

# 19. Pastoral Letters: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

PAUL'S LETTERS TO Timothy and Titus have been designated the "Pastoral Letters" since the eighteenth century. They were accepted and cited as genuinely Pauline by early Christian writers, but for two hundred years scholars have debated their authenticity. Lately the debate has ebbed, with the great majority of scholars thinking the issue has been decided: all three are considered inauthentic, at best a later and derivative testimony to genuine Pauline theology. Some scholars persist in thinking that conclusion to be somewhat hasty. Even those who are not absolutely convinced that the letters come directly from Paul find unconvincing many of the reasons given for assigning their composition to a later Pauline forger.

Since these are letters and not narratives, a decision concerning their authenticity affects our picture of Paul's ministry, our understanding of the development of Paulinism, and, most importantly, our reading of the letters themselves. Even though this debate already dominates scholarship on these writings and threatens to obscure their distinctive and individual witness to early Christian experience and interpretation, a consideration of the issues can nevertheless lead to an appreciation of the special character of these canonical writings.

There are strong tendencies in the debate, and it is helpful to note them at the outset. The first tendency derives from the primary and positive place most scholars accord Paul among NT writers. He is, after all, "*the* apostle." Scholars often want to find in him that which confirms their perceptions of "genuine" Christianity, and consider inauthentic those elements that contradict these perceptions. Those who regard the heart of Paul, if not of the whole NT, to be the teaching of righteousness through faith tend to reject the Pastorals as moralizing. On the other hand, those committed to traditions within which doctrine, church structure, and the inspiration of Scripture are important, tend to find these elements in the undisputed as well as the Pastoral letters. They are, consequently, inclined to regard the latter as genuine also. Thus, the issue of authenticity is directly correlated with the reconstruction of the "authentic" Paul: scholarship is not fully determined by bias, but we do tend to read Paul in our own image and out of our own particular theological context.

A second tendency also derives from Paul's place as the earliest and most prominent Christian writer. A judgment against authenticity of any letter means for some a

judgment on its value as well. They implicitly measure the worth of a writing by its authorship, rather than by its content or its place within the community's canon. The tendency is found on both sides of the debate. Some fight the authenticity of the Pastorals, thinking such a recognition would inevitably mean as well an acceptance of their teaching. Others defend their authenticity for the same reason. These tendencies complicate the making of good literary and historical judgments.

A third tendency in the debate does not come from bias but is an inevitable result of categorization: the three letters are invariably treated together as a group. Characterizations of "the Pastorals" are typically drawn from all three letters coalesced into a whole, while the individual characteristics of the respective letters are overlooked. The Pastorals are often said, for example, to contain an elaborate ecclesial structure. But 2 Timothy lacks any reference to order at all, and Titus contains only a trace. Reference is also made to "the opponents in the Pastorals," even though there is a distinct profile in each of the letters. Such generalizing dulls the perception of the individual letters, heightening a sense of their isolation from the rest of the Pauline corpus. A similar effect would result from treating the Thessalonian correspondence as a separate group without ever referring them to other Pauline writings. But if Titus is read with other travel letters, or 2 Timothy with other captivity letters, their otherness is greatly diminished.

Even when such tendencies are taken into account, the Letters to Timothy and Titus raise unique and difficult questions for every reader. No one denies that they represent a strain of Paulinism. They are written in his name, and seek to communicate teaching which is recognizably Pauline. But in each letter there is also just enough divergence from any reader's instinctive perception of what is Pauline, that even those most sympathetic to their authenticity must wonder at this blend of the familiar and the strange so erratically distributed over three documents.

## Factors To Be Considered

Since the issues are so complex, a full discussion is impossible, but each criterion for determining genuineness is touched upon in what follows. The first issue is their placement in the scheme of early Christian history and the Pauline mission. Although the letters lack obvious anachronisms, some find it difficult to fit them into Paul's career such as it can be reconstructed from Acts and the other letters. First Timothy and Titus presuppose Paul's active ministry among his churches. In 1 Timothy, Paul has left his delegate in Ephesus for a time while he goes to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3); Timothy is to attend to affairs until Paul's return within a short period (3:14). In principle, such a letter could have been written any time during Paul's lengthy Aegean ministry. Titus is written to Paul's delegate in Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul's whereabouts are not revealed. He plans to winter in Nicopolis (3:12), which could be any of several cities of that name.

That there should be a church in Crete is not surprising. The account in Acts, however, places Paul there only tangentially, and then as a prisoner (Acts 27:7-15). Could he have had the opportunity to found churches or to commission a delegate to found them? The phrase “I left you in Crete” is also ambiguous. Did Paul take his leave of Titus there? Or did Paul leave Titus in an assignment?

Second Timothy is written from (probably a Roman) captivity (1:16-17). But does Paul’s reference to a first defense (4:16) indicate that this is a second imprisonment, since he was released from the first (4:17)? In contrast to 1 Timothy and Titus, 2 Timothy contains information about fifteen of Paul’s helpers (4:9-21). Nothing in their movements directly contradicts the little we know of them elsewhere, although some scholars have great difficulty with the apparent discrepancy between Acts 21:29 and 2 Tim. 4:20 in the matter of Trophimus. Other information is startlingly confirming, such as the short remark “Erastus remained in Corinth” (4:20; cf. Rom. 16:23).

The problem is rendered more difficult by the attempt to place all the letters in the same time frame. The following options are possible. Some think the letters are pseudonymous and written at the same time after Paul’s death. The biographical information in this case only serves the interest of pseudonymity and is thus irrelevant. A second option invokes the ancient tradition (cf. *1 Clem.* 5.7) that Paul was released from a first Roman imprisonment and preached in Spain before again becoming a captive and finally being put to death. Supporters argue for a period of active work between the two imprisonments, such as is reflected in these letters. A third option is to regard the letters as genuinely Pauline and to try to fit them into Paul’s ministry as we know it from Acts and the other letters. This is not impossible, although it requires considerable ingenuity.

A fourth option is the best, though rarely chosen. It admits that neither Acts nor the letters give us a full chronology of Paul: Acts gives us only a selective and highly stylized rendering of Paul’s travels, while the letters provide only fragmentary bits and pieces of information. Thus, while the Pastorals do not by themselves account for their placement in his life, they may give us important information about incidents in Paul’s career and captivity that the other sources do not. Just as 2 Corinthians tells us of imprisonments we would otherwise not suspect, so do these letters tell us of Pauline missionary endeavors—in Crete and Dalmatia—that, aside from the tantalizing reference to Illyricum in Rom. 15:19, would otherwise be unknown to us.

The criterion of style is difficult to apply to the Pastorals. They obviously contain a large number of words not found in other Pauline letters and share other terms not otherwise attested in the NT. But there are also real differences among the three letters. On the whole, 2 Timothy has a vocabulary remarkably close to that of other Pauline epistles, whereas the terminology in 1 Timothy and Titus varies more significantly. How much of this special vocabulary is due to the nature of the letters, the character of the addressees, and the subject matter is difficult to determine. Unlike the genuine Pauline letters, there is no indication that the letters were dictated to a scribe, although

the use of an amanuensis cannot be ruled out. Since a large amount of the vocabulary of 1 Timothy and Titus is found in the NT elsewhere only in Luke-Acts, Luke has been proposed as the amanuensis (2 Tim. 4:11) or even the author of the letters.

More than vocabulary is involved in stylistic analysis. The syntax of the Pastorals is generally smoother than in letters like Galatians and Romans. Sentences are longer and more regular; the use of particles is less varied and rich. Yet, one must ask how much the style of Romans and Galatians is itself affected by the adoption of the diatribal mode in those letters. If the Pastorals are compared to 1 Thessalonians or Philippians, the differences are less extreme. The issue of style is further complicated by the fact that the Pastorals do not reveal a consistent “hand,” as do Colossians and Ephesians. Rather, the mixture of vocabulary and sentence structure is complex and varied. Some have even suggested that the Pastorals may contain fragments of authentic Pauline notes, worked up later into new pseudonymous compositions. But the close correlation of “non-Pauline” passages with the subject matters unique to the Pastorals has largely gone unnoticed. This is a significant oversight since it is precisely the difference in subject matter that most clearly separates these three letters from the rest of the Pauline corpus. Finally, on the issue of style, one should also recall the significance of “writing in character” (see chap. 10): the style of a letter is adapted to the persona a writer adopts for the sake of creating persuasive letters. This rhetorical phenomenon further complicates the reading of the evidence.

One of the early reasons for questioning the genuineness of the Pastorals was the nature of the opponents or heresy they attack. It was thought to be a form of “gnosis” (see 1 Tim. 6:20)—unknown until the second century—that believed the resurrection life had already been accomplished (2 Tim. 2:17-18), scorned marriage, advocated physical asceticism (1 Tim. 4:3, 8), and was interested in the practice of Jewish law (1 Tim. 1:7; Titus 3:9). This picture is of course a composite of the three letters. Even as such it does not preclude Pauline authorship, for there is nothing in this mix not already encountered in the undisputed letters (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 8:1-3; 15:17-19; Gal. 4:8-10; 1 Cor 7:1; cf. Col. 2:20-22). The composite sketch, however, ignores the real differences between the letters themselves, each of which is internally consistent and need not be read in light of the others. Some object further that the manner of responding to the opponents is typically un-Pauline, since it relies on polemic rather than refutation. This is slightly inaccurate, since 1 Timothy does clarify theological points several times (1:8; 4:3-5, 7-8; 6:5-10), and the genuine Paul is not immune from the use of slander against rival teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 5:12; 6:13; Phil. 3:2). What is distinctive in the Pastorals is the amount of polemic, its largely stereotypical character, and the literary function it performs in 1 and 2 Timothy.

A major challenge to the authenticity of the letters is made on the basis of church organization. Here, it is claimed, there is not merely a shift in emphasis, such as making Christ the head of the body (as in Colossians) but an entirely different outlook. The organic sense of the church is lost, replaced by an organization—the “household

of God”—that has a hierarchical ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, together with orders of deaconesses and widows. Such attention to structure, it is thought, results from a “routinization of charisma” when eschatological expectations diminish and the church grows accustomed to being in the world and adapts to its ways. Others see here a defensive reaction against a popular Paulinism that was more radically egalitarian, such as one finds in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The Pastorals, on this reading, arise from a situation like that found in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 115) in which a monarchical episcopate and hierarchical order are understood to be essential for the well-being of the church (see Ign. *Eph.* 2.2; *Magn.* 3.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1).

Such conclusions move well beyond the evidence of the letters themselves. First, it is inaccurate to speak of the church order of the Pastorals, since there is none in 2 Timothy, and the little found in Titus does not match precisely the fuller account in 1 Timothy. Second, what organization is spoken of is not elaborate. It corresponds rather well, in fact, to what we know of the synagogal structure of Diaspora Judaism in the first century, as well as to the structure of the religious and social associations prevalent in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Early Christianity did not develop in a vacuum; it naturally adopted and adapted pre-existing institutions. Third, the organizational structure is not legitimated in these letters, that is, it is neither theologically defended nor interpreted, unlike the case in the Ignatian letters. Fourth, the letters do not prescribe a particular order but presuppose it; they contain not job descriptions for new positions but moral and mental qualifications for those who are to fill established places in the church. Fifth, sociological studies of intentional communities in every era suggest that they do not survive for decades without strong structures for decision making and social control: a great time lapse between the birth of a community and the establishment of structure is thus counterintuitive: structure and charisma frequently coexist. Sixth, the undisputed letters of Paul not only refer by title to the offices found in the Pastorals (bishops and deacons, Phil. 1:1; woman deacon, Rom. 16:1), but explicitly recognize the role of authority figures in specific communities (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15-17; Gal. 6:6; Col. 4:17; 1 Thess. 5:12). Seventh, the attention that is given to organizational matters in two of these letters owes a great deal to the nature of the writings and the identity of the addressees.

The most telling objection to the authenticity of the Pastorals is the criterion of theology and ethics. Even when full credit is given to Paul’s wide range in these areas, some elements in the Pastorals appear to be marginal. Common Pauline terms such as “faith,” “law,” and “righteousness” occur, but all with slightly different nuances. “Law” appears as something that can be used “lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8), “faith” seems less an obedient response to God than the common body of conviction and commitment (Titus 1:1; 1 Tim. 5:8) or, simply, a virtue (2 Tim. 2:22). “Righteousness” (*dikaioσynē*) does not signify a state of right relation with God but denotes a virtue in the Greek sense of “justice” (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). Tradition is a deposit of truth that is to be

protected (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14) rather than a process of transmission (1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:3). Christology emphasizes the role of Jesus as Savior (2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4; 3:6) and his coming “appearance” (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10). It must be said that each one of these elements can be found somewhere in the undisputed letters, but never in this concentrated combination. Therein lies the difference and the problem.

A similar point can be made about ethical teaching. There is certainly nothing explicitly like Paul’s command in 1 Corinthians 7 to live in the world “as though not.” Here, the attitudes and aptitudes of household members are appropriate as well to the life of the community as a whole. The Pauline note of conscience (*syneidēsis*) appears, not in terms of weak and strong (cf. 1 Cor. 8:7-12) but of “good” (1 Tim. 1:5, 19) and “pure” (1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3) in contrast to “soiled” (Titus 1:15) and “cauterized” (1 Tim. 4:2). Here, too, is the contrast between “healthy teaching” (1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) and “sickness” (2 Tim. 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:2), expressing itself in a life of virtue (1 Tim. 1:10; 3:2-4, 11; 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:22, 24; 3:10; Titus 1:7-9; 2:7) and vice (1 Tim. 1:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; Titus 3:3).

Listing these elements is easy; evaluating them is more difficult. Appeal to the outlook of an aging apostle is of little help, and an assumed shift to a second generation of Paulinist Christians seems inadequate. The issue is complicated by the supposition of uniformity in Pauline Christianity: one must be careful about assuming that every Pauline church looked the same; clearly each community would have had a unique context that shaped its experience and expression. Take the question of subject matter. The “household” theme, for example, is prevalent in Paul, but takes on a variety of forms and nuances depending on the community Paul addresses. Even appeals to the character of the language itself provide ambiguous evidence. These letters do have a more Greek and less “biblical” mode of presentation. Yet, before drawing conclusions, it is good to remember that the “biblical” style of Paul in Galatians and Romans is no more natural than his “Greek” style in 1 Thessalonians or Philippians. His style is affected by his subject matter, his audience, and the traditions upon which he was reliant.

In fact, one of the solutions to the problem may rest precisely in these differences. Titus and Timothy, we recall, both have at least a partial Greek background, and both are portrayed in the role of teachers. These factors may help us locate the kind of language used in the letters addressed to them, particularly if we ask how Paul might have spoken and written to his more educated Hellenistic associates. The polished Greek, the moralizing tone, the specific subject matter treated, and the general tone and function of the letter may be determined less by the passage of time and more by the specific character and role of the delegates to whom Paul wrote.



## Accounting for the Correspondence

Most scholars see the Pastorals as the production of a “Pauline school” long after Paul’s death, perhaps as late as the mid-second century. Rather than real letters, the Pastorals are considered a single literary composition in the form of fictitious correspondence in which biographical elements serve only to provide an air of plausibility. In this view the three letters together represent the beginning of church orders, a genre of documents that regulated church worship and ministry (e.g., the *Didache*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Apostolic Constitutions*). They were written as part of a conservative reaction within Paulinism, possibly reacting against the use of Paul by heretics who radically extended Paul’s ascetic tendencies. It has even been suggested that Polycarp of Smyrna wrote them as a weapon in his fight against Marcionism. Another suggested stimulus was the growing egalitarianism, especially among women, that threatened the stability of communities.

The author of the Pastorals therefore sought to adapt the Pauline message for a new generation, emphasizing structure and order, while resisting ascetic and egalitarian excess. In the process, certain elements seem presupposed: a diminished eschatological expectation, a growth in church structure, and an increased accommodation to the world. In this view, the Paulinism of the Pastorals is refracted through the prism of second and third-generation concerns. Paul is a legendary hero whose authentic genius is diminished, reduced to being part of the “deposit” of faith for future generations.

The obvious appeal of this reconstruction is attested by its many adherents. It provides for development and conflict within Paulinism. It suggests that the Pastorals, with Acts and Ephesians, were part of the movement of “early Catholicism” that resisted Gnosticism while domesticating the more radical Paul of the authentic letters.

This reconstruction has serious deficiencies. Even if the writing of epistolary pseudepigrapha soon after Paul’s death can be granted, the Pastorals were accepted as genuine by the ancient church, in contrast to clearly Pauline counterfeits (*3 Corinthians*, *Letter to Laodiceans*, *Letters of Paul and Seneca*, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*) that were almost as universally rejected. A mid-second century dating must dismiss the allusion in Polycarp’s *Letter to the Philippians* (4.1) to 1 Tim. 6:7, 10, and reject the express statement of Tertullian (*Against Marcion* V. 21) that Marcion excluded the Pastorals from his canon—both of which would seem to necessitate an earlier origin of the material.

The common reconstruction falters most by failing to provide a convincing life setting for the production of three such similar yet quite different letters, and by paying too little attention to their self-presentation and literary form. It has been suggested, for example, that the letters were intended to rehabilitate a Paul fallen into disrepute because of his popularity among heretics. But Paul’s authority is never at issue in the letters; it is always assumed. Nor is specific attention given to his “image.” The suggestion also presupposes a consciousness of fine distinctions in doctrine such as exists

only among scholars. For anyone seriously doubting or misplacing Paul's worth, furthermore, it is unlikely that the rather banal material in the Pastorals would prove an effective antidote. Even in other scenarios, such as an orthodox leader like Polycarp creating and then distributing the letters as a Pauline discovery, there are problems. Besides being inconsistent with Polycarp's situation such as we know it, this hypothesis makes us wonder why more use was not made of this creation by Polycarp himself. Moreover, would such a ploy be successful at a time when Paul was apparently a figure of controversy and rival communities were compiling their lists of acceptable and unacceptable writings on the basis of apostolic origin?

Another suggestion places the letters' production within a school setting in which the imitation of literary models took place. This is a sensible solution, since such schools were known to exist after the life of a founder. It would be a stronger suggestion if we could be as confident about the existence of such a school after Paul's death as we are of its existence during his lifetime. However sensible, the suggestion is not altogether satisfying. If Pauline models were being imitated, why were letters not produced that imitated Paul's correspondence to churches—as was most typical for Paul—rather than letters to individual delegates (only Philemon was addressed to an individual, and he was not a delegate)? Why were the style and form of the undisputed letters not followed more accurately? The fragment hypothesis is of little help here. It is hard to see why tiny autobiographical notes would be preserved in the first place, and then lifted into new compositions so clumsily. Further, if a pseudepigrapher had authentic fragments before him, why could he not imitate their style more convincingly? To complicate matters even more, the differences in style between the three letters themselves do not allow for simplistic theories of compositional imitation.

An enduring difficulty for the conventional reconstruction is the presence of variety in the Pastorals. Why would three such letters be produced, each of which was directed to a situation that was internally consistent yet very difficult to match with the situations of the other two? Here we would have a forger subtly able to create the verisimilitude of an established community in Ephesus and a new church in Crete, together with the appropriate sort of directions to each, and yet not able to imitate more convincingly the available Pauline samples.

No real progress will be made in the understanding of the Pastorals until they are restored to separate but equal status within the Pauline collection. It may well be, for example, that 2 Timothy can lay a far better claim to authenticity on every count than 1 Timothy. The first sustained questioning of their authenticity applied initially only to 1 Timothy, and then only on the point of diction. The declaration of inauthenticity for all three has been a more recent development, largely resulting from the association of 2 Timothy and Titus with 1 Timothy. But it is theoretically possible, for example, that 1 Timothy is pseudonymous, based on an authentic 2 Timothy. Such possibilities must be entertained, although any particular configuration is difficult to prove.



In the final analysis, it is difficult to make any assured claims about either the authenticity or the inauthenticity of the Pastorals as a whole or as individual letters. Yet, what we lose for our reconstruction of the “historical” Paul, we gain for the understanding of early Christianity: in the Pastorals we catch a glimpse of early Christian leadership, structure, and social world that might otherwise be unknown to us. Consequently, attention is appropriately directed to the literary self-presentation of each of the letters in turn and to their respective shaping of the Christian message within the Pauline tradition.

## Paul’s Delegates

The letters are written to Paul’s most important delegates. We have repeatedly seen Timothy’s prominence within the Pauline mission: co-sponsor of five letters (see 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), he was Paul’s go-between with the Macedonian churches (see Acts 18:5; 19:22) of Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2) and Philippi (Phil. 2:19), as well as with the Corinthians (Rom. 16:21). According to 1 Tim. 1:3, he played the same role for the Ephesian church. In Acts 16:1, he is said to have a Greek father, which would make it likely that he had some Greek education as well. From what Paul says of him in the undisputed letters, his special role and his place in Paul’s affections is obvious. When Paul wants the restive Corinthians to “imitate” him (1 Cor. 4:16), he adds (4:17):

Therefore, I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in the church.

We notice here the role of memory and imitation, and the portrayal of Timothy as the “reminder” of Paul’s teaching and an example to a local community.

Paul clearly anticipated that Timothy would be received in the same manner Paul himself would be (1 Cor. 16:10-11):

When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. Let no one despise him.

When writing to the Philippians, Paul says of Timothy (2:19-23):

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me.

Finally, in 1 Thess. 3:2, Paul reports of Timothy:

And we have sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, that no one be moved by these afflictions.

There is a remarkable agreement between these random characterizations and the portrayal of Timothy in the Pastorals. He is a "beloved" (2 Tim. 1:2) or "genuine" child (1 Tim. 1:2). He is a "servant of God" (*doulos*; 2 Tim. 2:24; cf. same in Phil. 1:1, and *diakonos* in 1 Thess. 3:2). He is to "exhort" others (1 Tim. 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:2), and to "remind" churches of Paul's teaching (2 Tim. 2:14), providing them an example of it (1 Tim. 4:12) even as he himself has an example to follow in Paul (2 Tim. 1:13).

Two different but reasonable explanations can account for this evident agreement between the Pastorals and the genuine letters. First, the letters accurately report Paul's habitual perceptions of his delegate. Second, a pseudepigrapher had available to him the full range of such epithets when he drew up his imitation. The more important point, though, is that 1 and 2 Timothy present Timothy in a role that corresponds exactly to that explicitly given him in the undisputed letters: he is Paul's troubleshooter.

The undisputed letters tell us much less about Titus. He was of Greek origin (Gal. 2:3), and Paul makes much of his not having to be circumcised when he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-3). Although this is speculative, he may be the Titus (or Titius) Justus whom Acts 18:7 refers to as a "God-fearer" and whose house Paul uses after leaving the synagogue. He is, in any case, a notable associate of Paul's Corinthian ministry (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14), especially Paul's collection efforts (2 Cor. 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). He is not the representative of a local church but is Paul's "fellow-worker" (*koinōnos*; 2 Cor. 8:23). He is not, however, pictured as being on intimate terms with Paul.

The same sense is given by the Letter to Titus, in which he is called "genuine child" (Titus 1:4) but is not shown the sort of affection found in 1 and 2 Timothy. His duty in Crete may well also have included fund raising (see Titus 3:14). According to 2 Tim. 4:10, Titus also worked in Dalmatia, which would fit within the broad range of the Pauline mission (cf. Rom. 15:19).

In writing letters to delegates with such responsibilities, we would anticipate discussion of matters less appropriate for epistles written for community consumption. These could include: personal encouragement for the delegate's difficult task of dealing with lively Pauline communities; reminders of the ideal one should follow; hostile dismissals of rival teachers; *ad hoc* directions concerning local leadership positions and structural conflicts. Rather than lengthy doctrinal treatises, we would expect only formulaic allusions. As a means of encouragement, we might envision a shaping of the gospel that emphasized its godliness (*eusebeia*), a Christology in which the coming

“appearance of the savior” figured dominantly, and ethical teaching that stressed virtue and the avoidance of vice. No doubt many of these same aspects would have had further appeal to the reader immersed in the educative culture of the Greco-Roman world. Moreover, such letters would likely combine attention to the delegate’s personal disposition as well as to the attitudes appropriate to the office of teaching.

As so often in the Hellenistic world, there were precedents for letters like these. Second Timothy can be read as a personal parenetic epistle, and 1 Timothy and Titus can be understood as *mandata principis* letters. The following analysis will therefore proceed on the basis of genre rather than canonical order.

## 2 Timothy: A Personal Parenetic Letter

Paul writes to Timothy from prison (1:16; 2:9; 4:16). Although he still has workers around him, he is sensitive to the apostasy of others (1:15; 4:10, 16). He struggles to proclaim the gospel (4:17) and to direct the mission through delegates (4:10-12) and correspondence (4:13). He faces active opposition himself (4:14). Thus, despite feeling close to death (4:6-8), Paul writes to encourage and admonish Timothy in his own struggles. The letter is dominated by its unswerving attention to Timothy. Whatever is said about others is sooner or later turned back to Timothy: “but you . . .” The most frequent verb form in the letter is the second-person singular imperative. Nothing new is being communicated to Timothy, only reminders of what he already knows, together with the exhortation to hold fast to it.

Because we find here an aging, even dying, religious figure instructing his follower on the struggles to come and the need for perseverance, many who regard these letters as pseudonymous find the most appropriate literary category for 2 Timothy to be the farewell discourse, such as we find it in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* or even Acts 20:17-35. A more likely parallel, and one closer in content and function, is the personal parenetic letter.

Rhetorical handbooks describe an *epistolē parainetikē* as a letter written to “exhort someone advising them to pursue something and to abstain from something.” The sample letter given by Pseudo-Libanius reads:

Always be an emulator, dear friend, of the virtuous. For it is better to be well spoken of when imitating good individuals, than to be reproached by all for following evil ones.

This short sample contains the elements of imitation and the antithetical expression of options: do this, avoid that. In actual parenetic discourses such as Pseudo-Isocrates’ treatise *To Demonicus*, the form is followed exactly: the presentation of a model and appeal to memory (*Dem* 3–11) is followed by a series of moral maxims often expressed

antithetically (12–49), and at the conclusion there is a re-presentation of models for imitation (50–51). So also in 2 Timothy we find the elements of memory, model, and maxims.

This classification helps explain the polemic against false teachers. We are given little specific information about them, despite the naming of Phygelus, Hermogenes (1:15), Hymenaeus, and Philetus (2:17). They claim that the resurrection is already past (2:18), but apart from that, they are characterized mainly by their methods, which involve harsh disputation (2:16, 23) and the intellectual seduction of uneducated women (3:6), as well as their morals, which are obviously poor. Much of this takes the form of stereotypical slander, like that used by Hellenistic philosophers when attacking each other. Yet Paul never attacks them directly. His concern is for his delegate, and he thus alternates characterizations of them with direct commands to Timothy. The false teachers thereby become the negative model Timothy is to avoid. The same use of polemic can be found in protreptic (i.e., exhortatory) discourse addressed to would-be philosophers: slander establishes a counter-type to the ideal teacher (cf. Dio *Oration 77/78*; Lucian *Demonax*; Epictetus *Discourses* III.22).

Second Timothy has the overall form of a personal parenetic letter, with the elements of polemic being utilized to develop more fully what Timothy is to avoid. The structure of 2 Timothy therefore is: the presentation of Paul as a model (1:3—2:13); maxims for Timothy as a teacher, presented in contrast to the false teachers (2:14—4:5); and the re-presentation of Paul as a model (4:6-18).

### *Paul, the Model for Teaching and Suffering (2 Timothy 1:3—2:13)*

The motifs of memory and model open the letter. In the face of the opposition and success of rival teachers, Timothy is encouraged to “endure,” particularly since his “father” Paul has little hope for release from prison. The thanksgiving typically anticipates Paul’s main point: he “remembers” Timothy (1:3), “remembers” his tears (1:4), and “remembers” the sincere faith he had learned from his mother and grandmother (1:5). When Paul adds, “. . . a faith, which I am sure, dwells in you” (1:5), he reveals his true emphasis: he clearly wants to “remind” Timothy of the qualities and dispositions to which he was called. He was not given a spirit of timidity (or, cowardice: *deilia*) but one of “power and love and self-control” (1:7). Paul wants to “stir up” in him (1:6) this gift of power and confidence, so he will persevere in his ministry. The prevalent early Christian motif of “endurance” and “steadfastness” in the midst of trials takes on a practical edge here in 2 Timothy (cf. James 1:12).

Paul presents himself as a model for Timothy, who can find in him the “pattern of healthy teaching” (1:13). Timothy can preserve it, since it has been entrusted to him by “the Holy Spirit dwelling in us” (1:14). Paul is more than a source of proper teaching. He is the example of how to suffer for the gospel amidst adversity. Timothy is told, “Don’t be ashamed” of testifying to the Lord; he is to “take a share of suffering for the

gospel” (1:8). Paul too had been appointed a “preacher and apostle and teacher” of this “good news” (1:11), and “therefore I suffer as I do, but I am not ashamed” (1:12). Timothy should not therefore draw back because of suffering he may encounter for the “good news.” He is able to keep going because of God’s power (1:8), the indwelling Spirit (1:14), and the certainty of God’s promise (1:12).

The mention of Onesiphorus in 1:15-18 is not beside the point. Because he provided help (“often refreshed me”) and did so despite Paul’s captivity, he provides Timothy with another example: “He was not ashamed of my chains” (1:16). As Paul can look forward to a reward from God for his suffering (1:12), so he can pray, “May the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day” (1:18). Timothy, in other words, is not alone in “sharing the suffering” for the good news, and should take encouragement in that fact.

The second aspect of Timothy’s role is suggested in 2:2. He is to entrust the “sound teaching” to others who in turn will be able to teach. Timothy is not only a Christian who lives the gospel and suffers for it. His suffering occurs precisely because he is a teacher of the “good news.” The focus therefore turns to his ministry of teaching, particularly regarding the attitudes he himself should have and should inculcate in others. Before turning to that role (2:14—4:5), however, Paul offers a series of models to which Timothy can look for encouragement. The advice, “Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2:3), suggests the first. The soldier, athlete, and farmer are all stock examples for exhortation in Hellenistic moral teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7-27). Paul here emphasizes their attention to duty. The soldier does not get distracted by extraneous affairs; the athlete competes by the rules; and the farmer works hard. Reward only follows upon this devotion: the soldier pleases his recruiter; the athlete receives the crown; and the farmer enjoys the first fruits of the crop (2:3-6).

Paul saves his most important example till last: “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel” (2:8). Once again, we see here the note of memory. Further, Paul specifies his gospel as “. . . the gospel for which I am suffering” (2:9). In fact, Paul endures suffering so that others might attain salvation (2:10). The implication is that Jesus likewise suffered and died, “so that life and immortality might be brought to light through the gospel” (1:10). Here, then, as in chapter 2 of Philippians, Jesus becomes the model par excellence for imitation. So Paul reminds Timothy of the “faithful word” (2 Tim. 2:11-13):

If we have died with him we shall also live with him. If we endure, we shall reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

The first three lines of this apparently traditional saying have perfect internal symmetry: as we are toward God, so God will be toward us. Suffering now with Jesus will bring glory later with Jesus; endurance will bring rule; denial, denial. But the final line

is a surprise, and in it we find a typical Pauline emphasis: God is faithful despite human infidelity.

As Paul offered the Philippians a series of examples of “life for others” that included Jesus and himself (Phil. 2:1—4:3), so here we find the same rhetorical technique. He provides Timothy with a series of concrete examples of suffering in the hope of reward: Onesiphorus, the soldier, athlete, and farmer; himself; and Jesus who suffered and died.

*The Ideal Teacher (2 Timothy 2:14—4:5)*

Paul fills out the model with maxims, set in a series of antitheses. The attitudes and actions of Timothy stand in contrast to those of the false teachers. They are given to disputatiousness (2:14) and godless chatter (2:16), which spreads like a gangrenous sickness (2:17). They have revolutionary impulses (2:22) and engage in senseless and useless quarrels (2:23). They are filled with all manner of vice (3:2-5). The opponents are charlatans (3:13) who prey on the uneducated and curious (3:6-7). They are like the magicians of Pharaoh’s court who opposed Moses, “men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith” (3:8). Timothy and those he instructs (2:14) are to avoid such practices and people (2:14, 16, 22, 23; 3:5).

In an intriguing rhetorical strategy, Paul uses a spatial imagery throughout this section. The opponents are always on the move: they “go from house to house” (3:6); they fall away and turn away (2:18); they “stand against” (3:8); and they “advance” (2:16; 3:13). In contrast, Timothy is to “remain” (3:14) and “stand fast” (3:14; 4:2). Paul is using the opponents as a foil to develop the endurance theme for the faithful believer: the steadfastness of Timothy is viewed as a response to the “unsteady” behavior of the unrighteous.

The end results will, according to Paul, justify his exhortation: although the opponents “make progress,” Paul assures Timothy, “they will not advance” (3:9). Such comfort is all the more welcome since the opponents are obviously enjoying considerable success. Paul characterizes these as the “last days,” when people will be “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (3:4). And it will only get worse. People will not even be willing to listen to sound teaching but will seek charlatans willing to shape their teaching to expectations (4:3). The fact that this behavior is indeed taking place in the present both confirms Paul’s claim that the “last days” are upon them and encourages Timothy to remain firm in the faith: because the end is near, steadfastness and endurance in the face of this opposition are all the more urgent.

Against the tide of indifference and apostasy, Paul can only tell Timothy to remain steady, to endure suffering, and to fulfill his ministry (4:5). Timothy cannot cut truth to fit the season, but must remain constant (4:2):

Preach the word; be urgent in season and out of season; convince, rebuke, exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.



Timothy can once more look to Paul as a model of such endurance in the face of adversity. Paul reminds Timothy (3:10-11):

You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Paul too faced resistance to the truth, and as he held on, so should Timothy. The gospel ministry bears with it the necessity of suffering. For a sick world, health is a threat: “All who would desire to lead a godly life in Christ will be persecuted” (3:12). But as Paul was delivered—“From them all the Lord rescued me” (3:11)—so will Timothy be delivered.

In light of the apparent harshness and success of the opponents’ attack, the advice given to Timothy is remarkable. The use of medical imagery was common in the contemporary moral literature, so it is not unusual for Paul to contrast “healthy” and “sick” teaching. Indeed, this is what gives the polemic against the moral behavior of the opponents its force, for the ancients had the correct perception that action does follow on perceptions, and bad ideas can lead to bad actions. Philosophers who used such language, however, disagreed about the proper medical approach to “sick thought.” Some advocated harshness and scorn. They operated like surgeons. Others considered gentleness and care to be more useful for healing moral illness. That is the approach Paul advocates for Timothy. As Paul had characterized himself as being “as gentle as a nurse” (1 Thess. 2:7), so he wants Timothy to be gentle. Even when reproving, he is not to engage in harsh quarrels. Indeed, Paul sees such an attitude as opening the possibility for the adversaries’ return to the truth (2:24-26):

The Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and may escape the snare of the devil.

In this process there are resources available to the Christian teacher. Timothy can look to the education he has received in the faith from his maternal ancestors (1:5; 3:14). He has in Paul the source of sound teaching (1:13), the example of steadfastness in the ministry (3:10), and the model of suffering for the “good news” (3:11; 4:6). And, like Paul, he has the guidance of Torah, which he has known from his youth. It instructs him “for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” (3:15). And because it is inspired by God, it is (3:16-17)

profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

*Paul, Model of Suffering in Hope (2 Timothy 4:6-18)*

Paul concludes by again presenting himself as a model for Timothy. Even in prison, Paul continues to be opposed (4:14). Despite that, he does not turn from his ministry (4:17):

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me to proclaim the word fully that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

The point for Timothy is clear. He should not be cowardly but imitate the perseverance of Paul and take “his share of suffering for the gospel.” He can count on the Lord’s supporting him, as well, and must rely on that support, since Paul himself is about to die. Paul closes with his own hope, that “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day,” and extends that hope to Timothy as well, “and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing” (4:8).

If this letter is written by Paul, it is evident that he believes his death is near. Moreover, the hardship of a lifetime has been brought to bear on his reflection of the ministry. Paul is concerned about securing a faithful transmission of his message and ministry to the next generation of leadership. Growing division in the church and hostility from without are reminders that such a transition will be difficult, achieved only at great personal cost to Paul and his delegates. Steadfastness, endurance, and faithfulness therefore take on an even more practical urgency. It is these values 2 Timothy seeks to inculcate. It is not that Timothy has been unfaithful. Rather, as Paul passes on the torch, he wants to “remind” Timothy of the importance of enduring despite suffering and opposition. The teacher earnestly desires that his disciples and delegates face suffering the same way he—in imitation of Jesus—did. In this way the gospel itself will endure.

## 1 Timothy: Life in God’s Household

First Timothy comes closest to the stereotypical picture of the Pastorals. Elements of a personal parenetic letter are present in it: Paul is an example (now of God’s mercy to sinners, 1:16), and Timothy is to be a model for the church (4:12). Timothy’s attitudes are also contrasted with those of the false teachers (1:3-20; 4:1-16; 6:2b-16, 20-21). The letter, however, has less overall literary coherence than 2 Timothy. It gives only the merest hint of personal circumstance: Paul left Timothy in Ephesus on his way to Macedonia (1:3). He hopes to return soon (3:14) and in the meantime writes instructions to his delegate (3:15),

so that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

These instructions give 1 Timothy its special character. They deal with prayer (2:1-5); the role of women in the liturgical assembly (2:8-15); the qualifications for bishops (3:1-7), deacons (3:8-13), and deaconesses (3:11); the care of widows (5:3-16); the payment of elders (5:17-19); the resolution of charges against elders (5:19-22); the attitudes of slaves (6:1-2); and the rich (6:17-19). The most disconcerting feature of 1 Timothy is the haphazard way these elements are put together. If one isolated the passages concerned with Timothy and the opponents, a letter much like 2 Timothy would be the result. If one kept only the prescriptions, the writing would provide the nucleus of later “church orders,” albeit with a random and provisional air. And yet, a pattern not unlike that found in 2 Timothy emerges: the warnings against false teachers—occurring predominantly at the beginning, midpoint, and conclusion of the letter—provide a counter-example for the positive instructions on church order. Indeed, the framework for Paul’s “rules” on proper ecclesial structure is provided by the false teachers, supplying strong notes of urgency and seriousness to the unfolding subject matter.

The model for this type of letter can be found in the Hellenistic royal correspondence known as the *mandata principis* letters, which are directives issued by rulers to their delegates who are governing territories. They were written to officials of a city or to specific individual representatives, carrying instructions for the delegate to execute. Although technically private correspondence, the directives most often were intended for larger audiences (the subject matter naturally dealt with aspects of civic life), and in this spirit the letters were sometimes inscribed on monuments for public reading. One interesting example—a letter to a newly appointed Egyptian official (PTeub. 703)—not only lists duties that are to be carried out, but also goes into details of expected conduct of the official, including being an exemplary model. This clearly corresponds to what we find in 1 Timothy. Overall, the *mandata principis* letters indicate the widespread practice of leaders establishing contact with their delegates and taking responsibility for activities occurring in other locales through their designated representatives. Paul’s concern for the well-being of the community is thus expressed not to the community as a whole or to a local leader but to a delegate who is expected to attend to the problematic aspects of a local church’s life.

A precise reconstruction of the situation in the Ephesian community is difficult. On the whole, the letter gives the impression of a relatively mature community, with its basic structures firmly in place. As so frequently, however, there is also the problem of deviance within the community. The names Hymenaeus and Alexander occur here again (1:20), now together (cf. 2 Tim. 2:17; 4:14). We are told little about them, except that “by rejecting conscience they have made shipwreck of their faith,” so that Paul was forced to hand them over to Satan so that they might turn again to the truth (1:19-20; cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Tim. 2:25). They are, therefore, members of the church who appear to have been excommunicated. Otherwise, only “certain people” (*tines*) are mentioned (1:3, 6; 6:21). Timothy is to charge these not to teach other doctrines (*heterodidaskein*; 1:3).

The reference to other doctrines is not clear. Some people want to be considered “teachers of the law” (1:7) and are preoccupied with “myths and endless genealogies” (1:4). Some “liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron” are against marriage for Christians and advocate dietary restrictions (4:2-3) and possibly other forms of asceticism (4:7-8). Some seek money for their teaching (6:5). Paul’s final characterization is that they are involved with “godless chatter and contradictions which they have falsely called knowledge [*gnosis*]” (6:20). The traits can be combined and aligned with those of opponents in other Pauline writings. When the elements of Pauline slander (e.g., the accusation of cupidity) are removed, however, they resemble the sort of elitist esoteric groups we so often encounter in the religiosity of the Hellenistic world.

Several features distinguish 1 Timothy from 2 Timothy on the issue of the false teachers. (1) No mention is made in 1 Timothy of their aggressive missionary tactics or what effect these might be having. (2) In 1 Timothy they do not appear as teachers from the outside, but rather as ambitious and elitist members who were once part—or perhaps are still part—of the community itself. (3) In contrast to 2 Timothy, this letter does not stress rebuke or correction; rather, these negative characters supply the motive and context for Paul’s message for Timothy and the community. (4) On the other hand, Paul responds to them with more than polemic: he clarifies the proper understanding of those things the opponents are distorting.

In response to their wishing to be teachers of the law (1:7), Paul specifies the nature and function of the law (1:8-10). In response to the forbidding of marriage and food, he stresses the essential goodness of creation and its capacity to be sanctified by prayer (4:3-5). He counters the claims for physical asceticism with those of “training in godliness” (4:7-8). He clarifies exactly what sort of “gain” one can expect from godliness, in response to those who sought monetary rewards for their teaching (6:5-10). It is very difficult, however, to draw a direct or explicit connection between what is said of, or in response to, the troublemakers, and the concrete directives concerning community life. Certainly, one can extrapolate from certain emphases to commotions caused by divergent teachings: from Paul’s insistence that prayer should be free of disputation, his refusal to give women a teaching role (2:8-15), his concern for widows becoming gadabouts and gossips (5:13), his warning against the hasty appointment of elders (5:22), and his injunctions to slaves to obey believing owners (6:2). But the explicit connections are more difficult to establish.

Regarding its content, 1 Timothy contains allusions to familiar Pauline teaching, particularly in the emphasis on God’s salvific will for all humanity (see 1:15-16; 2:3-6; 4:9-10; 6:13-16). There is a fascinating reference to Paul’s conversion—seen as an example of God’s mercy (1:12-16)—plus allusions to the trial and testimony of Jesus (2:6; 6:13). There is also this hymnic expression of the “mystery” in 3:16:

He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels,  
 preached among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

These elements are dominated, however, by the practical instructions and the context of moral exhortation, with its “sound teaching” (1:10; 6:3), “training in godliness” (1:4; 4:7), and “good conscience” (1:5, 19; 3:9).

### *The Household of God*

First Timothy does not provide a full and satisfying picture of the community structure of the Ephesian church. The instructions deal with matters of immediate pertinence to the author and his delegate, rather than to the historian’s curiosity.

The author calls the church the household of God (*oikos tou theou*; 3:15). In other letters, Paul uses the expression “the church in the household of . . .” (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15), although he can also speak metaphorically of community members as “household servants” (Rom. 14:4) or “members of a household” (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19). It is important to note here that the church as intentional community is not completely assimilated to the household structure. A distinction is made several times between “one’s own household” and the community (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12; 5:4). In fact, the most important function of the household in this letter is to provide an analogy for leadership: administrative abilities and leadership skills demonstrated in one structure carry implications for another. There is also a distinction—however unclear to present-day readers—drawn between the life and responsibilities of individual households and the life and responsibility of the church (see 5:4, 8, 16). The church imitates the household in many respects, but is not subsumed by it. Since early Christians met in houses—within the sphere of the household—such associations were inevitable.

Paul’s directions to Timothy apply to several different spheres of the community’s life. Some are directed to the life of individual households and the community members living within them. Such are the remarks about slaves belonging to Christian masters (6:1-2) and those about rich members of the community who are not to rely on their wealth but use it for helping others (6:17-19). Similar is the demand that individual children within households provide for widows (5:4, 8, 16) and the banal yet pertinent advice on the attitudes that Timothy should display toward diverse age and gender groups (5:1-2). There is little dramatic in this advice and nothing implausible. The author wants order, propriety, and graciousness in the domestic lives of believers.

Some—not much—attention is paid to the liturgical life of the community, but with a focus different from the instructions concerning the Lord’s Supper and charismatic gifts in 1 Corinthians 11–14. Three very specific directives are given. First, prayers are to be said for all people, especially rulers (2:1-4). This is certainly unexceptional, as is the second instruction, which is that the male members, who pray with uplifted arms, should not have anger or quarreling among them (2:8).

The instructions about women are somewhat more problematic. The contrast between luxurious external adornment and the life of internal virtue (2:9-10) is

commonplace in Jewish and Greco-Roman Hellenistic moral teaching. But the prohibition against women teaching in the assembly or having authority over men (2:11-12) is more difficult to contextualize. The command here lacks something of the tension found in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:34-36. There, the context was one of charismatic worship in which women were certainly prophesying and praying. Here, the instruction focuses narrowly on the cultural unacceptability of women teaching in public. They are to give instruction only in private for their children (2:15, taking “they” as referring to “her children”; cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:3). The justification for the prohibition is harsh, and the account of the sin of Eve (2:13-14) is sharper than in Paul’s other reference to this part of the Genesis story (2 Cor. 11:2-3).

What we learn overall from these few remarks about worship is that it involves public prayer and teaching, and that both of these activities are male prerogatives. As much as one may seek a context for this in Diaspora Jewish synagogues, the participation of women appears more multifaceted there than what we see here in 1 Timothy, and more in line in with what we see in Paul’s other letters. Of course, details are missing that might point to specific church problems (cf. 5:3-16) or perhaps even outside influences, such as the cult of Artemis, which was popular among women in Ephesus. Overall, however, Paul’s message is consistent: order in the household and the church is essential for witness to the world. He clearly perceives the issue of female leadership as fitting into this in some way.

The most extended attention is given to the officers of the Ephesian church. The office of bishop (*episkopos*; 3:1-7) and deacon (*diakonos*; 3:8-10, 12-13) have been encountered before, albeit briefly (Phil. 1:1), as have deaconesses (3:11; cf. Rom. 16:1). The reference to women deacons is debated, but the repetition of “likewise” with the similarity of required behaviors in 3:11 (cf. 3:8) seems to demand that the women of 3:11 be viewed as parallel to, rather than the wives of, the deacons in 3:8. The existence of deaconesses in Ephesus indicates that although teaching was not an allowable activity for women, some ministerial roles were open to them. The office of elder (*presbyteros*; 5:17-22) is not found in other Pauline letters, although Acts associates elders with Pauline churches (14:23) and specifically with Ephesus in 20:17.

The instructions do not describe job responsibilities but personal qualifications. The bishop (or overseer) is obviously an administrator above all, and his position demands appropriate capabilities, although the bishop is also expected to be an “apt teacher” (3:2). Sound moral qualities and leadership ability are paramount (3:1-7). The work of deacons is also such that administrative abilities (proved by the management of a household) are desirable (3:12). Because specific cases are raised, we learn a little more about elders. Those who “rule well” are to be paid double, “especially those who labor in the word and teaching” (5:17). This suggests a board of elders (*presbyterion*, 4:14) who perform administrative functions, among whose number some may also teach or preach. The other directives concerning elders are a reminder of human frailty in every position of authority. Charges can be brought against them and must



be carefully considered (5:19). Timothy may be forced to rebuke an elder publicly—seemingly the role of an outside delegate, not of someone in the same community (5:20). In the light of these possibilities, Paul gives the sound advice that appointment to such positions should not be made with haste (5:22). His concluding injunction is classically Pauline: “Keep these rules without favor; do nothing from partiality” (5:21).

The discussion of widows (5:3-16) is the most problematic for our understanding of the Ephesian community structure. The question clearly seems to be who should be supported by community funds, for a distinction is made on the basis of support available from private families (5:4, 8). The resources of the community as a whole are not to be burdened unnecessarily (5:16): the community’s obligation is to help those who are “real widows” (5:16). But the discussion becomes more complicated at the point of who constitutes a “real” widow. Paul distinguishes between those whose husbands have died and those who are truly “left alone and have hoped in God” (5:5). Some women whose husbands have died are self-indulgent (5:6)—which means they have resources—or are not wholeheartedly committed to the community’s life. If they got the chance, they would like to remarry. Some of them are idlers on the community dole, meddling and gossiping (5:13) instead of serving the community. Paul’s solution would have widows of a marrying age remarry if possible. Only older widows and those without other resources (“left alone”) should be enrolled (5:9, 11). But does the term “enroll” indicate a special order of widows? Paul complicates the question by appearing to provide a list of qualifications as he does for other offices (5:9-10).

The simplest and best explanation is that the Ephesian church followed the model of Diaspora Judaism in providing assistance on a regular and organized basis for the needy of the community (cf. Acts 6:1-7). One of the most important tasks of every Jewish community was the carrying out of this obligation. It was never easy. The obvious categories of those who required aid were the strangers, orphans, and widows. Orphans and strangers were easy to identify and relatively easy to provide for. The case of widows was always far more ambiguous and difficult. Paul wants Timothy in this case to be sure that only the truly needy are cared for by the community as a whole—and then only those with no other resources available to them (i.e., their Christian families should care for them first). They should be enrolled on a list that would certify their qualification for help. In return, they were to give themselves not to their own interests but to the service of the community as a whole.

The community structure at Ephesus according to 1 Timothy is not complicated. It resembles what little we know of the structure of Diaspora Jewish synagogues (see chap. 3, pp. 74–79). In them, a leader (*archisynagogos*) and a board of elders (*gerousia*) did administrative work and settled disputes. Their obligations included running the community charity efforts, both the raising of funds and their disbursement. They were helped in these functions by assistants (*chazzan/diakonos*) who performed more menial tasks in the liturgy and community charity functions. There is nothing in this that is not fully compatible with the church in Paul’s lifetime. Moreover, there is

nothing in this letter that approaches a hierarchical, much less a monarchical, order. No office is theologized or otherwise legitimated. The community structure is task-oriented and practical: it is established to meet the very real needs of the Ephesian Christian community.

The fact, however, that attention is given to these matters implies that there is more here than Paul simply detailing the obvious. Rather, as the instructions themselves make partially clear, there were problems with elders and with widows. But the need may also have come from the disruptions caused by those who, “with ideas in their heads,” unsettled others. Certainly, a concern for order and for the good reputation of the community with outsiders runs through these instructions, a concern not alien to Paul elsewhere. The bishop should not be a recent convert who is easily led astray, thus falling into Satan’s trap and giving outsiders a negative view of the church (3:7). The bad behavior of would-be widows can make outsiders revile the community (5:14). Slaves who refuse to serve their Christian masters will cause the gospel to be defamed (6:1). The overall goal is internal stability and external peace—here approached through the instructions given to a delegate. This is not much different from what is expressed in the most charismatic of Paul’s letters (1 Cor. 14:37-40):

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order.

In 2 Timothy, Paul was concerned with the preservation of his gospel through the person of Timothy—Paul’s delegate. In 1 Timothy, the community as a whole is in view and Timothy’s function is more critical here: he is the delegate who mediates instruction for the well-being of the church. As in Ephesians, the Christian household and community are witnesses to the world of “faith and truth” (2:7). But only a community that is orderly and harmonious—displaying the best of the values and virtues of the larger Greco-Roman culture—can truly be the “household of God.” Indeed, only as an orderly “household” can the community stand as a witness among the Gentiles to the great mystery in Christ (3:16), with a leadership that will be “pillars and supports for the truth.”

## Titus: An Infant Church in the Outpost

In Titus, the segments that make up the puzzle of the Pastorals are pieced together in still another fashion. Unlike 1 Timothy, this letter gives a bit more autobiographical information. Paul is apparently in mid-career. His whereabouts are not indicated, but

he expects to winter in Nicopolis (3:12) and anticipates that Titus will return to him from his temporary duty in Crete upon Paul's sending Artemas and Tychichus to relieve him (3:12). To fill out this picture, two reasons are given for Paul's having "left" Titus on Crete: Titus is to take care of unfinished business left by Paul, and he is to appoint elders in each city (1:5). Much of the letter is taken up with instructions on these matters.

There is nothing in this information that is itself implausible, except that we do not know of any Pauline mission in Crete; Acts only mentions Paul's being there as a prisoner on his way to Rome by ship (Acts 27:7-15). And if the Apollos of 3:13 is the same as the one in 1 Cor. 3:1-6, it is perhaps a little strange to see him as a helper of Titus (though cf. Acts 18:27; 1 Cor. 16:12). Tychichus, of course, we have met before (Acts 20:4; Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12).

While the Letter to Titus bears a close correspondence to 1 Timothy by virtue of its being a *mandata principis*, stylistically it stands between 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. It appears neither distinctively Pauline throughout (as is the case with 2 Timothy) nor only remotely Pauline (as is the case with 1 Timothy). Rather, it alternates short sections whose Pauline rhythms none would deny (see, e.g., 1:15; 2:11-14; 3:4-7) with longer stretches of a seemingly quite different style. In contrast to 2 Timothy, the parenthetic elements are minimal. Titus is only told (2:7-8):

Show yourself a model of good deeds and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.

Moreover, much more than in 1 or 2 Timothy, there seems to be a direct relationship between the opponents and the instructions concerning "what is defective." In sum, Titus is best understood when considered on its own terms as a genuine piece of correspondence, addressing a specific and real situation.

### *The Situation of Titus*

Everything in the letter supports the picture (suggested by 1:5) of a new, developing community. In 1 Timothy, the church at Ephesus already had bishops, elders, and deacons in place. Indeed, the provision could be made that the bishop not be a "recent convert" (1 Tim. 3:6), suggesting that the community has been in existence for some time. By contrast, in Titus it is stated that the elder or bishop (the transition in 1:5-7 is not altogether clear) ought to have children who are believers and that these should not be "open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate" (1:6). Presumably there were Christian households in the community that could still have children who were unconverted, indicating the relatively new growth of Christianity in the region. A further clue to the context of this community is offered in the catalog of this bishop's

qualities, especially those given in addition to the list in 1 Tim. 3:1-7: the bishop is not to be “arrogant or quick tempered or violent” (1:7; in the Greek these terms are quite strong).

We are led to wonder about the population among which Christianity is trying to strike roots. In the eyes of the author, the populace is unattractive: “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons” (1:12). In fact, such a view of the Cretan population seems to have enjoyed almost proverbial status in antiquity. The sharpness with which the contrast between the Cretans and Christians is developed suggests the social formation rhetoric of a newly developing community, which must draw unmistakable borders of demarcation between the old life and the new. There may even be some hints in this language that the demarcation process is not meeting with full success, although the language of incivility ultimately functions as a foil to develop positive Christian traits.

The climate for evangelization is made stormier by opponents who are competing for the religious allegiance of the populace. In Titus, these opponents are outsiders, evidently Jewish rivals. They are “from the circumcision” (1:10), have “Jewish myths” (1:14), are stressing legal observance in some form (1:14), and claim to “know God” (1:16). The opponents are seemingly successful, and the degree of their success provides an important insight into the emphasis of Titus: “They are upsetting whole households by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach” (1:11). A fragile Christian community, therefore, is being threatened not only by the problems accompanying recent converts in an apparently unsupportive environment but also by the ability of rival Jewish missionaries to persuade the newly converted that they have a more attractive vision for being God’s people.

Here there is no possibility for dialogue. The survival of an infant church is at stake. Titus is therefore told by Paul, “They must be silenced” (1:11); and those being seduced by the Jewish opponents are to be “rebuked sharply” so that “they may be sound in the faith” (1:13). Titus himself is to avoid “stupid controversies, genealogical discussions, and quarrels over the law” (3:9). If anyone in the community remains factious, that person is to be warned repeatedly, then cut off (3:10). These are serious remedies for a tough situation. The bishop, likewise, is not simply to be an apt teacher (*didaktikos*) as in 1 Tim. 3:2. He has a more vigorous task (1:9):

He must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he might be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to confute those who contradict it.

### *The Teaching of Titus*

It is important to observe that the *only* specific element of “church order” in Titus is the remarks about the bishop. Otherwise, the focus of practical instruction is on the household and civic responsibilities of Christians. In 2:1-10, Paul provides a list of atti-

tudes that are appropriate, if somewhat bland, for older men (2:2) and women (2:3), younger women (2:4-5) and men (2:6), followed by an exhortation to slaves (2:9-10). In 3:1-2, general civic attitudes of submission to authority and basic rules of civility are recommended. All of these can be summed up as the doing of good works (*kala erga*; 2:14; 3:8, 14) that express the new Christian identity, in contrast to the wicked deeds of the opponents (1:16).

A closer look at the specific instructions raises some interesting questions. Why should older women need to be told not to be winebibbers (2:3)? Do their daughters really require teaching to “love their husbands and children” (2:4)? Are Christian slaves in need of instruction not to pilfer their masters’ goods and not to be stubborn and untrustworthy (2:9-10)? Do Christians generally need to be told to seek “honest work” and that they should not be revolutionary (3:1-2)? The problem is this: behavior this ordinary should fall into the category of “what goes without saying,” but here we find basic instructions being given in civility, the rudiments of civilized behavior. Since, as we have seen, “households” are being overturned by the success of the Jewish missionaries, these instructions are intended—in response—to strengthen the basic familial unit of the community by implicitly contrasting Christian behavior with that of the opponents: the opponents represent the opposite of the civility that ought to be found among members of the Christian household. Through this type of insider-outsider distinction, the gospel teaching is given a framework in which it might be able to grow securely, closing off the opportunity for further damage by the opponents. In Titus, therefore, the gospel itself takes on a civilizing function: it teaches people how to be members of society, a nuance often disguised by the English translation of the Greek.

In this light, we can better understand the two remarkable kerygmatic statements in Titus in which the Pauline language is most pronounced. These statements, we should note, frame and interpret the concrete directives. In 3:3-7, the author quotes a “faithful saying” that takes the form of a before-and-after statement, with the pivotal point being people’s baptism as a response to the “good news.” Before, they had shared in all the hostile attitudes of their neighbors, passing their days in malice and envy, “hated by people and hating one another” (3:3). But they had been given a new identity (3:4-7):

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Here we see that the qualities of God’s gift—the goodness and kindness and mercy—should themselves shape Christian identity, both renewing and regenerating it. This statement is followed by the final command, “Insist on these things, that those

who have believed in God might apply themselves to good deeds” (3:8). In short, specific forms of Christian behavior ought to follow upon the adoption of this new identity given by God.

The other statement (2:11-14) is found in the middle of the elementary civic instruction and is even more illuminating:

*For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.*

The most important word in this passage may well be the first—“For”—which connects the specific instructions to their basis: the grace of God itself. But the next most important word is surely “training” (*paideuouosa*). For Paul, the grace of God itself has an educative function: it trains people toward the goal of becoming human social creatures. Here, as elsewhere in Paul, the Christian life involves a transformation from the old life to the new. Just as Christians had become “slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18), so here they are to be “zealous for good works.” In the context of Titus, this takes on an even more pragmatic meaning because the community seems still to be in the process of formation and stabilization. God’s grace actually becomes a pedagogue for the new believers, training them in civic and social duties.

In a fascinating shift, Christianity here establishes its own distinctive “training,” rivaling yet adapting the Greco-Roman pedagogical emphases. The point of all this is simple: the Christian household now represents the societal and cultural ideal. This serves to reinforce the boundaries that separate the insiders from those “vicious brutes” on the outside, which in turn solidifies and cements this community firmly in the tradition of the Pauline church.

In the end, we see why the general populace is portrayed the way it is in Titus. Throughout, Paul wants to contrast the life of the believer with the people of the world, and he does this by sharpening the distinctions between the two, subtly transposing their respective positions vis-à-vis cultural ideals. For Paul, the Christian solution is obvious: the gospel itself can provide a rooting in the world and the possibility of growth. The grace that comes to people in baptism can change their hearts from hostility to civility, and can begin to shape their behavior in ways compatible with their new identity. Life together in the social structures of “this world” demands of Christians that they leave behind irreligion, worldly passions, and hostility, adopting instead sober, godly, and upright patterns of behavior.

Scholars have often labeled this type of ethic as a “domesticated virtue,” reflecting Christian cultural and social adaptation over time. Yet, in Titus, this ethic is much



more that of eschatological witness, as 2:13 makes evident. Here we see the sharpness of Paul's thought elsewhere: the Christian lives on the cusp of the new age and the old (2:12-13). Indeed, the admonition for Christian faithfulness rests in these two fundamental and widely attested Pauline axioms: Jesus has redeemed his people (2:14) and he is coming in glory to establish them eternally (2:13).

## Study Questions

1. What difference would it make in our understanding of Paul if he did not write these letters? In our understanding of the history of the church?
2. Considering all the New Testament references, what was Paul's relationship with Timothy?
3. What difference does it make that these letters are addressed to individuals rather than congregations?
4. How does attention to "letter types" help in the interpretation of these compositions?
5. What role do metaphors of the family and household play in these letters? What would account for this?

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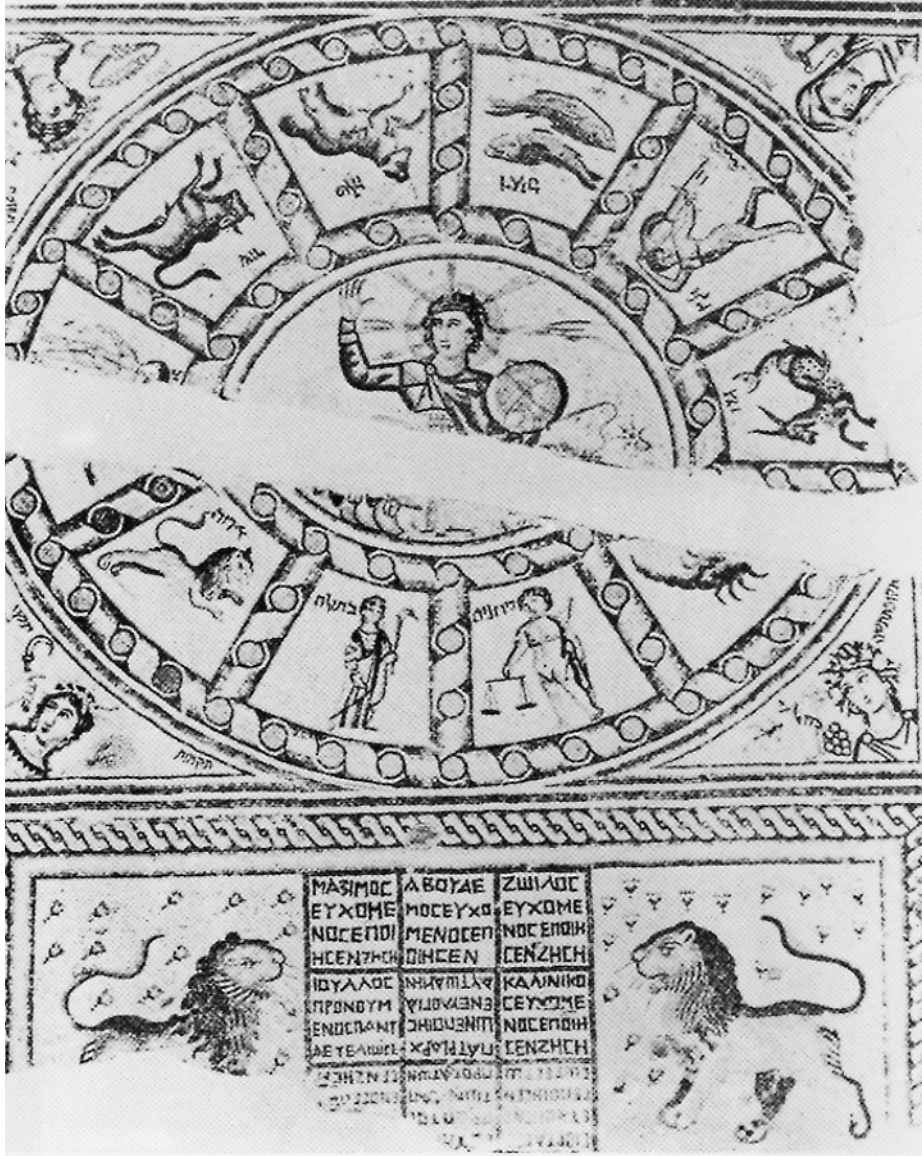
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*Mosaic zodiac and votive inscriptions in the floor of the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias (mid-fourth cent.)*