Are the Notes Found at the End of Most of the Epistles Part of the Inspired Ext?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

In many printings of the King James Version of the Bible, notes appear at the end of most of the Epistles purportedly stating where, when, and by whom the manuscript was written. But they are not part of the Scriptures, and many of them are wrong.

An article discussing these notations appeared in the quarterly publication of the Trinitarian Bible Society. We reproduce it below as our answer to this question, with their kind permission. (Note: TeachingTheWord does not agree with TBS' positions on all issues, but we believe they provide many excellent resources to the church, especially on the history of the Biblical texts.)

We have also listed the notations themselves below the article. The sum of things is that they are not part of the inspired text, but were added later. In fact, many are demonstrably wrong. This, however, does not in any way reflect badly upon the King James Bible, or upon the Greek Received Text on which its New Testament translation is based.

Subscriptions to the Epistles

by Rev. M. H. Watts

From the Trinitarian Bible Society’s Quarterly Record No. 587, April-June 2009, pages 13-14, which is available online at www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/qr.

Have you ever wondered about those explanatory notes which appear at the end of some of the Epistles? At the end of Romans, for example, we read: "Written to the
Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea". What are we to make of these notes?

The subscriptions are thought to have been added about the middle of the 5th century by Euthalius, Bishop of Sulca in Egypt. Thomas Hartwell Horne says this man was "either grossly ignorant, or grossly inattentive". ¹ Professor Patrick Fairbairn says, "the subscriptions...are oftener wrong than right". ²

Several of these subscriptions are simply and clearly erroneous:—

1. The First Epistle to the Corinthians is stated to have been written from "Philippi", even though the Apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 16:8 that he intends to "tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost" and then, in verse 19, sends greetings from "the churches of Asia". According to Dr. T. C. Edwards, this subscription has no manuscript support older than the 8th century. ³

2. The Epistle to the Galatians is said to be written from "Rome", but this cannot be right, for the Apostle Paul expresses surprise, in chapter 1 verse 6, that they were so 'soon' removed from Gospel Truth, but it was at least ten years after the Galatians' conversion that Paul was in Rome.

3. The Epistles to the Thessalonians are said to be written "from Athens", but they were clearly written at Corinth. Silvanus and Timothy, who are mentioned in the salutations (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), joined Paul at Corinth according to Acts 18:1, 5.

4. The First Epistle to Timothy carries a subscription which cannot possibly be correct or even early, because it states the Epistle was written from "Laodicea, which is the chiefest city of Phrygia Pacatiana" but (to our knowledge) Paul never was at Laodicea and, in the Epistle itself, Paul writes of having left Ephesus for Macedonia (1.3), so it was apparently written from some place like Philippi. Furthermore, the country of Phrygia was not divided into two
provinces — Pacatiana (or Phrygia Prima) and Phrygia Secunda — until the 4th century. The subscription must therefore have been written after this time.

5. The Epistle to Titus is said to have been written from "Nicopolis of Macedonia" but there was no Nicopolis belonging to that Province (but there was one in Epirus and in Cilicia). Moreover, when Paul says (3:12) that his intention was to spend the winter "there" (i.e., in Nicopolis), he clearly was not in that particular place at the time of writing. The further statement in the subscription that "it was written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians" (as Timothy, apparently, was "first bishop of the church of the Ephesians" — 2 Timothy) clearly reflects the 'sub-apostolic" emergence of "Diocesan Episcopacy". [This is the later human invention of a church hierarchy without Scriptural warrant — TTW.]

6. The Epistle to the Hebrews, apparently (from the subscription), was written "from Italy by Timothy", but this is wholly without foundation and plainly contradicts the inspired writer's own words in 13:23 — "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you".

Dr. Debra Anderson [of the Trinitarian Bible Society] writes: "Regarding the subscripts being in the Textus Receptus, they go back to Erasmus (we have a 1551 printing of his text in our library). They were, according to Scrivener, "appended to St. Paul's Epistles in many manuscripts... In the best copies they are somewhat shorter in form, but in any shape they do no credit to the care or skill of their author, whoever he may be". The earliest original-hand manuscript I know of that has the subscripts is Codex H (6th century), although Sinaiticus and Vaticanus both have titles and subscripts — these added later by a different hand"....
References


The explanatory notes found in many King James Bibles are as follows:

- Romans: "Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea."
- 1 Corinthians: "The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi by Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus and Timotheus."
- 2 Corinthians: "The second epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas."
- Galatians: "To the Galatians written from Rome."
- Ephesians: "To the Ephesians written from Rome, by Tychicus."
- Philippians: "To the Philippians written from Rome, by Epaphroditus."
- Colossians: "Written from Rome to Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus."
- 1 Thessalonians: "The first epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens."
- 2 Thessalonians: "The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens."
- 1 Timothy: "The first to Timothy was written from Laodicea, which is the chiepest city of Phrygia Pacatiana."
• 2 Timothy: "The second epistle unto Timotheus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time."

• Titus: "It was written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians, from Nicopolis of Macedonia."

• Philemon: "Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant."

• Hebrews: "Written to the Hebrews from Italy, by Timothy."