

## WORKING DRAFT ONLY

### "Leading God's Household: 1 Timothy 3:1–4:6"<sup>1</sup>

#### **Clarification of approach to the Pastoral Epistles (PE)**

Whilst the PE are perhaps not Pauline letters in an historical sense, they are Pauline in a "canonical" sense. That is, they are admitted by the church into the Pauline canon as integral members of Scripture's Pauline witness to and performance of God's gospel. According to the hermeneutics of the canonical process, a letter's apostolicity is less a matter of who authored a text, whether or not an apostle, and more a matter of its apostolic content and salutary effect. This criterion of canonicity coheres with a definition of a text's inspiration that is more functional than authorial, having to do with its performance more than its production (so 2 Tim 3:16). These qualifications are pretty easily retrieved from the canonical process during which composite and anonymous texts are admitted into the biblical canon.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, this study envisages a shift of approaching the biblical text from the point of its origin as a composition to its origins as Scripture, from authorial to ecclesial intent, from an interest in the circumstances that occasion the writing of a text to those that occasion its canonization. And so on. For theological reasons, then, I am reluctant to speak of a biblical text as authored—e.g., the final redaction of 1 Timothy is the work of a Pauline pseudepigrapher or 2 Timothy of the historical Paul and his collaborators. When approaching the PE as Scripture—as the *church's* (rather than an author's) book—authority is more properly located in the per se text as canonical or in the act of interpreting the text as sacramental.

For this present paper, then, let me simply state a couple of orienting concerns: (1) Even though the letters themselves would seek to suggest they are written separately and are occasioned for different reasons, the PE are received by the ancient church and admitted into the Pauline canon together—the pre-canonical and canonical histories would suggest sometime toward the end of the second century. Whilst I do agree that the prerogatives of critical exegesis obligate the teacher to consider each letter in turn, a canonical approach will finally find ways of engaging all three together as a whole part of an integral whole Pauline canon—that is, in a fashion that coheres with their reception into the NT canon. Put theologically, the church recognizes the divine inspiration of the PE and accepts their authority on that basis together and within the bounds of a thirteen-letter Pauline canon.

(2) From the Muratorian document, which remains the earliest list of authorized Christian writings (c. 200CE), we learn that the reception of the PE into the body of the church's sacred writings was due to recognition of their utility for "the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline" (62-64). Whatever the occasion of their writing, which remains contested, the occasion of their canonization almost surely is practical: to organize

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<sup>1</sup> This essay trades on my forthcoming theological commentary on the Pastoral Epistles for the *Two Horizons Commentary* (Eerdmans). Some incidental comments along the way may refer to earlier or later bits of that work, which is still a year away (at least!) from completion in draft form.

<sup>2</sup> All contested matters, yes; but I have staked out my claims elsewhere and will not repeat them here. See, for example, R. W. Wall, "The Significance of a Canonical Perspective of the Church's Scripture," in *The Canon Debate* (L. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, eds., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), pp. 528-540.

Christian congregations in a manner that safeguards and transmits the gospel's truth according to Paul. From this canonical perspective, then, the various instructions of 1 Timothy presume the authority of a Pauline rule of faith and life, which regulates the worship and religious practices of a Christian congregation, precisely because the Paul believes this Pauline rule is patterned after the Creator's way of ordering reality (see 1:3-5). The author's irreducible theological principle is embodied concretely in his use of the household metaphor, which serves as the letter's principal *typos* for ordering a competent community's life.<sup>3</sup>

The interplay between *oikos theou* ("God's household," 3:15) and *oikonomia theou* ("God's way of ordering reality," 1:4) forms the theological *gravitas* for the entire letter, since the various elements of a congregation's public life must embody the Creator's way of ordering social relations. Of course this makes perfect sense for the letter's first urban readers whose meeting place was typically a member's home where believers gathered for worship and Christian fellowship (cf. Acts 16:40; 18:7; 20:7-12; et. al.). Whether the family household remains the most essential unit of human culture today is debated among sociologists. Yet even when the currency of other metaphors that organize Christian congregations into cohesive and competent communities displace the household as more relevant, the patterns and codes of the family household found in this letter continue to instruct its faithful readers.

### **Profiles of Leadership According to 1 Timothy 3:1—4:6**

For this paper I intend to "drill down" on a particular text, 1 Timothy 3:1—4:6, which has been widely appropriated—often uncritically so—during the church's reception of the Pauline canon to define its ecclesiastical "offices." It is my understanding, quite apart from hermeneutical considerations, that this mistakes the poetic use of the relevant terms within this text to score more theological points about the nature of leadership within a "house(hold) of God."

What follows is a commentary on this text, beginning with my translation. In concluding this paper, I will offer a few preliminary reflections about the interplay between the PE profile of leadership and the more familiar idea of charismatic leadership within the Pauline canon related to Pauline use of "body" as a metaphor (or mythology) for church. The most substantial expression of this idea is found in 1 Cor 12, which I will use as a second set text in exploration of the Pauline witness to spiritual leadership.

#### **1. Household Administrator (3:1-7)**

*(3:1) Someone who aspires to become an administrator desires a good work. (2) Therefore the administrator must be blameless: the husband of one wife, clearheaded, modest, respectable, hospitable, a skilled teacher, (3) not a drunk or a bully but gentle, peaceable, generous. (4) He must manage his own household well, holding children in submission with complete respect—(5)for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? (6) He must not be newly converted so not to be arrogant and slip into the devil's condemnation. (7) He must have good references from outsiders so not to slip into disgrace, the devil's trap.*

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<sup>3</sup> See Collins' excellent excursus on this point, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 102-06.

Elsewhere in 1 Timothy, mention is made of a "council of elders" (*presbyterion*) who confirm and commission Timothy's prophetic calling (4:14); and again reference is made to "elders" (*presbyteroi*) whose worth within the congregation is measured by their active ministry of preaching and teaching others (5:17ff.). Although undeveloped in 1 Timothy, the instructions regarding elders suggest that they are the gifted custodians of the spiritual health of all those who meet together for worship, instruction, good works, and fellowship. This simple administrative structure accords with Acts and seems apropos for the house churches of the Pauline mission, which follow the sociology of Diaspora synagogues as an element of the church's firm embrace of its Jewish legacy (see Acts 18:5-6; 14:23; 16:4; 20:17).<sup>4</sup> Against this backdrop, then, the terminology for leadership used in this chapter is exceptional to the general pattern of governance found elsewhere in the Pauline canon leading most biblical scholars to conclude that 1 Timothy addresses a post-Pauline situation when the church had developed a more complex polity to accommodate Roman society or to safeguard the institutions of the Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> We agree with Johnson that interpreters are mistaken if they assume 1 Timothy's definition of church polity and leadership necessarily reflects this later move toward institutional episcopacy that characterized the early catholic church.<sup>6</sup> In fact, no such structure or formal job descriptions of a bishop or diaconate are prescribed by 1 Timothy and its "household" organization is rather simple by comparison.

In fact, it bears repeating that the structure and role of the Roman household is the most important sociological subtext of 1 Timothy: according to this letter, God's household in which the "living God" dwells as its *paterfamilias* bears a striking family resemblance to the traditional social patterns for organizing middleclass households in the urban centers of the Mediterranean world (see 1:4-5; 5:1-6:2; 2 Tim 2:20-21; Titus 1:5; 2:1-10). Each member of the household from its administrator to its servant staff held a certain status within an extended family with various responsibilities to perform and social relations to observe. The stability of the city-state if not of the Empire depended on maintaining this order. But the concern for propriety and efficiency as God's household is motivated differently than within Roman society: the primary vocation of God's household is religious, not political. The well-ordered Christian household is "the church of the living God" (3:15) that serves God's chief desire, which is to save all people (see 2:4). For this reason, the church is organized not by household codes or other instruments of social domestication, as some contend, but by the teaching of "sound doctrine," the grammar of a Pauline rule of faith (see 1:10-11).

Nonetheless, the daily operation of an effective congregation requires good leadership, which in 1 Timothy is appraised according to the traditions of an urban household. The political terms used in this chapter—"administrator" and "servants"—are not references to well established church offices but rather are metaphors of leadership consonant with the comprehensive use of the "household of God" metaphor when drawing useful patterns of assembly and tasks that his readers associated quite naturally with their

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<sup>4</sup> H. C. Kee, *Acts* (NTC, Trinity Press, 1997) 204-07. In Diaspora Judaism, *presbyteroi* formed councils that guided the religious business in Jewish neighborhoods of Roman cities following the biblical pattern of Israel's tribal confederacy (e.g., Josh 24:1).

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Structured Ministry of the Church in the Pastoral Epistles," *CBQ* 66 (2004) 582-96.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *1-2 Timothy*, 74-76; 217-25.

participation in familial households. There is a sense in which the terms of leadership found in 1 Timothy—elder, administrator, servant—are analogical of real persons and their roles within the typical middleclass urban household that had also become the location where believers assembled for worship and fellowship (cf. Acts 16:40; 20:7-12). For this reason 1 Timothy can also speak quite literally of “elders” (5:1) and “servants” (6:1-2) of actual households, which creates a purposeful ambivalence between the effective operation of familial and sacred households.<sup>7</sup>

Although possibly referring to particular elders who are assigned special administrative tasks within the congregation, our preference is to understand the terms used in this chapter as collective metaphors that infer a range of responsibilities assumed by a congregation's council of elders as a whole. For this reason, then, 1 Timothy's interest is to delineate the shared moral attributes of all elders who together administrate and serve the interests of the congregations they lead. For this reason, the verb *prohistēmi* is repeated in 1 Timothy to connect the church's administrative (3:4) and service (3:12) responsibilities with the council of “elders” (5:17). This same linkage of hearth and holy place may also be inferred by the juxtaposition of *presbyteros* in reference to a household's older males (5:1, where *prebys* means “elderly”) and for the congregation's governing elders (5:17).<sup>8</sup> Significantly in this regard, not only is the *episkopos* of Titus called “God's steward” (*oikonomos*), thereby locating him within God's household, but his qualifications (1:7-9) are shared and therefore logically related to the *presbyteroi* (1:5-6) by a connective *gar* “for” (1:7). Our general point is this: the instructions of this chapter are intended to circumscribe the obligations of the congregation's elders and define their spiritual leadership in virtues and roles that are suitable for a household belonging to God.

**3:1.** The word for “administrator” (*episkopē*) refers to someone who provides “oversight” to a group and is sparingly used in the NT (Luke 19:44; Acts 1:20; 1 Pet 2:12).<sup>9</sup> Acts 1:20 quotes LXX Ps. 109:8 in which *episkopē* is used of Judas' vacated “position” within the Twelve, which then Mathias fills at God's will. Although vague, the Acts use of *episkopē* may provide a context for reading the “aspiration” of a qualified administrator as an inward

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<sup>7</sup> F. Young, *Theology of Pastoral Letters*, 98-99.

<sup>8</sup> There is good reason why 1 Timothy makes an implicit connection between a congregation's “political” elders and its chronological elders, given the veneration of age in the ancient world. Note that the Qumran community's *Mevaqqer* was required to be between 30 and 60 years old (CD XIV.7), somewhat younger than the age requirement of “real widows” in the Pauline congregations (cf. 1 Tim 5:9).

<sup>9</sup> The metaphor of a household's *episkopos* may draw upon the image of the *Mevaqqer* within those sectarian communities now linked to Qumran and the DSS; cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, “Jewish Christianity in Acts in Light of the Qumran Scrolls,” in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn, eds., Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 245-48. According to the communal regulations found in the Damascus Document, the *Mevaqqer* (= the community's priestly administrator also known as its *Maskil* or “instructor”) is charged with safeguarding the community's welfare both spiritually and financially from external threat. For this reason, he must be spiritually mature. Included in the rules that guide his work is a concern for the community's relations with outsiders, not to save them as in 1 Timothy but to restrict their negative influence on the community's membership. While this person lives to high spiritual standards (e.g., 1QS 9-12), unlike the *episkopos* of 1 Timothy whose profile is catalogued by conventional virtues of maintaining a stable household, CD defines this similar role by a code of rules that regulates the religious and financial administration of the congregation's common life.

"desire" prompted by God's calling rather than by self-promotion. The word is repeated in 3:2 in slightly modified form (*episkopos*), which elsewhere appears with "elder(s)" (cf. Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:7; 1 Tim 4:14) and implies shared responsibility or perhaps even a political mechanism of accountability.

We have purposefully translated *episkopē* "administrator" rather than the more familiar "bishop" to resist the anachronism of insinuating what today's "office of bishop" has become for the meaning of *episkopē* in 1 Timothy. This translation also indicates our preference to understand the term as a collective metaphor of the council of elders who, like the competent manager, are attentive to the mundane nuts-and-bolts of daily routines that insure a religious household's stability and long-term existence. In this sense, the virtue catalogues of the present passage correspond to this practical role: they profile a manner of leadership that works behind the scenes for the common good of the household of God.<sup>10</sup> Although the administrator has singular importance with respect to these organizational tasks (see below), Timothy alone is charged with those tasks and responsibilities that are normally associated with a congregation's spiritual leader or "pastor." In distinction from those appointed to help manage the congregation's daily affairs, he alone is called the "pillar and foundation of the truth" (3:15) and is singled out by "prophetic utterance" (1:18) as vested with a spiritual charism and religious authority that authorizes him to represent the Apostle in guiding the congregation into its future with God our Savior (esp. 4:6-16). Neither the household's "administrator" or "servant staff" is accorded similar legitimacy.

If we are right that Acts introduces the Pauline corpus in its biblical setting, then Acts 6:1-7—a story that also concerns the congregation's leaders—would appear to form a strategic co-text with this text in a way that supports and expands the above observations. According to this story in Acts, the settlement of the intramural conflict between Hebrews and Hellenists within the Jerusalem church is prompted by its awareness of two related problems: not only were the material needs of dependent widows from one community neglected by the apostolic leaders of another (6:1) but the heavy burden of administering a community of common goods had subverted the Twelve's principal vocation of preaching the word of God and prayer (6:2). In response to this crisis certain members of the Jerusalem community known by their virtuous character—"good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3)—are selected and consecrated as the congregation's *diakonoī* to administrate the distribution of the community's goods. This organization in which apostolic authority is shared with these qualified "administrators" allows the word of God to flourish and the number of converts to increase (6:7).<sup>11</sup>

This same division of labor found in Acts is similar to the "household" labor envisaged in 1 Timothy. In this case, apostolic authority is delegated to Timothy, a "good

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<sup>10</sup> See Johnson, *1-2 Timothy*, 218-219. Among the administrative functions performed by the supervisor of other voluntary organizations in the Mediterranean world of antiquity, two appear most prominent: working as liaison between his and other groups, and raising funds to support the programs and various responsibilities of his particular community. Typically the head of such an organization, and sometimes its primary patron, was also head of a family household.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see R. W. Wall, *Acts* NIB:10, 110-15, and, more recently, "The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-21) in Canonical Context," forthcoming in C. E. Evans, ed. L. E. McDonald FS (Mercer University Press, 2007). Cf. C. C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) for the most important critical study of this issue.

*diakonos* of Jesus Christ" (4:6). While Timothy is charged to exemplify the Christian life (4:12), his principal role remains to engage in those "apostolic" tasks of teaching Pauline doctrine (1:10-11; 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17), interpreting the community's Scriptures (4:13), preaching the gospel of God (5:17), and especially to guard the "mystery of godliness" as the church's "pillar and bulwark" (3:15-16; cf. 6:20). These are essentially the same tasks performed by the Paul of Acts. Moreover, not unlike the manner of calling (cf. Acts 13:1-3), Timothy's ministry is made clear by "prophetic utterance" (1:18), confirmed by the laying on of hands (4:18) and empowered by spiritual charisma (4:18), which underscores his spiritual authorization in a manner similar to his mentor.

Three additional elements of the prior story in Acts 6 illumine important subtexts of the instructions for the congregational leaders (= elders) found in the present chapter. First, a healthy congregation requires a competent administrative staff that supports and makes possible a ministry of the word. What is gained from reading Acts is a clearer sense of the practical reason for a simple division of labor between those called by God to serve "apostolic" roles such as Paul (2:7) and Timothy (4:6-16), and those elders who serve the congregation in "administrative" and "servant" roles.

Second, much like in Acts, the selection of the congregation's management staff is subject to a more pragmatic review of their personal virtue and spiritual maturity rather than by divine appointment as is the case of those vested with apostolic authority. Those who qualify to lead do so by demonstration of their public virtue. According to Acts, the Seven are identified for service by their character, which repeats "full of Spirit and wisdom" and is evidently apropos for a ministry of charity. Significantly, the first characteristic listed is *martyroumenos* (Acts 6:3), which refers to one whose public actions and persona are witnessed and approved by others, which is synonymous to the principal Pauline virtue, *anepilēptos* ("blameless") that heads the list in 1 Timothy (3:2) and in some sense summarizes the character of a competent supervisor. This more public virtue of the Seven when coupled with Lukan catchwords of spiritual maturity, "full of the Spirit and wisdom," envisage persons of moral and spiritual competence, which is the essential attribute for their community service.

Neither Acts or 1 Timothy provide their readers with detailed job descriptions by which a pile of applicants is narrowed according to education, experience, calling, and success—which we might expect to find in today's résumés. We rather find the conventional profile of a virtuous person. What is clear, however, is that such a profile in virtue is apropos to the administrative task within a household of believers; in fact, the "aspiration" of any believer who seeks to be a church administrator presumes a prior experience managing the daily affairs of a family household (3:4-5). The presumption of the text, then, is that the relevant experiences that prepare one for a supervisory role within the church are not those we tend to ascribe to those who hold an ecclesiastical "office" but are more practically related to the routines and duties of running a household. Consistent with the rest of 1 Timothy, this profile is consistent with the use of "household" in 1 Timothy as the essential metaphor of church order, which also extends to the next profile of household "servants" and their wives (3:9-13).

Finally, what is unclear in 1 Timothy is made clear by the Acts intertext: the apostles of Acts convene an entire community not merely to advise them but to participate with them in making a decision that accords with God's will. This is the subtext of the opening conditional: for the prospective leaders to "desire a good work" (3:1) is to pursue

work that agrees with God's purposes (see below). The moral philosophers of the day routinely condemned those who "aspire" to leadership positions because such ambition was usually motivated by one's greed or a "desire" for sexual conquest. The text here challenges a more negative reading of human desire, suggesting that divine grace can transform the motives behind a believer's actions. What Acts suggests, however, is that it is precisely this counter-reality that the congregation has responsibility to determine is true of any candidate for this post.

**3:2-7.** The "therefore" that introduces 3:2 follows from "good work," which in its PE usage is theologically rather than morally determined: the believer who does "good work" does God's will by God's grace.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, while the interpreter should admit that the form of congregational leadership is not distinctively Christian and even formulaic of contemporary moral norms, its theological subtext is not: the "good work" a competent manager may do within the household is only by God's grace and not to be understood as a human achievement; and it is work that ultimately serves the redemptive interests of "God our Savior."

The literal sense that a congregation should have only *one* administrator—the articular *episkopos* 3:2 suggests this—may simply follow the analogy of the ancient household, which was typically led by a *paterfamilias* of singular authority. Read as a synecdoche for the entire presbytery, however, the singular noun would be understood in a collective sense; that is, the whole group the elders function as an *episkopos* in supervising the affairs of God's household.

The sentence is structured to introduce "blameless" as a virtue of singular importance that covers the entire list of sixteen characteristics that follow, nine positive and seven negative. In this sense, these virtues register a rounded "impression" of one's moral blamelessness. The choice of a hallmark virtue is somewhat odd since this word does not appear in Israel's Scripture, which is more concerned to define political leadership in terms of Torah observance or practical wisdom. The "blameless" person, however, is well-known in Hellenistic moral philosophy and the holistic formula of virtue envisaged by this profile, especially with its pronounced concern for cultivating the respect of outsiders, is congruent with its ideal.

Scholars continue to debate whether this particular listing of virtues is borrowed from a particular source and whether each virtue in turn carries peculiar significance for the reader. On the one hand, similar lists are found in the writings of Philo and the Stoics with other schools concerned with the manner of life lived in the public square for the common good. Epictetus, for example, defines the ideal citizen in conduct related to "marriage, raising children, reverence to God, care for parents" (*Discourses* 3.26). In similar vein, Onasander describes the competent military officer as "temperate, self-restraining, vigilant, frugal, hard working, alert, not too young or too old, a father if possible, a good orator, with a good reputation" (*General*, 1.1). Isocrates (cf. 250 BCE) writes, "Whenever you purpose to consult with any one about your affairs, first observe how he has managed his own. For he who has shown poor judgment in conducting his own business will never give wise counsel about the business of others" (*To Demonicus* 35). That is, the list of a competent administrator's qualities agrees with the criterion in the ancient world by which any household head would have been assessed. These are the stock qualities of someone

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<sup>12</sup> Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 227-29.

capable of sensible decision-making and a prudent lifestyle who does not abuse his authority are listed here. In fact, a few are found elsewhere in the PE as indicative of an earnest believer. The effect of such repetition is to relativize the leader's persona as exemplary of the covenant community in which every believer shares equally and equally obliged to attain these marks of discipleship. In any case, the rhetorical role of this list is to evoke general impressions of the sort of person who can effectively manage the household of God.

On the other hand, a cursory comparison of the particular virtues catalogued here with comparable lists found elsewhere in the ancient world as well as in the Pauline corpus—even Titus 1:6-9's profile of an *episkopos*—reflect differences that are probably related to different places and occasions. These lists, then, are not arbitrarily composed as generic of any social location but may reflect the particular concerns framed by the composition itself. For this reason, "the concept of 'good management of a household' provides the best access to the particular virtues of the supervisor."<sup>13</sup> This particular catalogue really holds no surprises for the reader; it includes qualities one might expect of a competent manager: an ability to manage others well, to handle finances fairly, to make clear-headed decisions, to represent the community's membership at the highest level. Marks of personal maturity ("not a drunk or a bully but gentle, peaceable, generous") are coupled with those of a spiritually mature person ("skilled teacher" who is not "newly converted") as apropos for one who supervises a sacred household well.

Yet this list is especially noteworthy by its interest in a congregation's public life—and with what outsiders think. For this reason, the review of moral character includes and concludes with an outsider's letter of commendation that supports a candidate's moral character. Collins points out that the repetition of *dei* plus infinitive ("must," 3:2, 7) forms an *inclusio*, which underwrites the necessity of a manager's good reputation among those beyond the congregation's membership. "Were an overseer not to have a good public reputation, he would likely fall into derision (and) along with him the community itself could possibly be derided."<sup>14</sup> Within 1 Timothy this pervasive interest in an outsider's opinion of the believer's social manners is theologically rather than politically motivated (cf. 2:8-15): the congregation's life together and its public practices embody for all to see God's will to save everybody (cf. 2:3-6). The motive of these instructions is not a social program of domestication according to which the administrator is put forward as an exemplary citizen; rather, he is an exemplary believer whose "good work" personifies the redemptive will of God for all to see.

Consistent with 1 Timothy's use of household as its primary metaphor of the church, marital fidelity and well-behaved children are listed as the marks of an excellent administrator. However, in the context of the Pauline canon where a solitary life committed only to God is celebrated (esp. 1 Cor 7 and then also in this letter's definition of the "real" widow; 5:9-10), the phrase "husband of one wife" might be understood more rigidly as the husband of *only* one wife. As a signature of his commitment, the administrator of a Pauline

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<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *1-2 Timothy*, 223.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, *I&II Timothy and Titus*, p. 86. J. D. Miller observes that the use of *dei* with an infinitive is a grammatical signal that the author has switched from personal correspondence to the use of traditional material to expound a "rule of virtue," unlike anywhere else within the Pauline canon in both vocabulary and motive; *The Pastoral Letters as Composite Documents* (SNTSMS 93 Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p. 76.

congregation may need to pledge to remain a widower in single-minded service of God's church should his first wife die.<sup>15</sup>

Significantly, hospitality is a hallmark of the covenant community. According to Acts, the host's good treatment of guests, a well-known characteristic of early Christian communities, is the expectation of any household headed by a virtuous person in the ancient world (cf. 16:15,34). To care for others, especially for its own (cf. Gal 6:1-10; 3 John 5-8) and even for strangers (cf. Luke 6:31-36), reciprocates God's love. The administrator's own hospitality, then, inculcates this practice within the household of believers where their obedience to God aims at love toward others (cf. 1:5).

## **2. Household Servants (3:8-13)**

*(3:8) Likewise, servants must be respectful: not duplicitous or imbibe in too much wine or in dishonest acquisition. (9) They should hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience; (10) let those who serve first be tested and found blameless. (11) Likewise, women must be proper, not slanderous, prudent, faithful in all things. (12) Let the servants be the husband of one wife who manage children and their own household well; (13) for those who serve well acquire for themselves a good position and much confidence within the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

Unlike the metaphor of household "administrator," the term translated "servants" (*diakonoī*) belongs to a word-family (*diakonia/diakoneō*) that has wide currency in the Pauline canon and generally conveys the terms of a faithful servant's vocation.<sup>16</sup> For example, all believers are considered "*diakonoī* of the new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6), whose competence in their common life and witness is a measure of divine grace mediated by God's Spirit (2 Cor 3:3). Even though sometimes attached to specific tasks—such as carrying the Macedonian offering to the Jerusalem congregations (Rom 15:25; cf. 2 Cor 8:19-20)—the principal use of this word family is metaphorical of the church as a community that serves the interests of God in a "ministry (*diakonia*) of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18) as "servants (*diakonoī*) of Christ" (2 Cor 11:23). The Pauline use follows the Gospel's witness to the Lord's definition of discipleship as a "servant (*diakonos*) of all" (Mark 9:35; 10:43). Likewise, the interest here is not to draft a job description of specific duties to perform but to profile the characteristics of those who are faithful servants of God's household for God's sake.

Perhaps for this reason, 1 Timothy says that the servant-staff of a sacred household must "hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (3:9)—a religious attribute in clear distinction from the household administrator. The congregation's diaconate exemplify the "mystery of godliness" as defined by creedal formula in 3:16 (cf.

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<sup>15</sup> The distance between the social world that shaped the Roman household envisaged by this catalogue and today's typical household is perhaps no more evident than in this emphasis. While the theological value of fidelity toward others within the household envisaged by this emphasis is timeless, the analogical relationship between the letter's instruction to male elders and its usefulness as a biblical criterion for today's congregation must surely be recalibrated, not only in light of different kinds of household relations commonplace today but by the different declensions of a congregation's board of elders, which now include women. The practical point of contact between the biblical and contemporary is that one's fidelity toward a spouse or toward their children is an effective barometer of spiritual leadership, whether an elder will be faithful in disposing of the congregation's requirements.

<sup>16</sup> See Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 486-88.

Eph. 1:9; 3:4), to which this particular quality surely alludes. According to Hellenistic mores, religious beliefs when linked to a "mystery" implied the use of magical formulae or esoteric teachings, or to a initiation ritual known only to the membership of a so-called "mystery religion." But in Pauline teaching, the "mystery of faith" is a public statement of what is believed, which marks out the confessing community as a people belonging to Christ. In this sense, then, the servant's primary responsibility within the household is to embody what it confesses to be true about Christ.

The structure of the catalogue, which enlists four virtues before adding the "mystery" phrase, suggests that a virtuous life is a mode of conduct that is the effective yield of one who "holds to the mystery of faith with good conscience." To be sure, the virtues listed—"respectful, not duplicitous or imbibe in too much wine or dishonest acquisition" (8)—are perfectly suitable for a servant's more "domestic" work. But the critical point should not be lost on the reader: the servant's character is forged by faith for the work of a congregation's faith formation, which is the servant's principal work.

Nothing stated would suggest this role is subordinate to the administrator; rather, if both administrator and servant are different perspectives on the role of a council of elders as a whole, the servants' household chores infer a different but integral skill-set less interested in the community's external affairs and are more attentive to the spiritual formation of believers. (Perhaps for this reason Timothy himself is called a "good *diakonos* of Christ Jesus," 4:6.) Unlike the administrator whose public persona is best summarized by his "blameless" character especially among outsiders, the servant's profile begins with "respect" (*semnos*), an adjective earlier listed in nominative form to characterize the administrator's respectful relations with his children (3:4). This interplay is crucial in inferring that a servant's chores are internal to the household of faith, cultivating the faith of the congregation's members.

Perhaps for this reason the predicate of such service is spiritual testing (10) and the present tense of the imperative, "let those who serve," suggests such testing is ongoing with their service. The one funds and equips the other. Collins relates this spiritual testing to the embrace of faith's mystery "with a clear conscience."<sup>17</sup> If a "clean conscience" refers to one's internal moral apparatus and the source of loving relations (cf. 1:5), then moral integrity must be seen as the complement of orthodox commitment, "holding fast to the mystery of faith." This formula of Christian existence, which views faith commitment and commitment to faithfulness as an integral whole, is central to the Pauline rule of faith.

The manner of how the servant's "blameless" character is tested and then assessed by the congregation is unmentioned, only that a servant's character is tested as the necessary predicate of service. We note that the adjective translated "blameless" (*anegklētos*) differs from the earlier word *anepilēptos* that summed up the "blameless" character of the qualified administrator (3:2). The word used here is a legal term for innocence (cf. Acts 23:29; 25:16), which when used elsewhere in the Pauline canon carries important theological freight: the believer who continues in the faith (Col 1:22-23) is pardoned of spiritual crimes and so participates with Christ in God's coming triumph (1 Cor 1:8). The results of spiritual testing monitor the vitality of faith.

The central problem of this passage is how to understand *yunaikas hōsautōs semnas*, which we have translated "Likewise, women must be proper" (v. 11). Because the phrase is

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<sup>17</sup> Collins, *1-2 Timothy*, p. 88.

sandwiched between two halves of a list that characterizes effective servanthood, scholars assume the intimate relationship between these women and the household servant staff. What remains unclear is the nature of this relationship, whether vocational (female servants) or marital (wives of servants). Grammar does not settle our decision<sup>18</sup>, which turns on understanding the title *diakonois* as a metaphor of a council of male elders in 1 Timothy: these women, then, comprise the "one wife" of the servant-elders. The particular list that defines their persona is noteworthy by what virtues are mentioned, which is comparable to those of their husbands. In particular the concluding phrase "faithful in all things" parallels that characteristic featured in the earlier list, "mystery of the faith" (see above; cf. 5:16). While again no description of tasks is added, the evident point is that faith is most effectively formed within households led faithful people.

### 3. Household *Paterfamilias* and Pillar (3:14—4:6)

*(3:14) While I hope to come soon to you, I write these instructions to you (15) so that if I am delayed you will know how you must behave as the pillar and foundation of the truth within the household of God, which is the church of the living God. (16) Indeed the mystery of holy living we confess is important: He was revealed in flesh and confirmed by Spirit/seen by angels and proclaimed among the nations/believed worldwide and exalted in glory. 4:1) But in fact the Spirit says that in the latter times some will abandon the faith, adhering to deceptive spirits and doctrines of demons 2) because of the hypocrisy of deceptive liars and cauterized consciences. 3) For example, they forbid marriage and eating foods that God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4) For everything God created is good and nothing received with thanksgiving is rejected 5) since these things are sanctified by God's word and prayer. 6) If you instruct these things to believers you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, apprenticed according to the teachings of the faith, the good doctrine, you have followed.*

This is arguably the most important passage in 1 Timothy and among its most awkward sounding. At last, the letter introduces its central metaphor for "the church of the living God," but as an autobiographical note rather than as a didactic claim or paraenetic exhortation. Perhaps the sharp departure of its tone intends to call attention to its rhetorical importance within the composition. What the reader has assumed from the beginning is here stated with personal force: the church congregates as a "household of God" where the transcendent God, the only God, dwells with a particular people in a particular place, "Ephesus" (1:3).

The instructions given in this letter, then, forge the formation of a sacred household in a way that circumscribes its social relationships and religious practices as apropos of those who think of themselves as members of God's family. The church is a sanctified place and so even its mundane routines are consecrated by "God's word and prayer" (4:4). God rather than any one person is the household's *paterfamilias*. We doubt this passage breaks the flow of the chapter's definition of leadership (so Bassler) but rather clarifies its character within the bounds of a sacred household, and in functional terms apropos to a household rather than by gender or social class. In particular Timothy's

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<sup>18</sup> For an analysis of the grammar of this phrase, see Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 492-94, who takes it with most scholars as referring to female deacons.

role is now re-imagined as the house's "pillar and foundation" (3:15); his role is to uphold "the truth" of the living God in a manner that dispels the teaching of those who "adhere to deceptive spirits and doctrines of demons" (4:1).

**3:14-15.** Because these instructions purpose to train a young protege in the particular manner of a Pauline congregation's religious practices and public life, the importance of a mentor's personal visit lies well beyond the routines of polite discourse. Good manners do not explain the largely paraenetic cast of this letter and its charge to its recipient! In Pauline letters, references to scheduled visits are vested with rhetorical importance: they promise "apostolic" house-calls laden with official importance.<sup>19</sup> Whether the promise is fictive or real, the very idea of an imminent visit implies the exercise of apostolic charisms and calling with the intention to fortify a congregation's spiritual resolve (cf. Rom 1:10-11; 15:20-22; 2 Cor 13:1-2) and to check on their spiritual progress (cf. 1 Cor 16:3-7; 1 Thess 2:17-3:5; Phile 22). Such visitations, then, embody political authority. But when a protracted delay in his "apostolic parousia" is anticipated, as in the case of 1 Timothy, letters become suitable substitutes for personal presence—an interim even if inferior measure that well addresses important problems in his absence until he can come to them in the full dress of his apostolic persona.

Read as a rhetorical convention, this reference to a personal visit suggests that 1 Timothy is read as a textual medium by which an absent but still authoritative Paul gives important instructions to needy recipients. This rhetorical convention may also explain why his instructions for certain groups are more expansive than to other groups. For instance, the letter may well address a new congregation lacking leadership and so includes instruction for identifying and defining the role of leadership within a Christian congregation worshipping in God's "house." The letter also reflects the prospect of awkward relations with certain woman because of their elevated social status (2:9-15) or age (5:1-16), and for this reason provides specific direction in the absence of the authoritative Apostle.

In any case, Timothy's importance to the congregation as its pastor is here more carefully defined. Already we know that he is addressed as one whose "official" relationship with Paul who has authorized him in his absence to organize this Ephesian community into God's household. The special circumstances of his calling only enhances his legitimacy to implement the instructions. The pastor's relationship with the congregation, then, must be more adequately defined.

Toward this end, 1 Timothy employs yet another "household" metaphor. Curiously, rather than a metaphor related to particular household chore as is the case for elders, who are either "administrator" or "servant" as need arises, Timothy's role within the congregation is inferred by architectural metaphors: he is the house's "pillar (*stylos*) and foundation (*hedraïoma*) of the truth" (3:15). The phrase reminds the reader of the similar way "James, Cephas and John" are named as the Jewish church's "reputed pillars (*styloi*)" in Gal 2:9. In that context, the plain meaning of the "pillars" metaphor infers the importance

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<sup>19</sup> The classic study of this motif is by Robert Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation* (W. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr, eds., Cambridge University Press, 1967) 249-69. The absence of an apostle provokes a spiritual crisis within the congregation not unlike the crisis imagined by the disciples in the fourth gospel when told that their messianic mentor was departing for a place where they could no longer be his followers (cf. John 13:31-14:14).

of leaders in deciding the future of the church's mission (esp. Eph. 2:19-22). In this particular setting, however, some have argued that the architecture images of v. 15—house, pillar, foundation—purposefully reflect the pagan temples of various Ephesian deities that contextualizes the letter's idea of the church as the dwelling place of Israel's God. Possibly so. More likely, however, "pillar and foundation of the truth" refers to Timothy himself and not to the church, and implies his pastoral role within the congregation in relationship to the broader pagan culture. In this regard, the text may well allude to the OT idea of Israel as God's "household" and to Timothy's performance of a role similar to that of Moses within Israel (cf. Num 12:6-8; Deut 23:2-4; 31:30), principally to cultivate a people's theological understanding in order to insure their divine blessing (cf. Deut 4).

**3:16.** If Timothy's Moses-like role is the authorized agent of the church's theological formation, then the puzzling placement of the christological confession here (3:16) makes perfect sense: it summarizes the subject matter of Timothy's (and so the church's) theological curriculum. In using this verse against the Arian heretic, Eunomius, Gregory of Nyssa wrote that these lyrics contain "all the declarations which the heralds of the faith are prone to make. By these is increased the marvelous character of him who manifested the super-abundance of his power by means external to his own nature" (*Against Eunomius* 5.3). Indeed so.

The phrase, "great is the mystery of holy living (*eusebeia*)," is universally conceded as a peculiar formula to introduce a confession. While it is plausible to think that the central beliefs about Christ comprise a "great mystery," in what way are they constitutive of a holy life? And what does this phrase suggest of Timothy's identification as the congregation's pillar and foundation? M. D'Angelo has recently argued that moral philosophers since Plato considered *eusebeia* the Roman virtue that best combined religious observance with "family values." That is, the secular ideal of "holy living" presumed that devotion to one's family instantiated one's devotion to the divine and as such was the very essence of the religious life.<sup>20</sup> This ideal is apropos of Pauline thought in which these two properties of Christian existence, a vital piety and sound doctrine, are not mutually exclusive: the way of life embodies the profession of faith for all to see. But in this immediate setting, this ideal is personified in Timothy whose commitment to Pauline truth, articulated in the following Christological confession, embodies his care of the congregation as its "foundation of the truth."

The Pauline letters are frequently adorned with similar confessions of faith, although rarely with one as theologically robust as this one (e.g., Rom 1:3-4; 16:25-27; 1 Cor 15:3-7; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20). In most cases, the lines of a hymn or creedal statement are already formed and known to his recipients. The literary form and christological content of this confession are suggestive of a well-used text in catechism and worship. Most scholars suspect use of preformed creeds and hymns reminds his readers of what beliefs they share, probably to prop up a letter's purpose. It follows here, then, that the confession's opening formula cues the reader to what all believers agree by "common confession" as "the truth" Timothy is charged to uphold as the church's "pillar and foundation."

We doubt the hymn's christological subject matter envisages the oft-heard critical distinction between an existential act of trust in Jesus and a later institutionalized set of

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<sup>20</sup> Mary R. D'Angelo, "Eusebeia: Roman Imperial Family Values and the Sexual Politics of 4 Maccabees and the Pastorals," *BibInterp* 11.2 (2003) 139-65.

core beliefs about Jesus—the former more true of the historical Paul and the later more true of his post-Paul tradents. In our mind there is no constructive distinction between these two kinds of “faith.” To confess faith in Christ is to affirm the core beliefs of his instruction, the church’s Rule of Faith. This confession would surely include his status as risen Lord and the redemptive purchase of his messianic death. To come to a knowledge of the truth (2:4) is the very activity of conversion; salvation is by profession of beliefs our Jesus (cf. Rom 10:9).

In commenting upon 3:16, most interpreters first call the reader’s attention to its literary cues: lines of identical length and structure that are introduced by a pronoun without clear antecedent and fashioned by a vocabulary distinct within the composition suggest an earlier, independent life. In this case, the text’s confessional form is also cued by the introductory *homologoumenōs* (“we confess”) and its economy of expression, typifies an oft-cited passage in liturgical use. Each of its six parallel lines begins with a passive aorist verb followed by a dative noun. Also typical of confessions used in Pauline letters is the transition from the invocative to creed is a relative pronoun whose implied antecedent is the one who is confessed. Only the subject matter identifies him as Christ Jesus; appropriately, its expression is doxological and reflects the attitude and tenor of a worshipping household.

Yet while its placement in the letter suggests its importance for defining Timothy’s pastoral role, nowhere is its motive clearly defined. The confession’s design and content may imply motive. The six parallel lines fashioned three pairs that make three succinct claims about the risen Jesus cast in spatial rather than temporal images. Each pair envisages a dynamic interplay between heaven and earth, between what angels witness—that which remains an invisible “mystery”—and what the church witnesses—that which defines “the faith” (cf. 3:9). That is, the subject matter of the congregation’s christological catechesis is confirmed by a second congregation of heavenly witnesses that rebounds throughout all creation, on earth and in heaven, in praise that the Creator’s redemptive purpose is brought to realization by the Christ event. And this is the central truth claim that Timothy is charged to uphold (3:14).

(1) *He was revealed in flesh and confirmed by Spirit.* The first parallelism introduces the church’s essential belief about Jesus. This affirmation is of Jesus’ “flesh”—his human existence. It is not fully expounded according to the interests of modern historians who attempt to reconstruct the life of Jesus within a first century Palestinian world; rather, this is an expression of faith that his public life is revelatory of God’s redemptive purpose (cf. 2:5-6). The motive is not incarnational christology as the ancient Fathers insisted but is messianic and so consonant with the christology of this letter (see 1:15). The heavenly complement of this belief is that his messianic mission is confirmed by the Spirit at his resurrection (cf. Rom 1:4; Acts 2:36). In fact, Collins contends that the revelation of Jesus to which this parallelism refers is the post-Easter manifestation of the risen Jesus.<sup>21</sup> The odd use of verb *dikaion* here, which we have translated “confirmed,” is similar to use of this same verb in 1 Cor 6:11 in reference to the authenticating witness of

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<sup>21</sup> Collins, *1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 108-09. Collins takes the parallel line as an allusion to Isa 53:11 so that the Spirit’s “vindication” (*dikaion*) of Christ confirms that he is the “Righteous One” (*dikaion*) of Isaiah’s Servant oracle, which is an important “proof-from-prophecy” in the church’s *apologia* for Jesus’ messianic identity.

"the Spirit of our God." Accordingly, we take it that the first line refers to the whole of Jesus' public mission and not just his post-Easter visitations, which is then validated as messianic by the Spirit who mediated God's power in raising him back to life according to Pauline teaching.

(2) *Seen by angels and proclaimed among the nations.* The second parallelism reverses the spatial interplay of the first by beginning with a belief about the witness of angels. Our translation of *angeloi* as heavenly "angels" (rather than human "messengers") preserves the heaven-earth interplay of this particular confession. But why this elevated interest in angels here? Elsewhere in the Pauline canon mention is made of an angelic host that welcomes the risen Messiah back into its heavenly company (Phil 2:9-11; cf. Rev 12:5-12). Quite possibly, then, these first two parallelisms are connected by the resurrection subtext of the previous line: what is seen of the resurrected Jesus by heaven's angelic witness (cf. Matt. 28:5-7) confirms the truth of the apostolic proclamation of the risen Jesus among the nations (cf. Matt 28:16-20).

(3) *Believed worldwide and exalted in glory.* The final parallelism affirms the universal importance of the church's core beliefs about Jesus (cf. 2:4-6) and his heavenly exaltation as risen Lord over all creation (cf. Phil 2:9-11). While linking together the second line of the preceding parallelism, "proclaimed among the nations," and the first line of this one, "believed worldwide," makes perfect sense, the logical connection of this earth-heaven interplay is not immediately clear to the reader-confessor. We doubt the idea of the doxology's final line is a Lukan gloss and refers to the Lord's ascension. The line is read with Pauline accent and expresses Jesus' heavenly exaltation as creation's Lord. The logic of the church's core beliefs about him and proclamation of him in the world rests on the surety of God's exaltation of him as risen Lord.<sup>22</sup>

**4:1-6.** Only here in 1 Timothy is mention made of the teachings of the false teachers mentioned earlier, where only the manner and effect but not the content of their teaching is described (see 1:3-7, 19-20). Here their teaching is condemned as a deception characteristic of the "later times." This polemical rhetoric is similar to Jesus' prediction of false prophets who will subvert Israel's preparation for its messiah (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21); it is rhetorical flourish indebted to the futuristic idiom of apocalyptic Judaism. In particular, "deceitful spirits" in contrast with the "righteous spirit"—the Spirit who discloses God's truth (see 3:15-16) through the prophet to Israel—is characteristic of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For example, *The Rule of the Community* predicts that "due to the Angel of Darkness all the children of righteousness will stray, and all their sin, their iniquities, their failings and their deceitful works will be under his rule in compliance with the mysteries of God" (1QS 3:21b-23a). Other Jewish literature of the day, framed by the images of an imminent apocalypse, speak of "deceitful spirits" set loose on God's people to turn their minds away from God (*T. Reub.* 2:1-2; *T. Judah* 14:8; 20). Especially Matthew's gospel characterizes those who lead the Jewish opposition against Jesus as "hypocritical" (cf. Matt 6:2, 16; 7:5; 22:18; 23:13-29; 24:51). Such polemic against disagreeable teachers reflects the close connection between the character of the one who teaches and the content and effect of one's instruction, axiomatic of the moral literature of his day.

Most commentators suggest that 4:1 marks a discrete break in the composition's structure. Here begins a round of more personal instructions directed at Timothy regarding

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<sup>22</sup> So Marshall, *Pastorals*, 528-29, who follows other interpreters ancient and modern.

his role and conduct within the faith community. But the themes of spiritual leadership continue in this passage; for this reason, the connecting *de* (4:1) is better understood as introducing contrasting beliefs and practices to those of the preceding confession that Timothy is called to safeguard as the congregation's "pillar and foundation of the truth." In fact, if the truth about the Christ event is conceived of as an effective interplay of earthly and heavenly witnesses (3:16), then a Pauline variety of Christian discipleship, cultivated by Timothy's ministry within the congregation, will lead believers to receive earthly goods such as food or marriage "with thanksgiving" as the benefaction of their transcendent God (cf. Acts 17:24-25). A disembodied, world-denying discipleship that refuses to embrace God's good creation "with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (4:3) is the hard evidence of the influence of "doctrines of demons" and "silly myths" within the congregation in which "good doctrine" (cf. 3:16) is not taught.

This invective is similar to Jesus' apocalyptic proclamation that predicts the advent of false prophets who will subvert Israel's preparation for its messiah (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). According to the teaching of sectarian Judaism in which Jesus stands the variety of spiritual and social conflict reflected by this text heralds the beginning of the end immediately before the final triumph of God in restoring creation from its evil destroyers. The *Rule of the Community* predicts that "due to the Angel of Darkness all the children of righteousness will stray, and all their sin, their iniquities, their failings and their deceitful works will be under his rule in compliance with the mysteries of God" (1QS 3:21b-23a). Other Jewish literature of the day, framed by the images of an imminent apocalypse, speak of "deceitful spirits" set loose on God's people to turn their minds away from God (*T. Reub.* 2:1-2; *T. Judah* 14:8; 20). Especially Matthew's gospel characterizes those who lead the Jewish opposition against Jesus as "hypocritical" (cf. Matt 6:2, 16; 7:5; 22:18; 23:13-29; 24:51). The polemic against the false teachers reflects the connection of personal character with one's capacity to receive and transmit truth, which is axiomatic of the moral literature of his day.

According to 1 Timothy "doctrines of demons" cultivate a creation-denying asceticism that denies marriage and certain foods. We doubt the opposition to marriage or foods is reflected in the instructions regarding women or family life found in this letter as some interpreters insist. Rather the plain meaning of this polemic follows naturally from the letter's use of "household" as its central metaphor of church. In this regard, the concern for the quality of a Christian marriage is pivotal for leadership within the church even as it is within the household and childbearing the badge of a woman's salvation. In the letter's use of the household metaphor, then, any opposition to marriage (and so childbearing) or to certain foods (and so religious observance), especially if drawn to define a purity of heart as is likely, should be inferred as teaching that is subversive to a church's covenant with God and mission in the world. Moreover, even more central to this letter's theological vision is the belief that familial relationships, especially marital, are decisive to the Creator's "way of ordering reality"—a social construction organized according to a Pauline understanding of the *oikonomia theou* (see 1:4-5). Relations between men and women, whether in the public square or the home, are regulated by patterns the Creator has built into the very nature of things. In that such an understanding of the church as a sacred household, organized according to divine agency, springs in part from the believer's "good conscience" cultivated by the faith claims of Pauline teaching (1:5, 10-11) and is subverted by those who "reject a good conscience" (1:19-20), this curious reference to opponents with "cauterized

consciences" (4:2) must be a reference to any whose beliefs oppose those upheld by Timothy and confessed by God's church (3:16).

Given the vague cast of this invective, however, scholars have found it difficult to place these opponents or their "doctrines of demons" anywhere on the map of earliest Christianity. Some have dated the composition quite late thereby allowing them to follow the letter's identification of ascetical practices such as celibacy and dietary regulation with second century Gnosticism of the kind Irenaeus refutes in *Against Heresies*. He writes, for example, that their teachers "assert that marriage...is from Satan" (1.24.2) and "some among them have introduced abstinence from animal food, thus proving they are ungrateful to God who created all things" (*Ad.Har.* 1.28.1). While plausible, such critical reductionism is unnecessary. A concern for social purity characterized Christian faith from its beginning. Indeed, the James of Acts corrects Peter's myopic commentary on Cornelius's conversion by arguing that public practices (Acts 15:20-21) follow from a "purity of the heart by faith" (15:9) and is the *sine quo non* of Christian fellowship.<sup>23</sup> Jesus himself allows for a celibate lifestyle as a property of a disciple's kingdom vocation (cf. Matt 19:12) and considers all foods kosher (Mark 7:19). constant rumination on food and human sexuality in his letters (e.g., Rom 14; 1 Cor 5-7, 8-11; 1 Thess 4:3-6) suggest a keen interest in these topics by his opponents. Although not clear from this letter and perhaps presumed by it, Pauline teaching supports marriage (e.g., 1 Cor 7) and a normal diet (e.g., Rom 14) as indeterminate of the believer's purity before God in Christ. More critically, disagreements over marital and dietary practices are recognized by Paul as inherently divisive and for this reason should be of principal concern for leaders of a congregation (1 Cor 5-12; cf. Acts 21:25 in narrative context).<sup>24</sup>

According to Acts, the leaders of the church gathered in Jerusalem to discuss issues of table fellowship. James in particular is deeply concerned that the initiation of repentant Gentiles into the Diaspora church, most of whom are not Jewish proselytes and converted from paganism to Jesus, might threaten the Jewish legacy of the faith. Appealing to Israel's Scripture, his solution, repeated three times in Acts for rhetorical effect (15:20, 29; 21:25), concerns food and sex. Indeed, religious practices related to these things often defined the sometimes difficult social relations between repentant Jews and Gentiles. Perhaps harsh words about the "hypocrisy of liars" and his appeal to God's good creation (4:4) and to the alternate religious practices of "the word of God and prayer" (4:5) has a similar setting in mind in which a world-denying asceticism is mandated by false teachers for converts who have recently left their pagan religions for membership in God's household.

The thankful reception of material creatures such as food or social conventions such as marriage is set apart for sacred purposes by "God's word and prayer." In this compositional setting the consecrating agent is not the holy Spirit but the worshiping household. Even these mundane activities—eating good food about a table with one's family—carry religious importance for believers, especially when contrasted to pagan "households" whose use of food in religious rituals especially carries a different connotation

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<sup>23</sup> See R. W. Wall, "Acts" NIB, 10:203-23; also, see my "The Jerusalem Council" article.

<sup>24</sup> See R. W. Wall, "Reading Paul with Acts: The Canonical Shaping of a Holy Church," forthcoming in Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson, eds., *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007) XXX-XXX.

than for Christians. In continuity with Jewish tradition table fellowship is consecrated by prayers of thanksgiving that recall the biblical story of creation in which "God's word" brings forth a creation (cf. *Gen* 1:31) in which food (cf. *Gen* 1:29-30) and marriage (cf. *Gen* 1:28) are given strategic roles to serve the Creator's purpose.

Finally, we think the conditional of v. 6 glosses the prior correction of a creation-denying Christianity rather than introduces a personal charge that is expanded on in 4:7-16. The implied contrast relevant to this exhortation is between teachers who follow the "doctrines of demons" (4:1) and those, like Timothy, whose instruction follows "the good doctrine" of the Pauline legacy. This is the hallmark of the teacher who is the "pillar and foundation of the truth" of God's household.

### **A Canonical Approach to Leadership within the Pauline Canon: The case of 1 Cor. 12**

*The idea of church in 1 Timothy.* The interplay between *oikos theou* ("God's household," 3:15) and *oikonomia theou* ("God's way of ordering reality," 1:4) forms the theological *gravitas* for the entire letter, since the various elements of a congregation's public life must embody the Creator's way of ordering social relations. Of course this makes perfect sense for the letter's first urban readers whose meeting place was typically a member's home where believers gathered for worship and Christian fellowship (cf. *Acts* 16:40; 18:7; 20:7-12; et. al.). Whether the family household remains the most essential unit of human culture today is debated among sociologists. Yet even when the currency of other metaphors that organize Christian congregations into cohesive and competent communities displace the household as more relevant, the patterns and codes of the family household found in this letter continue to instruct its faithful readers.

For example, this particular chapter catalogues the qualities of those who can competently lead a Christian congregation—not by the spiritual charisms of church office but according to the virtues of competent workers. These qualities and their presumed roles within the church are illumined by analogy to the typical Roman household. That is, the household administrator takes care of the congregation's day-to-day business, especially with outsiders, while its servant staff attends to the household's internal affairs. The collective task of the congregation's leadership team, whether as a household administrator or servant, is to help Timothy organize believers into a working congregation that will cultivate the faith and witness of its membership. For this reason, then, we should note that the congregation's "administrator" is also apt to teach believers (3:2) and the servant staff personifies the "mystery of the faith" for the religious benefaction of other believers.

If we assume that the administrator manages the sacred household according to God's way of ordering social reality (1 Tim 1:4-5), we should expect the catalogue of virtues that mark such a person out among other elders to embody the core ideals of God's sense of propriety about human relationships. It is on this theological basis rather than as a mere prudential matter that the leader's spiritual authority is based. People are appointed to supervise the church's affairs not simply because they are virtuous people; their appointment is based upon a congregation's apprehension of one's ability to lead it in the ways of God (cf. *Jas* 3:13; *Deut* 1:13).

Today's American churches, which are often preoccupied with legal rights and denominational slights, too easily dismiss this chapter's catalogue of human virtues as yet another biblical reflection of social hierarchy and reject it on this basis. Not only is the

household symbolism of this passage thereby missed, the canonical argot is also missed. For what remains normative in the Paul's discussion of church leadership is no longer the specific attributes of a biblical catalogue—or its ancillary metaphor—as though a congregation's selection of a leader is by rote check-list; rather, what is normative from congregation to congregation is the underlying theological principle that shapes these instructions that religious leaders qualify by reason of their character rather than by their charisma.

In 1 Timothy, for reasons that have occasioned a great deal of scholarly speculation, much more attention is granted a different kind of dynamic between believers and outsiders. The Paul's use of the household metaphor is not easily reduced to a mundane matter of naming God's church after its customary meeting place. The church is re-imagined as a sacred household precisely because it enables readers to understand why and for what ends a congregation and its leadership is organized in the manner envisaged by these instructions. In fact, even if the household metaphor and its top-down management style responds to the instability triggered by false teaching, which we doubt, the initial reception of the PE as Scripture towards the end of the second century is doubtless prompted by the early catholic church's battles with internal "heresy." The organization of the church after the Roman household provides political structure and a firm definition of a Pauline rule of faith that could help settle the conflict that threatened the church's future at the very moment the PE were received as Scripture toward the end of the second century (see Introduction).

While useful in this practical way, we also think the Paul's use of the household metaphor is theologically motivated: God's desire to save the outsider (2:4) requires an idiom that pays close attention to the conventions and manners of outsiders, and so increases the prospect of their conversion to Christianity.<sup>25</sup> While Paul consistently adapted his sense of the church's missionary vocation to various epistolary settings, his metaphor of the church as a Spirit-ruled "body" concentrates on its internal dynamics—that every believer performs a Spirit-assigned and enabled role within and for the benefit of the whole church. Moreover, the very expression that a congregation is a "bodily" whole is apropos of an apocalyptic community whose very existence under the Spirit and in Christ is situated over-and-against the surrounding world order. While this idea is not totally absent in 1 Timothy, this Pauline letter posits a much keener interest in what outsiders think and how they might respond to the gospel on the basis what they observe of believers in the public square. Their opinion counts in a way that is simply not found in the rest of the Pauline canon. Indeed, there are two kinds of outsiders according to 3:6-7. The first outsider is the ordinary citizen whose public testimony regards a prospective administrator whether he is "above reproach" (see 3:7 *apo ton ezothern*). These are also subjects of God's redemptive purpose—"sinners for whom Christ came into the world to save" (1:15), whom God desires to save (2:3-4), and therefore about whom the church should present itself as a compelling testimony of God's mercy. But evidently there are outsiders, once of "the faith" who now pose a moral and spiritual threat to believers (cf. 4:1-2). Even these Timothy is told to point in a different doctrinal direction (1:3). There are demonic outsiders too (3:6-7; 4:1; cf. 2 Tim 2:26) who may influence believers in a negative way and are to be avoided.

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<sup>25</sup> Bassler, pp. 106-107.

While 1 Timothy's household code surely envisages a Pauline sense of the *oikonomia theou*—the Creator's way of ordering social reality—the fact that this code trades on Roman models of the middleclass household further suggests also an accommodation with Rome's way of ordering society, but in a subversive way to convert it to God. In this regard, the administrator's role is not truly analogous to the *paterfamilias* of the Roman household, since the church is God's household and God alone is its head. For this reason, leaders are selected according to their character rather than inherited according to their family birthright. The result is an ethos not unlike the charismatic community even though one's fitness to lead is predicated on human virtue rather than spiritual charism. Moreover the administrator's various duties within the household are those one would expect of one who manages a Roman household: instruction and role modeling, administrative oversight, and public representation all of which are supported by the qualities catalogued.

Another intriguing element of this notion of community is reference of a female order of servant leadership. On the one hand, the servant staff of a middleclass Roman household would typically include men and women. Qualities match those of the male "helpers." This is qualified, of course, by 2:11-12, so that by leadership, 1 Tim would not include women engaged in public teaching within congregation. It should be pointed out, however, that there are examples of female heads of households in antiquity, which on occasion extends to the structure of the congregation (cf. Acts 16:14-15).

Finally, comment should be made about L. Johnson's contested interpretation that the crucial phrase of 3:15b, "the pillar and bulwark of the truth," is in reference to Timothy rather than to the church. In agreeing with his exegesis, we note two of its most important implications for this letter's definition of "ecclesiastical discipline." First concerns the political structure of a Christian congregation. Neither the congregation as a whole nor its administrator in particular are vested with epistemic authority. This role belongs to another individual, Timothy, who is appointed by the Spirit and confirmed by apostolic authority to insure the succession of truth to the "next congregation." His religious authority as "the foundation of truth" is charismatic and not subject to a human assessment of his competence. Second, as custodian of the apostle's rule of faith, Timothy's leadership is not practical but theological. He leads by teaching, interpreting, adapting "the truth" about Christ (3:16) as the congregation's internal standard of compliance to God's saving word.

*The idea of church in the Pauline Canon.* As with virtually every other thematic on the leading edge of a Pauline interpretation of the Gospel, the Pauline canon includes a variety of images of church and of spiritual leadership apropos to it. Briefly, a constructive conversation between different Pauline ecclesiologies—between 1 Cor 12 and 1 Tim 3 in this particular case study—should include a critical assessment of their differences and a scheme to relate them together as diverse but integral members of Scripture's Pauline witness.<sup>26</sup>

In this regard, the interpreter should begin with different metaphors used of the church: "body" in 1 Corinthians and "house" in 1 Timothy. In 1 Corinthians, then, the "body" metaphor is instantiated in a congregation ordered by God's Spirit that imparts charismata/pneumatika to the membership in an organic way—according to its evident needs—in a manner that edifies and builds up the whole. No one spiritual gift is inherently more

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<sup>26</sup> See E. E. Lemcio, "Images of the Church in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy: an Exercise in Canonical Hermeneutics," *Asbury Theological Journal* 56.1 (2001): 45-59.

important than any other since all are necessary for the proper functioning of the whole. A hierarchy of spiritual gifts, if there is one, reflects a hierarchy of congregational need rather than of inherent importance: the more important gifts are those required at any given time to nurture and enrich the congregation's membership. For example, if a congregation requires more adequate instruction, then the Spirit enables certain believers to teach; and so on. Moreover, there seems to be no social hierarchy based upon class (1 Cor 1) or gender (1 Cor 11); gifting depends upon the Spirit who rules over the community and whose choices reflects the essential oneness between those who share a new life "in Christ." Such a populism reverses normal patterns of societal power, so that "not many who are powerful or of noble birth" (1 Cor 1:26) are called by a gospel that proclaims a Christ crucified in the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:22-25).

The "house" metaphor is instantiated by 1 Timothy in a congregation ordered by its human leadership who are virtuous and spiritually mature and attentive to the practical needs of the congregation's relations with outsiders and the spiritual care of insiders. Whilst modern criticism has surely overplayed the political and social hierarchy of 1 Timothy's church, members are nonetheless ranked in the various ways of a Roman household—according to role and social status. Such a hierarchy is not the byproduct of the Spirit's will as in 1 Cor. But according to human choices reasonably made, both by the aspirant to leadership and by a congregation's apprehension of his/her fitness. And these choices are reasonably made in due consideration of social status and character, and in a way that is solicitous of the outsider's opinion. In stark contrast, 1 Corinthians bans the outsider from the charismatic community precisely because the motive and ministry of charisms are unintelligible to them (1 Cor 14:20-25)! Moreover, what charisms are parceled out by the Spirit are given to Timothy who alone is called, enabled and guided as the congregation's "pillar and foundation of the truth." What is a collectivity of charism in 1 Corinthians is reduced to an individual in 1 Timothy.

In fact, the elevation of personal character as the criterion of leadership is different than teaching elsewhere in the Pauline canon that defines Christian ministry (if not congregational leadership) by the Spirit's charismata distributed according to its will and prerogatives and set within an egalitarian worshiping community (1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12; Eph 4). Within a charismatic community where the Spirit is Lord and who alone determines church order by giving spiritual gifts according to its will (1 Cor 12:11), the very idea that male supervisors are selected on the basis of their human virtue and are approved even by outsiders strikes the reader as strange-sounding. Again, some clarity is gained by merely recognizing the use of different metaphors of "being church": each metaphor, body and house, proffers a distinctive way of imagining the social roles and relationships within a congregation's membership as well as its corporate identity and sacred calling as a missionary people belonging to Christ. Yet, Paul's use of the "body" metaphor in 1 Cor regards the internal dynamic between believers, which is sometimes conflictive even though they share God's benefaction equally in Christ. A house, secured by a "pillar and foundation," suggests more stability not only between its ordered membership but with the surrounding cultural order.

The various articles of a Pauline rule of faith—a grammar of "healthy doctrine"—also cohere to these different models. For example, a confession of faith in a church conceived as the "body of Christ" is logically shaped into core beliefs about the crucified body of Christ (1 Cor 1, 11), the resurrected body of Christ (1 Cor 7, 15), the spiritual body of Christ as Second Adam (1 Cor 15), and so on. The idiom of a participatory Christology and intimate fellowship in

and with him frames this more organic and integral whole by which the church is envisaged in 1 Corinthians. Of course, these very beliefs are sometimes distorted into a world-denying asceticism against which 1 Timothy's Christology protects the church (cf. 1 Tim 4:1-6). In fact, the exalted Christology of 1 Tim 3:16 (see above) resists the sloppy analogy that those in Christ's body must crucify their flesh (however defined) in order to become worthy Christians. The Pauline gospel does not presume that the Lord's messianic prerogatives are to be shared with his followers rather than the effect of the Lord's exercise of those prerogatives in obedience to God.

Indicative of the above contrast is the role performed by the Spirit in each typology of the Pauline church. Repeated reference is made in 1 Corinthians to the Spirit's status and work; in fact, it is impossible to conceive of the vitality of Christ's body apart from his life-giving Spirit. Not only does this Spirit baptize believers into Christ, which is also the realm of the Spirit's power and influence, this same Spirit assigns gifts and guides the formation of the congregation found there. Whereas 1 Timothy ascribes Christ the role of mediator between God and all humanity (1 Tim 2:3-6), 1 Corinthians gives the mediatory role to his Spirit but in a more exclusive human community that is bounded by faith (1 Cor 2). Further, sparse reference to the Spirit's power is restricted in 1 Timothy to the community's leader who is gifted to teach others (4:14).

The Paul's sharpest polemic against those apostates who teach "different (i.e., non-Pauline) doctrine" (cf. 1:3, 10-11) is given as a Spirit-inspired prophecy of the church's "latter times" (4:1), when there is expectation of trouble from false prophets (cf. Matt 24:9-14). But clearly this future is right now (cf. Acts 20:28-30). And so here too he rebuts the creation-denying asceticism they promote as the truth (4:3-4) but is in fact a departure from "the faith" (4:1) and is a lie (4:2).

The mention of the Spirit is more important than as referent to the church's opposition to falsehood or as agent of the Paul's prophecy regarding the church's eschatological battle with the Devil and those spirits and doctrines it controls (cf. Rev. 12:10-12). In this setting which regards Timothy's role within the congregation, this is the very Spirit of prophecy whose utterance called him to his ministry of safeguarding the truth about Christ. Timothy's future is right now too.

Finally, the text's regard for creation that "everything God created is good and nothing received with thanksgiving is rejected" (4:3) trades once again on the biblical narrative of creation (see 2:13-15a)—in this case that God created marriage and food to eat for good ends (cf. Gen 1:26-31). Such pastoral encouragement is apropos in a letter whose instructions intend to supply a road map of the *oikonomia theou*, which the faithful congregation then must instantiate. Yet in a passage about the church's "latter times," the Paul's celebration of a good creation heralds the coming renewed creation in which the original intentions of "everything God created" are restored. In this sense, the church's ordinary time in which good food is thankfully eaten and marriage thankfully enjoyed heralds the Creator's coming triumph over the "deceptive spirits and doctrines of demons."

One of the values the early Apologists retrieved from the PE, which may have led to the expansion of the Pauline canon to include them, is the recognition that other Pauline texts supported Marcion's negative appraisal of the natural order (cf. Tertullian, *Prescr Her* 33). Evidently Christian teachers in Corinth had already taken Paul's predictions of Christ's bodily return any-moment as inferring indifference to bodily things in the present age, including marriage (cf. 1 Cor 7) and perhaps even to food (cf. 1 Cor 8-10), which soon will

pass away (1 Cor 7:31). While the date of 1 Timothy's composition may preclude a Marcionite *Sitz im Leben*, almost surely the letter's reception as Scripture does not. The Apologists may well have recognized in this text a useful corrective to teaching found in Marcion's uncorrected Pauline canon: the church's positive response to its material life heralds the in-breaking of a renewed creation at the end of the age.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This is precisely the sort of move we find in Tertullian's comments "On the Apparel of Women," 9, in which he uses 1 Tim 4:3-4 as a corrective to the asceticism shaped by 1 Cor 7.