (i.e., if their pretended truth-statements do not prevent beastliness and self-

¹¹ In this article I do not offer a thesis that depends on a particular view of the authorship of Titus. Because my argument is that the theological project in Titus is comparable in some respects to that in later Apologists, it should be apparent that I consider this epistle to be transitional in nature (see Philip Towner's helpful discussion, "Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method," *TynBul* 46.2 [1995] 287-314). Hopefully, the present article will contribute to our understanding of that transition. However, I prefer to leave for another occasion the discussion as to whether it is more likely that Paul himself has invoked the Cretan "prophet's" counter-overture to his own gospel, or that a Pauline pretender has ironically employed the saying to assert his own theological veracity at the expense of Cretans' religious credibility (Lewis Donelson's discussion of the use of the "noble lie" in philosophical propaganda wars is suggestive of how the latter line of analysis might proceed (*Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1986]). For simplicity's sake I refer to Titus' author in a number of ways, ranging from "Paul" to "Titus' Paul" to "our writer," without presuming agreement as to specific identity.

¹² Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, 1983) 42-45.

¹³ According to Richard D. Hofstadter, "Epimenides was a Cretan who made one immortal statement: 'All Cretans are liars,'" (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Band* [New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1979, 1989] 17).

¹⁴ Certainty about the original saying is impossible until and unless further evidence surfaces. Unable to see how a Cretan could say such a thing about his own people, G. L. Huxley proposes that it was actually a riposte delivered to Epimenides by the Delphic oracle (*Greek Epic Poetry* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969] 81-82; he is supported by G. M. Lee, "Epimenides in the Epistle to Titus (1:12)," *NovT* 22 (1980) 96.

¹⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1:12,13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in the Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis," *BibInt* 2.2 (1994) 207-223.

indulgence), their truth-claims should be disregarded. I find Thiselton's thesis about the mutually reinforcing nature of belief system and lifestyle to be cogent; however, I cannot force myself to see an either/or here: the saying both recalls a well known critique of the falsity of Cretan ideas about the gods and, precisely in so doing, sets up a call to a lifestyle designed to render plausible Christians' assertions about God. The quoting of the Cretan seer is the attributing to at least one Cretan of an ancient aspiration for piety, justice, and sobriety; but as expressed here, it is an aspiration — and this is why it is serviceable to our author — with a conscience. It is, after all, one thing to assent to, even to aspire to, a religious, ethical, and personal ideal; it is another to achieve it. I submit that the letter's dominant concerns come into focus when it is appreciated that at Titus 1:12 our writer enlists a self-critical voice within the host culture to overture in a negative fashion precisely the features of the faith he himself wants believers to put on display among nonbelieving Cretans.

Consider the second and third members of the critique: “beasts” and “bellies.” “Vicious beasts” (*kaka thēria*) brings into view what Cretans do to one another — it is an admission that their social life is predicated upon injustice. Crete was an island reputed to lack predatory animals. Pliny, for instance, asserts the absence of “wolves, bears, any noxious animals at all except a poisonous spider, wild boars, and hedgehogs” (*Natural History* 8.83). Accordingly, Plutarch introduces his address on profiting from one's enemies by contrasting Crete's reputation for being a region without wild animals (*chōran athēron*) with the sad fact that there is no polity anywhere free of the passions that produce enmity: envy, rivalry, and contention (*Moralia* 86C). “Alas,” to paraphrase Paul's Cretan prophet, “it is true of Crete as well: our being known for having no wild animals stands in condemnation of us. We have no need of predatory animals, we have predatory humans!”

And with “idle bellies” — rendered in several translations “lazy gluttons” — the critic indicts his fellow Cretans for the uncontrollable appetites that underlie the social viciousness. The expression is ironic, for there is nothing “idle” or “lazy” in the Cretan reputation. The island's principal role in the Hellenistic wars was to keep various sides stocked with reputedly fierce soldiers of fortune, and Mediterranean peace could not be established without the subduing of Cretan piracy.¹⁶ Polybius, the mid 2nd century BCE Greek historian of the rise of Rome, berates the islanders particularly for a sordid love of gain and lust for wealth; so greedy are they, he maintains, that Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful (*hōste para monois Krētaieusi tōn hapantōn anthrōpōn mēden aischron nomizetai kerdos* — *Hist.* 6.46.3).¹⁷ As backdrop to his censure, Polybius appeals to the Hellenistic canon of virtue: in their private lives people ought to be “pious” (*hosios*) and “self-controlled” (*sōphrōn*), and in their public lives they ought to be “tame” (*hēmeros*) and “just” (*dikaios* — 6.47.2). Though the form is fourfold, the content is threefold, since “tame” and “just” are synonyms. Conceivably, this is but stock declamation.¹⁸ However, A. M. Eckstein sees Polybius' critique as part of a

¹⁶ On Cretan mercenaries, see Stylianos V. Spyridakis, *Cretica: Studies on Ancient Crete* (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide Caratzas, 1992) 43-82, 130-131; on piracy, *ibid.*, 131.

¹⁷ For an evaluation of Polybius' anti-Cretan views see Spyridakis, *Cretica*, 112, 120.

¹⁸ Cf. Robert J. Karris' treatment of declamation in the Pastorals (“The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” *JBL* 92 [1973] 549-564).

broader vision of the origins of correct and incorrect conduct, that is to say, of “justice” and “injustice.” Polybius, he maintains, portrays Cretan turbulence, injustice, and ignoble behavior as having “at the center of the web of evil” uncontrolled avarice and the lust for gain (*aischrokerdeia kai pleonexia*) — “the besetting Cretan vice (Polybius 6.46.3; 6.46.9; 6.47.4).”¹⁹ In the Cretan prophet’s juxtaposition of viciousness and gluttony, Paul finds a similar assessment: unbridled appetites make for bestial behavior.

Other literary sources less jaded than Polybius’ *History*, specifically Aristotle’s *Politics* and Strabo’s *Geography*, preserve Crete’s solicitude for sociability and temperance, and its antipathy toward injustice and appetite. Though bothered by what they consider to be its many inadequacies, Aristotle and Strabo nevertheless treat the ancient Cretan constitution as one that had sought an equilibrium of relationships between gender, age, family, and power groupings (Arist. *Pol.* 2.2.12; 2.7; Strab. 10.4.20-22). Especially interesting is the provision for a common table (*ta sussitia*). According to Aristotle, the ideal described in the Cretan constitution is one in which meals are taken in common “so that all the citizens are maintained from the common funds, women and children as well as men; and the lawgiver had devised many wise measures to secure the benefit of moderation at table (*hē oligositia*)” (Arist. *Pol.* 2.7.4). Strabo’s description of the Cretan common table differs in that it is a male-only institution, but the logic is similar: “Now harmony ensues when dissension, which is the result of greed and luxury (*dia pleonexia kai truphēn*), is removed. For when all live sensibly and simply (*sōphronōs gar kai litōs zōsin*) there arises neither envy nor arrogance nor hatred” (Strab. 10.4.16).²⁰ As Strabo summarizes: “In regard to Crete, writers agree that in ancient times it had good laws, and rendered the best of the Greeks its emulators” (Strabo 10.4.9).

The point is not that this describes the Crete first century Christians there experienced — Strabo says most of what he describes is long gone (10.4.22). It is simply that the literary climate is one in which it is perfectly reasonable to expect there to have emerged at some point a self-critical voice — like the one quoted at Titus 1:12 — acknowledging the gap between Cretans’ ethical standards of justice and sobriety and the stubborn fact of antisociality and uncontrolled appetite. Nor do I wish to imply that the author of the epistle to Titus has read Aristotle, Plutarch, Polybius, or Strabo. We cannot even assume he has read at length that Epimenides whom he appears to quote. However, urbane and well-traveled members of the Pauline itinerary or continuers of his legacy — just as Paul himself — could be expected to be as familiar with the general contours of the social and ethical landscape the Cretan quip presupposes as with the quip itself. The evidence indicates a Cretan social and ethical consciousness that is already widely known and considered ancient by the time of Aristotle, one that our author believes he has captured in a self-critical voice from within that culture. That the author of the epistle to Titus would take up a Cretan’s protest of his people’s failings is no more surprising than if a modern missionary to the United States were to appear in Baltimore quoting H. L. Mencken on the foibles of North Americans.

¹⁹ Arthur M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 71-72.

²⁰ Compare the same combination of the adverb *sōphronōs* and the verb *zēn* at Titus 2:12; and see Mott, “Greek Ethics” 27-28.

These latter members of the hexameter at Titus 1:12 (“beasts” and “bellies”) happen to be the converse (in reverse order) of the first two adverbs of 2:12 — “sensibly” and “justly” — by which the apostle provides positive content to the “living” which grace intends to teach the human race. This suggests that in Titus there is at work a similar understanding about the interplay between beastliness (or injustice) and gluttony (or intemperance), on the one hand, and justice and sobriety, on the other. In addition, however, the writer to Titus joins to this an older critique, and one that argues for a deeper root to the problems of injustice and intemperance themselves. That root is impiety, manifested in a dissembling approach to deity.

The Cretan Prophet’s Critique: “Liars”

The theological critique of Cretan thinking is anticipated in the letter’s introduction, for here we see that it is the claims of “the God who does *not* lie” (1:2) — an attribution unique in all of Scripture — that the writer intends to advance on a people he will soon say can do nothing *but* lie (1:12). There is widespread agreement in ancient sources about the mendacity of Cretans. In the Greek speaking world, the verb “to Cretize” (*krētizein*) means “to lie” (*pseudesthai*).²¹ But what underlies the characterization is Crete’s infamous religious prevarication, a misstep of first principles. Despite Clement of Alexandria’s attribution of Paul’s quote to Epimenides, the fact is that Titus 1:12 marks the first appearance of the saying in its entirety in any extant source. Prior to this, the first member of the saying appears for the first time, and that in this precise wording — “Cretans are always liars” — in Callimachus, the 3rd century BCE librarian of Alexandria. Callimachus explains exactly what he finds so offensive about Cretans: “Cretans are always liars. For a tomb, O Lord, Cretans build for you; but you did not die, for you are forever” (*Krētes aei pseustai; kai gar taphon, ō ana, seio Krētes etektēnanto; su d’ ou thanes, essi gar aiei* — *Hymn to Zeus* 8-9). In a word, Cretans are dissembling deicides.

While, apart from Titus 1:2 itself, the epithet “unlying” (*apseudēs*) is never applied to deity in either Jewish or Christian scriptures, the term is used in classical texts, according to LSJ, “especially of oracles and the like.”²² And the nuance intended in the letter to Titus is dramatically foreshadowed by the term’s use in another saying from the same Callimachus. In a prayer to Demeter, Callimachus asserts that it is a matter of “speaking without lying” (*apseudea legōn*) to say that one “knows the Cretan tomb is empty” (*tapho[n to]n K[r]ēta ginōskein kenon* — *Iambus* 12 [Fragment 202] 15-16).

Himself the champion of a transcendent Olympian view of the gods, Callimachus takes as his point of departure an immanentistic Cretan heritage that maintains the gods of the Greek pantheon to have originally been but men and women.²³ Emblematic of the original humanity of

²¹ Suetonius, *On the Right Insult*, 13.253, as cited in C. Spicq, *Les Épistres Pastorales*, 2 vols., 4th revised ed. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969) 608 (with other references).

²² LSJ, citing Hesiod *Theog.* 233, Herodotus 1.49, Aeschylus *Cho.* 559. See LSJ, 298.

²³ At play here is a longstanding contrast between the transcendent Olympian portrait of the gods and the immanentist Cretan portrait. Cf. the discussion in W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Free Press, 1950) 40-42; in the spirit of Sorokin, H. O. J. Brown contrasts “sensate” early Cretan-Mycenaean culture

the gods is ancient Crete's claim to have a tomb for Father Zeus, perhaps on Mt. Juktas (though there are other claimants), a mountainous ridge south of Cnossus, resembling a human face oriented upwards in profile and long thought of as Zeus in repose.²⁴ Cretans had their own angle of vision: their race had emerged from the earth, and so, of course, they were the original Greeks (Diodorus 5.64.1). In the face of Olympus' claim to be the seat of the gods, Crete countered that those very gods were but men and women of Crete elevated to deity by virtue of benefactions bestowed upon the human race (Diodorus 5.64.2). Cretans held their island to be the birthplace of the majority of the gods, and in the case of the preeminent man-become-god, Zeus, the burial place as well. Of course, this also made Crete the launching pad of the worship of the gods (Diodorus 5.77.3).

The Cretologist Stylianos Spyridakis suggests that Callimachus' bile against Cretans is a result of their complicity in the anthropocentric religious ideas of Callimachus' contemporary, Euhemerus of Messene. Euhemerus co-opts the ancient Cretan notion of deity emerging from humanity in support of a teaching that the gods themselves are nothing but a projection of the human spirit — this, maintains Spyridakis, is as close to blasphemy as pre-Christian Greek religion is capable.²⁵ By claiming a tomb for Zeus, Cretans have always walked right up to a line between divinity and humanity that, despite being ever blurry in Greek thinking, had nonetheless always at least in principle been there. But in the Hellenistic age Crete's heritage of maintaining a tomb for Zeus emboldens rationalists, who, in light of his having been thus cut down to human proportions, are prepared to go the rest of the way and claim: "Zeus is dead."²⁶ Callimachus' protest against Euhemerus is renewed by Plutarch (fl. ca. 80-120 CE) not long after the New Testament era. Plutarch insists that the Euhemeran mythology is predicated upon a lack of faith and is a deliberate fabrication. It amounts to "atheism," to a "degrading of things to the human level," and to an assault on piety and reverence and faith (*Is. et Os.* 359-360). And Lucian the satirist will play off the popular association of Crete with such deicidic ideas late in the 2nd century CE (*Philopseudes* 3; *Timon* 6).

It would be the incorporation of Epimendes' and Euhemerus' views into the writings of Diodorus at the birth of the Roman Republic and about 100 years before the letter to Titus, that would govern the general understanding of Cretan religion at the beginning of Christian era.²⁷ Though

with the "ideational" culture of Homer's Greece (*The Sensate Culture* [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996] 43). Thanks to my colleague Al Mawhinney for calling my attention to this dynamic.

²⁴ See A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, Vol. 1, *Zeus God of the Bright Sky* (NY: Biblo & Tannen, 1964 reprint) 157-163; and Vol. 2, *Zeus God of the Dark Sky (Thunder & Lightning)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925) 939-940, and photograph of Mt. Juktas at Plate 43; and Lewis Cottrill, *The Bull of Minos: The Discoveries of Schliemann and Evans* (NY: Facts on File, 1953) 112. More reserved about the identification of any of the places designated as the "tomb of Zeus," and especially about Mt. Juktas, is Martin P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, 2nd rev. ed. (NY: Biblo & Tannen, 1950, 1971) 461-462.

²⁵ Spyridakis, *Cretica*, 2.

²⁶ Thus the title of Spyridakis' essay: "Zeus is Dead."

²⁷ Diodorus himself says his section on Crete is dependent in part "upon Epimenides who has written about the gods" (5.80.4). And Diodorus provides the most extensive account we have of Euhemerus' utopian island, Panchaea, to which the human Zeus was supposed to have migrated from Crete to establish his thoroughly humanistic and enlightened worship (5.42-46).

it goes beyond the evidence to argue for direct literary influence of Diodorus on the epistle to Titus, it should be noted that Titus' specific concern to counter Jewish "myths" and "genealogies" finds a counterpoint in the fact that Diodorus' section on Cretan religion is woven together by words from the *mutholog-* root and that it is framed as genealogies of gods and heroes. Diodorus thinks of himself as merely the popularizer of longstanding traditions (the verb *paradidonai* courses through the sections on the early Greeks). The strong likelihood is that Diodorus' *History* contains precisely the sort of "myths" and "genealogies" Paul's rival Jewish teachers seek to accommodate with their own torah-based apologetic "myths" and "genealogies."²⁸ Titus' Paul wants none of it.

Two features of the Cretan portrait of Zeus stand out: the attributes associated with him, and the transaction of honor for benefactions. In the first place, Diodorus depicts the Cretan Zeus in terms of an ethical triad: this Zeus surpasses all in "courage (*andreia*) and wisdom (*sunesis*) and justice (*dikaio sunē*) and all the other virtues" (5.71.1). The tag, "and all the other virtues," looks more like a statement of the unity and interdependence of the virtues enumerated rather than a claim to others, because the elucidation that follows incorporates only the three listed.²⁹ The threefold canon is familiar in the Hellenistic period; however, in one throwback to an earlier age, Diodorus displaces "self-mastery" (*sōphronsunē*) with "courage," and in another, he employs the more intellectual term "wisdom" over the more religious "piety" (*eusebeia*). Preeminent among Zeus' attributes is his "justice"; it is pressed into the service of the human race through Zeus' laying down laws that distinguish between just and unjust behavior, through his establishing judges and law courts, and through his persuading the good (also a function of his "wisdom") and punishing the evil (5.71.1). His "courage," a martial virtue, manifests itself in his war with the Giants (or Titans), enemies of justice and piety (5.71.2). And though Diodorus stresses the more intellectual "understanding" over the more religious "piety," Zeus' understanding nonetheless turns out to be piety-hued, for his sagacious offering of a sacrifice to the gods before the battle with the Titans leads to insight into the propitious outcome of the war (5.71.3).

Given the preference for *sōphronsunē* over *andreia* in the Hellenistic period's ethical canon and given the particular interest the epistle to Titus has in self-mastery, or the lack thereof, at Crete, the want of this virtue in Diodorus' portrait of Zeus is at least worth mentioning. According to a fragment of Book 6 preserved by John Chrysostom (court preacher in Constantine's Constantinople), Diodorus allows as how the Cretan Zeus' human name had been Picus; he had been king of Italy for one hundred and twenty years, and had had many sons and daughters because he was a debaucher of comely women (6.5.1).³⁰ It is because of Picus' "assuming

²⁸ Quinn is probably correct in identifying Titus 1:14's "Jewish myths" as a rival *haggadah* ("...the homiletic, narrative embellishment of the Pentateuchal history ...") and "commandments of truth-bereft humans" as a rival *halakah* ("...the 'oral law' or further explanation of how to carry out the commandments of the Torah ..." [109]). He further lays out suggestive lines of analysis for the rival Jewish teachers' appeal to genealogies (245-247) alongside the mythical interpretation of Scripture, all in order to "to bridge the gap between the Scriptures of Israel and the apostolic faith (109)." I suggest, albeit in passing, that Diodorus' Cretan myths and genealogies may merit study for insight into the religious preunderstanding of those whose beliefs both Titus' Paul and his rival apologetic storytellers seek to mold.

²⁹ Cf. Philo, *Prot.* 329c: (cited in n. 8).

³⁰ It should be noted that for the entirety of Books 6-10 and 21-40 we are dependent upon fragments preserved by later writers.

mysterious aspects” so as to “be looked upon as a god” by the women he was seducing, that this mortal was thought godlike. He was interred on Crete at his own instructions in a temple built by his sons: “This monument exists even to the present day, and it bears the inscription, ‘Here lies Picus whom men also call Zeus’” (6.5.3).³¹ Whether John passes along this tradition as a faithful preserver of Diodorus or crafts it as a Christian debunker of the pagan gods is beyond my competency to judge. According to Book 3, where the manuscript tradition is intact, Diodorus distinguishes between the younger Olympian Zeus and his older, though less well known Cretan counterpart; in this passage Diodorus confirms that he does know of the Cretan Zeus’ death and burial on Crete (3.61.1-6): the Cretan Zeus “named the island after his wife Idaeia, and on it he died and was buried, and the place which received his grave is pointed out to this day” (3.61.2).³² It would appear that Book 6’s Picus fragment is either counterpart to or derivative of Diodorus’ Book 4 account of Olympian Zeus’ bedding of Alcmena at the conception of Heracles. Unwilling to force himself on her and thus compromise the legality (*nomimos*) of his embraces, and knowing he cannot persuade her because of her chastity (*dia tēn sōphrosunēn*), he decides to use deception (*hē apatē*): “he deceived her by assuming in every respect the shape of Amphytryon,” her husband (4.9.3). That Zeus — Cretan or Olympian — would be the last god to be accused of *sōphrosunē* is pointedly clear. And that Titus’ biblically unique reference to the Christian God as being “unlying” stands in self-conscious contradistinction to a chief deity whom Titus’ Paul would consider to be an immoral liar I consider to be altogether likely.

The second thing to be observed in Diodorus’ Cretan Zeus is the way humans confer upon him divine status in consideration of his bestowal of benefactions upon the human race. The result of Zeus’ placing his virtues in service of the human race is that he “receives peculiar honors” (*tugchanein hōrismenōn timōn* — 5.71.3). Diodorus summarizes: “because of the magnitude of his benefactions and his superior power all people accorded him (aorist passive infinitive of *sugchōreō*) as with one voice both the everlasting kingship which he possesses and his dwelling upon Mount Olympus” (5.71.6). In a penetrating analysis, Kenneth Sacks argues that one of Diodorus’ most fundamental premises is the Hellenistic belief that virtue placed in service to humanity will be rewarded.³³ Deification is the ultimate return of honor for benefactions bestowed. What Diodorus does with Zeus is no different than what he does with any number of cultural heroes — civilizers, inventors, and city builders.³⁴ For a Diodorus the notion of there being a “tomb for Zeus” connotes the nearness of the human soul to divinity; its legacy is a willingness to participate in that competition for honors which drives the ancient economy.³⁵ In whatever way such notions would have been found their way to Titus’ Paul, there is little way for

³¹ On the mythological background to Picus, the woodpecker who guard the infants Romulus and Remus and is subsequently transformed into an Italian king, see *OCD*, 833; Martin P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 483; and W. R. Halliday, *Classical Review* (1922) 110.

³² Diodorus’ Cretan Zeus is older if less famous than the Olympian, father to rather than son of the Curetes, and king merely of the island of Crete — not of Italy, as in the case of John’s Cretan Zeus, nor of the entire world, as in the case of the Olympian Zeus.

³³ Kenneth Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990) 79.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 71 (see the extensive list there).

³⁵ Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (London: Yale University Press, 1974), esp. p. 56.

him to express how alien they are to him than to protest that people who think this way are inveterate liars.

And that “Cretans are always liars” would indeed have been understood to refer to such a religious offense exactly contemporary to the career of the apostle Paul is clear from a literary swipe at Cretans from the poet Lucan — himself nephew both to Seneca, Nero’s teacher, and to Gallio, Paul’s judge in Corinth. In *Pharsalia*, his epic poem about the Roman Civil War, Lucan lingers over the burial of one of his protagonists, Pompey.

Unable to complete the task of burning Pompey’s remains, a friend must bury the charred bones in a shallow, sandy Egyptian seaside grave, and cover it with a modest headstone. Lucan protests that Pompey’s free spirit should not have been so imprisoned within a tomb, for “the world was Pompey’s tomb.”³⁶ Indeed, being “Fortune incarnate,” Pompey, “deserves to be worshipped as a god.”³⁷ Accordingly, Lucan expects Pompey’s ghost to break free of that tomb and soar in the

frontier regions of air between the earth and the moon’s orbit, where our dark atmosphere impinges on the starry brightness of the empyrean, . . . where the souls of heroes from all over the world collect after death — such, at least, as are fitted by the flame-like quality of their virtue to survive in the lower tracts of heaven among the eternal spheres. This is, however, a refuge denied to men who lie buried in frankincense and gold.³⁸

So little worthy of the spirit of Pompey are the seaside grave and headstone that Lucan expects that

the present grave will soon disappear and all proof of Pompey’s death vanish with it. And in a more fortunate age, Egyptians who point to the stone and say: “This once marked Pompey’s grave,” will meet as little belief from our posterity as do the Cretans when they point out the alleged tomb of Juppiter on Mount Juktas.³⁹

E. Rohde attempts to capture the prevailing sentiment surrounding Crete’s tomb-for-Zeus legend as follows: “The Zeus that died and is buried is only a god reduced to a Hero.”⁴⁰ It would be more accurate to put it this way: “The Zeus that died and is buried is only a human elevated to a Hero.” This is the Cretan offense: by claiming to imprison the father of the gods within a tomb, they make him into the same sort of heroic figure as Lucan’s Pompey. But what marks a promotion for Pompey is a demotion for Zeus. It is to place Zeus himself in the second category of gods, the “earthly gods” (*epigeioi theoi*) we met in the opening paragraph of this essay in the passage from Diodorus.

³⁶ Robert Graves (trans.), *Lucan: Pharsalia* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1957) 194. Cf. J. D. Duff’s more literal (albeit less comprehensible) translation in LCL (8.795-799).

³⁷ Graves, 196; LCL 8.860-861, 840-841.

³⁸ Graves, 197; LCL 9.1-10.

³⁹ Graves, 196; LCL 8:870-872, *Tam medax Magni tumulo quam Creta Tonantis*.

⁴⁰ Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (2 vols.; 1925; repr., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966) 1.97.

Thiselton's protestations about the nonsensically self-referential nature of the liar's paradox notwithstanding, to first century readers or auditors the saying had a specific and concrete — or better, earthy — referent: Cretans' claim that Zeus had been in a previous career a mere human being. The Cretan barb's appearance in the epistle to Titus is not the racial slur it is often called in the commentaries. Rather it is an exercise in what Harold Bloom might call "religious criticism."⁴¹ Nor has it any sharper an edge to it nor any greater a logical incongruity about it than the Preacher's and the Psalmist's universal (and self-inclusive!) indictment in the hands of the Paul of the undisputed letters: "None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks after God" (Romans 3:10-11; see Ecclesiastes 7:14; Psalm 14:1-3). In similar fashion, the Epimenidean hexameter allows the Paul who writes to Titus to have the Cretan say on the apostle's own behalf: "Look, in the end, we know that what everybody says about us is right: God, if he is truly God, cannot just be one of us! No wonder our lives are so messed up!" And the appending of the wink — "This testimony is true!" — is as much as to say: "If only the Cretan prophet knew how right he was — *both* about the failing *and* about the aspiration it presupposes!"

In this setting, the task of communicating what it means for God to have taken up earthly existence is a delicate one. I suggest that Titus' distinctive christological language is crafted in such a way as to ensure that these believers do not give the wrong impression to their contemporaries about what it is for God to have "earthed" his own life in the specific context of human existence. The Christian God does not emerge from among humans. To be sure, he has appeared now among humans, but his appearing is altogether a move from the top down, rather than from the bottom up. Though it is not the only possible reading of the phrase at Titus 2:13, "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" does indeed seem to be the most plausible rendering of *ho megas theos kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsous Christos*, and amounts to an attribution of deity to Jesus.⁴² At the same time, it is to be noted that Jesus is not referred to in Titus in the same way he is in 1 Timothy, that is, as he who is "one mediator between God and human beings, the human being Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Rather, here in Titus the incarnation is referred to more obliquely: in terms of the "appearance" of "the grace of God" (Titus 2:11) and "the kindness and love for humans of our God and Savior" (3:4). Various explanations have been offered for the circumlocutions in 2:11 and 3:4, and for the attribution of divinity to Christ at 2:13. Many observe — as if observation amounted to explanation — a similar use of honorific language in the Hellenistic ruler or Roman emperor cult.⁴³ Lewis Donelson says the reference to Christ as God is "functional" rather than "speculative"; it is not a matter of investigating "Jesus' metaphysical status."⁴⁴ Mott suggests that the use of abstract nouns may bespeak a potential

⁴¹ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

⁴² Murray Harris, "Titus 2:13 and the Deity of Christ," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday* (eds. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 262-277.

⁴³ See, for instance, the inscription by the league of Asia Minor in 48 B.C.E. honoring Julius Caesar as "God Manifest and Common Savior of all human life" (*theos epiphanēs kai koinos tou anthrōpinou biou sōtēr*; *SIG* 760; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* [St. Louis: Clayton, 1982], No. 32). See also the excursus, "The Soteriological Terminology of Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-7" in Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 143-146.

⁴⁴ Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy*, 146.

“difficulty ... in speaking of the direct action of God,” a difficulty diminished by the expressing of God’s appearance in history in terms of his virtues rather than of his actual self.⁴⁵ Troy Martin even contends that the christology of abstractions in Titus is docetic, expressive of a breach with the incarnational christology in 1 Timothy.⁴⁶

In Titus 2:11-14 as a whole, the saving acts of Israel’s covenant Lord are attributed to Jesus Christ. What Israel’s God promised to do, Jesus has done: he has redeemed, he has purified, he has taken a people to himself for possession. To the extent that, as Forrest Gump might say, divine is as divine does, perhaps it is indeed appropriate to think of this as a functional christology. But the perspective of the epistle to Titus is not that deity is something Jesus becomes, much less merely resembles, by virtue of his beneficent, saving acts. That would be to participate in the Cretan fabrication, the divinizing or heroizing of a human. The appeal to the Cretan prophet makes sense only if the christology is ontological as well — or, to put it in other terms, if the functional christology presupposes a metaphysical christology. The word entrusted to this Paul, and which he in turn entrusts to Titus, et al., is a word about divinity in a human context, that is, about Israel’s covenant Lord actually manifesting his own person in the person of Jesus Christ. To be sure, Chalcedon’s nuancing of the relations among divine persons lies some distance down the road, but the epistle to Titus makes Chalcedon a more likely stop on that road than, say, Alexandria (home of Arius). The divinizing language that is used elsewhere for rulers and emperors and here for Jesus receives its content there as well as here from the person or persons being described: there of humans who are godlike, here of God who has become human. God’s self-manifestation among humankind is described by means of the attributes that are at the fore in that enterprise. The mode of expression — that is, the use of abstract nouns — does not indicate that God’s involvement with humanity is problematic, much less docetic, but that these are the attributes most necessary to the salvation of humans from the prison of their impiety, antisociality, and appetites.

Rather than think about the one whose “glorious (re-)appearing” they await as being one more human who has attained deity by his benefactions (no matter how salvific), believers should be assured that his appearance was, first and last, the appearance of God himself. What fuels the engine of the epistle to Titus is not an entrapment in metaphysical dualism, but rather, given the Cretan religious heritage, a concern to communicate that the dynamic of incarnation is a matter of divine condescension rather than of human projection. Christ’s appearance is a matter of God’s gracious, kind, and beneficent self-revelation, rather than yet one more promotion of a larger-than-life human to the pantheon.

⁴⁵ Mott, “Greek Ethics,” 43.

⁴⁶ Troy Martin, “The Rhetorical Situations of the Pastorals: Proceeding beyond a Partial Paradigm Shift” (paper presented at the 1994 national meeting of the SBL 1994) 9-10.

Lifestyle as *Apologia*

Another reason for the use of abstract nouns to refer to God's self-manifestation in Christ lies at hand in Abraham Malherbe's contention that the coming of Christ is designed to effect the replication of precisely these divine attributes in humankind.⁴⁷ For what is notable about the divine attributes enumerated is not so much that they are transcendent, but that they are communicable. Christ came to make us gracious, philanthropic, and kind. Herein lies the truth in Donelson's contention that the christology does not investigate Jesus' metaphysical status: this is a christology for emulation (2:11-14; 3:4), wedded to a pneumatology of empowerment (3:5-6). In this the epistle to Titus anticipates the apologists. Origen makes precisely this appeal in his *Contra Celsum*. Just before taking up Celsus' protest at Origen's and other Christians' mocking of the tomb-for-Zeus legend, Origen speaks to Celsus' likening of Jesus to others who became gods at death: Asclepius, Dionysus, and Heracles. Origen's simple response is to ask: "Can they support their claim to be gods by proving that there are people who have been reformed in morals and have become better as a result of their life and teaching?" (3.42). At the same time the epistle to Titus articulates its christology of the self-revelation of the biblical God, it also urges the believing community to demonstrate Jesus' deity by putting forward evidence that he effects change in the people he has redeemed.

To parse Titus 2:14: the teacher of piety, justice, and self-mastery has modeled and brought them to us. Christ's coming is itself a case study in self-mastery (*sōphrosunē*) because it is an exercise in self-giving (2:14, "he gave himself for us"). That he redeems us from lawlessness (*anomia*, that is from religious rootlessness) and cleanses us into relationship with himself is to bestow piety (*eusebeia*) upon us. That he redeems and cleanses us to be a "people for possession" — that is, as those who live before him in solidarity with one another — means he places us into rightly aligned human relationships (*dikaiosunē*). And that he makes us zealous for noble deeds means he has displaced worldly passions with a new inward disposition (*sōphrosunē*).

Because he is a communitarian, the writer to Titus looks for these marks of Christ first in the leadership, for, according to 1:8b, these individuals are to be *sōphrōn dikaios hosios egkratēs* ("sober, just, holy, and self-controlled"). Intriguingly, the structure of this verse fragment evidences even the phenomenon of a list that is threefold in content, though fourfold in form, since the first and last members are synonyms. The fact that the doubled pair has to do with self-mastery probably indicates the centrality of this virtue to the kind of community-construction the epistle envisions. And because it will be their task to encourage these marks in the life of their churches, the leaders' impact is looked for first on a more immediate circle of influence: their children. Paul wants to ensure that the Cretan leaders' children are faithful (*pistos*, that is, pious), and neither leave themselves liable to a charge of prodigality (*asōtia*, that is, being "idle bellies," the converse of being self-controlled) nor are living insubordinately (*anupotaktos*, that is, being "vicious beasts," the converse of living justly).

⁴⁷ Abraham J. Malherbe, "Response to Raymond Collins, Donald Hagner, Bonnie Thurston" (paper delivered to the Disputed Paulines Group's session on the Theology of Titus, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, November 1998) 1-15.

The citation of the Cretan prophet is aimed pointedly at the opposition, declaiming first their lives and then their teaching. First, Paul sees their personal character fitting the Cretan prophet's profile precisely: they are "insubordinate" and "destructive of households" (*anupotaktoi* and *holous oikous anatrepein*) i.e., they are relationally destructive (1:10,11). They are "vain talkers and deceivers" (*mataiologoi kai phrenapatai*), i.e., they are religious liars (1:10). They teach for base gain (*aischrou kerdous charin*), i.e., their motives are profligate (1:11).

Second, at the very same time that he describes a deficit in "piety, justice, and sobriety" which he thinks even thoughtful pagans should be able to recognize, Titus' Paul confronts a rival, Jewish "pre-Christian system of interpretation" that offers an alternate path to these very same ends.⁴⁸ His view is that the mythic recasting of old covenant heroes and the adaptation of torah and kosher are the moral equivalent of the Cretan legends that cut divinity down to human size: thus he writes off their "Jewish myths," their "commandments of human origin," and their distinctions between "pure & impure." Rather than follow an eschatologically anachronistic and irrelevant route to *eusebeia* ("Jewish myths" ... "foolish disputes and genealogies, and disputes and battles over the law" — 1:14; 3:9), to *dikaiousunē* ("commandments of humans bereft of the truth" — 1:14), and to *sōphrosunē* (via a regimen of kosher that leaves the pollution of mind and conscience unaddressed — 1:15), believers should pay attention to that "healthy" teaching which is sketched at 2:11-14 and 3:4-7, and which brings true piety, justice, and self-mastery.

In the ethical sections of Titus, the combination of "piety, justice, and sobriety" is worked out in various ways, suggesting that the whole life of grace can be approached by means of each or any of the three virtues. Given space and time, I believe I could demonstrate that each provides a perspective on the whole — that each implies and is necessitated by the others. But the apologetic thrust of the letter as a whole is evident in that the most characteristic way of relating them is in the order in which they are presented in 2:12: a God-taught right relationship to self enables right relationships with others; these in turn promote a right relationship with God among onlookers. The general portrait is one in which "healthy" teaching (as defined in 2:11-14; 3:4-7) will promote an expression of self-mastery or sensibility as the linchpin of a communitarian ethic (note the fivefold appearance of the *sōphron*- root in chapter 2 [vv. 2,4,5,6,12]). Communal *dikaiousunē* ("justice") is, in its turn, realized through the right ordering of the church under able leaders, and as members pursue "good and noble deeds," in service both of one another (presumably 3:14, though not necessarily exclusively so) and the larger community (3:1,8). And in a feedback loop, the communal lifestyle of self-mastery and justice serve piety by commending the "teaching of God our Savior" to the outsider (see the *hina* ["in order that"] clauses of 2:5,8,10).

The Cretan seer's barb is counterpoint to the ethical triad of 2:12. It is simultaneously antonym and prelude to the general summary of the *paideia* of grace in 2:12 — "that we may live ... soberly, justly, and piously." Paul's use of the poet's indictment about the misrepresentation of the divine ("Cretans are always liars"), upside down social relationships ("vicious beasts"), and lack of internal controls ("idle bellies") is supposed to strike a familiar dissonant chord, to which grace's *paideia* in sensibility, justice, and piety is intended to bring resolution. Grace has come

⁴⁸ The phrase is Quinn's (*Titus*, 113).

for profligates, teaching sobriety to “idle bellies.” Grace has come for predators, teaching justice to “vicious beasts.” And grace has come for prevaricators, teaching piety toward the “unlying God” to those whose indigenous ideas about deity prove themselves to be “inveterate liars.”

Titus as a Brief for Christian Humanism

The Pastoral epistles (which would include 1 and 2 Timothy as well) are alternately chided as harbingers of an unheroic *Verbürgerlichung* of Western Christianity (Dibelius) or championed as heralds of a “Christian humanism” (Spicq). I should like to assert that in this respect, at least, Spicq is on the right track: in the light of Titus 1:12’s citing of the Cretan prophet, the positive ethics of Titus should be interpreted as an antidote to cultural deficiencies its writer would expect contemporary non-Christians themselves to recognize. Paul quotes a Cretan prophet as having critiqued his own culture for its impiety, injustice, and intemperance. Accordingly, by insisting upon the opposite of these qualities among their leaders (1:8b) and by highlighting grace’s education in sobriety, justice, and piety for Christians in general (2:12), the letter to Titus challenges Cretan Christians to live out a kind of community that coheres with the social self-criticism of an important strand of Greek thought.

Elsewhere I have written that I believe Spicq overstates things when he sees the Pastoral epistles “prescribing a strategy by which the world was ‘so swiftly (to be) won to Christianity.’”⁴⁹ Nonetheless, he strikes the right note in describing the kind of mediating position a document like Titus takes in relationship to the rest of the New Testament and what is to follow.

Titus is apologetic literature. It does as much to anticipate the *Epistle to Diognetus* and the *Contra Celsum* as it does 2nd and 3rd century documents about church government. It is a document that bespeaks, first, a theology the content of which is stable and traditional but which must be pressed into the flesh of a host culture, and, second, a communitarian ethos which must be constructed to give plausibility to the theology. If the particular shaping of community in Titus strikes moderns (and now postmoderns) as quaint or as uncritically derivative from the Greco-Roman “household,” that says more about our interests than about the text’s. As L. T. Johnson sagely observes, the author of this epistle believes that at Crete he has reached civilization’s back country.⁵⁰ Repulsed by a heritage of what he considers to be their religious fabrication and its moral aftermath, the apostle understandably believes nascent Christian congregations here need instruction in the most basic elements of the human enterprise. Given this, perhaps we should be more surprised at his confidence that new Christians may enchant their contemporaries with something immensely noble and beneficial (*kala kai ophelima tois anthrōpois*, Titus 3:8): the prospect of the attainment of an ancient if elusive ideal of what it is to be genuinely human — being rightly related to God, to others, and to oneself. The Pauline proposal is that they do so simply by pursuing lives reflective of Christ’s noble deed and redemptive beneficence — and this both across the spectrum of contemporarily meaningful

⁴⁹ Reggie M. Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: A “Bourgeois” Form of Early Christianity?* (SBSDS 122; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 203.

⁵⁰ L. T. Johnson, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987) 117.

social venues (2:1-10; 3:1-3), and under the impetus of the regenerating and renewing Holy Spirit (3:5-7).

Titus is communitarian apologetics. The Paul who writes to Titus refuses to engage in theological quarrels and casuistry about what pollutes and what does not. Rather, he insists a leadership be set in place that can instruct on site rather than pontificate from afar, and that can give shape to the inchoate community. In doing so, he challenges the reduction of theology to the plane of ideas, and insists that a people's beliefs are what they live. By contrast with Crete's humans-become-gods who had received their divinity as a return for providing benefits to humankind, Paul's God-become-human has employed his divinity to make available the ultimate human existence possible: a right relationship with deity, with other humans, and with oneself. And what articulates the life of the God who has taken on humanity is a humanity enlivened with his attributes: his graciousness, his own love for humans, the kindness of his bearing toward them. In the epistle to Titus the construction of a community that bespeaks this theology is not ancillary to but a constitutive element of this theology.⁵¹ This is suggestive of subtle lines of connection between Titus and other places in the New Testament where community's interdependence with theology comes to the fore; for example: "(You are) a city set on a hill ... let your light so shine..." (Matthew 5:14-16); "Love one another ... that the world may know you are my disciples (John 13:34,35); and "Father, may they be one ... that the world may know that you sent me ... and that you have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:21,23).

By New Testament standards, Titus issues an unusually clarion call to do theology for the outsider. In doing so the letter anticipates the apologetic claim of the anonymous writer of the Epistle to Diognetus that Christians are a "new race" (*kainon genos*), negotiating a communal identity that is neither a one-for-one reduplication of the heritage culture of Judaism, nor a straightforward accommodation to the host culture of Hellenism (*Ep. Diog.* 1). Respective assumptions about what it is for God to move among humans are challenged at their root: though Israel's covenant Lord has previously brokered his presence through one historical people, this God is not a reflection of any people's corporate ego, and he will not be confined by "Jewish myths or commands of humans" (Titus 1:14). At the same time, the biblical God does not lie (1:2), pretending to be a human so, as in some Zeus legends (Cretan or Olympian), he can get a woman. In times so ancient their days cannot be numbered, the God whom the canonical Paul represents made a covenantal promise of life eternal to humankind (1:2). In recent days this promise has been kept: God's grace, *philanthrōpia*, and kindness toward all humankind (2:11; 3:4) have been revealed in person, in the self-giving of "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." And this revealing of the divine brings in its wake not relics — e.g., tombs to visit — but rather lives undergoing transformation and a community under construction.

⁵¹ Incidentally, this is quite the case with 1 Timothy as well (e.g., 1 Tim 3:14-16 and context).