

2

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL PATTERNS

EACH OF the Pastoral Epistles displays its own discrete set of literary and theological patterns. The immediate goal of this chapter is to identify those structural patterns and to see the individual theological elements in their respective literary contexts. The further goal is to begin to position these letters conceptually in the developing Pauline tradition by providing the baseline for later comparisons of Pastoral and Pauline material and for identifying the earliest signs of the Pauline writings as Scripture. This will also help us assess how the tradition of the Pastoral Epistles contributes to theological formation and consolidation in the early church. The method for identifying these structural patterns will be to examine the literary and textual characteristics of each of the Pastoral texts in turn.

1 TIMOTHY

The world of 1 Timothy turns on the literary axis that runs from Paul to Timothy, the named author and reader respectively of the epistle. In the world of this text, it is along this axis that the various instructions and exhortations, as well as the pattern of the epistle's theology, begin to come into view for the reader. On the face of it, quite apart from the literary question of genre, this epistle is a private correspondence between two people, Paul and Timothy. To that extent, 1 Timothy is much like 2 Timothy. What distinguishes 1 Timothy from 2 Timothy most dramatically is that in 1 Timothy the shape of the discussion is cast broadly in terms of *οικονομία* (divine training/order; 1:4) and *εὐσέβεια* (godliness) for those within the household of God (3:15). Along this Paul-Timothy axis, the ecclesial dimension of 1 Timothy shapes the context for the instructions, exhortations, and theology that emerge from the literary world of the epistle. In 2 Timothy, as we shall see, the Paul-Timothy axis turns more directly on the intimate relationship between the two, most especially on the appeal for Timothy to suffer as Paul has suffered. With this in mind, it is clear that the household of God, the church in Ephesus according to the text, also functions as an implied au-

dience in 1 Timothy. On that level, the Paul-Timothy axis becomes also a Paul-household of God axis.

The function of the greeting in 1:1–2 is to establish this axis between Paul and Timothy. The author identifies himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the command of God our savior and Jesus Christ our hope.” Paul portrays himself as being under a divine command, and as such becomes the authoritative voice in the text that addresses Timothy and the household of God.¹ But even more than that, God is identified as “our” savior and Christ as “our” hope. Already in this opening statement of the greeting, the common bond between the author and the reader in the household of God is established. They are united in God and in Christ. In turn, the text identifies Timothy as a true child in the faith as well as the recipient of the letter on whom grace, mercy, and peace are bestowed by God and Christ through the words of greeting from Paul. Timothy, the child, is addressed by Paul, the apostle.

Unlike the conclusion of 2 Timothy with its final testament, personal notes, and greetings, 1 Timothy ends abruptly with the words: “Grace be with you.” Although the entire sequence of 1 Timothy is structured around the relationship between Paul and Timothy established at the beginning of the letter, the end of the text presents no corresponding discussion portraying the personal connection between the two. That relationship is presumed in the world of the text and the abrupt ending, rather than reiterating that bond between the author and the reader,² simply intrudes to bring the discussion to a close.

From the Greco-Roman Household to the Household of God

In his study of Philemon and the sociology of Paul’s narrative world, Norman Petersen wrote, over twenty years ago, concerning the transformation of literal references into metaphorical references:

It is now apparent that Paul has borrowed the role names of master, slave, father, child, sons, brothers, and sisters from the kinship and master-slave institutions in the world outside the church. But because he transforms the literal reference of the role names taken from these worldly institutions into metaphorical reference to roles in the church, we can see that the world and the church are two separate domains within Paul’s narrative world. . . . The believer’s identity as a believer is represented by borrowed language, but the

¹For a discussion of the authoritative image of Paul in the Pastorals see J. Christiaan Beker, *Heirs of Paul*, 37–39.

²The use of the plural pronoun ὑμῶν (you) in 6:21b reinforces the perception that the wider community was also thought of as part of the audience of 1 Timothy. The textual tradition indicates that this pronoun was changed to the singular in some manuscripts, presumably to convey the sense of the epistle being a private correspondence between two people.

believer is not governed by the institutions from which it was borrowed. The role names are the same in both domains, but in the domain of the world they refer to the literal relationship between actors, . . . all of whom are governed by institutional rules of behavior to be followed by the role players. In contrast, within the domain of the church the same role names are also used to refer to two different sets of actors, one set of which is superior to the other set, but with strikingly different significance.³

Similar to the shift identified by Petersen in Philemon, the rules and patterns governing relationships in the church, understood literarily in 1 Timothy as the household of God, are not, strictly speaking, identical to those in the institution of the Greco-Roman household. Personal qualities and behaviors were obviously important to those concerned with the management of the Greco-Roman household, as they were to those concerned with the well-being of the church. However, the assembly of the living God represented in the text as the household of God in fact operates on a conceptual level with a somewhat different pattern of expectations, and this affects the sociological implications of the exhortations and instructions of the epistle. This discussion addresses how the transformation of images from the Greco-Roman household to the church takes place in the world of 1 Timothy. To put it another way, what happens when the social patterns and expectations governing the one (the church) shift, if not also transform, the patterns that pertain to the other (the Greco-Roman household), even though they are connected in the symbolic reference of the text by the image of the household of God?

In light of the extensive work already done on the background and context of the New Testament “household codes,”⁴ three intersecting lines of that investigation are important for the present discussion: origin, function, and circumstance. Increasingly, the household management traditions in the Greco-Roman world have come to be understood as the originating context for the New Testament “household codes.”⁵ Their function in the New Testament turns on either the need to silence criticism of the community by outsiders and hence to avoid scandal and attract converts or to order the internal affairs of the community before the advent of more formal

³Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 25.

⁴See the following discussions of scholarship on the “household codes”: David Balch, “Household Codes” in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 25–36; David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS; Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1981), 1–62; Clayton N. Jefford, “Household Codes and Conflict in the Early Church,” *StPatr* 31 (1997): 121–27; Angela Standhartinger, “The Origin and Intention of the Household Code in the Letter to the Colossians,” *JSNT* 79 (2000): 117–22. See also David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 71; Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1983), 83–125.

⁵See especially the work of David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” 25–36; and *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 1–62; see also Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians,” *JSNT* 74 (1999): 100–102.

ecclesiastical structures.⁶ Further, Clayton Jefford identifies the consistent circumstance of schism or theological conflict from the first appearance of “household codes” in the letter to the Colossians to their final appearance in the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians.⁷ The common thread running through all of these is the maintenance of or quest for order, whether under the guise of managing a household (ordering a household), silencing critics (not threatening the order of society), structuring the life of the church (ordering the assembly of the living God), or dealing with conflict and division (reordering the community). In line with this common thread, the household becomes, both metaphorically and socially, a microcosm of the city, or the empire. In the case of 1 Timothy the household serves as a microcosm for the household of God, the church. Hence, as we shall argue below, *οικονομίαν Θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει* in 1:4 is best translated “divine order to which members of the household ought to conform in faith,” because it conveys both the sense of order that is underscored by divine purpose and the duty incumbent on Timothy to conform to that divine order. This is played out in the context of what Ramsay MacMullen has described as the key to understanding the social scale of the Roman empire, “verticality,” and the responsibility of everyone through their behavior to maintain the prescribed order of Roman society.⁸

In light of all this, we must, however, be more precise about the use of the terms “household,” “household of God,” and “church.” The terms “household” and “church” point to social phenomena, the one represented in discussions of the household in Greco-Roman literature and pertaining to the character and management of household life and the other projected in the text of 1 Timothy as the ecclesial community. What connects them is the term “household of God,” a metaphor and linguistic link between the two social realities. As a linguistic link, it may not say much directly about the actual social realities of either the Greco-Roman household or the church, though the linkage presumes that the established social reality of the household is in some sense a model for the real life of the church. To make the metaphor work as a model, the author—in addition to what is said about the life of the church in the text—must also presume on the readers’ own experience of household life. What the term “household of God” does relate to directly, however, are the instructions related to other household terms in the literary world of 1 Timothy: overseers, deacons, women, elders, older men, widows, and slaves. Once again, the extent to which these instructions are manifested or will be manifested in the actual communal life of the epistle’s readers we are not able to know with precision.

⁶Jefford, “Household Codes,” 121–23.

⁷Ibid., 122. See also Verner, *The Household of God*, 76–77.

⁸Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 94, 105; see also Verner, *The Household of God*, 80.

As literary realities, the image of the household of God in 1 Timothy and the instructions and exhortations pertaining to the management of the church are on one level largely consistent with what we think we know about the order and management of household life in the Greco-Roman world.⁹ In 1 Timothy's frame of reference, various classes of people are identified and instructed concerning the appropriate qualities and behaviors for each. While the rough outlines of an ecclesial structure come into view, there is in 1 Timothy no concern to sketch the job descriptions for those positions identified as overseer, deacon, and elder. On the contrary, the concern in this text is with the characteristics and behaviors that ought to be exhibited by those people who have designated public roles in the household of God.¹⁰ Relationships within the household are crucial, and the qualities and behaviors necessary to maintain those relationships are of paramount concern in the world of this text. If the church is to function as the household of God, it must function according to patterns that contribute to the proper network and ordering of relationships among people in the community. In short, this is the way to maintain the good order of the church.¹¹

However, if we do not also consider the theology of 1 Timothy, we miss the full implication of the shift involved in borrowing the language of the household and applying it by means of a metaphorical link to the church. Here, we could argue, the prepositional phrase ἐν πίστει (in faith) in 1:4 and the genitive θεοῦ (God) in 3:15 function as qualifiers that require the household of God metaphor to be understood in relation to the full range of conceptual, theological patterns in the textual world of 1 Timothy and not simply in relation to the various individuals and groups explicitly identified in the epistle. To put it another way, both the instructions that pertain to the individuals and groups as well as the theological patterns represented in the epistle affect the way the household of God imagery applies to the church. It is on this level that the movement from the one domain to the other exhibits the most profound shift, a shift that would have had important social implications for the church as well. Hence, it is not adequate to divorce the theology of 1 Timothy from the issue of the household of God, as either an image or as a model for the church. The social character of the church and the qualities expected of those who exercise leadership roles in

⁹Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates*, 144–45.

¹⁰Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 63–72; and Young, *Theology*, 17–20.

¹¹We might conclude, depending precisely on what we determine the originating context for the household of God image to be, that the transition from the domain of household life to the household of God as a metaphor and model for the church exhibits a high degree of consistency and a low degree of social transformation. However, Verner writes: "The station code schema has influenced the shape of the material in 1 Tim 2:1ff. and Titus 2:1–10, 1:5ff., 3:1ff., although this influence is considerably greater at certain points than at others. At the same time the schema has been freely adapted, modified, and even ignored as concrete problems of the church have been addressed" (*The Household of God*, 106).

the church are circumscribed by 1 Timothy's theology and sense of piety. These put the household of God in a distinctive frame of reference when compared to the Greco-Roman household.

The Household of God

In 3:14b–15, the author writes: “so that, if I am delayed you may know how it is necessary to behave in the household of God (οἶκος Θεοῦ), which is the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” This image, presented midway in the discussion, sets the referential context for Paul's instructions and exhortations. The author's words are directed to Timothy and to the household of God; and in the sociology of this text, attention is directed inward to the assembly of the living God. Insiders are implicitly distinguished from outsiders, and the injunctions about proper behavior, personal characteristics, and patterns of life are intended for those who are inside this household. Modeled on the pattern of household life in the Greco-Roman world,¹² this text projects, in a literary way, the ideal pattern of life in the household of God. In short, the patterns seen in the real world are picked up in the literary world and shaped into a context for the instructions, injunctions, and theological claims of the epistle. The patterns of the household in the real world shape the ideal patterns of the household of God in the literary world, which in turn are intended to order the real life of the church.¹³ This is the social and literary interplay that circumscribes this text, and it is the household of God concept in 3:15 that emerges as the crucial image for understanding the literary context of 1 Timothy's theology, as well as for understanding the instructions and exhortations that are directed to Timothy.

The household of God image may or may not be the center of 1 Timothy's theology,¹⁴ but it is clearly framed by the theological statements in 3:16: “Without a doubt the mystery of godliness (εὐσεβείας) is great. Who was manifested in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, preached to Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.”¹⁵ As the pillar and foundation of the truth, the assembly of the living God rests upon the great mystery of godliness, which is cast in christological terms. The unmistakable implication is that the work of the living God and the mystery of godliness are

¹²See Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 73–74; Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 102–6; and Frances Young, *Theology*, 17, 22.

¹³A fuller discussion of the relationship between the Greco-Roman household and the household of God in 1 Timothy will be presented in the conclusion to this section.

¹⁴Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 231; and Jerry L. Sumney, “God Our Savior: The Fundamental Operational Theological Assertion of 1 Timothy,” *HBT* 21 (1999): 109–10.

¹⁵Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates*, 157.

to be understood in terms of Christ, and all of these are tied directly to life in the household of God. If the household of God image projects a context for theology in 3:15–16, the work of the living God expressed in Christ sustains that household in truth. In that sense, the church is the assembly of God.

The inward focus of attention in the literary world of 1 Timothy comes to the fore immediately following the opening greeting in 1:3. Timothy is urged once again to stay in Ephesus and to instruct certain people not to teach a different, presumably incorrect, doctrine. Those who occupy themselves with myths, endless genealogies, and speculations are to be corrected. Without any doubt, these are people within the household of God who are straying from the truth into false doctrine. The concern is not with outsiders at this point, and to the extent there is a concern with outsiders in 1 Timothy, it is primarily with the image the household of God projects to the outsiders.¹⁶ The perceived threat is from false teachers within rather than the threat of persecutions from without. More specifically the threat comes from those who wish to be teachers of the law but have no understanding about the things of which they teach and end up in idle chatter (1:6–7).

The false doctrines of the false teachers—their myths, genealogies, and debates—are contrasted with the οἰκονομίαν Θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει. The meaning of this phrase is critical for understanding life in the household of God and for the injunctions that shape much of 1 Timothy's textual world. A brief survey of English translations of 1 Tim 1:4 and of recent debates about the meaning of the term οἰκονομία indicate the diversity of renderings.¹⁷ Lexicons themselves confirm this diversity of options.¹⁸ There are two general schools of thought regarding the term οἰκονομία: the term has either the sense of divine order or it conveys the sense of cultivating the proper form of godliness.¹⁹ In deciding between these two schools of thought, the first point to be observed is the adversative nature of the sentence structure. The false teachers occupy themselves with myths and genealogies which give rise to debates, instead of (μᾶλλον ἢ) the οἰκονομίαν Θεοῦ that is known or received in faith. Syntactically it appears that two forms of behavior on the part of people in the household have two different results, speculative debates or knowing in faith. If such parallelism is in the text, then it would seem to tilt the argument

¹⁶ Cf. 6:1. See also Beker, *Paul's Heirs*, 45. MacDonald says we find no desire in the Pastoral Epistles for rejection of the world, *The Pauline Churches*, 164–70.

¹⁷ See the article by Luke Timothy Johnson, "Oikonomia Theou: The Theological Voice of 1 Timothy from the Perspective of Pauline Authorship" and the response to it by Margaret M. Mitchell, "Speaking of God as He Was Able: Three Accounts of the Theology of 1 Timothy Compared," *HBT* 21 2 (1999): see especially pages 95–103 and 130–34 in the article and the response. Also Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 27; and Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 164.

¹⁸ BDAG suggests that "training" best fits the context of 1 Timothy 1:4, whereas J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (2d ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988–1989), 1: 358, opt for the term "plan."

¹⁹ See the discussion by Young, *Theology*, 54–55.

slightly in favor of the practice of godliness as the proper translation of the term. Although this does not rule out the sense of knowing in faith the divine order of things, it is stated directly in 1:5 that the goal of this instruction is “love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine faith.” On the face of it, this sounds very much like the language of piety and devotion. At least this much is clear in light of the parallelism identified: different forms of human activity have different results, debates or knowing in faith. What seems to be ruled out is the idea that divine order is merely a static concept apart from any human concern or activity.

If this term is understood to convey the idea of divine order, then the instructions and exhortations that alternate throughout the epistle ought to be understood as seeking to replicate the divine order of things in the household of God that is also found more generally in the Greco-Roman household. If on the other hand, the term encourages the practice of godliness, then the emphasis is on shaping piety and devotion in the household of God. When faced with this alternative, two things are important to observe. First, the translation decision ought not be made solely on the basis of 1:4–5 but must be made in light of the entire textual world of 1 Timothy. Second, these alternatives cannot be set in rigid contrast to each other, for there is evidence in 1 Timothy for both proper conduct leading to good order in the church and conduct that leads to godliness.²⁰ It would also be a mistake to try to understand the thought world of 1 Timothy by making a definitive decision about the translation of this term and then reading the entire text through that lens. A better approach is to identify the alternate emphases in light of 1:4–5 and then to examine the text’s theological and rhetorical patterns to see how the text might nuance and shade the meaning of the term. Hence, this issue will be revisited after the pattern of 1 Timothy’s thought world has been sketched and discussed.

What is clear to this point is that the household of God image provides the organizing structure within which the instructions, exhortations, and theological claims of the letter are made. This image, drawn from everyday life in the Greco-Roman world,²¹ establishes the underlying symbolic network that gives the discussion in 1 Timothy intelligibility and poignancy. Moreover, within this concept of the household, the οἰκονομία, whatever its particular nuance in 1:4, is critical for understanding behavior, life, and thought in the assembly of the living God.

God, Godliness, and Salvation

In 1 Timothy, God is identified as one (2:5), and Christ Jesus is the mediator between the one God and humanity. In this statement, the divide

²⁰ Εὐσέβεια, for example, appears in 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; εὐσεβέω appears in 5:4.

²¹ MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 200–201. See below, p. 35.

between God and humanity is clearly implied, and Christ serves as the mediating bridge between them. But more than this, God is also portrayed in the text as a “living God” (3:15; 4:10) and as a God who “gives life to all things” (6:13). God is the creator of everything that has life. In the literary world of 1 Timothy, God is, on the one hand, separated from humanity in terms of redemptive reality and works through a mediator, Christ. On the other hand, God is immanent in his direct involvement in the giving of life. In the pattern of 1 Timothy’s theology, divine transcendence (mediated redemptively by Christ) and divine immanence (life given by God to all things) are both suggested by the framework that informs the discussion of the epistle.

In the thought world of 1 Timothy, the most conspicuous image associated with God is God as “savior.”²² Already in the greeting, God is identified as “our savior” (1:1), a claim that is repeated in 2:3–4: “This is good and acceptable before God our savior who desires all people to be saved and come to knowledge of (the) truth.” God is both savior and the one who desires all people to be saved.²³ The saving and the desiring are both part of God’s image. This is reinforced in 4:10 where God is identified as both a living God and a God who is the “savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” This text confirms the image of God as savior but extends the implication. The saving activity of God is not disconnected from the human component, in this case from the faith of those whom God desires to be saved.²⁴

This human dimension of salvation becomes even more pronounced in 4:16: “Attend to yourself and (your) teaching, continue in them, for by doing this you shall also save both yourself and those who hear you.” In the exhortation to Timothy in 6:12 this human dimension is portrayed in yet another way: “Fight the good fight of faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession before many witnesses.”²⁵ In 2:15 there is the reference to women being “saved through childbearing if they remain in faith and love and holiness.” This rather strange statement likely points to the need to mind one’s place in the order of social expectations.²⁶ These statements do not negate or diminish the image of God as savior. God is still the one who saves. But in the textual world of 1 Timothy people apparently have a role to play in this process. In the redemptive nexus between God and humans, God is portrayed as savior and humans are projected as fully engaged in their own salvation as well, not as earning their salvation but as taking hold of it in faith, in correct

²² Sumney, “God Our Savior,” 108; and Young, *Theology*, 50.

²³ Johnson, *Paul’s Delegates*, 131–32; Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 190–91; and Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 52.

²⁴ See below, pp. 30–31.

²⁵ Cf. 6:19 and 1:16

²⁶ As Bassler points out, this may be to encourage women to avoid the message of celibacy (*1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61; see also S. E. Porter, “What Does It Mean to Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ [1 Timothy 2:15]?” *JSNJ* 49 [1993]: 87–102).

teaching, and in proper behavior. In other words, there are things that people can do or not do to jeopardize their own salvation, even though God desires that all should be saved.

By simple extrapolation, it is clear that Paul's instructions and exhortations to Timothy, and through him to the entire household of God, are set forth against the backdrop of soteriology. What people do and how they behave in the assembly of the living God make a difference for their salvation. The evidence suggests that the language of salvation refers to eternal life (especially 6:12), but there may also be a sense that salvation has a social and this-worldly dimension as well (e.g., 2:15). In that sense, salvation manifests itself also in the household of God.

The particularity of Christ's appearance in the flesh as the one who is proclaimed to the Gentiles and believed throughout the world becomes clear in 3:16. And Christ's reappearance in the future at a time when the "blessed, powerful one, king of kings, and lord of lords" shall choose is projected beyond the time frame of the text's temporal scope in 6:14–16 to an indeterminate future.²⁷ Christ appeared in the flesh and Christ will be manifested again in due time. The urgency implicit in Paul's instructions and exhortations is the theological conviction that ultimately salvation hangs in the balance.

As we already saw in 2:5, Christ is the mediator between God and human beings, and in that sense is a central figure in salvation. In that same context, Christ is also identified as the one who gave himself as a ransom (ἀντίλυτρον) for all (2:6). Moreover, Christ came into the world to save sinners (1:15), of whom the author identifies himself as foremost. This assertion is introduced as "true and worthy of all acceptance," which suggests that it is close to the heart of 1 Timothy's notion of redemption. In the greeting, Christ is also portrayed as "our" hope (1:1). In the literary contour of this epistle, Christ the ransom and Christ the forgiver stand close together and form a critical part of the divine work of salvation.

Arrayed around the image of God as savior in 1 Timothy is Paul's desire that people in the household of God live in godliness (εὐσέβεια).²⁸ In 2:2 the term stands in relationship to the call to pray for those in high places in order that "we" may live quietly in all godliness and modesty. Devotion and piety are the goals of life in the household of God, and the author urges that entreaties on behalf of the powerful for the solitude that makes this possible be made.²⁹ This leads in 2:3 directly to the claim that "this is good and acceptable before God our savior." It is not entirely clear what the antecedent to "this" is but it is reasonable to think that it is the godliness and modesty sought by the author. In this way, εὐσέβεια is clearly linked to God and salvation.

²⁷In 6:14 the Greek form of the word for "epiphany," normally translated in English as "appearance" or "manifestation," appears referring to Christ's return. For a discussion of the "epiphany" Christology in the Pastorals see below, pp. 98–99.

²⁸Ibid., 51.

²⁹Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 54–59.

The implications of εὐσέβεια become clearer still in 4:7–9: “Avoid profane and foolish myths. Train yourself in godliness. For physical training is of limited value, but godliness is of value in every way for it holds the promise of life now and in the future. This saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance.” This statement is preceded in 4:1–5 by a rejection of those who forbid marriage and abstain from certain foods, and it is followed in 4:10 by a reiteration of the author’s hope in God who is the “savior of all people.” Once again, the injunction to godliness is closely connected to God and salvation. More than that, however, godliness is explicitly set in opposition to certain forms of behavior. It is contrasted with the actions of those who turn from the faith and follow deceitful spirits and demonic teachings through the hypocrisy of liars (4:1–2). Likewise, the godly are not to reject that which is created and “made holy through the word of God and prayer,” namely marriage and food (4:3–5). If Timothy follows these instructions, he will be a good minister of Christ Jesus (4:6). Godliness, portrayed according to the model of physical training (4:7–8), implies that it is to be exercised and trained. The shape of that training gradually comes into view as the discussion unfolds in the rest of the epistle.³⁰

The implications of godliness are brought into still clearer focus in 6:3–6 where it is closely connected to correct teaching and the sound words of “our” Lord Jesus Christ. Εὐσέβεια is not simply a matter of behavior but is also an issue of adhering to the proper teaching. Following false teachers and teachings is, of course, a matter of behavior because it leads to debates and quarrels that threaten the order of God’s household, as is implied in 6:5. There are even those who think godliness is a form of gain. It is clear in the pattern of 1 Timothy’s theology, then, that right thinking and right behavior are intimately connected,³¹ and that they are urgent issues in the world of the text precisely because salvation is at stake. Godliness is clearly concerned with piety and devotion to God, but it is also linked to the proper ordering of life in the church. God, the giver of life and savior, orders the expectation that people in the assembly are to exhibit lives of εὐσέβεια (godliness). This is summed up nicely in the charge in 6:11: “But you, O man of God, flee these things, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.” These are the virtues to be sought by the person of God.

Truth, Sound Teaching, and Faith

The concept of truth is critical for understanding the nature of correct doctrine in 1 Timothy. In the household of God, knowledge of the truth is a

³⁰Cf. 5:4. In this text, a verbal form of εὐσέβεια is used and pertains to the household of widows with children or grandchildren who are to honor their religious duty to their own family.

³¹See the discussion of the close connection between theology and ethics in Young, *Theology*, 27–28.

virtue. In 2:4, for example, knowledge of the truth is coordinate with God's desire that all people be saved. Salvation and knowledge of the truth are linked in the desire of God, and it may be that salvation is in fact dependent upon knowledge of the truth. Knowledge of the truth is linked in 4:3 with faith for those who eat with thanksgiving the food created by God.³² The concepts of knowledge and faith are approached from the opposite direction in 6:20–21: "O Timothy, guard the deposit that has been entrusted to you and turn away from profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge which some have confessed and have deviated from the faith."³³ Paul identifies himself as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth (2:7). Here Paul establishes his own credentials as one who is on the side of truth and faith. And in 3:15, the church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

When we look at the concept of truth in 1 Timothy, we see that it is associated with a complex of other terms (especially "faith") that are intended to designate the idea of correct belief and teaching. While the content of this correct doctrine is not made explicit in all its various forms, one senses that it is only slightly submerged beneath the surface of the text. It is part of the underlying theological world of 1 Timothy, and, as such, it comes to the surface only occasionally in the course of the discussion. As a feature of this literary world, the concept of correct doctrine clearly functions to distinguish those who possess the truth from those who do not. It also serves to provide a context for the instructions and exhortations that run through the epistle.

Genuine faith is either explicit or assumed in a series of references in 1 Timothy: 1:4–5 (faith is associated with "a pure heart and a good conscience), 1:14 (grace of our Lord overflowed to me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus), 1:16 (believe in him to eternal life), 1:19 (have faith and a good conscience), 4:3 (those who believe and know the truth), 4:6 (nourished on the words of faith and sound teaching), 4:10 (the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially those who believe), and 6:12 (fight the good fight of faith). Faith, along with truth, is part of a complex of terms and images that characterize the godly life in the household of God. In these references, faith is identified with a series of vivid affective images—"pure heart," "good conscience," "love," "nourished"—but the term also suggests that a certain content is in view. It is associated with the "words of faith" and "sound teaching." Moreover, in 1:13 Paul refers to his former life when he acted ignorantly in unbelief. By implication, he did not live in truth and knowledge. He acted ignorantly according to truth and knowledge. And in 4:1 and 6:10, it is asserted that some shall turn or have already turned from the faith. Presumably this turning from faith involves more than abandoning the affective dimensions of faith. It means turning from truth and knowledge, which implies turning from the true doctrine and teaching that is to be

³² Cf. 1:6–7.

³³ See the discussion of the "good deposit" below, pp. 37, 95–96, 100–101.

represented in the household of God. In the thought world of 1 Timothy, the term “faith” conveys both the theological and the personal dimensions of godliness; there is no suggestion that these can be separated.

Another dimension of faith in 1 Timothy has to do with instruction and the example of those who serve the church. The author identifies himself in 2:7 as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith. The character of faith is also associated with various categories of people in the church: deacons (3:9), women (3:11), those who serve well (3:13), the pastor (4:12), and whoever does not care for relatives (5:8). In this list, faith is linked with Paul’s expectations for those who have particular roles in the church. Faith is critical for defining life and behavior in the community. Consequently people who conduct themselves improperly are considered to have departed from the faith.

A further aspect of this language complex is the idea of teaching. Part of this concept pertains to the content of teaching. The opponents and problem individuals are promoting a different teaching through myths, genealogies, speculations, wives’ tales, and meaningless talk that are opposed to sound teaching and proper behavior (1:3–4, 6–10; 4:7; 6:2–5). Correspondingly, Paul exhorts and instructs Timothy and the household with regard to the activity of teaching. In 4:11 Timothy is exhorted to teach, and in 4:13 he is instructed to occupy himself with reading, exhortation, and teaching. Toward the end of the epistle in 6:2–3, Timothy is called upon to teach and exhort slaves to give due honor to their masters, and he is reminded that anyone who teaches otherwise is, to put it mildly, ignorant (6:4–5).

Particular categories of people are instructed with regard to teaching. Women are not permitted to teach (2:12), whereas the ἐπίσκοποι (overseers) are to be skillful teachers (3:2). The πρεσβύτεροι (elders) who work in the word and teaching are worthy of double honor (5:17), and slaves are instructed to give honor to their masters in order that the name of the Lord and the teaching might not be blasphemed. Some of those who have deviated from true doctrine have desired to be teachers of the law but have been ignorant of the law (1:7–9). They simply have not known anything about the law and the things of which they claim to teach. If there is a focal point for the opposition to the faith, truth, and sound teaching in 1 Timothy, it is to be found here. From the perspective of 1 Timothy, the teaching of the law is a bone of contention, and it is around this ignorant teaching that the opposition is singled out for special mention in the text.³⁴ The law is not set forth for the innocent but for the disobedient. It may also be that the errors related to other issues also stem ultimately from a misunderstanding of the law: those who forbid marriage and certain foods (4:1–3); those who teach things that are contrary to the teachings of Paul and do not agree with the

³⁴For references to the opposition (e.g., false teachers, misguided ascetics, and divisive people) see Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 38–42; and Johnson, *Paul’s Delegates*, 108–9.

words of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:3–6); those who engage in profane and idle talk and in contradictions (6:20). In 1 Timothy these could descriptions could be pointing to those who claim to be teachers of the law yet have no understanding of the law.

As we plot the theological pattern of 1 Timothy, we see that the terms “truth,” “faith,” and “teaching” are all part of a semantic field that points to an activity as well as to a framework of conviction that helps us map the symbolic world of this text. In this world, thought and action are closely linked. There is no hint that theology and behavior can be wedged apart. In fact, the theology of 1 Timothy does not emerge through the discourse of theological argumentation but rather through the ebb and flow of instruction and exhortation to Timothy and to the household of God. While these terms seem to represent content—the correct doctrine that stands behind them—the character of this content often remains only implicit in the text. It is only explicitly identified here and there on the surface level of the discourse. The distribution of this terminology in the text also gives the impression that the discourse is linked together by a complex interweaving of terms and ideas that provides a kind of rhetorical coherence for a text that otherwise often appears quite random.³⁵ To distill this interconnectedness, one must discern the web of terms and ideas that identify the symbolic world of the text. From the image of God and the household of God extending on to the interlocking concepts of truth, faith, and teaching, one can begin to detect the pattern, if not the order, in the thought world of 1 Timothy. And it is in the ordered pattern of this world (with its emphasis on the household of God; God, godliness, and salvation; and truth, sound teaching, faith) that the instructions regarding the ecclesial concerns of 1 Timothy are anchored.

Qualities and Instructions Appropriate for Members of the Household of God

In 1 Timothy’s frame of reference, various classes of people are identified and instructed concerning the appropriate qualities and behaviors for each. While the rough outlines of an ecclesial structure come into view, there is in 1 Timothy no concern to sketch the job descriptions for those positions identified as overseer, deacon, and elder. On the contrary, the concern in this text is with the characteristics and behaviors that ought to be exhibited by those people who have designated public roles in the household of God.³⁶ Relationships within the household are crucial and the qualities and behaviors necessary to maintain those relationships are of paramount

³⁵ Here we echo the observation by Luke Timothy Johnson regarding the non-systematic, even haphazard, nature of the presentation in 1 Timothy (*Paul’s Delegates*, 106).

³⁶ Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 63–72; Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 78–93; Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 212–25; and Young, *Theology*,

concern in the world of this text. Once again, the household of God is modeled on the Greco-Roman household of the wider culture, and the characteristics appropriate for that wider household are also appropriate for the managers of the household of God.³⁷ If the church is to function as the household of God, it must function according to patterns that contribute to proper relationships between people in the community. In short, this is the way to maintain the good order of the church.

The ἐπίσκοπος (overseer) is to be “beyond reproach: husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, honorable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not aggressive but gentle, peaceable, not greedy” (3:2–3). Listed both positively and negatively, we find the qualities that are desirable for an overseer. They sum up what the irreproachable life is thought to be like. In each case, the desired qualities are those that should contribute to the proper order and functioning of the community. Further on in the discussion, the concern for the household is made explicit: “He must be able to manage his household well and keep his children in submission. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for the assembly of God?” (3:4–5). The connection between the Greco-Roman household and household of God is made as direct as it can possibly be in these verses. Management of one’s own house is evidence of one’s fitness to manage the church, and apparently the qualities necessary for the one are necessary for the other. In the literary world of 1 Timothy, the expectations and characteristics of household management outside the church are projected onto the assembly of God, and the congruence between the two is very close. The discussion of overseers concludes with the further qualifications indicating that they must not be a recent convert and must also be well thought of by outsiders (3:6–7). Those in positions of responsibility on the inside should provide no affront to those on the outside. While the point of view of the text is clearly directed to those inside the community, the responsibility of the community’s overseers extends beyond the boundaries of the community, at least to the extent of not bringing themselves and the community into disrepute. In this way, the world inside and the world outside are connected.

Similarly, the διάκονος (deacon) must be “dignified, not deceitful, not partaking of much wine, not fond of dishonest gain, and must hold to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience” (3:8–9). If when tested they prove themselves to be above reproach, they are permitted to serve. As with the overseers, they are to be husbands of one wife and are to manage their children and own households well. Once again the emphasis is on the personal qualities that are to mark those who minister in the church. In so doing they

17–20. See also the discussion of ministry in the Pastorals by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 582–96.

³⁷Johnson, *Paul’s Delegates*, 144–45; Fitzmyer, *Structured Ministry*, 584–87.

achieve “good standing” in the community and “much confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (3:13). As in the case of the overseer, a role in the life of the community is identified but a well defined and fully institutionalized office structure is still not yet clearly in view. This is indicated by the emphasis on personal characteristics necessary for the various roles rather than the formal requirements and functions associated with an office.³⁸

In 5:17–20 the πρεσβύτεροι (elders) are singled out for consideration. Elders, especially those who labor in word and teaching, are worthy of double honor. In this case the tone of the discussion tends toward the procedural. Charges should not be leveled against an elder except on the evidence of two witnesses, and where elders persist in sin they are to be reprovved. As is the case with deacons, the epistle lauds those elders who are involved in managing and directing the affairs of the community.

First Timothy fully expects that different roles will be assumed in the life of the community and seeks to order those roles and activities in accord with a perception of how the household of God is to function based on the model of the family.³⁹ It is quite a different matter to claim that by the time of 1 Timothy distinct offices with formally differentiated expectations had already developed. We might expect that at this time there was still some overlap between the roles attributed, for example, to overseers and elders. Furthermore, the development of roles and expectations during the New Testament and early post-New Testament period may also have occurred independently in different locations.

Instructions for other groups are also woven into the discourse of the epistle. Women are singled out and instructed to dress modestly, clothing themselves with good works, learning in silence and all submission (2:9–11). Women are not to teach or have authority over a man but to keep silence (2:12).⁴⁰ The justification for this is that Adam was born before Eve and was not deceived as Eve was (2:13–14). The underlying assumption for these instructions is that there is a structural order of things, presumably in nature and society, that ought to be observed and that holds true for the household of God as well.⁴¹ Imprinted on the literary world of the text is a perception of how reality is structured, and the social order in this structure is understood to be part of the nature of reality. Conforming to this structure in life and behavior is tantamount to godliness.

³⁸ Embedded in the middle of the discussion about deacons is the comment that women are to be “serious, temperate, and faithful in all things and not to engage in slander” (3:11). This remark also emphasizes the personal behavior and character dimension of the discussion, in contrast to a focus on the roles and expectations somehow inherent in the office described.

³⁹ Cf. 5:1–2.

⁴⁰ MacDonald argues that false teaching was linked with the activity of women (*Pauline Churches*, 187–89).

⁴¹ Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 59–60.

Widows are also instructed; in this case there is apparently a group of widows who are enlisted for service in the community. Those sixty years of age and over who have been the wife of one man, attested for their good works and child rearing, known for their hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, and helping the afflicted are to be put on the list (5:9–10). Younger widows are not to be enrolled for they are preoccupied with sensual desires and wish to marry. Moreover, they are generally idle gadabouts who gossip (5:11–13). What is especially interesting about this group of widows is that they are not to have a public role in the household of God but to devote themselves to their tasks in the domestic household by marrying, bearing children, and managing their own homes (5:14). Once again, the domestic household and the household of God are both in view. In this case, the instruction to the younger widows, unlike the older widows, is to fulfill their godliness by confining their involvement to the domestic spheres of household life.

Slaves and those desiring to be rich are also given instruction. Slaves are advised to honor their masters “in order that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed” (6:1). An extra measure of service is instructed for those slaves who have believing masters on the ground that their service redounds to the benefit of other believers (6:2). Even in these instructions to slaves, the familiar distinction between those in the household of God and those outside is drawn. The actions of slaves are in some measure affected by the kind of master to whom they are enslaved, whether an insider or an outsider.

In 6:9–10 those who desire to be rich are warned that the love of money is the root of all evil. In their desire for money, some have also wandered away from the faith. In contrast, the “man of God” should avoid this and “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness” (6:11). The love of money is apparently contrary to the life of godliness and can draw people away from the faith, which of course threatens their very salvation.

Woven through these various instructions to groups in the household of God are instructions that are directed quite specifically to Timothy. In 1:18–20 Paul instructs Timothy so that he might fight the good fight, have faith and a good conscience, and not blaspheme. Immediately following this statement Timothy is encouraged to make supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings for all people (2:1). And in 4:6–16 Timothy is instructed and exhorted regarding his own manner of life. Referring to the previous discussion, Paul advises Timothy that if he gives these instructions to the people in the church he will be a good minister of Christ Jesus (4:6). Following this introduction, Timothy is instructed to have nothing to do with myths and idle tales but is to train himself in godliness (4:7); to set an example in word and deed (4:12); to attend to reading, exhorting, and teaching (4:13); to honor the gift that was given through prophecy with the laying on of hands (4:14); and to practice and persevere in these things (4:15). Fur-

ther on in the discussion, he is called upon not to rebuke an older man but speak to him as a father (5:1); to show honor to widows (5:3); to keep Paul's instructions regarding elders without prejudice and partiality (5:21); and he is not "to lay hands on anyone" hastily (5:22). He is also to take a little wine for his stomach ailments (5:23). Finally, in 6:20–21 he is commanded to guard that which has been entrusted to him and to avoid that which is falsely called knowledge. In the literary construct of this text, the author addresses the stated reader (Timothy) and an implied audience (the household of God in Ephesus). It is around this double axis that Paul's instructions are organized and directed, and it is not always easy to distinguish them from each other.

Divine Order and Conformity in Faith

In the literary world of 1 Timothy divine order, natural and social, stands alongside the expectation that people in the household of God should pursue godliness. The proper manner of life—the godly life—is a matter of bringing one's character and behavior into conformity with the perceived order of reality and one's place in that reality. Training in the way of godliness is important in the church, and it is patterned on the model of physical training in 4:7–8. Both of these are part of the structure of 1 Timothy's literary world, and they pertain to the way we ought to think about the *οικονομίαν Θεοῦ* in 1:4. This expression conveys a sense of divine order but it also communicates an expectation that in faith this order is observed by the godly. Those who pursue godliness build up the household of God into conformity with God's purposes and plans. This is important for both the present life and the life to come. Hence, we propose that *οικονομίαν Θεοῦ τὴν ἐν πίστει* ought to be translated: "divine order to which members of the household ought to conform in faith." This conveys the sense of divine order, but also implies the sense of actively conforming one's life in faith to *εὐσέβεια* (godliness). Deeply embedded in the thought world of 1 Timothy is the image of a natural order to which people in the household of God ought to conform, the result of which is a tendency towards consolidation and conformity, rather than novelty and innovation.

2 TIMOTHY

The literary axis of 2 Timothy is established immediately in the first two verses of the text, the greeting. Paul, the named sender of the epistle, is identified as an apostle of Christ Jesus *διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ* (through the will of God), *κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν ζωῆς* (in accordance with the promise of life), and *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* (in Christ Jesus). The objects of the prepositions identify different aspects of Paul's apostleship: "the will of God," "promise of life,"